



“Tribal as Surreal in, Mahasweta Devi stories “Salt and Hunt”.

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Abstract;

This research is analysis of the concern for the tribal Indian society embedded in Mahasweta Devi writings, selectively. The analysis used is descriptive approach from Mahasweta Devi important work. The purpose of this study is to find out how tribal men and women, suffered under the hands of upper class men, generally, and , particularly, society. The research method is descriptive qualitative and uses a literature study design. Data is taken from various sources; stories, novels, of Mahasweta Devi, and articles and others. Researchers use literature study because researchers indirectly analyze stories and novels. Researchers choose some stories as data source. The research shows how the tribal, suffered by the upper class Indian society.

Keywords ; tribal as Surreal in, Mahasweta Devi stories “ Salt and Hunt”.

Introduction;

There are many writes in India to expose the richness of Indian culture, tradition, art, socio- Economic life condition, the geographical beauty etc In Indian writing in English we can see many writers who frankly are trying to show the Indianness in their writings. Among these Indian writers Mahasweta Devi is dominant and efficient writer to show the culture and tradition of India. She not shows the richness of Indian culture and tradition but also shows the dark side of the tribal, oppressed and female suffering in her writings.

Findings and Discussion;

The term tribal was taken over by anthropologists from ordinary use and like all such terms it has a variety of meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary two definitions of tribe are;

1. A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor.
2. A race of people frequently applied to a group of primitive people, especially aggregation, under a chief or headman.

According to Everyman's Encyclopaedia .(Vol. Xii, P.44) “ Tribe is generally used to denote group of primitive or barbarous clans under recognized chiefs”.

Volume II of Subaltern Studies (P.319) defines tribe in the following way; A number of local lineages are combined into a number of villages united in a regional confederacy defines the tribe. These tribal communities do not possess a state appearance or distinctly identifiable political structures differentiated from the social group at large.

The tribal groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the national population. The term ‘Adivasis’ has recently become current to designate these groups.

The typical characteristic of tribe includes a common name, a contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a tradition of common descent. In general, the term was applied to people who were considered primitive, lived in backward area and did not know the use of writing, sometimes it was considered synonymous with the term race.

Many people conceive of tribal society as being in state of total anarchy. In reality this is far from the truth and many tribal societies have well established systems of government. On the other hand there are certain tribal societies which do lack government in the ordinary sense of the term this survivor must not be taken to mean that they exist in a state of anarchy. Here the social system is maintained by a balance of powers and by other institutional mechanism.

The largest concentration of tribal population anywhere in the world except perhaps Africa, is in India. There are 613 tribes which inhabit all over India. The tribal population in India can be demarcated in three tribal zones; North- Eastern, central and Southern. The north- eastern zone consists Sub-Himalayan region and the mountain ranges of north-eastern India. This zone is inhabited by tribes like the Gurung, Limbu, Garo, Khasi, Naga and others.

Mahasweta Devi deals mainly with the tribes of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. the chief tribes which figure in her fiction are Santhals, Kherias, Bhils, Mundas, Oranons, Agariyas, Gondas, Kol and Lodhas.

The major theme of Mahasweta Devi's fiction is that of exploitation. She deals with the tribals focusing on how they adopt strategies and struggle for their survival amidst their suppression by various agencies. Agencies such as the feudal system, the political system, the caste system, the police system, the bureaucratic system, etc, combine as a force of victimise the tribals and are out for lower- caste blood.

“Salt” is a story written to express the deep anguish over a commodity that is consumed by a man irrespective of his/ her status. Violence in turn is suggested the only way out. The story is set in 1960s, in a tribal village named Jhujhar, situated in the lap of the Palamau Reserve forest right next to the Koel river. The story “salt”, is translated in English by Sarmishta Dutta Gupta and was published by Sahitya Academy, New Delhi .Story, Solt is set in Jhujhar, a tribal village along the palamau reserve forest in year following the emergency and the defeat of the Congress in the subsequent elections. It represents the plight of the tribals, deprived of the arable forest land by the Hindu traders who came there after the Kole Revolt 1831. when the story begins the entire villages is shackled into forced labour without wages by the landlord Uttamchand. The tribals live off the forest unaware of their right to a share of the crops on the land they till, until a new minister takes power after the election in 1977.

The “organized youth”, with Purti Munda, challenge Uttamchand and decree that the tribals must receive half the share of the crops. By way of revenge. Uttamchand decides to deprive the tribals of salt, a basic cheap commodity;

The people of Jhujhar come for their weekly market to Palani or Muru. All the grocery shops of these two markets belonged to Uttamchand. He said “Let them have a taste of saltless gruel. Such ingratitude after being fed by me for so long!”

Salt, by Mahasweta Devi stands as a potent story that explores the terrible reality that the oppressed Kol tribe must endure, utilizing Kanta as a symbol of resiliency and rebellion against a system of oppression. With the backdrop of salt production, the narrative deftly examines themes of oppression, exploitation, and the pursuit of justiceThe story illustrates the contradictory relationship between resources necessary for life and their potential for exploitation using the metaphor of salt.

Kanta's story serves as an example of the resilient spirit of the oppressed and motivates everyone to fight together for justice and empowerment. Beyond personal challenges, Mahasweta Devi's provocative story offers a deep commentary on larger social themes such as environmental degradation, economic inequity, and the transforming power of solidarity.

In this story Mahasweta Devi focuses on these main themes which are monster of tribal people. They are Exploitation and Oppression: .Resilience and Defiance: Injustice and Inequality: Symbolism of Salt: Struggle for Justice: .Empowerment and Solidarity: .Impact of Environmental Exploitation.

The story "Hunt" figures in Imaginary Maps by Mahasweta Devi (1995). It centres around the annual hunting festival, most popular festival of the tribals of Bihar. The first part of the story shows the peaceful tribal life in the village Kuruda. Even with the decolonisation the exploitation has not come to a halt. The forests, which once belonged to tribals, are now converted into estate owned by a few rich landlords. They exploit the poor tribals as bonded labour, maids to run the homes and low wage labourers. Mary Oraon is one such victim of exploitation though she refuses to be a victim at the end of the story. Mary's mother Bikhani was employed by an Australian planter, Dixon, on his estate to look after the bungalow. The colonial masters left the area after the independence. However, in 1959 Dixon's son came to this place to sell the bungalow and he impregnates Bikhani and deserts her. That's why Bikhani's daughter, Mary Oraon, does not look like a tribal though she is one. Prasadji is the new owner of the estate and Mary Oraon works there in place of her mother Bikhani. Mahasweta Devi captures Mary's deftness in work at Prasadji's estate. The second part of the story marks the onset of the mainstream mechanised and industrial exploitation of tribal people. The area is planted with Sal trees by the Britishers. The tribals never calculated the economic value of these Sals. But Prasadji's son, Banwari, brought a contractor, Tehsildar Singh, to cut and ferry these precious sals. The poor tribals are hired by the contractor to fell 'Sal' trees. They are paid twelve annas daily for men. Women are paid eight annas for trimming the branches. Only Mary understands the tricks of the broker. She embodies the love of tribals. She tries to advise Prasadji and other village headmen, but to no avail. They were bribed by the broker. She said, "twelve annas and eight annas! No porter carried gentlemen's case for this price." (9) Banwari and Tehsildar knew well that these Sals belong to Government, still they illegally cut the trees. Government machinery is so corrupt that the illegal action never comes to light. The virgin forests are ruined by the greed of the rich, and the poor tribals who are compelled to cut the trees out of need, are held responsible for deforestation

The story "Hunt" also focuses on violence and sexual harassment- the much used male hegemonic act to subdue and control women. The story is about the revolt of a half tribal girl, Mary Oraon, against gender oppression. She is vulnerable more because of her looks and personality but she reverses the role generally ascribed to females and counters her exploiter through her physical power. The ecological exploitation of tribals' natural resources and sexual exploitation of their women go hand in hand. But Mary preserves the both- the natural resources as well as dignity of tribal women-by killing the oppressor.

Methodology;

The research is designed to obtain Mahasweta Devi's concern about tribal and marginalized people of the society. The design of this research is library research. According to George "library research is not a mystery or a lucky dodge, but an investigation you control from start to finish, even though you can't usually tell what sources you will discover". The data are taken from selected stories, novels, articles, and etc. the method in this study is qualitative by using library research

Conclusion;

There are many reasons of the tribals being exploited and oppressive such as their ignorance, superstitions, illiteracy, helplessness, government rules and bureaucracies, negligence, police- landlord nexus, etc. The exploiting forces take the advantages of the tribal's bad conditions and make the tribals suffer in the clutches of the moneylenders. The exploitation is not for one generation it was therefore, it is there now and it will be remain in future also. The tribals have to toil all their life to repay either a meagre loan or handful of Paddy which their forefathers had received from the present money lenders forefathers. "My great Grand fathers took a bit of Paddy from him and I still give him free labour to repay that debt....."

Mahasweta Devi fiction projects human predicament, especially of the destitute. Her fiction assumes importance not only for presentation of ideology but also for it deals with the plight of the impoverished. The poor inevitably lead a life of hardships. The causes are their bad financial condition and upper caste/ class exploitation. Their own illiteracy, ignorance and helplessness aggravate their predicament. Life for them is not beautiful. In spite of their troubles and difficulties tribal's have found their means of entertainment. On some occasion's men and women drink and dance, without discrimination. Tribal men and women can drink and smoke beedi together. Thus in the perennial burdensome life they often find some moments of joy and fun.

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