



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-
Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

Depiction of Marginalization in Mahasweta Devi's *Hajar*

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An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 1



Abstract:

Mahasweta Devi is an unexpected writer who has been writing, functioning and combating for the marginalized untiringly for the precedent six decades. She is a bizarre mix of an objector and a writer who has accepted both duties ferociously all her life. Away on or after the spotlight, she keeps operational for the interests and betterment of persons whom the media and the conventional expediently keep forgetting. Her inscription is troubling because it shows the person who reads her or his own true face.

Introduction:

Mahasweta Devi is celebrated particularly for her works correlated to the lessons of rural tribal communities of West Bengal, women and Dalits. In her convoluted Bengali fiction, she repeatedly depicts the atrocious repression of tribal people and untouchables by strong demanding upper-caste landlords, money-lenders and administration officials.

Mahasweta Devi actually deals with an immediate past event in order to comment on the present as a cautionary tale universalizing human experience - an experience which drove many a mother and son to martyrdom. Though the novel, at one level, reads like a mere account of the inhuman suppression of the Naxalites revolt in Bengal, it is a tragedy of an 'apolitical' mother who awakens one day to a greater truth and dies a martyr. The realistic surface details such as the mass killing of the young activists, the torture scene and the elaborate party scene are provided only to enable us to penetrate that surface to the hidden truth beneath. The play enacts a single day in the life of the principal character. Sujata, the mother of corpse number 1084, hails from a fairly affluent middle -class family.

The Naxalites raised their right to be heard alongside the reputable arrange, and happening to combat for the grounds of the unfortunate, browbeaten by the landlords, industrialists and bureaucrats. The domineering and unbendable position of these high-headed men enforced a collection of young men to obtain up the cudgels adjacent to them. The revolution of the farmers of Naxalbari further grows firewood to the blazing intellect of bitterness touching the capitalist financial system. The interest and animosity extend like

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An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 2



wildfire amongst the people of the neighboring areas. They were not only piqued, but they feel astonished at the reality that the unusual supporting parties and intellectuals tacitly arranged to such domination and repression. The incursion of refugees from Bangladesh added motivated the circumstances. In fact, the intellectuals seemed to be supplementary troubled concerning the Bangladesh difficulty than the one ravaging the people inside the country. The upper class remained complacently unresponsive. A radical fanaticism set in. Displeased at the rebellion, the government attempted to control the association at an early stage. Police strength was used violently. This gave ascend to brutality. Discontented parties tried to oust each further in the procedure. As Sujit Mukherjee rightly states, Mahashweta Devi turns, with *Hajar Chaurashir ma* “to recording the present instead of reconstructing the past” (07). It is a typical play of documentation in which she seeks the roots of the “revolutionary fervor” of the urban rebels "in their discontent with a system that upheld a corrupt and insensitive establishment both in the family and in the State’s, there was confusion in the social order which was trapped in this common disorderly confusion.

A deepening societal consciousness and fictional adulthood converged in her watershed novel of 1974, *Hajar Chaurashir ma* which is one of Mahashweta Devi’s the majority extensively read workings. Mahasweta Devi documents the traumatic experiences in the life of a sensitive mother, Sujata, who loses her favourite son in the holocaust during the suppression of the Naxalite Movement. Exactly two years after the brutal killing of her son, she becomes not only aware of the need for a sacrifice to defend one’s right to live but also her inner urge to protest against the patriarchal authority represented by her husband. The years 1970-72 witnessed the rise of The Naxalite movement in West Bengal.

Exactly two years after the death of her favourite son, Brati, coinciding with his birthday At the end of the play Sujata, shorn of all prejudices, finds herself drifting towards a kinship with her son’s ideology as she bursts out angrily at the apathy of the audience, Sujata gets to know of the facts behind his sacrifice. The learning process continues untill the end of the play involving her in a series of encounters with the people whose cause Brati championed. Divided into twelve scenes, *Hajar Chaurashir ma* is a neatly structured play

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

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INVESTIGATION”

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 3



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www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

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beginning with the identification of Corpse no. 1084 and moving on to Sujata's discovery of Brati. Her passionate appeal to the people forms the ending of the play. Mahasweta Devi moves the time-scale backwards and forward by presenting the past and the present in alternating scenes, very much in the manner of a memory narrative. The stage is free of superfluous theatrical properties which give the playwright great freedom to present different situations more by suggestion than by scenic displays. Furthermore, it allows her to be more faithful in her portrayal of the contemporary realities. Besides, the playwright uses the 'tape' to great advantage.

When the narrative opens, Sujata has been married for thirty-four years to Dibyanath Chatterjee who symbolizes an honest representation of the male-dominated society. They have four children, two sons, Jyoti and Brati, and two daughters, Nipa and Tuli. Jyoti has already been married to Bina and Nipa to Amrit. In the eyes of the world, all of them are leading blissful lives but Sujata goes on to discover later, that this happiness is only superficial. Dibyanath Chatterjee, Sujata's husband, is an overbearing and complacent man. He does not hesitate to risk the private sentiments to keep his public stature untarnished. This attitude of his is vividly depicted in the opening scene of the play when they receive a phone call from the police to identify corpse number 1084 which is, in fact, Brati's, who has in the meantime been divested of his identity as a person and given another 'dehumanized identity' as corpse number 1084.

The most dominant character in the play is Sujata Chatterjee. She is one of the persons wounded whose kith and kin had been completely missing within disagreement with the citizens in authority. In fact, with Sujata, the playwright seeks to bring to light the darker areas of life where the persecution of the innocent continues unabated. Having felt alienated from her corrupt household, Sujata takes up a job in the bank. Although it is two long years since Brati was killed, her mind is filled with his memories. Like Sujata, Brati has no fancy for the luxuries that their rich background is to offer. Being aware of economic deprivation and exploitation, he swears by the cause of the exploited. And he revolts against the senseless ethics of all those institutions that add to the woes of the underdog. It is, however, unexpected

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 4



of a person like him who is a member of a family which has been built on the mound of corruption which touches the play with a curious mix of the elements of surprise, innocence and youth imminent in life and history. It is indeed surprising that Sujata, with an innate resentment, like her favourite son, against all the shams that are inherent in the patriarchal institution, fails to take cognizance of the rising tide of revolt in Brati. Thus, Sujata, is caught in the conflict within herself between a sympathetic mother and a silent protester against the immoral life which her household stands for. This conflict assumes an altogether different form when her motherly love is contrasted with the indifference of the members of her family towards the news of Brati's death with which the play begins.

While Sujata is all concerned and helpless, Dibyanath searches ways to hush up the incident. One important feature of the play is that it sets off with characters not already formed but emerging from the play. As such, all the characters, except Sujata Chatterjee, are given minor portions in the play. Even Brati, around whom the entire story of the play is woven, is allotted only a few dialogues and he appears in the beginning as Corpse number 1084. He appears a living character only twice in the play, once in the company of his mother in scene 5 and the second time with his friends in scene 7. However, Brati and his activities are revealed to us when the principal character Sujata gets herself engaged in conversations with different characters at different places which make the progress of the novel.

Sujata feels suffocated under the weight of the stifling values enjoined on her by the patriarchal institution. Yet she never ventures to disentangle herself from them. Though aware of her husband's womanizing and corrupt practices she does not protest. Rather, she starts working in a bank in order to escape all the constraints. Her work is in itself a form of protest and self-assertion against the patriarchal authority of her husband. Many a time she resents the immoral acts of her children but continues to discharge her familial duties, calmly bearing all kinds of humiliations. She is very fond of her youngest son, Brati, who unlike her other children is a man of integrity. She appears to find in his company what she misses in her household.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 5



The barriers that separated Sujata from the rest of the people like Somu's mother appear to be dwindling away. She could find an echo of her own silent scream of torment and desperation in their unending sufferings. However, finding in her a rebel in the making, the vested interests do not allow her to visit the settlements of the underdog. The relationship, established between Sujata and Somu's mother – both of them victims of the holocaust during the 1970s – is not unnatural and it possibly turns a major threat to the prevailing social system as the victims learn to make common cause by revolting against all kinds of oppression.

Hence there is a conflict between the exploiter and the exploited-leading to senseless assaults and counter assaults a kind of an orgy of violence and murder in the name of false encounters. Saroj Pal, an archetype of bureaucracy, surpasses all those persecutors who have come to stay in our memory by virtues of their notoriety. Thus, Sujata goes through a painful process of discovering Brati and her own being while others in the family including Dibyanath, the father, enjoy socializing with those persons who have been overtly a part of the Establishment that cause Brati's death. She is now fully aware of the situation in which she lives. The more she learns about Brati, the closer she feels to him. She can find him among the people who he strove and died for. Though initially, grief had brought them and Sujata together, she finds herself always on the receiving end.

Conclusion:

It is the influence of a universal complaint alongside the outwardly permanent and callous civilization in which we live. And, by the time she makes this inspiring formally request to the spectators, Sujata shakes herself off the shackles of the patriarchal values enjoined on a woman. Enlightened, she takes up cudgels against the society itself. Symbolically, Sujata moves from the world of innocence to the world of experience. As a result, she discovers inside herself a wish for self- realization which has been so far suppressed due to the lack of courage. Sujata lashes out at the police and the ignorant class of rich people. She calls them out to arise or befallen forever. With this outburst, directed

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

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Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 6



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against the pleasure-seeking people, Sujata collapses on the stage. However, her search for Brati does not end with her death. It continues as a problem very much alive.

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An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 7