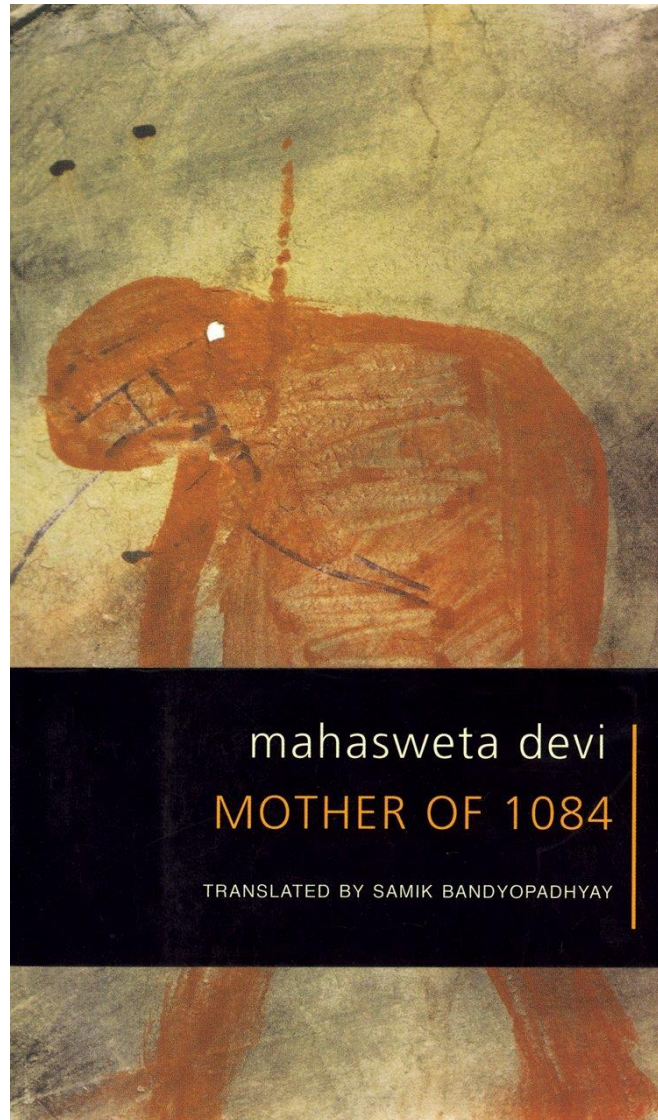


**Women's Identity in Patriarchal Society:
A Case Study of *Mother of 1084***

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Abstract

A woman plays an important role in family and society. She is always ready to help her children and family as per the norms established by society. Women's identity is constructed by the society and they have to live under this and with this. Women are considered weak and limited to cooking, eating and caring children as well as her family in patriarchal society. Mahasweta Devi is one of the famous writers of India; she depicted many

issues related to women and tribal society. In Mahasweta Devi's work, we can see these types of themes like suppressed women, exploited women and we also get the glimpse of patriarchal society etc.

The novel *Mother of 1084* was written by Mahasweta Devi in 1974. In this fiction Mahasweta Devi depicted a bourgeois woman, who lived in the male dominated family, as well as a lower class woman, who is the mother of Somu (a friend of Brati). He also died in Naxalbari movement.

This paper is an attempt to get a glimpse of the patriarchal society in the novel *Mother of 1084*, which is one of the famous novels of Mahasweta Devi. The paper also discusses the identity of women in this society. This paper identifies the hypocrisy of culture which imposes identity and roles to women.

Keywords: Patriarchal society, women identity, gender, Oppression, mother.

Mahasweta Devi

Mahasweta Devi was born in 1926, in Dhaka (modern Bangladesh). Many films like *Mother of 1084*, *Rudali*, etc. were based on Mahasweta Devi's works and she was also honoured with many awards such as the 'Gyaanpeeth Award', 'Sahitya Academi Award', 'Padmashree', 'Padma Vibhushan', 'Roman Magsaysay Awards', etc. She started her life as a teacher and journalist. In 1984, she left her job and started writing and working for the uplift of tribals. Mahasweta Devi raised her voice through her writings for "Lodhas" and "Shabar" (tribes of West Bengal) and also raised her voice against bonded labour in Jharkhand and South-Bihar. Most of the themes of her writings were about poor people and against discrimination of tribal people of India. Mahasweta Devi's first novel *Jhansi ki Rani* was published in 1956. In this novel she has mentioned the bravery of India's 'Veerangana' Rani Laxmi Bai. She tried to tell that the woman is not less than a man.

Identity of Women

When the women identity is discussed in the context of Mahasweta Devi, her works such as *Mother of 1084*, *The Breast Giver*, *Bayen*, *Sham Savere Ki Maa*, etc., draw our attention. With the "indomitable will", Mahasweta Devi depicts social and political atrocities

on women and their tolerance and struggle. Mahasweta Devi's parents were also writers, and her mother was also a social activist. She spent many years to address the social issues related to the Indian people. Like her mother, Mahasweta Devi was also writing with social concern and raised her voice against discrimination of women and tribal people. And she addressed the oppressed section of society through her works.

Portrayal of Patriarchy

Mahasweta Devi also portrayed the structure of the patriarchal system and how a woman struggles in male dominated society. Devi, throughout her life, wrote for the uplift of tribal people and women. Mahasweta Devi depicted unique patterns that represent women in her stories and novels.

Women are born free, but in the patriarchal society they were in chains. They are considered as wife, mother, sister and were always looked as inferior human beings. Women are not safe and free as men, and they have to live in the male dominated system. From the ancient times, men occupied superior status and women are considered less than a man and their primary duty is to bear children and take care of their family. They have to live according to their husband's choice. I have tried in this paper to explore the idea of suppressed woman in male dominated society based on the novel of Mahasweta Devi *Mother of 1084*, where the main character "Sujata" plays the role of those common women, who struggle within the male dominated system.

Mother of 1084

Devi's novel *Mother of 1084* explores the theme of women's suffering. This novel reveals the glimpse of the social structure of the patriarchal system. This novel portrays the upper-middle-class woman Sujata, whose world changed forever when she lost her son "Brati" in 1971 Naxalite movement. Mahasweta Devi was readily connected with social movements and gave assistance to needy people, including tribals and untouchables. In this novel, Devi depicts the problems of the suppressed women in the society as well as explores several mental and physical torments. This fiction focuses on a woman 'Sujata', who awakens one morning and heard a painful and shattering information that her son 'Brati' is found dead in Naxalite movement and the police were enquiring about a dead body of a Naxalite and her son's identity reduced to a numeral Dead-Body Number '1084.' Sujata could

not understand how her son became a Naxalite. Her son Brati's death brought her closer to her son and mother-son's strong relation became stronger. Throughout the whole novel Sujata Chatterjee is trying to understand her son Brati's death, who she loves the most. This journey leads Sujata to self-discovery, and she also feels for the cause of Brati's revolt.

Sujata in Calcutta

The novel *Mother of 1084* moves around the main character Sujata, lived in Calcutta. She belonged to a rich family. She was born in an affluent and conservative family. She was suggested that she complete her Bachelor degree so that it could help her marriage.

Sujata was married to Dibyanath Chatterjee, who was a chartered accountant. Sujata gave birth to two sons and two daughters in her thirty-four years of her married life. Brati was closer to her among all her children as well as with whom she shared a special relationship. One morning Sujata heard the news of her son Brati's death and police were enquiring about a dead body of Naxalite with Dead-Body Number 1084. Her son's mysterious death made Sujata shocked. Police called up Dibyanath Chatterjee to ask him to identify the dead body but Dibyanath the father of Brati refused to go there. He also stopped his other family member from doing so. But Brati's mother Sujata decided to go there, throwing all the false social constructions, which were made by the patriarchal system. Here in this novel Dibyanath Chatterjee, father of Brati, represents the male-dominated society. He negated her wife Sujata's motherly love and even he tried to hide the matter of his son's death and warned Sujata to close the matter about Brati's death and stopped to talk about Brati. He only focused on his reputation in society. Dibyanath had no interest in Sujata physical condition after she gave birth to her first child and he would not play the role of a father. Sujata knew about her husband Dibyanath's extra marital affair but she could not raise her voice. Sujata lived in a patriarchal society, where woman is considered as a sex object and as an object for reproduction. Women are not expected to express her own concern. Even Sujata could not express her grief and love for her son Brati after the death of his son in Naxalite Movement. She had to hide her grief in front of her husband Dibyanath, who only thought about his reputation in the society. Throughout the novel Mahasweta Devi portrayed the suffering of Sujata under her husband Dibyanath's dominant character.

Mahasweta Devi in her novel *Mother of 1084* portrayed the woman, who suffered throughout her life for her children's happiness but on the other hand her husband Dibyanath never cared about her feelings. Dibyanath considered himself superior in her house and did not give importance to others' feelings. Dibyanath's superiority impacted his children and they were nurtured and influenced by their father's qualities. But Dibyanath's wife Sujata could not change her children's way of life and her husband's superiority-domination over her. She also thought that everything must be done only after her husband Dibyanath's approval and nothing should go without her husband notice. Sujata had only her physical presence in her family, as the family was ruled by the two people Dibyanath and Dibyanath's mother. Sujata could not say the one word against her torments and oppressions. Even Sujata was doing a job in bank not for the sake of her freedom, but at that time her husband Dibyanath faced some financial problem. Dibyanath had extra-marital affairs with a girl, who was working as a typist in his office. Sujata never raised her voice against Dibyanath, because she was simply a victim of patriarchal society, which suppressed women and their feelings. Sujata was trapped into the conflict within herself, conflict between a silent objector and sympathetic mother. Sujata endured all shame and suffering with fortitude.

This novel brings to light Sujata's self-determination as she struggles for justice and freedom for her individual identity in male dominated system. After the death of her son Brati, Sujata realised that she had never known a part of her son's life that Nandini was her son's girlfriend. Before his death, Sujata thought that her son Brati shared everything with her. In this fiction, Mahasweta Devi portrayed women as object of pleasure. The main character of this novel Sujata is shown as a victim in the male dominated society. The novel also shows the victim trying to find out her individual identity.

Conclusion

In the novel *Mother of 1084* of Mahasweta Devi, we find several examples of patriarchal society as well as dominating male character such as Dibyanath. In this novel Sujata was always under the control of her husband Dibyanath and she had to live accordingly. Sujata suppressed her own voice and had to adjust to the domination of men. Mahasweta Devi explored the exploitation and harassment of women. In this fiction Mahasweta Devi portrayed Dibyanath's extra-marital affairs in his office with a typist and this showed that Sujata was the victim of male dominated society and patriarchal system.

Devi depicted women as the object of pleasure for men who dominate them and beings essential for the welfare of children and family. After the death of her son Brati, Sujata realized and recognized the torment imposed on her by her husband. But she suffered accepting this torment and domination within herself. She could not erase away these memories of torment but she saliently bore all these with patience. In this novel Sujata tried to understand her son Brati's mysterious death and in this journey, she realised her individual identity in the male dominated society.

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