



International Journal of Research in English

ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJRE 2022; 4(2): 01-03
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 08-06-2022
Accepted: 09-07-2022

Mohammed Ahmeduddin
Assistant Professor,
Department of English, Sir
Sayyed College, Aurangabad,
Maharashtra, India

Depiction of marginalized people in Mahasweta Devi's Mother of 1084

Mohammed Ahmeduddin

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2022.v4.i2a.53>

Abstract

Mahasweta Devi is one of the most acclaimed Bengali writers of India. She is also an activist and a journalist. Her writings are seen to be a service for the marginalized people. She writes fiction, short stories and plays.

The present article seeks to find out how marginalized sections of the society have been depicted in the famous play *Mother of 1084* by Mahasweta Devi. Naxalite Movement has a tremendous influence on her works.

Life and problems of tribal folks is the main concern of Mahasweta Devi's writings. She does not present the romantic picture of tribal life. Her works try to expose the kind of domination that feudals have over poor people and their land. She wishes for metamorphic change in the existing system. She justifies violence where the system fails to do justice. The protagonists of her works are the victims of the repressive regimes and these sensitive individuals later in turn into rebels. The play *Mother of 1084* deals with the issues of gender, class and politics. It's a satire on government. At the end of the play we see Sujata leaning towards the ideology of her dead son and express her anger at people for being passive spectators. The play depicts the plight and anguish of sensitive mothers who have been forced to separate from their beloved sons.

Keywords: Marginalized, naxalite movement, repressive regimes, gender, class etc

Introduction

Mahasweta Devi is one of the most acclaimed Bengali writers of India. She is also an activist and a journalist. Her writings are like a service for the marginalized people. She writes fiction, short stories and plays. She is a prolific writer whose major works include: *Jhansir Rani* (The Queen of Jhansi, 1956), *Five Plays* (1986), *Imaginary Maps* (1998), *Rudali* (1997), *Out Caste* (2002) etc. She has won many awards like Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnapith (1996), Ramon Magsaysay (1996) and Padmavibhusan (2006). Her works depict concern for tribal communities. As G.N. Devy states: Mahasweta Devi brought to those poor and harassed people a boundless compassion which they instantly understood though they could neither speak her language nor she theirs. She has strange ability to communicate with the silenced, her best speech reserved for those to whom no one has spoken. (*Mah. Devi: Critical Perspectives*, 76) Mahasweta Devi is the voice of the voiceless. We find a sense of history in her writings and they hold mirror to life. Naxalite Movement has a tremendous influence on her works. As she asserts: The Naxalite Movement between the 1960s and the early 1970s with its urban phase climaxing in 1970-71, was the first major event after I had become a writer that I felt an urge and an obligation to document (*Mahasweta Devi's Five Plays*, viii) She talks about the factors which led to the rebellion and the brutal casualties of the Naxalite Movement. She is preoccupied with the presentation of the predicament of the humanity. Her main concern is to expose the domination of feudalism over the poor people and their land. According to Dixit: Oppression of the landless peasants was ignored and instead of addressing their issues, the Indian Government considered it as a "law and order problem." (Naxalite Movement in India: The State Response, P-22).

Mahasweta Devi believes that drama can reach to the large illiterate audience. A keen awareness of the things happening around her is a key feature of her dramatic works. She shows concern for that ignorant section of society. There is no place for sentimental romanticism in her plays as they depict life objectively. The protagonists of her works are the victims of the repressive regimes and these sensitive individuals later in turn into rebels. Samnik Bandyopadhyay translated Hajar Churashir Ma in English as *Mother of 1084*.

Corresponding Author:
Mohammed Ahmeduddin
Assistant Professor,
Department of English, Sir
Sayyed College, Aurangabad,
Maharashtra, India

The play tries to unravel the Naxalite Movement of the early 1970s from a humanistic point of view. The play *Mother of 1084* deals with the issues of gender, class and politics. It's a satire on government. Sujata Chatterjee is a middle-aged lady of an upper society of Calcutta. The story of the play revolves around her. Sujata, an undergraduate is married to Dibyanath, a Chartered Accountant. She has four children, two sons and two daughters. The play presents a single day in the life of Sujata, the mother of the dead son Brati, corpse number 1084. Sujata is a loving mother and a typical wife but is ignored by most of her family members. She feels happy only in the company of her younger son, Brati. Brati Chatterjee is someone who is full of ideals and Sujata is unable to understand the life and activities of Brati which adds to the tragic atmosphere in the play. Brati was disillusioned with the existing system. As a result he joined the peasant revolt. He could have enjoyed the luxurious life but he fights for the marginalized people. Sujata is a staunch opponent of the patriarchal institution's pretences. She is torn between being a compassionate mother and a silent dissenter against the family's immoral lifestyle. When family members exhibit their apathy to the news of Brati's death, the conflict reaches to its height. The fact related with Brati's sacrifice become clear to Sujata two years after his death. In the meantime she meets with the people for whom Brati gave his life and learns so much about her own son. Sujata says, "I don't know Brati well enough, Somu's mother knew him better. When I visit her, I find Brati." (Modern Indian Drama, 689). After the Brutal killing of her son Brati, Sujata begins to understand the need of sacrifice to defend one's right to live and need to stand against the patriarchal authority existing in the society. She persuades the audience to act against those who aims to reduce the young revolutionaries to just a mere number. The play presents Sujata as a mother who keeps her son's ideal alive rather than drowning herself into tears. Her personal loss and predicament turns into political awareness. At the end of the play we see Sujata leaning towards the ideology of her dead son and express her anger at people for being passive spectators. Sujata becomes a victim as she lost her dear son confronting the people in the power. It throws light on the dark side of life where innocent people get continuously persecuted. Although Sujata takes up a job in a bank but she can't isolate herself from the memories of Brati. Sujata's overbearing husband, Dibyanath Chatterjee, is a braggart. He is unafraid to put his own feelings on the line in order to keep his public image pristine and unblemished. He understands how to gain advantage by correctly playing the cards in order to raise his status among the privileged. Impertinence of Dibyanath is vividly represented and demonstrated in the play's opening scene when Sujata receives a call from the police to identify corpse number 1084, which is, in fact, Brati's. Sujata, as a sensitive mother, is apprehensive and restless, while Dibyanath searches for ways to conceal the situation:

Voice Son? Come to Kantapukur.

Sujata (uncomprehendingly). Kantapukur ?

Voice yes. You have to identify Brati Chatterjee...

Dibyanath What's the matter? Who was it?... Sujata I don't understand.

Dibyanath What don't you understand?

Sujata Who was it on the phone? He only said-Come to Kantapukur. DIBYANATH What?

Jyoti What did you say?

Sujata He said, come to Kantapukur. He said...you have to Identify? Brati?

Dibyanath and Jyoti look at each other, with a clear understanding of what has happened.

Dibyanath. Kantapukur?

Sujata. Haven't I told you? Jyoti, get me the car out...

Dibyanath. My car, at Kantapukur? No. Listen, Jyoti...

Sujata. But why? Why can't the car be there?

Dibyanath. I need the car. I'm going to Chaudhuri. You, ring up Dutta. Tell him...why don't you go over straightaway? ...

Sujata you talk of going to people? Why Brati...

Dibyanath (oblivious of Sujata's presence) Jyoti, there may still be time. Isn't there a relation of your mother-in-law's in the police?... Jyoti A maternal cousin.

Dibyanath Ring him up. Chaudhuri must help hush it up. He had warned us. (Modern Indian Drama, 683-684).

The insignificance of Dibyanath's attitude toward Sujata and her dead son, as well as the apathy of her children, is an emblematic trait of upper-class people who enjoy elite status and are only concerned with self-esteem and self-interest.

The human plight pervades *Mother of 1084*. Sujata's senses were suffocated by the mothering ethics imposed on her by a male-dominated society. She, on the other hand, never tries to free herself from the stifling morals. Dibyanath's womanising and immoral deeds are well known to her, yet she maintains silence. So much so that she tries to acquire a service to get out of all the restraints and checks. She bemoans the children's immoral actions at times, yet she carries on with her familial tasks calmly, bearing all dishonour and degradations. She adores Brati, who, unlike her other children, is a man of ideals. She finds solace in his company that she lacks in her other children. Sujata, surprisingly, is uninformed of Brati's revolutionary actions, despite their shared concern for one other's feelings. Nandini, Somu's mother, and others provide her with information about his goals and activities.

The play *Mother of 1084* depicts the plight and anguish of sensitive mothers who have been forced to separate from their beloved sons. Sujata never learns about Brati's true self as a rebel. He does not want his revolutionary passion to be stifled by familial feelings. He is committed to his life's mission. His goal is to establish a classless society in which everyone has equal rights. Ironically, ruling party autocrats like Saroj Pal see the youthful rebels as a cancerous tumour on the face of democracy. As a result, there is a confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed, culminating in savage muggings and counter-muggings, violence, and murder perpetrated under the guise of false interactions. In a confrontation with the powers' muggers, Brati, corpse no. 1084, is slain alongside his comrades Somu, Partha, and Bijit. Sujata has been compelled to adhere to patriarchal societal standards and practises, which she has unwittingly accepted. As they have penetrated her psyche, she has unwittingly submitted to them. She lacks the courage to resist and initiate a deep-rooted social and familial revolution.

Life and problems of tribal folks is the main concern of Mahasweta Devi's writings. She does not present the romantic picture of tribal life. Her works try to expose the kind of domination that feudals have over poor people and their land. These people live their lives under continuous persecution, torture and Mahasweta Devi is successful in presenting the pain and torment in the lives of these

oppressed people. She wishes for metamorphic change in the existing system. She justifies violence where the system fails to do justice. We can view her works from a feministic point of view also as she talks about the subjugation of women and the resulting revolt. Women's personal lives have been exposed to political power struggles. Women have been manipulated, abused, and deprived (of normal existence) whether as a mother, a beloved, or simply as a woman. The comment made by Jaydip Sarkar seems very apt here:

Through the character of Sujata, Mahasweta seeks to bring to light the darker areas of life where persecution of the innocent continues unabated. She is one of those victims whose kith and kin had been done away with as a result of confrontation with the people in power.

She finds herself caught in a conflict between a sympathetic mother and a silent protester against the immoral tendencies of the members of her family... she feels suffocated under the weight of the stifling values enjoined on her by the patriarchal society. (Indian Drama in English, 256-7) We find the central characters of her writings take to violence when they realize the meaninglessness of their protest against repressive social system According to GN. Devy violence is given a Marxist interpretation in Mahasweta Devi's. We come across a deep concern for the human predicament and the hope for better future for humanity in Mahasweta Devi's writings.

Nandini's tone portrays her as an enraged young woman enraged by police brutality and torture. Her unwavering faith in humanity, on the other hand, is both inspiring and moving. Sujata's self-discovery takes place in her company. Nandini asks Sujata: How can you be so smug and complacent? With so many young men killed, so many imprisoned, how can you wallow in your complacency?

It's your 'all's right with the world, let's go on nicely' that frightens me most. How can you carry on with your pujas, concerts, cultural festivals, film festivals, poetry fests? (Modern Indian Drama, 705) Somu's father has lived his entire life in fear. He is a complete novice when it comes to cheating. He feels duped since he was unaware of the monstrosity of the crime committed by the ruling party with the implicit support of the police. Somu's mother has lost the family's last breadwinner in an orgy of violence. As a result, many mothers and sisters have become dejected. As seen by Somu's mother's complaint to Sujata, their socioeconomic status is dismal, agonising, and soul-stirring. Mahasweta Devi depicts a pitiful life that seems to mock history's fate. The play is a story of Sujata's multiple repressions within a stuffy, home, male-controlled, and feudal society as a whole. It's also a drama about how she breaks free from her sheath of social obligations and a sophisticated exterior in order to perceive the unknown world of Naxal activists or to learn more about the real Brati, about whom she knew very little when he was alive. Furthermore, Mahasweta Devi depicts how an apolitical mother, on the verge of losing her mind, is compelled to recognise the basic human need to express her moral, social, and ideological place in extremely practical culture of upper-class individuals like the Chatterjees. Mahasweta Devi in her play Mother of 1084 successfully depicts the various marginalized sections of the society. The play depicts the plight and anguish of sensitive mothers who have been forced to separate from their beloved sons. It also throws light on the patriarchal structure of society where a woman is discriminated and thought as

lower in stature. The marginalization of the rural folk leads them to use violence and as a result they lose their lives. The title is very significant as it talks about the degrading ethics of society where a dead man is merely assigned a number 1084.

References

1. Bandyopadhyay, Samik. Mahasweta Devi's Five Plays, Calcutta: Seagull Books; c2008.
2. Chakraborty, Kaustav (ed.). Indian Drama in English. New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Ltd; c2011.
3. Deshpande GP. Ed., Modern Indian Drama An Anthology, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; c2010.
4. Dixit Raman. Naxalite Movement in India: The State Response. Journal of Defense Studies. 2010;4(2):21-35.
5. Sen Nandini. Ed., Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives, New Delhi: Pencraft International; c2011.