



GENDER AND FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE STORIES OF MAHASWETA DEVI

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ABSTRACT

The key feminine consciousness characters in the stories of Mahashweta Devi are 'Douloti' from 'Douloti the Bountiful' and Mary' from 'The Hunt'. Devi's powerful tales of exploitation and struggle indicates the feminist perspective. In the 'Douloti' the bountiful Douloti was a fourteen years old girl and her father Ganori Nagesia (from tribal cast) who is bonded labour of Munabar Singh Chandela. For some reason Ganori has borrowed a particular amount from Munabar singh. Then for the refund of that debt Douloti became a prostitute. Through the 'The Hunt' Devi expressed female oppression and harassment of a tribal girl Mary is a protagonist of this story. A logging broker named Tehsilder Singh; he tried to take disadvantage of Mary. In this story Devi has used 'red' colour as a symbol of femininity

Keywords- Gender, feminine consciousness, woman harrasment.

INTRODUCTION

Mahasweta Devi (14 January 1926-28 July 2016) was an Indian Bengali fiction writer and also socio-political activist. She focused on various issues through literature she worked for the right and empowerment of tribal people with the circumference of west Bengal, Bihar, MP and Chhattisgarh.



She has written many novels and short stories essays dramas focuses on historical social, traditional, realism issues Devi dragged the attention of society towards the problems of tribal, subaltern, dalit, political relevance, cast and class oppression, woman harassment through her writing. Though she did not considered herself as a feminist writer but she portrayed here most of the stories related to female gender oppression.

Adam and Eve were earth's first man and woman. They were also known as human's first parents. So we have known about first male and female. In the gender there are three categories which indicate sex those are male, female and neuter.

Simon de Beauvoir stated that, "One is not born but rather becomes woman"...It is civilization as a whole that produces creator... Which is described as feminine."

Many feminist writers focused on female problems, their rights, sexual and mental harassment, Sexual freedom, self dependant / reliable, educational right, their status in society female empowerment and women's liberation.

The key feminine consciousness characters in the stories of Mahasweta Devi are 'Douloti' from the 'Douloti' the Bountiful and 'Mary' from 'The Hunt'. Devi's powerful tales of exploitation and struggle indicates the feminist perspective.

Douloti the Bountiful is the short story by Mahasweta Devi. This story deals with the sacrifice and sexual harassment of a tribal girl. Douloti was a daughter of Ganori Nagesia. He was working for his master Munabar singh Chandela a Rajput. He was the owner of Seora village where, Ganori was living. He was crook.

Ganori became Munabar's bonded labour. One day Ganori had borrowed some amount from Munabar Sing. He used that money for his eldest daughter and son's marriage. So Munabar singh made him Kamiya from that day. Munabar singh had known that, Ganori cannot repay the amount. The interest of main rupees was increasing day by day. For some reason Munabar punishes to Ganori that, Ganori Should yoke in replace of steer. So Ganori tried to take the yoke on his shoulders and lifting on his own shoulders but suddenly he fell down his body cracked. From that day he became crook. Paramanand a Brahmin promised to rescue Ganori from bonded slavery but he wished to marry with Doulati.

After some days, Paramand took Douloti to Madhpura to marry with her. He gave a new saree and make-up kit. Then next day both went to a new place, new house. That house was known as whore's house. The owner of this whore house was Paramanard he was running

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this prostitution business. One day a customer came for Douloti his name was Latia, who was a railway contractor.

After some time, Douloti loosed here consciousness because Rampiyari who was a caretaker of that whore house, she had poured something in Douloti's drink. Then Latia entered in Douloti's room and tried to harass to Douloti, Latia had pulled off here sari and torn off her blouse. Douloti a little bit conscious and she realizing that something is happening with her.

That night the sexual harassment was happened with Douloti by Latia. She bloodied many times all through night. She scratched by Latia. After Douloti's harassment Latia gave a handful of banknotes to paramanand and said now Douloti is his girl when he let her go, then she can take another clients. This deal happened between Paramanand and Latia.

In this way, Douloti became a prostitute and Latia had Douloti's regular customer. Rampiyari has told real truth to Douloti, that paramanand Cheated with here. He brought here to whore house and made her a whore. Then Rampiyari asked to Douloti that, how can a brahmin marry with lower cast girl (Harijan)? In reality Douloti was deceived by Paramanand under the name of marriage.

Lastly she died with pain and she could not see her parents. Douloti's death was miserable.

'The Hunt' is a story by Mahasweta Devi. The protagonist of this story is 'Mary oraon' a tribal girl. Mary and Mary's, Mother Bhikhni were living in kuruda village. Before Indian independence, there was timber planted by whites (Dixon) in Kuruda Mary's mother had been working as a maid in Dixon's Bungalow her work was to look after that bungalow and house hold works Dixon's son seduced Mary's mother before leaving India. One day he went to Australia.

Mary was a daughter of Bhikhni and Dixon's son's. Eighteen year's old Mary looking very beautiful, tall, flat-featured, light copper skin. Her regular dressing was sari. She was able-bodied, empowered with strength, intelligent, she was also formidable with her words and machete, and she had these two weapons.

Now that bungalow's proprietorship went to Prasadji Lachhman. There these mother and daughter were working. Mary's daily work was to pastures cattle of Prasadji to sell the custored apples, guavas and vegetables at the Tohri Market. Mary and her mother were working with loyalty, Prasadji Lachhman was giving proper wages to Bhikhni.



Mary always picked the fruits of Mahua trees of the Prasadji's property. No villager had dared to touch the fruit even in jest. Mary had instantly raised her machete. This was hers by right so did not take wages as her recompense from Prasadji.

Around the bungalow of Prasadji Dixon had planted Sal trees on fifty acres. The customers were interested to buy that trees but Mr. Prasadji wanted to get more profit from felling these Sal trees. There was a broker and logging contractor named Tehsildar Singh. He had come to Kuruda Village to buy logging rights. He got the right of Sal tree felling by Prasadji. Tehsildar was coming regularly at Prasadji's house and tried to go to close Mary. One day he bought a sari for Mary Tehsildar always pursued Mary whenever she goes outside the house for her daily duty, but Mary did not interest in Tehsildar and his sweet talking. She showed her machete to Tehsildar because, he became lustful for Mary.

One day Mary was returning from the market and going at the home. Tehsildar was waiting for her on the way then as she came, Tehsildar caught Mary's hand.

Mary struggled with Tehsildar, in this struggling, she lost her machete. Then she felt that, this is not human this is an animal. She decided something in her mind and she promised to Tehsildar to meet him on the 'Spring Festival'.

Tribal celebrates spring festival it comes after every twelve years. In this festival woman become the hunters and hunts the wild animals. While the men dress up like clowns and enjoy with drinking liquor and they dance also. This is the part of tribal custom. By this hunting festival gender roles exchanges once every twelve years. This festival is related marry making.

On the spring festival day Mary called to Tehsildar in the forest. That day every tribal had gone to Kuruda hill to find a hunt. Mary thought that,

"Why kill hedgehogs or hares or partridges? You get the big beast with bait."

On the occasion of festival Mary wore colored sari and red blouse in this costume. She was looking like a flamboyant tree in motion. As if a bunch of flowers from that flamboyant tree was running in the wind. There were also red flowers besides road. Everything was red.

That day she wanted to hunt a big beast that was Tehsildar. After some time Tehsildar arrived on the Kuruda hill, he also wore red shirt Tehsildar was calling her towards him. Then he drunk liquor then Mary gave him love bites on the lips, Mary watched that, Tehsildar's face



was changing in to an animal suddenly Mary started to laugh and held him, laid him. Mary lifts her machete and killed to Tehsildar, who was an animal for her. An animal inform of a man.

After the killing Tehsildar she had thrown to Tehsildar in ravine. Now she felt that, she did a big hunt. Tehsildar's blood spread over her sari. After this hunting her face was looking with deep satisfaction.

CONCLUSION:-

'Douloti the Bountiful' the story portrayed with the real condition of defenseless woman. How a brahmin cheated with Douloti and made her a prostitute. Her life became hell. In society a prostitute has not prestige. Their life is full of problems. Douloti faced all these things.

Here Devi one aspect is pointout that the women's abuseness. Douloti worked until her body is used up. She bloodied many times. She became a doll in the hand of Paramanand. Latia harassed her. Ganori's freedom came at the cost of his daughter. Unfortunately Douloti did not become the bride of a brahmin but a prostitute. Douloti's virginity and youth brought 'a high price' for Munabar. Douloti had faced to sexual harassment. Through these aspects Devi's attitude shows towards feminine Consciousness.

In 'The Hunt' there is use of several animated and unanimated objects as symbols of woman hood, feminism and also related rights of woman by Mahasweta Devi

Firstly a machete which Mary had kept always with her, she used it for chopping of fruits and to sell it at Tohri market. Whenever she felt unsecure from any male. She raised it and flashed it. She protects her right by picking up Mahua fruits from the orchard of Lachhman Prasadji.

When Tehsildar caught her hand while she was returning from the market and going at home. She shows him machete for protection.

On the day of hunting she wore a coloured sari and red blouse Mary was looking like flamboyant tree red flowers on all sides of road. Everything was red. Here red colour is referred for menstrual blood the identification of feminity.



When Mary saw to Tehsildar on the Kuruda hill, she felt that, Tehsildar is like an, animal. She wants to hunt that 'big beast' and she did it also. Here Tehsildar used as an hunting animal. Instead of real animal. Instead of real animal, because he behaves lustful for Mary so Mary felt that, he is a big beast, an animal on the right occasion she hunted that animal, on the spring festival.

Hunt is also related female rights here generally male hunts the animals and female as usual cook it. This is the tradition of any tribal cast but in the tribal festival of 'Spring festival' male gives a chance to women of hunting animals. On this day female roes made character as a hunter and women hunts the animal so here Devi represents the equal human right to men and women. A woman also powerful she can do everything if she decides. She faces to all struggles and prove to herself. After every twelve years on the spring festival woman become powerful with strong body and strong mind and they complete their target of animal hunting. Devi represents the 'Mary' character as powerful she was able to protect herself from men's lust. She did not give any chance to seduce her to Tehsildar. Before Mary was hunted by Tehsildar, she became a hunter of him. In this way she hunted a big beast on the spring festival.

When we see through the comparatively towards these two characters of Mary and Douloti we understand that Douloti was a helpless poor character. She was unable to save herself from harassment, but Mary was powerful, strong character. She was able to protect herself. She was using a chopping machete for the protection from male. Mary was strong by mind and body. As an Indian goddess 'Kalimata' at last Mary killed a man, who tried to seduce her.

In this way we can say that Mahasweta Devi depicted woman characters as feminine consciousness and womanhood through the stories of 'Douloti the Bountiful' and 'The Hunt'.

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