

Mahasweta devi -
rudali



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INTRODUCTION

Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* centers on the two women who develop a partnership for survival. *Rudali* is one of the haunting stories that come from remote villages in Rajasthan. The novel depicted the struggle Sanichari oppressed against poverty, humiliation and wrecked by an exploitative patriarchal caste-based social system. Damaged by their own family, community members or the ruling rich, these women either submit to a relegated existence, which became prostitutes for survival; or like Sanichari and Bikhni, challenges their subjugation.

The novel represented the miserable condition of a low-caste starving family in post-colonial Indian society. It highlighted the particularly miserable position of backward class women in rural India.

Mahasweta Devi was born in 1926 in the city of Dacca in East Bengal. Born into a literary family, Mahasweta Devi was also influenced by her early association with Ganantya, a group who attempted to bring social and political theater to rural villages in Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s. After finishing a master's degree in English literature from Calcutta University, Devi began working as a teacher and journalist.

Her first book, *Jhansi Rani (The Queen of Jhansi)*, was published in 1956. In 1984, she retired from her job as an English lecturer at a Calcutta university to concentrate on her writing. Devi has been the recipient of several literary prizes. She was awarded the Jnanpith, India's highest literary award in 1995.

She is a long-time champion for the political, social and economic advancement of the tribal communities, whom she characterizes as “suffering spectators of the India that is traveling to the twenty first century”. Many of her stories are about tribal fighting oppression, resisting exploitation, rebelling against authority.

She does not have connection with any school of thought yet her sympathetic portrayal of the subjugation of women and consequent revolt invariably adds a feminist dimension to her work. Woman characters in her works are stronger than that of men.

Sanichari, the protagonist, is an active Dalit widow who lives in a village of Bihar, reeling under the burden of earning for her family. Without any earning family member, she faces many difficulty, feeding his family as she was cursed as a ‘witch’ who has devoured the men of the house. Sanichari was alone and she finds a supporter in her long-lost friend Bikhni, another ill fated Dalit widow who was left alone by her own son.

“ Everyone said – she’s led such a hard, sad life. But finding Bikhni has been a blessing” (Devi. 110).

The two form a deep bond and a partnership for survival as they discover financial help in an different occupation as hired mourners (Rudali) to add pretension to funerals of the feudal rich in their two-faced society. The new profession gave them their first sense of mastery. But then, Sanichari suffers another blow when Bikhni dies from dysentery as given lack of basic medical care.

After facing this much of loss, Sanichari is moreover shocked. But she refused to take a break and emerges revolts against her isolation. She visits the brothel to recruit a band of Rudalis all by herself from among the prostitutes, where she encounters her fiercely defiant runaway daughter-in-law Parvatia. Wishing to free them from mistreatment of the flesh trade, Sanichari motivates them on how to surpass as false mourners at funerals of the rich landlords, " When you start, weep as if you have lost someone close to you, someone dear to your heart. Beat your breast and cry out with such feeling that their blood runs cold!" sheteaches them.

The play culminates with these prostitutes faking loud mourning at the death of the very man who pushed them into the pyre of prostitution. There is a sense of freedom from their indignant life in this alternative profession that earns them cash, food grains and goodies without having to sell their bodies.

REPRESENTING MARGINS

Representing the Margin is about the representation of socio cultural margins in Indian fictions, written in various Indian languages including English. The main agenda concerned in such novels are of caste and gender issues which was a prominent subject of the post and pre-independence era . The concept of marginalization means ' to make somebody feel as they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; or to put somebody in a powerless position'.

The very opening of the story is that Sanichari be treated as a commodity and thrown away as soon as her commodified existence becomes useless to the males in her life.

The tragic fate of tribal girls like Sanichari is clearly presented by Mahasweta Devi in this short story. The Indian paramilitary forces sought to subjugate the tribal people by burning their huts, by looting their possessions and killing them, and by gang raping their women.

Mahasweta Devi discriminates between the civilized ordinary reader, reading a short story about the condition of the exploited tribal sitting in his or her comfortable hearth and home, and the condition of the "Ho-Oraon-Mundra girls".

When someone died in a malik mahajan household, the amount of money spent on the death ceremonies immediately raised the prestige of the family. The status of the Rudalis also rose.

"We can offer worship to shiva as well. after all we've managed to save up sever rupees!" (Devi. 73).

Such is the degrading conditions in which the low caste woman is destined to live. And such women are termed as a separate caste. A caste of low caste "whore" women. It is the women who are ruined by the Malik Mahajans who turn them into whores.

"The Malik-Mahajan demands honor even when he is a corpse" (Devi. 91)

But Sanichari rises to the occasion and seizes the opportunity by making it an act of revenge and expression of historical opposition. Sanichari thought that perhaps her tears had been reserved for the time when she would have to feed herself by selling them.

It can also be identified as an predictable part of the advancement of the cultural politics of dissent and difference from the historically marginalized people of India. It can be justly termed as representation the cultural politics.

CONCLUSION

Sanichari was marginalized firstly as a girl child and she was forced to get married at the time of adolescence. And then her mother in law was also responsible for her marginalization, she always taunted her saying that she was born on Saturday so her name was inauspicious. She even said that Sanichari's life is full of sufferings and brought a bad luck to their family. This made Sanichari feel rebellious against her mother in law.

Shanichari was compelled to go for the profession of a paid mourner (Rudali) because there was nobody to provide her with basic necessities of life.

“ For them, nothing has ever come easy. just the daily struggle for a little maize gruel and salt is exhausting. while those people spend huge sums of money on death ceremonies, just to gain prestige...” (Devi. 9)

Lastly she turned up to be a Rudali just to earn her daily bread. Rudali is all about how to survive. She had to sell her tears which she never shed at the death of her own people but the death of the landowners so that she could earn livelihood.

Works Cited

Primary Source:

Rudali by Mahasweta Devi

<https://assignbuster.com/mahasweta-devi-rudali/>

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