

# The Awakening of an Apolitical Mother in *Mother of 1084* by Mahasweta Devi

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Subaltern means, of inferior rank or status. Subaltern studies emerged around 1982 as a series of journal articles published by Oxford University Press in India. Scholars of the Subaltern focus on the terms of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture. There are a number of ways of approaching the subject. The Subaltern is a technical term for a certain kind of dispossessed person. It is a person who fits within the model of the oppressed and so marginalized. Those persons even do not have their voice against the people, who have possessed hegemonic power and they are dominating over them. The term Marginality is generally applied to interpret and analyses socio-cultural, political and economic spheres, where underprivileged people struggle to gain access to resources and equal participation on social life. Literature of Marginality is the literature that deals with the marginalized class of the world who is kept devoid of their fundamental rights to participate in the social, cultural, religious, political, educational and economic spheres of their lives and are kept aloof and alienated.

Mahasweta Devi [1926-2016] was an Indian Bengali fiction writer and social-political activist. She was a self-recognized communist and worked for the rights and empowerment of the tribal people of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states of India. Her notable works are including *Hajar Churashir Maa*, *Rudali*, *The Queen of Jhansi*, and *Aranyer Adhikar*, etc. She was honoured with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award, Jnanpith Award, Yashwantrao Chavan National Award, Bangabibhushan-the highest civilian award from the Government of West Bengal, Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Sahityabrama, and Ramon Magsaysay Award along with India's civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan.

The two classes of characters that have dominated Mahasweta Devi's stories and novels in the seventies are the mothers bearing the brunt of social and political oppression, and enduring and resisting with indomitable will; and the sensitive individual, initially apolitical, but with the strongest of ties binding him to a community, growing to the role of a leader of the people. She writes over 100 novellas

and short stories about the people of the poorest Indians. Her subjects were the cycle rickshaw puller and the bricklayer working on boiling city streets, farmers threatened by factories, peasant communist guerrillas wielding sickles against the State and impoverished wet nurses hired out to suckle wealthy babies.

Mahasweta Devi's one of the best novel is Hajar Churashir Maa. Mother of 1084 the play was translated by Samik Bandyopadhyay from the novel Hajar Churashir Maa. Hajar Churashir Maa [Mother of 1084] is a story of a mother, Sujata Chatterjee. In the title Mother of 1084, 1084 denotes the corpse number of the son of Sujata in the morgue. Her son name is Brati. Brati was brutally killed by the state because of his ideology of advocating the brutal killing of class enemies and collaborators. In this novel Mahasweta Devi sets her feelings against the dominants, those who are killing the urban Naxalities. A Naxal or a Naxalite is a member of any of the communist groups; they have raised their voice against the established order, and fought for the cause of the poor, exploited by the landlords, industrialists and the people, who have possessed hegemonic power in the society.

In this story, the mother Sujata, a traditional apolitical upper middle class lady. When the play starts in one early morning, she attends a call from an officer, who informs that her son, Brati is dead. The officer searches for the male voice, when Sujata attends the call. Here, Mahasweta Devi has brought out the dominance of the society on women. However, Sujata comes to know that she should go to kandapukur to receive her son's body. She is shattered by the news that her son is dead. He is Sujata's favourite son among her four children.

The father of Brati, Dibyanath Chatterjee does not bother about the death of his son. As soon as, he comes to know about the death of his son instead of going to police station he tries to hush up the news. Sujata is shocked by the unaffectionate behavior of her husband regarding their son, Brati. This shows the indifferent attitude of the family. At last Sujata is left alone, and then she rushes to kandapukur for getting her son's body. In this story, the narrator has introduced the character Dome. Dome is one of the untouchables who handle and cremate the dead bodies. Mahasweta Devi also reflects the real happenings of the society that how poor people are suffered because of the high class people.

Then Sujata meets the Incharge officer, she has signed the papers in order to get the body of her son, Brati. Sujata recognizes her son's dead body but there is no one near her to console, even though she has a family. It is a terrible moment for Sujata because she cannot get the body of her son, the body kept in the morgue, under the corpse number 1084. The story of the play is exposed two years later, when the family celebrates the engagement of Sujata's youngest daughter, Tuli. Mahasweta Devi denotes that it was the date of birth and death anniversary of Brati. The family members have forgotten the death of Brati completely, except the mother Sujata. Only two people are unable to forget Brati. One is his mother and another one is his lover and fellow fighter Nandhini. Nandhini also has been imprisoned and exposed to different forms of torture that left her physically and mentally drained.

Sujata feels that she fails in understanding her son, Brati. But, on the day before he dies, he spends his time with his mother, Sujata. As soon as, he comes to know about the betrayal of his friend, named Anindya, he leaves the house without telling anything to his mother. So, Sujata feels that even though she is very comfortable with her son, she does not understand him rightly, about the main cause of Brati's advocating for the poor people against the established order. Sujata plans to meet Somu's mother and Nandhini in order to know about her son in a deep manner. Somu is the friend of Brati and he is also dead.

Somu's mother informs about the betrayal of Anindya and the murder of Brati and his friends. Brati and his friends are served against the established order and lived revolutionary life. So they

are brutally killed by the Officers called Mob. Somu's mother also informs about Anindya, who has cheated Brati and his friends by giving information to the Officers. When Sujata comes home, she thinks about Brati's last day how he has passed the day with her. At the time Brati hints about the relationship that exists between his father and his typist but he is expressed it in a plain manner. This small action speaks volumes. As a mother Sujata is shocked by the words of her son, Brati. She shows herself that she doesn't bother about the illegal affair of her husband. But really Sujata is disappointed by her husband's illegal activities.

Sujata wants to know her son in a different light, so she prepares herself to meet his lover Nandhini. Nandhini is not only the lover of Brati but also a social reformer. She is also one among the group of Brati. Further, Sujata meets Nandhini. Nandhini tells about how they have been betrayed and trapped by the officers. No one suspects Anindya because he acts like a true reformer. Nandhini also tells about how she has tortured in the prison severely. But their revolution changed nothing even after the death of many beings. The rich are smug and complacent while the atrocities are being meted out to the poor. She also tells that she loved Brati very much. As soon as Brati comes to know about the betrayal of Anindya, he has rushed to Somu's house to inform his friends to be safe, without concerning himself. At last all of his friends with him have shot by the Officers. Even two years later, when the play takes place Sujata mourns for Brati. Many people are invited by the family for the engagement of her youngest daughter Tuli and one of them is the Incharge officer, Saroj Pal. She becomes emotional on seeing him, because he is the person who has relegated her as the mother of 1084. She meets Brati's close accomplice and tries to justify Brati's actions and his revolutionary mentalities. Throughout the story, Sujata is portrayed as a strong woman who fought against the odds. She is advised to forget her son, as people like her son are, what are often called cancerous growth on the body of democracy.

The final sequence is the emotional outburst of Sujata to the audience over the emotional inequality and the brutality of the violence in the name of the control of Naxalites who is only aim for equality among the rich and the poor. All her questions are directly towards the society and its people. She addresses the audience that Speak! Speak! Speak! How long will you endure in silence? to the society. She has expressed her complete rage towards the society because, many mothers have lost their sons during the revolution and they have taken revolt only for the welfare of the society. But the people in the society are not ready to support them. She points the audience as the corpses and stiffened corpses. She has delivered her powerful speech towards the audience. So, Mahasweta Devi signifies the importance of the awakening of the society through the speech of the mother Sujata. The play ends with the terror awakening of an apolitical mother in front of the society.

Mahasweta Devi was an ardent fighter and her weapons were fiction and her political writings. She is well known for her prolific writings. Mahasweta Devi is not only known for her political writing style but her immense contribution towards communities of landless labourers of eastern India where she worked for years. Her intimate connection with these communities allowed her to understand and begin documenting grassroots-level issues, thus making her a socio-political commentator of the marginalized community.

Devi's writings are straightforward with her approach to talking about the lived experiences of the marginalized. Her language is simple – an ironic juxtaposition to the complexity of the issues she talks about. In fact, it is precise because she is talking about complex realities that she uses simple language to reach the reader.

Her fiction allows the reader to look at cultural practices, social institutions, identity formations, sexual roles and how they operate in spaces with different power dynamics. Mahasweta Devi was awarded the Padma Shri, not for her work as a writer but as an activist working with the tribal

groups of the Purulia and Medinipur districts of West Bengal. On the Whole, Mahasweta Devi has expressed her powerful voice through her work Hajar Churashir Maa [Mother of 1084].

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