

Mother of 1084 by Mahasweta Devi: A search for real Home
Dr. S. Parvin Banu, M.Mallika

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Dr. S. Parvin Banu*, **M.Mallika****

**Assistant Professor, **Research Scholar,
Dept. of English,
Chikkanna Govt. Arts College, Tirupur.*

Abstract

Home is the place, where human being is furnish with the life of self-satisfaction and tranquility. There are some people who dream to see the society, nation, country to be the home. A concept in the Indian culture, 'Vasudyka Kutumbam' which means 'whole universe is one family' is the perception and the vision of some of great beings on Earth. These human beings, who are the embodiment of virtues, go the extent of sacrificing their life for ideology of the betterment of the world. The play Mother of 1084 of Mahasweta Devi has Sujata and Brati to be the main characters, who are extremely dissatisfied with the prevalent conditions of the home and the society, and in striving to establish the egalitarian society that is free from greed, injustice, horrors of suppression and exploitation, they have become martyrs.

Keywords: *Egalitarian Society, martyrs, vasudyka-kutumbam, , alienation, Naxalism*

Reference to this paper should
be made as follows:

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Mahasweta Devi:
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Notions June 2020,
Vol. X1, No. 1,
pp.14-18

Article No.04

Online available at :

<http://notions.anubooks.com/>

Introduction

The play *Mother of 1084* is the original translation of Mahasweta Devi's Bengali play *Hazar Chaurasir Maa*. It is a play of 12 scenes. The plot is condensed into the scenic space of single day through the device of the mother recalling, a year after the events that followed the morning when she was summoned to identify her son lying dead in the police mortuary. Through the device of dramatic condensation, Devi achieves an admirable effect of concentration in *Hazar Chaurasir Maa*. G.P. Deshpande in his *Anthology on Indian English Drama* introduces the play with a brief note:

Mahasweta Devi, very eminent writer of fiction,
Has been active with tribals of West Bengal and Bihar.
In this play she looks at the Urban Bhadrolok Bengal
In the context of the rising people's movement.
She offers us a view of politics which is both
Moving and disturbing [2].

Mother of 1084 provides a certification of the Naxalite Movement of the seventies. This was an important aspect of the political climate of West Bengal. The Naxalites raised their voice against the established order and fought for the cause of the poor who are exploited by the landlords, industrialists and bureaucrats. The oppressive and inflexible attitude of these highhanded men forced a group of young men to take up cudgel against them.

The outraged protest against the authoritarian system was ruthlessly handled by the government. The upper class was completely indifferent. They were not sympathetic towards the cause. They could neither spare time nor the interest to pay attention. In *Mother of 1084*, Sujata, mother of corpse number 1084, can find a moral rationale for son's revolt only when she can piece together exactly two years after the killing, a part of her son's life she had never known.

Sujata has called within herself against her corrupt respectable husband, other children and their spouses and friends the closer she feels to her dead son, and the more poignantly she feels the loss. In a sense she can 'find' her son and holds him to herself only when she can find in his death a fulfillment that she has yearned for and never dared to claim for herself. The one day in the life of Sujata, spent in 'discovering' Brati for the first time in a series of encounters with people beyond her circuit of experience, is spent in forging a connection with Brati or rather with what he strove and died for. Hence it is Sujata's story, not Brati may be Sujata Brati's.

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Sujata, a traditional upper middle class lady and an apolitical mother wakes up one early morning with the shattering news that her favorite son Brati, is lying dead in the police morgue with the dehumanized identity, bearing the corpse no.1084. They give the indication that it is the 'Seventeenth January Nineteen Seventy'. A telephone rings as an early morning glow spreads over half of the stage it means that the other half of the stage remains in darkness – the presence of light and darkness indicates the duality of life.

This dramatic device is used to hint at the fact the happy house hold shall soon be immerse in the shadow of sorrow. A voice on the other end of the line brusquely questions her relationship with Brati Chatterji. She is called to Kantapukur to 'identify the body' that is in the dehumanized form. Brati's father Dibyanath refuses to send the car to the police morgue to identify their dead son with the fear of stigma to his family as their son is involved in the anti – establishment's activities. Moreover, taking help of Jyoti, their elder son, rushes to hush up the matter. Bratis's father sees to it that all traces of Brati, the rebel, the errant Naxalite, are completely obliterated so that he can hold up their bourgeois' family name.

Dibyanath Chatterji, a true representative of patriarchal society, least bothered to value the feelings and sentiments of Sujata towards her son and proceeds ahead with his plan of action. This cold attitude of father shocks Sujata a lot. Not only he refuses to send the car, but also ignored her, in spite of her being the second important member of the family

SUJATA. (Uncomprehending, in a panic)What will You hush up?
What are you talking about?

DIBYANATH. Jyoti, there's no time to waste He goes out.(1.4).

After two years exactly on the same day that is seventeenth of January, accidentally it is a day of birth and death of Brati, Sujata gets a phone call. It is from Nandini, fellow comrade of in the mission of Brati, who is released from the imprisonment on Parole for medical treatment due to the brutal interrogation of the police. Sujata accepted to meet Nandini. The plight of Sujata is clearly can be comprehended from her words.

Sujata is subjected to humiliation in her home because her presence is ignored. She is not consulted in fixing the date of the betrothal ceremony of her youngest daughter Tuli and either the death or birth anniversary day of Brati is observed by none of the members of the family. Because, Tuli's engagement is decided to be celebrated on the day of Brati's birth and death anniversary. Sujata feels intensely alienated herself from the members of family at home... During the conversation

with Tuli she expresses her loneliness.

The hypocritical life led by the members of the family is revealed in the words of Sujata. The person who stands for the ideals like Brati and Sujata are subjected to alienation. Both these characters' are not contended with the conditions of the home. A reader can analyze the irrational discrimination to which Sujata is subjected at home. Sujata feels that she has failed as a mother. She is unable to understand Brati and his vision for which he is secretly languished and given his life. She embarks now on the mission to know her son better, to understand intricacies of the cause for which he has fought. With this intention she visits Somu's mother and Nandini. Sujata tries hard to come to terms with her loss. But it is a tough fight. She hardly find any sympathetic members of the house around her.

Grief brings the two mothers together. When Sujata meets Somu's mother, the crisis that envelops society comes to them. She is informed how her son has taken plunge into the revolution. The words of Somu's mother express her grief over the loss of her son.

Besides the grief, the other social ailment, gender discrimination is also highlighted. Much prominence is given to the boys in the family rather than the girls. It is a common feature of the patriarchal society. Somu is paid much attention. When they lose Somu it has become very difficult for that family to get survived. This gender discrimination reminds us the story of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande, where the protagonist Sara is discriminated by her own mother and her brother Dhruva is treated as a blessing into their family. Sara, being a girl she is considered as a burden to the family.

Her brother's birthdays are celebrated with much joy and fun, filled with rituals and rites when compared to her birthdays. She is treated as a second in preference and special attention is given to her brother.

Nevertheless, Somu's mother appreciates the honest commitment Brati has in the mission he has opted. Somu's mother is all praise for Brati who has sacrificed his life in order to save the lives of fellow comrades. Because, he has been there like an angel to save the other boys. Despite his efforts, the boys were killed in police encounter. Now for this, Sujata finds solace in the fact that though her son is criticized by the members of the family, as unworthy Naxalite, he is praised by the others.

She expects that he will confide to her all his secrets. She can hardly believe that her son is mature and grown up enough now to take part in such a big movement which demands skillful and strategic and manipulated plan of action. She is great introvert, and keep herself undisturbed by the external world. This indifferent and

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passive attitude to the external world has kept her in the world of ignorance, especially about her son's inclination towards the Naxalism, though she loves him so dearly and who is practically the succor for her existence amidst the material minded and selfish members of the family.

It is general perception in the society that father and mother play an important and equal role in bringing up their children. It is very ridiculous to see that when the children get spoiled, complete blame is thrown on mother.

Women have always been treated like beasts of burden and an object for pleasure. She remains calm as a sacrificial animal with moist eyes ready to accept whatever life has in for her. Her husband's accusation that she is responsible for Brati's death accelerates the process of ion of her psychological moorings. She now feels relieved of the burden of guilt she has all along been bearing. In such recognition what pains Sujata is the indifference shown by the people to the cause and to the sacrifice of youths like Brati, Neetu, Somu and the like.

Thus the play *Mother of 1084* can be read as the play, that attempts to explore the real home against the suppressive measures employed in the home, society as well as state level. Even in the play *Water of Mahasweta Devi*, she talks about the same situation. When the Dalits-Tribals raise their voice against injustice, against vicious landowners and money-lenders like the Pujari, are branded as Naxalites and tortured and ruthlessly encountered.

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