

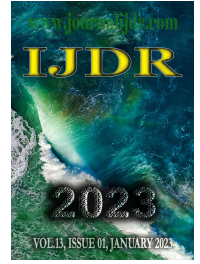


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TRIBAL WOMEN: THE GAME OF HUNT IN THE STORY "THE HUNT" BY MAHASWETHA DEVI

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ABSTRACT

Mahasweta Devi, a prominent academic, has hailed her outrageous, powerful narratives of the exploitation and suffering of women as excellent sources for feminist discourse. Her inventive language use has widened the traditional boundaries of Bengali literary expression. She is possibly the most prominent socially committed writer because she was at the crossroads of critical modern concerns such as politics, gender, class, and caste. Devi tells the story of the tribal women's exploitation, or the game of hunting, which is the main focus of this story. At the same time, Devi does not simply project the suppression of these women and also how these women revolt or protest in a very significant manner against all the injustices and inequalities. In "Imaginary Maps", by Devi, is not restricted to some particular state in India but can always expand the geographical domain to Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and West Bengal and even move beyond to India or anywhere. The Subaltern, or the oppressed people, lives on one side of India. The central character, Mary Oraon, in the story "The Hunt" has mixed parentage: an Australian man and a tribal woman. India's indigenous tribes are located in the lowest strata of the strictly demarcated caste society. According to Mahasweta Devi, The struggles of decolonization are fundamentally cultural and there exists the tension between myths and rituals of the indigenous tribes and the pervasive modernity of national bureaucracy and the multinational capitalism that penetrates even the most remote regions of the Indian subcontinent. (126)

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INTRODUCTION

Tribal women, both in the pre and post-independence periods, have been given inadequate recognition. The traditional image of Indian womanhood, whether the socially secure and independent image of Aryan women or the sheltered and protected image of the purdah-clad mediaeval women, does not include the grim realities that constitute the life of tribal women. Tribal women are the class indulgence, always to be oppressed and exploited sexually, that is, physically, mentally, economically, and even culturally. The subordination of tribal women operates at various levels, the first of which lies in the very terms of discourses that are decidedly mainstream in Devi's stories, such as "Breast stories", "Outcast" and "Till death do us part". The traditional notions associated with women's roles, their social position and responsibilities, and their privileges, economic, political, and sexual, are determined and judged from the dominant cultural perspectives, which are opposed to the ideals of tribal traditions. The tribal woman's independence, for instance, is misread as very often as unimportance or even immorality, her resourceful handling of nature is seen as witchcraft; and her fearlessness is translated as a criminal best of mind. Obligated to face the double jeopardy of being women and also tribal, the tribal women have to contend with images, one of

which presents them as "bright and comely" but "hopelessly immoral". Mahasweta Devi provides representation to the subaltern women in the socio-political domain of the nation where the impact of materialism and greed intrude into the mental and physical geography of the margins that are poor and exploited tribal women. In her acceptance speech at the Magsaysay award, Devi says,

"my India still lives behind the curtain of darkness, a curtain that separates the mainstream society from the poor and the deprived. But then why India alone? As the century comes to an end, we must make an attempt to tear the curtain of darkness to see the reality that lies beyond and see our true faces in the process".

As a result of socio-cultural disagreements that began in nineteenth-century India, female writing has emerged and developed. Women's liberation has caused more turmoil both internationally and locally, and in India, reformers Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar are credited with helping the cause of women's liberation. The portrayal of tribal women's plight is a consequence of the women's situation in India. The study is necessary because women are the foundations of humanity, accounting for nearly half of the world's population; the various aspects of their socioeconomic lives play a significant role in their fate. As a result of socio-cultural disagreements that began in nineteenth-century India, female writing has emerged and developed. Women's liberation has caused more

turmoil both internationally and locally, and in India, reformers Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar are credited with helping the cause of women's liberation. The portrayal of tribal women's plight is a consequence of the women's situation in India. The study is necessary because women are the foundations of humanity, accounting for nearly half of the world's population; the various aspects of their socioeconomic lives play a significant role in their fate. The female characters in Devi's works are stronger when compared to men. Devi's stories are the study of centuries of violence and degradation wrought on women. She records women's retaliation toward subjugation, which becomes a means of eventual liberation, as well as awful stories of women physically imprisoned in traditional assumptions of femininity, oppressed by a specific ideology. Her tribal woman turns herself from a survivor to a subject role with the strength of her belief and brings about a metamorphosis in her life after enduring constant degradation at close to socioeconomic and political levels through physical, emotional, and psychological abuse.

Modernity and Objectifying: "The Hunt" depicts the Oraontribals' experiences and tribal life in post-independence times. The setting of the story is at GomoDaltonganj in Jharkhand, where "trains stopped at this station once upon a time." The expense of a train stop may be too much. It is ironic and it shows that once upon a time a train stopped here, but for one or the other reason, now it doesn't stop here. Devi explains

It gasps as it climbs. It is a low hill. After a while, the train enters a ravine. On both of the smile ravine, there are blasted stones. There is a bamboo thicket on the hill and occasionally the bamboo bends in the wind and hits the train."(61)

It shows that it was before electrical trains, when it was only steam engines. Mahasweta Devi try to provide every bit information in this story: it is a low hill, the train enters a ravine, on both sides of the ravine coal mines are there and the seasoned bamboo trees are bent and they hit the train. Mahasweta Devi depicts further,

Tohri is also a coal halt. The train picks up coal. There are surface collieries all around. In these parts, low-grade coal is to be found almost above ground. (61)

After Khurda next station is Tohri, here train picks up coal and in these parts are low-grade coal is easily available but the real benefactors are the timber brokers or agents because it is a Sal growing area, so Sal trees are illegally cut down and sent in every direction. Thori is always busy. The last line in this paragraph is interesting because it tells about the commercial position between Tohri and Kuruda. Kuruda is only a place where tribes live and there is hardly any commercial activity it is more abandoned and away from the public gaze and nobody cares.

Instead of maintaining the dichotomy between economic and ecological "health," material ecocriticism adds a third piece to the discussion: the well-being of our material bodies—both as agents and as small-scale, mobile environments in their ownright. (P.g.2)

On the other hand, Tohri is being a junction is full of activity, profit, business, and commercial, it is an experience to watch trains move on the hilltop and distant villages. These villages see this every day and may never end; this tells us about the innocent people they hardly have many things surprises in their life so the train itself is a kind of wonder. Ravine swallows the train suddenly the nature of the geography there lost when the train moves, the nature like ravine, hill, and bamboo all are disappeared, if we reached the top of the hill elephants are eating bamboo from very distance elephants become toy elephants, here Mahasweta Devi tells us natural kind of boundary like Sal trees, bamboo, and elephants all are destroying by human but only kuruda itself survive themselves but because of the trains and materialistic tendencies of the merchants, bureaucrats, brokers all others took benefits from nature and destroyed the natural sources. This story is about Kuruda, where tribal people lived far away from all the comforts of the city and public gaze, just in the laugh of

nature, their life is mechanical and routine only some of the annual festival they celebrated

"When Mary Oraon comes up, she looks at the train, as the passengers look at her if they see her. Eighteen years old, tall, flat-featured, light copper skin. Usually, she wears a prin sari. As she looks at the train, so the passengers look at her if she catches their eye. At the distance she looks most seductive, but up close you see a strong message of rejection in her glance".(Pp-62)

After three or four paragraph writer introduced the protagonist of the story Mary Oraon, she comes up looks at the train as passengers look at her this is the interesting thing look at the train the passengers look at her that means she is exceptional in what way she is 18 years old, she is raw in her youth, very sharp quiet tall light of skin, that is also common in tribal woman, they are generally black, usually, she wears a print sari, we understand she is not perfectly a tribal woman, she has the white blood as well as the blood of a tribal so she combines color and physical features also from both the father and mother. The word seductive means she is an object for many people, if you come closer you will find out that you cannot take her easily, take up granted rather she would present before you a strong message of rejection in a glance. It means don't try to you come very closer, advantage otherwise you will be the end or you will face a kind of a problem. Mary has that kind of mental, moral guts, and integrity.

Exploitation

The concept of subaltern in the words of Liza Chakravarty

"It contains the groups that are marginalized, oppressed and exploited on the cultural, political, social and religious grounds" (P.g. 2)

The reader cannot call Mary is a tribal girl, because when whites come to Kuruda for timber plantation, but whites left India after independence, Mary's mother Bhikni worked in Dixon's bungalow when Dixon's son came to India in 1959, sold forest, everything that time Bhikni and Dixon's son made love that time Mary born but Dixon's son went to Australia. The title of the story is "The Hunt" it is the son of Dixon hunting her, it is the sexual hunt. Bhikni gave up Christianity, this is another kind of colonization, British come here they forced to speak English, Prasad came to Dixon bungalow to live, he forced Bhikni to change religion. GayatriChakravortySpivak in her article questioned like this about women,

"How do "Third World women," "women of color," "Indigenous communities," "First Nations," migrant and diasporic peoples and their knowledges shape postcolonial, decolonial, and feminist scholarship and practices? Such questions are the proper concerns of both postcolonial and decolonial critics and activists".(pg.516)

In the story "Douloti the Bountiful," Douloti becomes forcefully an urban prostitute. Readers can see different kinds of exploitation here, Dixon's exploitation of Bhikni sexually, physically and Prasad exploited her religiously, tribal cannot do anything of their own. Mary doing her works in Prasad's bungalow as a cowherd and sells custard apple and guava in the market, she is very loyal to the owner but she is not an employee there, she just lives there and she helps her mother, marked the kind of devotion and the commitment that the tribal people offer, we hardly value this quality and she was a great bargainer, she used to do all this for Prasad, she used to carry all the vegetables and fruits and board the train to Tohri market to sell this and get the best price for Prasad. GayatriChakravortySpivak in the essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" wrote:

The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as a pious. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribe task which she must not disown with a flourish. (308)

Mahasweta Devi is telling us about this extraordinary kind of character Mary that she is just not tribal and difference become

especially interesting and challenging for her that she is a kind of a bastard, she is an outsider because in her community she is also seen as an outsider. She has a very upright kind of character she is 18 years only and extremely conscious about her self-dignity. and she doesn't have love any kind of anybody if anybody tries to take a liberate and advantage and interesting again that she is a very loyal to the owner and she knows what is the right thing and she already has committed with Muslim boy another very kind of an interesting thing development that is taking place she decided to marry Muslim boy out of her community. Mahasweta Devi telling us about this wanted to understand that all this castism sense of Hindu -Muslim or any such kind of a difference is just artificial what matters most is who cares for you, who will give you the desired kind of respect and she has been an extremely hardworking girl. Marry looks after the bungalow of Mr. and Mrs. Prasad and Mrs. Prasad said she can marry her gardener son, she understands the meaning of thereby so she says very clearly that you need to captive my life that is not going to allow. why not marry a Muslim boy because your brother sayings she wanted to keep me so she is very bright, she can speak very boldly to the face so on this comes from a sense of beautifulness, she is so honest, she doesn't have any reason to fear anybody and everybody is afraid of Mary she cleans house and feeds the cattle constitution of infinite energy look at that Mahasweta Devi says infinite energy, endless ability to work and she is full of life, she is an illiterate woman but her mind is razor-sharp and she knows her rights she picked up the fallen fruits now she is the absolute owner of then she knows that how to get her things she is demanding Mrs. Prasad to dressed well.

How she used to make mixes other people in the community and she is a little bit pained when the tribal community doesn't ask her not to move around in the dark or not marry a Muslim mark that she sits at any Oraon house in the village, she prepared food eating with the community people and she knew that she is going to marry Jalim. She is very conscious all the time but community people treated her now as an outsider there now she is searching for her identity this is very important wherein the story Mahasweta Devi telling us that we might try to suffocate torture then but we come to in asserting once dignity, once identity well tribal woman perhaps it is not just lagging sometimes we even might find out these kinds of girls taking the beaten in their hands she would have a rebel in the hand so she is very conscious about own liberty and freedom. She would not be accepted what the Oraon family said you can't marry Jalim because Jalim is a Muslim and yet see the dichotomy, paradox, pain innermost heart where longing to be part of the Oraons, this is the sense of belonging she said I belong to the Oraons, her destiny has put her in a marginalized situation she is not properly a tribal woman neither an Australian she wouldn't have been very glad she was 13 or 14 force her to marry, she would have gone happily with any of the Oraon boys if this happens when she was hardly beginning of the teens but now she is in 18 years old young woman who can understand many things, analyze, decipher and now there is a pain when people in her community makes a difference between them and her, she is not just like they, her life goes on in the story but one-day something happens this becomes turn in her life as well as in Kuruda Village.

"So goes Mary's life. Suddenly one day, stopping the train, Collector Singh descends with Prasadji's son, and Mary's life is troubled, a storm gathers in Kuruda's quiet and impoverished existence".(Pp-66)

A collector Singh, comes there along with Prasad's son, and Mary's life is troubled and a storm also comes to in Kuruda so this is going to be a real challenge to them what is happening to them. Suddenly another leaf is too added. The Sal trees are our offered very lucrative kind of an opportunity for these commercial people and these Sal are not do of the solution in the particular but they joined the Sal area for the time they grow immense and ready for felling, Prasad doesn't know the value of real Sal and least bothered about the environmental issue so Mahasweta Devi's story "The Hunt" is not just hunting of women it is a kind of sexual, physical, mental, psychological, commercial and natural hunt or different kind of exploitation. Now he knows the price of Sal, he goes to sell the trees of highest price,

Prasad is an outsider because he comes from Ranchi for him all the Sal means money so he is not attached any important thing what might happen to the environmental balance if all the Sal felt and taken away now one thing find out that Sal can be sold for a very good price he wants them to be sold and his son is another such man, who is least bothered about the life of tribes, environment so now he brought a kind of an agent Lalchand and Mulniji, forest officers and Prasad's son Banvari all are greedy people Sal tree business took initiative position by Banvari. The collector wants to cut all the Sal trees and sold them but he doesn't want to do anything good to the Kuruda village people or tribes, improve their local culture nothing, they start negotiating prices says how can I sell Sal such a price then he decided two names a proper price where he wants to sell.

Here, Mr. Prasad not to sell them at a high price because after all number of things have to be done, they have to be e felt, it is cut into pieces and transported all these involve a lot of money but one thing understand that it without any effort they are getting more money because used natural Sal tree area, natural fruits, vegetables etcetera. Prasad and Lalchand things if the collector went what is the use of Sal trees, birds, bats, in the forest only leaves and a flower without fruit what is the use of this tree so selling is the only good method. Prasad didn't find big Sal trees in his land because he didn't made effort to labor all or natural trees. The collector not only buy natural Sal trees include in all Sal trees in that area this is the very spirit generally in the colonizer mind and it is the perfect colonization, which means colonize everything to control everything, buy everything without any idea but the Sal tree given meaning to the tribal culture and environment, this is the thought of cress-cross mind so this is an opportunity to get money without doing work, the collector who comes and give offer simply money, this is the new idea for or young tribal men and women, here is an opportunity they can earn money without going out this man has come and he offers money simply doing something for these poor people, it shows another kind of poor people exploitation, the poor people hunted, here the broker tries to exploit Prasad and poor tribal people, Banvari son of Prasad who took money from the broker he didn't work anything, didn't understand his father like the collector, then Marry said to Prasad,

"Mary said, "He's greedy now. He'll come again in five years. Then he'll bargain for three or two rupees. And he'll have to give. Otherwise, how will he get an outsider here?"(Pp-69)

This is very interesting and ironic a tribal woman, who has hardly going to any privileged School or having education, talking about doing business properly and earning money and for whom did she is doing for her the employer and for her mother, because she is not the employee to Prasad so that is what Mahasweta Devi is perhaps stressing here that it looked at the simplicity, intelligence, and maturity the involvement of these poor people, look at the wisdom of Mary, she tells to Prasad if there is no Road any business, job what will happen it shows the ground reality of this tribes, forced to live and accept the hard life, she turns towards the broker side she revealed brokers mind and nature to everyone but collector did not forget her and he said "How pretty," he said. "You look like HemaMalini."

Here actually collector Singh miss judge Mary, he thought Mary is just like any other tribal woman and he can make any liberty with her, just miss behave with her, the collector thought at least he is in successful in drawing Mary. Singh trying to do, and he least bothers who is Mary here we can see the robustness, rude that is the spirit of Mary we have to understand when these poor people exploited, again and again, the rebellious spirit yelling up want an outlet because nature, tribal women exploited how much don't know. Prasad said to Banvari, Mary lived like a daughter in the house, Banvari told to collector she is not a good woman because her marriage fixed with Muslim, look at here there is no name for the boy, but the contractor reply she shouldn't find a tribal boy, it is another way of little her because she is an object of choice, because if anyone went outside to marry, people didn't accept as natural. Singh trying to do something, and he is least bother about who is Mary here we can see the

robustness, rude that is the spirit of Mary we have to understand when these poor people exploited, again and again, the rebellious spirit yelling up want an outlet because nature and tribal women exploited how much don't know.

The Hunt: However, Devi's story "The Hunt" demonstrates that hunting is cruel not only to animals but also to tribal women who are hunted by white colonial officers. Jim Corbett, a colonial white man, was a tiger hunter, not a tribal woman hunter. The other writer from Tamil, PuliMurugan, is a second Corbett in hunting; he hunts social inequality in the tribal people's society. Prasad said to Banvari, Mary lived like a daughter in the house, Banvari told to collector she is not a good woman because her marriage fixed with Muslim, look at here there is no name for the boy, but the contractor reply she shouldn't find a tribal boy, it is another way of treated her very lower level because she is an object of choice, because if anyone went outside to marry, people didn't accept as natural. Mary said don't become over smart you have come to kuruda and you think you are a hero but I have come across people like you at the market of Tohri. Even Banvari, the branch head he could understand, what exactly collector What Mahasweta Devi is trying to tell us about construct just imagine who has come here is a contract has come to Kuruda village for making a profit and suddenly when he saw Mary 18-year-old tribal woman exceptionally sharp and good looking, and collector thinks he could fell Sal trees and Mary, just refuse his offer and go to the Muslim, it shows that no choice, no freedom, and no dignity nothing, collector brought sari for Mary because he taught this poor person, if we offer them present, well they can easily seduce.

Mary didn't accept any gift from these people including Jamil, this shows the collector miss judge her, here is the collector thinking himself very smart very shrewd, and do anything with these people and it is insulted before them because Mary threw sari on him or a tribal woman. It shows that she is so confident and sure about what she is doing, we can see through the Desire of the collector, it is hardly any scope really e a challenge her and it was so unexpected and sudden for the collector and even he couldn't respond properly, it could be a great leg down of the collector's prestige before of everybody, tribal elder suggested to the collector don't give anything to her. Mahasweta Devi is not just talking about Mary as unexceptional but tribes also have their dignity and especially they are very sensitive when comes to the women honor, the collector completely strained to seduce Mary. Tribes protecting their women by the outsiders and that is the beauty Mary completely Oraon or not completely but if an outsider comes and says anything which is not proper well the entire community Stands beside her and the collector suddenly a sense of insecurity everyone has machete that he could understand better that is he couldn't say anything but the collector rises a question about Mary's character.

"The third important point in the story or twist is, the tribes celebrate at the Spring festival is for the women to perform this year. For twelve years men run the hunt. Then comes the women's turn. Like the men, they too go out with bow and arrow. They run in forest and hill. They kill the age hogs, rabbits, birds, whatever they can get. Then they picnic together, drink liquor, sing, and return home in the evening. They do exactly what the men do. Once in twelve years". (Pp-73)

We need to understand and know that in the tribal community, they celebrate different festivals with joyfulness, cheerfulness, and also with equal devotion, after 12 years they got a turn, what is that 12 continuous years men did the hunt but the particular day is fixed they would be hunting, it is the practice now in Ayodhya but 2 years back they stopped this activity because of some environmental issues might be. Twelve years continuously it would be the turn of men because they are the dominating agenda after 12 years come to the turn for women now the whole situation will be reversed just like the man to go with the bow and arrow they running forest and hill they kill rabbits, Fox. Mahasweta Devi tells us it might be 12 years, perhaps at least they have windows for the women too where the cycle terms and now the women take the lead, they come to the forest and become

hunters and hunting they come to the center and the men go to the periphery. This is a kind of culture for them; everybody enjoys and part of the festival, depending on the age they played certain kind of work quite happily. They don't know why they hunt but do they hunt every moon day, but it is a kind of lovely ritual and tradition these tribes have celebrated and Mahasweta Devi is perhaps bringing to us this kind of ritual, ceremony life of the tribal and suggesting that we might think ourselves to be superior much better in all different areas of life but perhaps the tribes offers us an opportunity where gender equality can be settled. Another way, the forest is empty because of deforestation, modern activity, and the hunting game also been meaningless and useless.

Mahasweta Devi brings particularly the effect of the collector to seduce Mary, in one line we learned the real hunt that women can do and side by side yet there is another hunting on Mary by the collector, he is continuous, single-mindedly with all his focus following Mary, she can analyze everything to take a proper decision because Mary knew everything about people mentality if Jalim knows everything about it that collector who came to the village and he is doing everything for Mary why she didn't tell anything to Jalim because she is afraid the collector uses money, men might just bring about the false case and just input prison Jalim that Mary cannot do allow, it would be a great defeat if the collector fails to hunt Mary, now gradually the momentum has built and the collector once catches hold up that desired target. Mary returning from the market on the way she used to sing a song in her rhythm normally tribal has their rhythm a kind of repetition and most importantly they are very happy. On the way, Mary was scared a kind of moved off the collector towards her it shows that when you lose your mind you know what you are doing, and after all, Mary knew that she is a woman and perhaps nobody near to might save her, so it is a kind of virtual wrestling between a woman and a potential molester, collector appearance in this scene like young and Hero, and Mary called him an animal, it is a very suggestive and very poignant metaphor, and now starting linking with it up this particular year women folk would be hunting. It is a lovely wrestling match going, earlier it was physical wrestling in which Mary defeated by collector somehow she could disengage herself and comes out of the physical grounds of his man and now it is mental wrestling that is started and very wisely cleverly Mary is leading this animal a kind of a trap she took a deep breath and said not today but on the day of the feast Mary is a good actress, she is very intelligently speaking on the logic at any an ordinary man would have believed and very subtly Mary is successful in convincing to the collector that it is serious, but speak very softly she is going to offer herself to the collector because of his lust, here Mahasweta Devi e trying to shows when you are in a battle use to keep war things in the backside if the situation demands you have taken two steps a back should come and then back with all energy to vanquish enemy this is what exactly Mary is doing successfully. Mahasweta Devi was used ritual as a weapon for contemporary resistance, she is not promoting women she also promoting tribal culture, where women would be hunting and men just lie in the hope there is a ritual in this ritual there is an opportunity of just resistance neglect the oppression Mary's just an act of killing her organ shooter, outsider, and sexual harasser, the wealthy Tahsildar comes from the city it is a clear statement of transcending and destroying and destroying the patriarchy that is corrupt what Mahasweta Devi doing in this story is she is telling here is a tribal woman, culture in which if you have that self-belief, determination to do to you can also turn the table on the so-called oppressor and exploiter moreover buy this react Mary challenged the dominant structure on the middle class by upper-caste hetero-normative femininity, and gender subjectivity and don't take it for granted.

CONCLUSION

Who would be a woman and who would suffer, don't accept this inferior position by lying low and Mary said these four trees are mine, fruit falls under their nobody can dare to touch them and finally, Devi reached the tribal women hunt Mary's murder over the shooter is indigenous practices this was another important point of tribal culture

but we say they are primitive people, we have always a tendency to downplay, inferior and age-old tradition and no need to follow them but indigenous practices have provided to them for dying ground off myths that can be deployed to come back temporary operations so no need to go outside for really e find a solution if the society is not providing you any true relief just it is justice well you deep into your own culture and tradition and then you could find perhaps the reason to defend yourself.

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