

Social Paradigms in Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali*

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Abstract

Contemporary research has primarily focused on different strategies of Marginalisation. Marginalization mein ans 'to make somebody feel as they are not important and cannot influence decisions or conclusions, or to put somebody in a powerless position. Mahaswetha Devi's Rudali focuses on the two women who flourish in a partnership for survival. The novel represents the struggle of Sanichari suppressed against poverty, humiliation, and demolished by an exploitative patriarchal caste-bases social system. This paper focuses on how the character Sanichari undertakes the different situations to survive in society.

Keywords: Marginalisation, Patriarchal society, Religious system, Social, Economic system.

Novels, plays, and poetry are applied to as literature, especially when they are supposed to be good or important. Indian literary culture is the oldest in the world. The family is important in Indian Literature and Drama. Mahasweta Devi was born in 1926 in the city of Dacca in East Bengal. Born into a literary family, Mahasweta Devi was also affected by her early relationship with Gananatya. This group tried to bring social and political theater to rural villages in Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s. After completing a master's degree in English literature from Calcutta University, Devi started working as a teacher and journalist. Her first book, *Jhansi Rani*, was published in 1956. In 1984, she retired from her job as an English lecturer at a Calcutta University to centralize on her writing. Devi has been the receiver of several literary prizes. She was awarded the Janpath, India's highest literary award in 1995.

Rudali is a powerful short story written by Mahasweta Devi, in 1992 it was adapted into a play by Usha Ganguli. She is a long-time champion for the political, social, and economic improvement of the tribal communities, whom she characterizes as "suffering witnesses of the India that is traveling to the twenty-first century." Many of her stories are about tribal fight oppression, resisting exploitation, rebelling against authority. She does not have a relationship with any school of thought. Yet, her condoling depiction of the subjugation of women, and consequent revolt invariably adds a feminist dimension to her work. Woman characters in her works are powerful than that of men.

A frame of the Dalit class in self-reliant India, *Rudali* was an electrifying repository by exposing out the complex strains of a low caste poor woman in the country. The work *Rudali* portrayed the tussle of a suppressed woman against poverty, humiliation, and desolation. Based on the social system and patriarchal caste, women were compressed. They were damaged by their own

family, community members, and ruling rich. To exist, they became either prostitute like Parvatia or the challengers like Sanichari and Bikhni.

Sanichari is the most important character. She is an active and steadfast Dalit woman. She struggles a lot to line successfully with her family and social charge. She is born with misfortune. Being born on Saturday, she is refused by many old women and purposely named as 'Sanichari.' Shortly after her birth, her father died and her mother Peewli runs away with a rich lover who is the owner of a drama company. Soon he leaves her. When Sanichari grows up, she is married to Ganju, who is living with his sick mother.

Sanichari struggles a lot by the socio-economic and religious systems. Both Sanichari and her husband equally work hard for their sustenance. "For them, nothing has ever come easy, just the daily conflict for a little maize gruel and salt is exhausting, while those people spend huge sums of money on death celebrations, just to gain prestige..." (Devi.9). She leaves her six-year-old son, Budhua, at home and goes to Malik's estate, where she cuts wood, carries fodder for the cattle, and at harvest season, she works shoulder to shoulder with her husband. But they are repressed by Malik – Mahajans like Ramavatar Singh and later, his son Lachman Singh. "The Malik-Mahajan demands honor even when he is a corpse" (Devi.91). They are pictured as administering the lives of the low-caste villagers. Whenever they feel, they can lock up the men, and they can also use and dispose of the women. They crush many people for small debts and make them work hard with unpaid labor. Sanichari faces economic problems due to these Malik-Mahajans, and Lachman Singh wants Sanichari to live with him, and she refuses it.

The religious system also controls her through anguish and superstition and does not comfort her but makes her enslave. When Sanichari's mother-in-law dies at night in the pouring rain, she is hard lower to carry out the essential rituals before the day break. But she has no gain in the house and no menfolk to help lay out the body. Though she encounters emotional hardships, she is unable to cry. When Sanichari's brother and sister-in-law die, she doesn't weep for those deaths. Every death is mediated by religious demands for rituals. Sanichari's husband

dies of cholera after drinking the contaminated and putrid "sanctified" milk denoted to the shiva idol by the rich. She is made to pay twice over for ritual offering. "We can offer worship to shiva as well. After all, we've managed to save up sever rupees!" (Devi.73).

When she goes back to her village, Ramavatar's idiosyncratic priest Mohanolal abuses her and asks her to do again the offering. In this difficult situation, she is compressed into debt to Ramavatar. Sanichari borrows a minor amount rupees twenty for her husband's shraddha that means Hindu funeral. But she has to repay rupees fifty as bonded labor over the next five years, while thousands of rupees are lethargically spent on the Lavish Shraddhas of her masters. This is the best illustration of how religious and economic exploitation reinforces one another. She is unable to weep for her husband's death.

When Budhua gets married to local prostitute Parbatia, Sanichari is unable to weep. Parbatia becomes aggressive, hostile, shy, greedy, and extremely selfish. She spends valuable rupees essential for medicine on food. She often scolds her husband. Later she goes off with a wandering medicine man who attracts her with oaths of places to see; non-nature marvels like Nautanki shows that cheap dance shows, cinemas, circuses, and daily treats of puri-kachauri. Badhua comprehends that her hunger drives her. She even abandons her motherly responsibilities to survive.

After Buddha's death, sanitary finds herself unholy alone. She looks at her grandson. Later a young Haroa is over worked at a Lachman singh's land and is paid a tiny amount. He even gets beaten as he denies to surrender to the hard conditions. But still, Sanichari is unable to weep.

Sanichari's only solace is Bikhni, her childhood friend. "Everyone said – she's led such a hard, sad life. But finding Bikhni has been a blessing" (Devi.110). Both are poor and struggling to find means of survival. Both are enlightened by Dulan. He empowers them and encourages them to find easy employment in order to live. When Bikhni's mother goes out, both Sanichari and Bikhni goes to Dulan for counsel. He gives an idea that they employ themselves out as Rudalis. Rudali means a person who accepts money in turn for loud laments,

weeping, and beating of the chest for some milk, oil, and flour, when a rich man dies away. After the death of Bikhni, she alone. With the help of this, it makes the union of Rudalis and whores. She goes to 'randipatti,' which means whores' quarter at Tohri, there she meets her daughter-in-law Parvatia.

Sanichari herself is shown as being fully aware of how essential survival is to the community. She agrees with her daughter-in-law and thinks, without that aid, it is impossible to live in the village.

The story ends with these prostitutes make loud mourning at the death of a very rich man who pushed them into the pyre of prostitution that man is Ramavatar. Sanichari is called to be a Rudali. Knowing fully well that she cannot shed tears, Sanichari attends the funeral. It is here that brings real tears from her eyes.

In the struggle for survival, grief is turned into a commodity, and mourning is labor. Tears can be used as a source of earning by professional mourners. After obtaining the money she has earned by mourning at the death, Sanichari smiles hopelessly at her Joke. So Sanichari is a successful survivor despite poverty.

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