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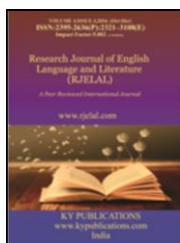
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DILEMMA OF A MOTHER TRAPPED IN THE WEBMADE SOCIETY OF MAHASWETA DEVI'S NOVEL *MOTHER OF 1084*

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ABSTRACT

A woman is a daughter, wife, mother, daughter in-law etc; she plays numerous roles in her life for the family and society. Apart from her own happiness, she works for the welfare of her parents, children, and husband and even she lives under the norms made by the society, even though she was considered as the least important being. She is put under the stereotypical category of 'woman' by the society. Gender, which is determined by the culture and is the construct made by the society. From the late 40's, she is considered to be 'the other' in the patriarchal society. The novel *Mother of 1084* by Mahasweta Devi is the best illustration of marginalized, neglected or suppressed plight of woman. In this novel *Mother of 1084* written in 1974 Devi portrays the life of a bourgeois woman, Sujata, fifty one years old living in Calcutta. In one of her interviews, Devi says that this story is about the "awakening of an apolitical mother". But after the death of her beloved son killed in 70's Sujata, mentally and physically caught in conflict within herself between sympathetic mother and silent protestor. She later finds that the entire family and society is cadaverous and feels that there is no legitimacy for her son's death. Because of these chaos she transformed from apolitical mother to the political one at the end of the story. Protagonists realises the truth and becomes socially and politically conscious member of the society. The heroine represents the pain of woman at the margins of society and family and she also questions about the male centred society (patriarchal society). In the novel Sujata is portrayed as the woman at the margin and her husband is considered to be the supreme authority in male dominated society. In Post-Colonial dialects 'the other' plays a prominent role. It refers to a group of people who are subordinated or rejected on the basis of class, gender, caste etc.

Keywords: Marginalization, Patriarchal, Gender, Apolitical mother, Post-colonial

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Mahasweta Devi had a prominent voice on the international sphere who is prosecuting for the right of equality of unprivileged subaltern and oppressed section of society by expressing miserable condition through her pen. This novel *Mother of 1084* is one of the best creations of her

writings which is set in the circumstances that is based on patriarchal social structure and how a woman is thrown at the margin of the society by the male dominated social system. The analysis of the novel gives a glimpse of all; misery of a woman created by the patriarchal hindrances and the place

of women in the social structure. In the novel Mahasweta Devi portrays the problems of the marginalized or suppressed women in the social sphere as well as unravels several physical and mental torments that an individual faced by her society.

Before acquainting oneself with the plight of marginalized, to know the exact meaning of the term 'marginal' or 'marginalized' is of vital importance. According to the Oxford Dictionary the concept 'marginalize' means 'to make somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; or to put somebody in a powerless position'. So, the word 'Marginalized', refers to the group of people who are deprived of their minimum rights and are exploited.

In Post- colonial dialects the term 'marginalized' occupies a prominent place. The term 'subaltern' or 'marginalized' incorporates the entire people who are subordinates in terms of class, caste, gender and office. It is the subject position that defines marginality. The lack and deprivation, loneliness and alienation, subjugation, the resignation and silence, the resilience and neglect, mark the lives of 'marginalized', even when they resist and rise up. They feel bounded and defeated by their subject positions. They have no representatives or spokespersons in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are essential as human beings.

Marginalization is the process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored. Marginalization comprises those processes by which individuals and groups are ignored or relegated to the sidelines of political debate, social negotiation, and economic bargaining and kept there. Homelessness, age, language, employment status, skill, race, and religion are some criteria historically used to marginalize. Marginalized groups tend to overlap; groups excluded in one arena, say in political life, tend to be excluded in other arenas, say in economic status.

The outcome of social marginalization is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. A woman is a woman because of the strict conventional belief weaved around her by the male – dominated patriarchal society from the very beginning of human race. A woman is generally defined as 'subordinated being incapable of taking decisions' or leading an independent life. Even in twentieth century, the western society declares women as subordinated creature and nourishes this mythology and psychology about her still. There are various social flaws and evils flowing in the veins of patriarchy which is curse for the women and also they are completely marginalized in the society, where they are considered as 'the other'.

The Naxalite movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's was also an important influence on her work. Devi, in a 1983 interview, points to this moment as the major event that she felt. "I believe in the value of documentation." (*Mother of 1084* xii). The leftist militant movement, which started in the Naxalbari region of west Bengal, began as a rural revolt of landless workers and tribal people against landlords and money lenders. In urban centres this movement attracted participation from student groups. Devi's *Hajar Chaurashir Ma (Mother of 1084)* is the story of an upper middle class woman whose life is shattered, when her son is killed for his nexus with Naxalites.

The present article aims at giving relevance to the term 'other' or marginalization in the novel *Mother of 1084*. In *Mother of 1084*, Devi throws light by illustrating the poor life of a mother who have everyone around her but no one for her. She has been completely marginalized after the death of her beloved son, Brati. In the beginning the novel starts by telephone ringing at Sujata's table. She is going to the past and remembering about all those incidents that injured her heart when she was 51. She remembers about the indifference in the character of her own husband who had no bond or value towards relations. He only focused upon his reputation and the status in society

An unknown, impersonal officer's voice had asked the first question-

Are you related to Brati Chatterjee?

Your son, you say? Come to Kantapur.
(*Mother of 1084 5*)

When the message came over the telephone, his first concern was how he could keep the news from the people who knew him. Going to Kantapur to identify the body did not seem that important. He had brought up Jyoti, his did not seem that important. He had brought up Jyoti, his eldest, according to his cherished ideals, and in the fitness of things he had accompanied his father on the same mission.

Dibyanath had not allowed Sujata to take his car it would not be right thing to keep his car waiting before Kantapur. Anybody could identify the car. (*Mother of 1084 7*)

In the eyes of the world all of them were leading a blissful and happy life but later Sujata goes on to discover that this happiness is only superficial. First part of the novel not only represents the central conflict but also introduces the characters deeply. The whole novel sets around the character Sujata. Even Brati, around whom the whole story focuses on, is allotted only to a few dialogues and he appears in the beginning as corpse number 1084.

Sujata was shocked when she found the indifference in the character of her husband who was searching out the ways to hush up the incidents with the fear of stigma in the society for his son's involvement in anti-government affair. It was Brati's mother only who loved him sincerely and deeply, for others in the family Brati was dead long before in their heart. "The day, with Brati's death, Brati's father had also died for Sujata. The way he had behaved that day, that moment, had shattered numberless illusions for her. It had burst upon her with explosive force. (*Mother of 1084 7*)"

In fact, while reading the novel the reader is left baffled for being unable to distinguish between the 'other' and 'mother'. Sujata represents the lot of mothers who are not able to understand the character and the changes in their sons' behaviour. Sujata hence throughout the novel represents as a failed wife, daughter in law and also she considers herself as a failed mother who remained as 'other' even for her son she was closely

attached to. "There must be thousands of mothers like her who fondled their sons' clothes in secret and touched their sons' portraits secretly". (*Mother of 1084 21*)

Sujata belonged to the other camp, the camp of the enemy. For Sujata was the only one in the family who had never blamed Brati for messing up her neatly organized life. She had never blamed Brati. She had not beat her breast in the wild wailing. She had never put her head on the chest of anyone of them and sought consolation. She had made up her mind quite early that she would never seek consolation from those who thought first of themselves while Brati lay dead in the morgue. (*Mother of 1084 30*)

Sujata was never accepted by her family and she made to feel like an outcaste who did not abide by the standards of the family. "With her pride and strong sense of dignity, Sujata had realized soon after her marriage, that the more she kept herself aloof from the household, the more satisfied the others were. Dibyanath and her mother in law were the 'others'" (*Mother of 1084 45*).

She understood about the element of 'otherness' imposed on her who was actually 'the other'. Then the novel also focuses on the problems faced by these mothers, not only Sujata but also Somu's mother, whose son was also died in the same incident. They did not understand the involvement of their sons' activities in anti-governmental affairs or what lead them to this.

The pain was not of losing them instead because of that they were unnoticed in the society and even by the family members.

But Brati had built another Brati with his belief, his ideals and ideology. This other Brati loved his mother; his mother loved him, but never really knew him. These boys knew the other Brati, the Brati that Sujata did not know. That was how they could be inseparable in both life and death. (*Mother of 1084 57*)

These mothers had nothing else left in their life except the memory of their sons' death either to feel proud of them or to cry their hearts out. The possession was deep pain and the sense of loss. The

process of decolonization began but ruthlessly curbed by the new colonizers by killing the youth and making the elders destitute. The novel is a cry of all those mothers who beat their breasts to mourn the death to their sons who was not acknowledging just because they were others. At last Sujata moved from the reality to the world where she is not treated as 'other' it was her own death. Thus the whole novel portrays the pain of a mother in the society and her silent sufferings. There is no one to cry for her or to share her emotions and thus with the pain of sufferings she is flying into the place where no one can anymore hurt her. As Simone de Beauvoir states; "One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman." (*The Second Sex* 301)

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