REPRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY IN SELECT TRANSLATIONS OF MAHASWETA DEVI’S FICTION: A CRITIQUE

ABSTRACT

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

In

English

SUBMITTED BY

ASHIQUE RASHUL

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

DR. VIBHA SHARMA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH - 202002 (INDIA)

2014
ABSTRACT

In traditional India the woman is an object of constant scorn, degradation and physical torture. In the past, women did not exist as individuals with personalities to defend. They rather existed as mere docile accompaniments to the males. Throughout history, women lacked a voice to articulate their dilemma and their points of view. They, thus, accepted their fate without resistance. Such passive stance results from societal conditioning through questionable cultural practices. From birth, through childhood and adolescence, to adulthood, women receive from society and others around the messages and feedbacks which launch them into roles and behaviors considered appropriate for them. Most often, female are accorded inferior roles and such long years of cultural suppression and intimidation, unfortunately, misled the women into an underestimation of their capabilities and self worth. Female subjectivity is one of the formulations of the Feminist criticism which comprehends the female subject as the one that is dominated and suppressed by the patriarchal set-up of the society as stated above. The thesis tries to record and trace the experiences of female subjectivity and also explores different aspects of female subjectivity in select texts of Mahasweta Devi. The chapter division is such that it shows four progressive stages in a woman’s struggles in life. The thesis showcases how different characters from Mahasweta Devi’s stories endure, evolves, resists and survives.

The first chapter deals with the concept of subjectivity and its definition. It also deals with the idea of female subjectivity and its emergence in regards to Indian feminism. Further it records the condition of Indian women which Mahasweta Devi has talked about in her fictions. The second chapter include three stories of Devi, ‘Dhouli’, ‘Sanichari’, and ‘The fairytale of Rajbasha’, which presents the case of
endurance by the three protagonists while living in the existing society. It also shows the helplessness of the subaltern females while enduring physical as well as mental abuse in the patriarchal set up. The third chapter includes the novel *Mother of 1084*, where the protagonist’s journey from innocence to knowledge is shown. It deals with the process of evolution in the subjectivity of the protagonist, Sujata. Sujata at the end unmasks the hypocrisies which betray her throughout life.

The fourth chapter include two short stories ‘Draupadi’ and ‘The Hunt’, where the protagonists’ resistance will is portrayed. The two stories present different types of resistances. ‘Draupadi’ presents the case of symbolic resistance where as ‘The Hunt’ presents physical resistance, both emphasising on the departure of male dominance and emergence of new kind of female subjectivity. The fifth chapter includes the novella *Rudali*. It deals with the last stage of survival. In this stage the female subjectivity is shown to adapt the adverse conditions in the lower class Indian society to avenge and retort. Here the protagonist defies all the odds which are against her thereby finding a way to survive. The sixth chapter is conclusion. It reiterates the points made in previous chapters.