

Exploring Marginalization in Maheswata Devi's *Dhouli*

K. Shams Naveeth

M. Phil English, The American College, Madurai.

shmsnaveeth8@gmail.com

Abstract:

The issue of women marginalization in the society continues to be a major theme in Indian literature especially in Indian society. While it is true that it has been written against the oppression and marginalization of women, it is very much evident that women are still at pronounced marginalized positions in the Indian society. Maheswata Devi's Dhouli explores this theme further to reveal the ordeals that women face in a society dominated by men and caste system. This study focuses and explores how Dhouli through her numerous unpleasant experiences, becomes the voice of the marginalized women in a hegemonic male society.

Keywords:___Gender prejudice, Caste centered, marginalization and hegemonic male society.

Maheswata Devi's *Dhouli* is an eye opener against the politics of high caste and Intra caste. She clearly focuses on the male domination of both upper class and lower class men. *Dhouli* is a story of a marginalized and innocent girl. It also highlights on the cruelty of the human mind.

It is evident that even in this 21st century, women still lack identity of their own. In spite of their education and economic independence, their identity is

described in terms of men. For a woman whose husband is dead, bearing the financial burden of the family does not guarantee her an individual identity. India is a vast country with different people, language, culture and scripture, but the only area that our country is united is in the way they treat women. For instance, if a woman lose her husband at the early age, the society sees her as an ill omen and all the negatives goes only to her. The men around that woman want her to fall for them, but the society never allows her remarriage even if she wishes to.

Dhouli is a marginalized girl that means excluded from the society, whose life is spoiled by the forbidden love by a high class Deota. She loses her husband and all hopes of married life. After that Misrilal, a high class deota falls for her, driven by her charm and beauty. He treats her equally and secretly fulfills his lustful desire. She is made pregnant. When Misrilal tells his

mother about her pregnancy, she says that it is she who has sinned.

“ it is always the fault of the woman for not considering a brahman’s honour,

She is even more to blame.’(p.9)

This reveals that even if a man commits a mistake, the fault goes only to the woman. The woman is easily awarded the name prostitute, but a woman cannot be a prostitute without the support of a man. Women’s identity change but men don’t get any new identity and are not accused. Maheswata Devi gives another case, that is Misrilal’s brother Kundan’s life. His three sons are carried by a woman he did not choose to marry. It portrays that women is viewed as an object of pleasure.

Dhouli is asked to abort her child in the

womb by her mother.

“get rid of thorn in your womb”(p.3)

The above line portrays the cruelty of human mind. Dhouli's mother utters the word 'thorn', a negative attitude towards the soul in Dhouli's womb. The soul inside the womb is the mistake of both high class and low class, but the accused is the unborn child in the womb. Dhouli is an early widow, but the society does not think of marriage. It is normal that the frustrated mind like dhouli can easily falls for things without thinking. It is the fault of the society and also the politics that force the question why Dhouli can't remarry to any man in her own community?. She was only given a choice to be a concubine for her brother-in-law.

Maheswata Devi in dhouli does not write about the upper caste politics over dusad,

but also about honor killing. When Misrilal refused to move out of the village, in order to retrieve their community and status , he is commented as follows.

“if you don't go, we'll make sure your corpse leaves the village. Men like you are a stigma to our name”(p.10)

After Misrilal gets settled in his married life, Dhouli does not have any chance to live her life. Men around the place stare at her. Even if she asks for job, people around Taharr are not interested in giving opportunity because of the high caste. The politics behind this is that if other people do not cooperate with Deota, they feel annoyed to buy them.

“Next morning Dhouli went to prasanth's shop and said 'atleast let me earn something by sweeping this place'..... Prasanth told ' here's some maroa take it and leave. If I give you a job the deota will be annoyed with me”(p.(20)

Dhouli is cornered on all directions. She and her family are starving to death. She does not have any other choice. Dhouli turns fearlessly over the head coolie who makes an obscene gesture on her, asking him to bring money. This shows that Dhouli turned against the society as a rebel. She realizes that this was her fate.

“whoever is ready to pay can come in”(p.21)

Dhouli realizes that this world is only for the fittest. The above line reveals how a young mind prefers to rebel against the male hegemonic and caste based society. Marginalization and domination turns against her the society. Breaking the taboo is a kind of struggle. Sexual economy makes her life better. Dhouli is an innocent girl in the society that is marginalized. She is forced to do prostitution by covering all the possible ways of life. This makes her as a

rebel. Dhouli’s decision is a revenge against upper class politics and hegemonic male society.

After attaining betterment in life, she is again tortured by Misrilal and his family that she cannot be a whore in Taharr and also adds that the village still has brahmans and they practice puja in their home. Kundan and Misrilal support prostitution by having intercourse with low caste dusad and ganju girls. This act proves that they are not against prostitution but against Dhouli the rebel. The act is not only the merciless exploitation of the weak and helpless but also the inhuman mind set of human beings.

Through this study, we have been able to see that the identity of a woman is still deeply rooted in the system that the society creates. For a women to go against such structure is considered as a taboo, and she must suffer the consequences. Indian women are still

bond within the limits of caste and male hegemony. This is exactly what the author reveals.

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