Research Article

Women as Marginalized Beings:
A Reflection on the Intersectionality of Marginalization within Indian Literary and Social Framework

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Abstract: As Elizabeth J. Meyer wrote in the book *Queering Straight Teachers Discourse and Identity in Education* is that, "Queer theory goes beyond exploring aspects of gay and lesbian identity and experience. It questions taken-for granted assumptions about relationships, identity, gender, and sexual orientation. It seeks to explode rigid normalizing categories into possibilities that exist beyond the binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine, student/teacher, and gay/straight" (Meyer, 1). Among these series of complexly designed network of marginalization, which is a branched and towered regime of oppression in Indian framework, so, I select Gender and Caste as that lens to depict the narratives of marginalized identity- *women*. The concept of "women" as Judith Butler defines in her famous work *Gender Trouble* 1990- "Women are the sex which is not "one". Within … a phallogocentric language, women constitute the unrepresentable … women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity" (Butler, 13). The identity of a woman gets trapped between some supposed and created links, which therefore my paper will try to discern, by the application of queer post-structuralist feminist theory, in both few selected literary texts- Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* and *Breast Stories*, Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni's *Mistress of Spices, Vine of Desire,* and *Sister of My Heart*, and social context- women as subject of politics within the rape culture.

Keywords: Culture and Society, Identity Politics, Gender and Queer Theory, Women.

1. Introduction

Queer theory along with Feminist studies has thus, provided us with lens to speculate the intersectionalities that exists in each paradigm of identity, and the necessity to recognize the same is important to deconstruct the stratified layers of marginalization, the intersectionality of the same to portray how the identity of a 'woman' is still the peripheral within Indian literary and socio-political framework. Feminism initially commenced with the middle-class white women's call for political rights including the Suffragettes, where the public and private binary was challenged with the powerful demand of re-claiming the spaces by Women, However, with the passage of time the famous historians Rebecca Walker and Maggie Humm, divided the History of Feminism into three waves, which eventually started including not just women but all oppressive 'bodies.' The immensely crucial and echoing slogan "Personal is Political" was introduced by Carol Hanisch that reflected the dimension ad growth of Second wave Feminism; the creation of Feminism(s); however, this aroused too few political complexities. This concept of Feminism(s) could broadly include-Radical Feminism; Cultural Feminism; while the Third wave very carefully focused on the deconstruction of the "inherent-link" between one's sex/gender/sexuality, stating them as choice/performances rather than an authentic ultimate, where one of the prominent personality was Judith Butler, and eventually Jacques Derrida's post-structuralist theory further envisaged our perceptions towards language-sign/signifier and signifies, which presented the fact, that the relation between them is arbitrary and deconstructed the very essentiality of truth/essence/main/centre, which with time and inclusion of queer theory organized Feminism into Queer-post-structuralist and intersectional political standpoint.

2. Literature Review

Gender is socially constructed as put forward by Simone De Beauvoir, but is this dimension just adhering to the binarized male/female quotations? Judith Butler regarded Gender is 'performative' and eventually deconstructed the intricately designed thread of inherent link of sex/gender/sexuality [1]. 'Gender is a choice to perform an identity', but it is curbed with policing and panopticon social structure. Gender studies portray and teach how Gender is a 'spectrum' and a floating concept where anyone can identify themselves as anybody at any juncture of experience [2].

This complex operation of Gender has decoded the Brahminical standard of power and authority of one anatomy over the 'othered' anatomies [3]. Rape culture is celebrated norm in India, because the object of 'rape' has been women's body which is further linked to the concept of shame/purity; however, *men are also the object of rape,* but our political framework has always portrayed them as the 'subject' of every shelter and oppression; hence portraying them as the object will no longer make '*a fate worse than death*' (rape), an un-questionable category under 'power'; men as object of rape, would have been crushed. Keeping in mind what Butler regarded the subject 'women' as, we see that 'rape culture' in India is patriarchally popular which focuses on blaming the victim and not the criminal-Nirbhaya and Hathra's case; whereas feminists discard 'rape' because it is "against the autonomy and bodily integrity of a woman" [4]. The concept of 'consent' in 'rape' is omitted by patriarchy and hence our social structure veils 'marital rape', and tries to blame the woman as a subject of political representation the *cause behind rape* (by revealing her body- said by Chairperson of Karnataka Human Rights Commission) and not the man. Therefore, maintaining of 'rape culture' will instill a fear within the "cultural set-up", resulting in controlling of women's body; thus regulating their sexuality and identity, creating the 'ideal definition of what a women should be; how should she present herself- obedient daughter/wife/mother' of emerging and strong phalluses [5].

The area of literature has always been a reflective of any socio-cultural, ethico-ontological, cognitive and political dynamics of power, that webs and constructs certain 'norms' of presentation and re-presentation within the literary domain [6]; however, within which 'power' and 'deconstruction' functions simultaneously. As Gayatri C Spivak in introducing the *Breast Stories* wrote, "Power *is* nothing if not opposed to what it is not…make the latter's form of expression concretely possible" (Spivak, x). If the society did not present what 'just the breasts are not', then what the 'breasts are and can possible represent would not have an existence', and to amplify the relation between 'power and breast' [7] [8], I opt the story of Dopdi Mehjen from among the stories narrated in *Breast Stories.* While we delve our cognitive comprehension with Devi's first story- "Draupadi"; we can find a power is born as a result of some tension, which is emerging from the periphery and challenging the 'constructed center' [9]. Devi has presented 'breasts' as thet symbol, which beyond 'just an erotic attraction'; it represents the power that can suppress the 'oppressive

institutional social barking', as well as, the stories of marginalized and subjugated bodies and identities-Women [8] [10]. If we look into 'breast' as that anatomical part which is considered the 'beauty, pleasurable, object' of a body, it is also depicted as a 'shame/weakness/inferior' concept; yet that feed mouths and penises alike with erotic touches [11]. This erotic re-presentation of breasts makes the identity of women as that suppressed/passive object of male subject, and this similar linkage is also presented in the character of Tilo (*Mistress of Spices*), Anju and Sudha (where her objectified physical beauty is the main plot) in *Sister of My Heart and Vine of Desire*, and quite vibrantly in "Rudali", where Women are clearly either wives or prostitutes, who during their old age turn into Rudalis (sells crying to earn during funerals) [12] [13]. The character of 'Dopdi' is crucial, (the plot mainly begins after her husband dies), in relation to the title of the story- Draupadi, as this was the name of that female character in Mahabharata who symbolizes the power of men in 'destructing and securing the "shame" of a women'; whereas, Dopdi symbolizes that destructive institutional device- 'police', who not only 'raped' her 'breasts' but also tore her "shame" without the ability to 'dress' her again, yet Dopdi also represents how the power of patriarchally authoritative sacredness can also protect women (just like her husband)- "Dopdi is at once a palimpsest and a contradiction" [14] [15].

3. Methodology
This study uses Judith Butler's Analysis which sees Gender and Caste as a lens to describe the narrative of marginalized women's identity. This exploratory study aims to determine the development of Indian society's perception of women.

4. Finding and Discussion
The character of 'Dopdi' is crucial, (the plot mainly begins after her husband dies), in relation to the title of the story- Draupadi, as this was the name of that female character in Mahabharata who symbolizes the power of men in 'destructing and securing the "shame" of a women'; whereas, Dopdi symbolizes that destructive institutional device- 'police', who not only 'raped' her 'breasts' but also tore her "shame" without the ability to 'dress' her again, yet Dopdi also represents how the power of patriarchally authoritative sacredness can also protect women. It also shows how Dopdi refused to be the victim and not hoped to be rescued by men unlike Draupadi- "Dopdi is… what Draupadi — written into the patriarchal and authoritative sacred text as proof of male power — could not be". The last scene of the story is remarkably reverberating, when 'Dopdi' undresses her body 'swept with thick blood and torn breasts', presenting herself as the "object of" their "search" and terrifyingly splitting her ululation "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" this scene demonstrates the power of an unarmed object and its ability to challenge both patriarchal institutions and political identities; the 'clothing of shame and identity for women' is terrifyingly discarded and created as the 'super-object' of that oppressive search.

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5. Conclusion

It therefore becomes immensely necessary to adopt the lens of gender theory while studying and visualizing both literary and socio-political framework of any culture and important to apply the same in everyday life and not just limit to educational sphere, because then only we can sensitize people that gender is performance rather than essentialisation, and how within the mainstream literature application of Gender studies assists in understanding the 're-presentation' of the marginalized identities, where presentation just remains an illusion. Politically, Gender is molded as a device to regulate and control bodies/identities, to conveniently maintain the "nude-makeup" like social structure of our society. Both Diasporic and Dalit Literature has enhanced and elevated the presentation of heterogeneous cultures dwelling in Indian geographic dimension. In these stated literary domains, the subject 'women' has been juxtaposed with fragmented cultural subjugation threaded intricately with norms and regulations. Thus, we see how by the application of post-structuralist queer feminist theory, we adopt to our eyes, a lens, which assists us to discern the institutionally motivated familial and cultural practices that 'other's' selective identities, while mainstreaming 'one'; how the definition of what 'power' is not, has been conditioned as natural, where gender as a practice/performance/choice is hindered. Hence, both literally and socially, sensitizing our cognitive perceptions to scrutinize the 'representative identities' within Indian political framework must become an ululation of deconstruction.

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