



ANALYZATION OF SUBALTERN VOICE IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S *MOTHER OF 1084*

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ABSTRACT

Mother of 1084 analyzes the occurrences of failed Naxalite insurgency in Bengal in the 1970s; it shows the larger problem of the nation's suppression of any authentic form of subaltern insurgency. Mahasweta Devi writes about everyday life and focus on the problems of tribal folk. It's a saga of the Naxalite resistance in Bengal through the characters of Sujata and Nandini, her powerful exploration of subjectivity voiced through the female characters, it's a tragedy of apolitical mother. This paper explores how the Naxalite movement brings two subaltern mothers instead of class barriers. The aim of this movement was the long established oppression of the landless peasantry, this movement gives rise to a new literary tradition and the writers, artists and cultural activists realized that there was a need to work with the revolutionary to make the people politically aware and guide them to class struggle.

Keywords: Naxal Movement, death, marginalization.

Introduction:

Mahasweta Devi is one of India's leading writers born in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She has given Sahitya Academy Award for her novel *Aranyer Adhikar* in 1979. She was awarded prestigious Padmashree Award for her social work in tribal communities of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. She joined the bourgeois poet Rabindranath Tagore and founded the Vishvabharati University in Santiniketan. Having been motivated by a sense of history, her writings hold a mirror to the past and present. Moreover she was a witness to several people's movements before she became a writer.

Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* appeared in Bengal as *Hazar Churashi Ki Ma*. It was in *Prasad* periodical. Later it was translated into various languages. In the late sixties and early seventies there was a rise of Naxalite revolt in Bengal; it was led by the unexpected coalition of the peasant and the intellectual.

Before acquainting ourselves with the plight of the subaltern, let us know the meaning of word '**subaltern**' is some who belongs to the lowest rank of the society. In south Asia of postcolonial *Subaltern Studies Group* has become a historical point in giving voice to marginalized women very particularly subaltern women. Edward Said in his forward to *Selected Subaltern Studies* declares that the word '**Subaltern**' has political and intellectual connotations. The opposite of subaltern is hegemony. According to Said the Italian political thinker and writer, Antonio Gramsci states:

wherever there is history, there is class and that the essence of the historical is the long and extraordinarily varied socio-cultural interplay between the ruler and ruled, between the elite, dominant or



hegemonic class and the subaltern and the emergent class of the much greater mass of people ruled by coercive or sometimes mainly ideological domination from above (Said, *Forward* selected vi)

Brati, a sensitive and intellectual young man is the son of Sujata dies in the hands of the police in an encounter between police and Naxalite, Brati in his early twenties who are member of an educated, middle class family. He has become victim of police brutality and murder. Symbolically Brati represents the large number of young men and women from Indian middle class.

Most of them signed on their solidarity with the Naxalite cause and these are basically drawn from peasant tribal clashes during the late sixties and through seventies in various parts of India such as Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. This movement has become strong and violent in these states. The name Naxalite movement takes its name from an armed peasant uprising in Naxalbari in west Bengal.

Sujata couldn't understand the reason behind her son Brati tragic death; she asks about herself what his ideals were, Sujata investigates the reasons for the death of reasons for the death of her younger son Brati, in this journey she meets the mother of one of Brati's comrades, Somu, she looks tired and broken and Sujata repeatedly visits to her house Sujata comes to know that she can console her only through the position of her as a mother. Sujata oscillates between loss, memory and mourning. Somu's mother is subaltern because she is from poor family who belongs to social class. They cannot raise their voice because of social and political subjugation, but she could communicate with Sujata who is from upper class society. Nandini is a middle class educated woman and girl friend of Brati who has become part of Sujata's mourning; Nandini doesn't want to make it public therefore she refuses to take part in Sujata's grief.

Certainly these three women tie with Brati, social, economic and political conditions and Naxalite movement as well. We must look at this depiction not only because the Naxalite movement bought it consequences as subaltern and they lost their dear ones lives and thrown in solidarity but also because these Naxalites are always been marginalized. But this movement bought harmony in society by forming equality in society. This would become part of Indian Historiography.

This book was made into film by director Govind Nahalini; here is a small difference of portrayal between book and a film. In the film they focus on the voice of central Naxal character Brati whereas the book gives emphasis on the mother, her loss and how she make an attempt to know about Naxal movement that which she knows nothing about. However, both book and film creates a space for the marginalized people.

Before analyzing about the journey of Brati and his mother Sujata we need to understand what made to form Naxalite movement. The Naxalite movement started



in late 1960 and survived till 1973. This militant movement started as a revolt of peasants which was led against landlord's moneylenders. Basically our India is considered as agriculture based country, in this 75 percent of population depends on agriculture for their survival. These people are made to exploit everyday because they live in the semi feudal economy of India.

20 percent of the population own 80 percent of land such as Zamindars, Talukdars and other landlords and other 80 percent of population remain landless, these are bonded laborers. Whatever these peasants earn they must pay interest to the landowners for using their lands. The Zamindars and landowners have no concern for them and they used to extremely exploit them. The people who have part in Naxalite movement thought that they could free these peasants from suppression and bring harmony in the land to live a dignified life. To make true this noble ideal the communist party revolted against the land owners and Zamindars. The militant movement put forward some ideals such as:

- i. They want to kill all the land lords and money lenders and distribute their money to poor, landless, peasants and the needy people.
- ii. They armed guerrilla uprising soldiers.
- iii. They want to organize peasant committees to rule the liberated villages.
- iv. Once if the villages are liberated, they want to free the cities as well.

Mother of 1084 is a self-conscious reformation of the third world intellectual as a subaltern. The insurgency in this novel is claimed by the male gender but it was narrated by Nandini. It was second death anniversary of Sujata's son Brati when the narrative begins. Her son exists in police records as corpse number 1084. Brati 22 years old who born at the time of independence and our constitution declared India as a sovereign, democratic, socialist, secular republic and make sure the citizens to uphold justice, equality and liberty. That day it was Brati's sister Tuli's engagement party on the death anniversary, their father Chatterjee makes sure that everything was going well but there is a one kind of lack was shown with his son's death, his absence or meaning loss.

This is an exploration of constitutive lack in which nation has murdered their own citizens by demanding the fundamental human rights. The Naxalites such as Brati and Somu experienced themselves in solidarity with subordinate people everywhere. Authorities determined Brati's allegiance to the Naxalite cause treated them as a rejection of his rightful place as a citizen. Brati's involvement in revolt against the authorities and State considered him as a criminal. Sujata make use of both the words such as "out of the ordinary" and "crime" to explain how authorities both the State as well as her husband Dibyanath Chatterjee framed respond to Brati's death:



There was no one in the family any more to do something out of the ordinary and provide an occasion for a sudden message on the telephone that would drag Sujata to Kantapukur to identify a dead body in the morgue. There was no one in the family any more to be such a fool as to send Jyoti and Jyoti's father running through the corridors of power while Sujata and Tuli were the only ones who could be spared to rush to Kantapukur .

There was no one in the family any more to commit a crime that could leave him lying dead in Kantapukur. The Dom, removing the heavy sheet. The O.C asking- Do you identify your son?

They were all prudent people, they lived by the laws of the land, and they were good citizens. (Devi, 7).

When Chatterjee got a message from telephone about his son's death, he tried to hide the news that his son was killed in police encounter and he was a Naxalite. It doesn't seem important for him. Chatterjee did not allow Sujata to Kantapukur, all he cared about his power and position. The next day in the newspaper it was reported that the death of four persons but there is no news of his son seen, with this Sujata comes to know the true nature of society who ignores Brati's death as martyrdom and looks it as a crime. She feels the people who live in society lived like corpses and she feels that Brati has given his life for noble cause but society didn't recognize his sacrifice. Sujata collapses at the end.

The basic ambiguity that states the subaltern insurgent, whether Brati is criminal or revolutionary? It shows tie in the issues of class welfare but Sujata makes clear this ambiguity as it is very significant to her journey into the subjective consciousness; it means to be a subaltern:

Sujata had not been able to find a category of criminals to put Brati into. Even as they cried for dead Brati, Jyoti and Dibyanath had tried to make her see that the killers in society, those who adulterated food, drugs and baby food, had every right to live. The leaders, who led the people to face the guns of police and found for themselves the safest shelters under police protection, had every right to live. But Brati was a worse criminal than them. Because he had lost faith in society ruled by profit made business and leaders blinded by self interest. Once this loss of faith assailed a boy, an adolescent, or a youth, it does not matter whether he is twelve, sixteen or twenty-two, death was his portion. (Devi, 19).

When the police made a search in his room, Sujata found the slogans written by Brati. It shows the oppositions endangered by the newly independent India. The local disturbance affects local economies because of the Naxalite uprising revolt and at the same time Naxalite insurgency was against the nation. The State and Central



governments made a plan to deal with Naxalites in West Bengal during the Emergency period in early 70s.

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