



## THE REFLECTION OF SUBALTERN VOICE IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S *MOTHER OF 1084*

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### ABSTRACT

*Subaltern Consciousness is the major theme of the decolonized literature. Human mind and spirit are basically free identities which resist external control and governance. Mahasweta Devi is one of the prolific women writers of India. She stands at the intersection of vital contemporary issues of politics, gender and class. Her concern is for the poor, landless from lower castes of eastern India. She has emerged as an important figure in the field of socially committed literature. The present research paper entitled The Reflection of Subaltern Voice in Mahasweta Devi's novel "Mother of 1084" is an attempt to examine the subaltern voice of that period. It explores how the Naxalite Movement brings two subaltern mothers instead of class barriers. It's a saga of the Naxalite resistance in Bengal that through the character of Sujata and Nandini, her powerful exploration of subjectivity voiced through the female characters, it's a tragedy of political mothers and a person of a class barrier. This is a very sensitive and thought-provoking novel centered on a Young, Idealistic, Intellectual, student, Brati Chatterjee, who is treacherously betrayed to the police by a mole in his revolutionary group.*

**Keywords :-** Subaltern Voice, Naxalite Movement, Death.

### INTRODUCTION

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Indian women novelists constitute a significant group today. They are consciously drawn into an exploration of the forces which shape the experience of women. These experiences have been expanded and changed in cultural, social and economic scenarios, nationally and globally. Among these writers, Mahasweta Devi has carved a special place for herself. She is a Bengali writer born in 1926 in Dhaka Bangladesh to literary parents. She worked as a journalist, creative writer, and an internationally acclaimed novelist and short story writer. She overwhelmingly portrays the downtrodden of West-Bengal. She acknowledges more famous for her work related to the study of the Lodhas and Shabalars, the tribal communities of west-Bengal women's and Dalit's. Her fictional works are mostly read as texts that seek to inscribe subaltern history and their identity. Most of her works have been translated into English by eminent scholars such as GyatriChakravorty Spivak, Rimi B Chatterjee, SamikBandopadhyay.

Mahasweta Devi's mother of 1084 is an English translation of Bengali novel "Hazar Chaurashi Ki Maa" inspired by Maxim Gorky's famous novel Mother (1907). Mother of 1084 was written by Mahasweta Devi's in 1973-1974 and translated by in English language in 1997. There was a rise of Naxalite Movement (revolt) in Bengal in the last of sixties and seventies which projected a multitude of women's problems. Their dilemma, disputes and frustration are depicted in the novel. This novel is thought-provoking novel centered on a young idealistic, intellectual student Brati. BratiChatterjee, is treacherously betrayed to the police by a mole in his revolutionary group.

The term subaltern refers to any person or group of inferior rank in orientation, ethnicity or religion. Subaltern are socially politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. It is derived from the cultural hegemony work of Antonio Gramsci, which identified the social group of people excluded from a society. At the time of post-colonial the term Subaltern flesh out the lower class people as well as the social groups who are at the margins of a society. But Gayatri-Spivak advised against a too broad application of the term. Subaltern is the people who have been silenced in the administration of the colonial states as they constitute.

*"Gayatri Spivak in an essay titled "Can the Subaltern Speak"?. Wrote The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists With woman as a pious. She put emphasis on the pitiable conditions of women who are not only oppressed by patriarchy but also by colonialism . The most famous name among all subaltern historians is unquestionably ". (Guha 25)*



In the novel Mother of 1084, Devi does not give any detailed historical account of the Naxalite Movement; rather she explores the politics and the passions of the peasants' tribal revolt turning into a student's revolt against bourgeois values and the academic institutions they sustained. Mother of 1084 described almost all the features of the urban phase of the 1971-1974 Naxalite-Movements. Many aspects have been depicted by MahaswetaDevi in this novel, but violence is one of the major factor dealt with the author as the Naxalite had to face inhuman treatment by the police. The police-men torment the Naxalites and killed them brutally to stop the movement. Brati and his associates have turned its mode in the urban areas ; it attracted student's participation in the political struggle.

Sujata the protagonist of a novel and the mother of Brati, is a witness to the suppression of the Naxalite movement. Brati her son the corpse no. 1084 had taken part and become a martyr. The novel starts with a phone call from the government morgue asks Sujata to identify a corpse no 1084. Realizing that she is alone in her concern for her son, she goes to the government morgue against her dominating husband and the children who are keen on hushing up the whole affairs. Physical identification of Brati triggers off a process of awakening in Sujata and ends up with her discovery of her son. The novel which speaks about the inner conflicts of a mother.

Sujata is an adult woman belonging to a Bhadraklok, Bourgeois family in Calcutta. As she was born into a conservative and prosperous family and married to Dibyanath Chatterjee, who is a chartered accountant and a dominating husband, he thinks that women are only for the household works and to nurture the children. Many time he insulted Sujata in front of Jyoti as she is one of the most important member of the family .In the following sentences expose very clearly how much she was overlooked by him,

*“Dibyanath had not allowed Sujata to take his car. It would not be the right thing to keep his car waiting before Kantapukur .Anybody could identify the car”. (M1084 7)*

By listening the words of her husband Sujata is amazed to see the emotionless behavior of her husband and she speaks out, on the day of Brati's death, Brat is father had also died for Sujata. From the above lines one can easily understand the character of Dibyanath, that how Dibyanath is an honest representative of the male dominated society. Instead of rushing to the police station, he tries to hush up the matter. Not only this he consider women as an object of sex, only to reproduce, bring money when they needed and does not utter a sound, even if they have a voice to express her own interest. He has an affair with his typist that is familiar to everyone in the family.



Somu was the closest associate of Brati. He was also killed in the same encounter of Naxalite Movement. One afternoon Sujata went to meet Somu Mother's with the specific aim of fetching the memories of Brati in the last few hours. Both mothers together in spite of, belong to a different class. Somu is from a poor family who lives in the slum areas but Sujata is from upper class society. She visits those who live in slum areas. This difference between both the mothers who lost their loving sons.

*"Don't compare yourself and my daughter, Didi.  
with all the contacts you have! Didi. Didn't you notice  
how all their names appeared in the paper,  
but Brati's name never appeared? Didi I have no contacts,  
I don't have the money to hush things up or get things done". (M1084 61)*

From the above lines we can initiate the difference felt by Somu's mother and the terrible shocking pain that had brought them together. Instead Somu's mother had remarked a question to Sujata. Sujata had a question in her mind? What's true and what's not true? Those who defied the system were no longer living. But their families remained, why this difference prolonged in the society. Besides these, Somu's mother only realizes how much Brati loves her, as she remains imprisoned within a private grief. Sujata also visits Nandini who apart from being Brati's comrade-in-arms was his beloved. She is an educated woman of a working class family. It is Nandini who rejuvenates Sujata leading all the incidents happening in his life. Through Nandini, only Sujata comes to know about the Naxalite Movement, its causes and aims. She made aware about the internal working of the movement and how desperately they are fighting for the poor and oppressed sections of the society. When Sujata asked about Brati, how Nandini examine in a very crucial way that can be detected by this lines:-

*"Yes. Now when I think back how naively we had assumed that  
an era was coming to an end. You are bringing a new age .Brati  
and I would walk all the way from shyambazar to bhowanipur ,  
just talking all the ways .Whatever we saw on the way –the people ,  
the house, the neon signs ,red roses in a wayside florist's stall,  
festoons on the streets, newspapers pasted on boards near the  
bus stops, smiling faces ,a beautiful image in a poem in as  
little magazine picked like mad at a political rally on the  
maidan, snatches of lilting tunes from hindi films-  
everything spelt ecstasy ; we could not hold in the joy,  
we felt explosive .Felt loyal to all and everything.  
I will never feel the same way again .It will never  
come back .Total loss .An era is really over for good .*

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*The person I was then is dead".(M1084 77)*

It is obvious that Nandini doesn't want to make it public therefore she refuses to take part in Sujata's grief. Unquestionably these three women associated with Brati. Firstly, Somu's mother belongs to a poor family and she has to bear a loss of struggle. Being poor she could not hush up the publication for her son's death but Sujata and husband can. Nandini committed towards her works in resisting the Naxalite movement, though she was a close companion of Brati and had decided to marry each other, yet after his death she did not reveal his feelings before Brati's mother.

History confirms a universal human tendency for aggression and violence. It is indeed relevant to look at the resonances of this organized and deadly encounter of Naxalite violence and state oppression, with its aftermath, through the novel and three women's subaltern voice has been suppressed, beautifully Mahasweta Devi portrays in the novel.

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