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The Identity of 'Self- Sacrificing' Woman as a Mother: An Analytical Study of 'Breast Giver'

Abstract

The famous Bengali writer and activist Mahasweta Devi explores the different phases of women suffering, which a woman undergoes in society. Mahasweta Devi portrayed the silence surrounded issues such as cultural, social and political. She also portrayed the experience of motherhood and also the exploitation of women, which were ignored by society. She also writes about the ignored and exploitative group of people.

Mother shares very closest relation with her infants and a mother always occupied a central role in every child's life. Mahasweta Devi almost in every work, she depicted mother and motherhood. Mahasweta Devi in her writings portrayed the diversity of women exploitations. In her short story "Breast Giver," she depicted mother Jashoda and, here Mahasweta Devi used Jashoda's motherhood as a metaphor for her exploitations.

The purpose of this paper is to see how Mahasweta Devi portrayed motherhood as the metaphor for the exploitations of women in our society. Mahasweta Devi's eager and responsive study of unheard stories of Indian society brings to illumination or light the exploitation of females.

Keywords: Motherhood, Mother, Children, Exploitation, Women, Society.

In the year of 1926, India's famous writer and social activist Mahasweta Devi was born in Dhaka, which is now a portion of Bangladesh. Her mother and father both were writers. Mahasweta Devi's works translated into more than twenty-two different languages. Mahasweta Devi has raised her voice through her writings for the poor and oppressed people as well as the miserable and harsh situation of women, in a direct and indirect way. She also mentions the mother's sacrifices and affection towards her children. Mahasweta Devi is influenced by the Naxalbari movement of West-Bengal and in her novel 'Mother of 1084', we can see a reflection of this. Here the mother figure suffers the death of her son, who is a victim of the prevalent political unrest, perpetuated by the male-dominated movement. In Another story of Mahasweta Devi, in 'Breast Giver,' we can see an image of a sacrificial mother Jashoda. The short story "Breast Giver" explores the enormous self-sacrifices of the woman as a mother. This story described motherhood, which is rooted in Indian culture. As we know a woman as a mother has a very significant place in Indian society. And a woman, who could not reproduce, being a victim of exploitation as well as she has no importance in society. Mahasweta Devi depicted a woman, mother, wife, daughter, lover beyond their social identities. Mahasweta Devi portrayed them as human beings. Mahasweta Devi is well known for her works such as Jhansi Ki Rani, Breast Giver, Mother of 1084, Draupadi, Bayen, Rudali etc.

Mahasweta Devi in her short story "Breast Giver" depicted Jashoda role as a mother, which gives her a unique place in society, that identity of a woman no can replace it. Mahasweta Devi described the unique identity of Jashoda (main character of this story) as a professional mother. Jashoda sacrifices everything for her children and her husband Kanganalicharan. In this story, Mahasweta Devi wrote on motherhood in the context of Indian society, culture and tradition as well as in the context of Nation (motherland). In Indian culture, the mother has a very important and holy place. In this story, motherhood takes

another amplitude such as mother by hired. Throughout this story, Jashoda's continuous reproduction and lactation became her way of survival. In this story, Jashoda's motherhood includes all infants, whom she suckles.

The main character of the story 'Breast Giver' Jashoda belongs to a Braman family. And she married Kungalicharan, who worked at the shop of sweets. He always stole sweets and samosas for his children and wife. Kungalicharan lost both legs in an accident. Jashoda started working in Haldars family as a wet nurse to feed her disabled husband Kungalicharan and her children. Jashoda represents the Indian culture and religion positively. Here Mahasweta Devi portrayed the main character of the story Jashoda as divine mother Yoshoda, who was the milk-mother of Lord Kanhiya (Krishana). And mother Jashoda fulfilled the duty of a mother for Krishana. As mother Yoshoda, Jashoda also fulfilled her duty as a wife, mother towards her family. And Jashoda represents a divine status through her milk and motherhood.

The story 'Breast Giver' traditionally connected with mothering and motherhood. In this story, Jashoda is the mother of fifty children, twenty children, whom she was biologically born out of her own womb and 30 children, whom she fed her milk as a wet nurse in Haldars family. Jashoda sense different types of maternal affection for her husband Kungalicharan. Jashoda wants to become the mother of the whole Nation so that she can equally feed and take good care of all children. Here the writer Mahasweta Devi related Jashoda with the 'Earth-Mother', who loves her all children equally. Jashoda completely devoted her body to her profession. Jashoda feels a different type of bond with all of her children, including her milk children.

Many times Jashoda was abused by her husband Kungalicharan but she devoted herself to her husband and children. Jashoda was a faithful and good wife and a mother. Jashoda always equally loves her all infants. Even she stays till late at night at Haldars family to feed her milk

then she returns home and made food for her family. Jashoda simultaneously does her job (as a wet nurse) and she always taking care of her responsibilities towards her children and husband as a mother and wife, which represents the many women or mothers. Here Jashoda proves that if a woman works outside of her home it does not mean that she cares about her household less. And She became a wet nurse only to feed her family. Jashoda suffers from the incurable disease 'Breast Cancer, because of her continuous lactations and because of feeding around 50 children. Her lactation, which was her way of survival became more painful for Jashoda at the end of this story. She is left all alone by all family members and Haldars family members when she needs them the most.

Motherhood is considered the greatest happiness in the world. But here in this story for Jashoda, her motherhood brings painful death. Jashoda was left alone by all children, whom she brought up with her milk, when she expects them to stay nearby her they all left her alone in the hospital for dying alone. She feels deep pain and questioned herself that "is mother and motherhood so constituted cheap?" Here, motherhood and motherly love being questioned by Jashoda. Another hand, mothers of Haldars family fulfilled their duty of a mother only by giving birth to their children. Because they belong to a rich family and in their society, it's enough. And another mother Jashoda, whose motherly love and care protracted or extended not only to her biological infants but also to her milk children. She gets habitual to suckled infants at her, even after being disappeared of her milk and Jashoda remains useless after drying of her lactation. And Jashoda's breasts became the cause of her painful death, these

same breasts, which were her most valuable object for her and the way of her livelihood.

Here in this story, Jashoda became the idealized figure of a mother. And she sacrificed everything to fulfil her duty as a mother and as a professional mother. Jashoda equally loves her own children and Haldars family children, whom she feeds her milk. When she suffers

from incurable disease 'cancer'. Everyone left her in the hospital to die alone, but Jashoda always remembers her children, even in the last moment of her death. And she also realized that motherhood is also very painful and cause of death as she experienced and she also raised question about it.

Conclusion

In her short story "Breast Giver", Mahasweta Devi depicted mother Jashoda's struggling life and her exploitation. Here, in this story, Mahasweta Devi used Jashoda's motherhood as metaphor for her exploitations. Jashoda is a religious wife, and she treated her husband Kangalicharan as her god and guide. She always follows her husband's commands blindly. But when she needs him, he left her alone to suffer. Jashoda for her family became a wet nurse of Haldar's family, she was treated harshly as a servant and useless, but for her children's upbringing and happiness. she bears all this pain and insults within herself. In this story, Jashoda was exploited by her profession as well as by her motherhood. Jashoda's body exploited because of continuous lactation and served fifty children with her milk. She sacrificed everything even her body for her children but when she is suffering from the painful disease 'breast-cancer' all were go away from her as if they do not know her. They forgot her love, sacrifices and care and easily forgot everything. At the end of the story, Jashoda felt that motherhood is also very painful for her, whereas for other women it's the greatest joy of their life. Jashoda's sacrifices make her divine and in her reflects the image of the divine mother.

Reference

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