

State Apparatuses in Mahasweta Devi's Drama Mother of 1084

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Abstract

This drama is about the search for self-identity of a mother in the search for the cause of the death of her son. In doing so, she comes to know the role of the State and Family in her sons' and her own life. Though this drama is set in the background of Naxalism, there are many themes in the drama that seeks the attention of the reader. Thus, in this paper, the theme of patriarchy, parenting, education, and State Apparatus (ideological and repressive State Apparatus) are discussed. The present research paper has given an outline of the novel Mother of 1084 written by Mahasweta Devi. Devi has, through her novel, rightly pointed out the deeply embedded concept of an ideology, patriarchy, gender, and power which are mainly responsible for the unequal and exploited plight of women in society. Women are exploited in multiple ways by society. They are outcasts from society. State, family, society, court, police, and all apparatuses are used to control women. All the time they are controlled either by the armed force or by ideological consent. Women are victims of society throughout history. And, this is rightly framed by Mahasweta Devi in her novel Mother of 1084.

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Introduction

The Marxist scholar Louis Althusser has divided State apparatuses into two categories. The first is the 'Repressive State Apparatus'(RSA) which is used to control society by using the penal system, police, court, hospitals, army, and force. The other one is the 'Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) which consists of religion, culture, family, education, etc. to control society by the consent of the people themselves. The state is an institution that controls society and its people in multiple ways. In RPA the force is used to control the subject. Whereas in 'Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) consent of subjects is taken in a subtle way to control their activities of themselves. The Subjects accept the ideology, which acts against them without knowing themselves. And, these two apparatuses are visible in Mahasweta Devi's drama 'Mother of 1084'.

Place of Women in the Society

Mahasweta Devi has written the drama Mother of 1084. She also wrote the novel by the same name and the subject. The number in the title of the drama indicates the corpse number

of Sujata's son Brati. The number strikes us again at the beginning of the drama. The first sentence uttered at the beginning of the drama is the number-460001. Through the number, it is clear that it is not important for a state that the corpse was once a living subject. The living thing is just has turned into a number. Anyone showing dissent against the state will be robbed of their identity and will be counted in numbers. In this drama, Mahasweta Devi has elaborated on the plights of the character Sujata and her son. She searches for the cause of the death of her son and comes to know the atrocities faced by her son and herself at the hand of the state and family power. In such a way through the search for her son's death, she recognized her position in society.

When drama begins Sujata receives a call and the voice on the other end asks for Dibyanath Chatterjee's house. The opening dialogue is very important to mark the condition of women at the home and in society.

Voice: Dibyanath Chatterjee's house?

Sujata: Yes

Voice: Who are you?

Sujata: (surprised) Mrs. Chatterjee.

Voice: Mrs. Dibyanath Chatterjee?

Sujata: Yes. Who are you?

Voice: Is there no male member around?

Sujata: Still sleeping. Who are you?

The question “Dibyanath Chatterjee’s house?” is posed in such a way, as if the house doesn’t belong to Sujata. And the same can be seen in Indian society where houses are named after the male member of the family. The women don’t own houses or lands before and after marriage, even though legally they are beneficiaries of the same. Even though the female is answering the call, the voice keeps asking about the male member of the family. Sujata keeps asking the question "who are you?" The Voice doesn't consider Sujata answerable or worthy to be answered. The Voice thinks that the information to be delivered is too sensitive for a woman to tolerate. Sujata’s answer “Still sleeping” inform about the status of women at the house where women have to get up before sunrise and perform household activities.

A reasonable person in the world is hardly accepted. Women have to perform the role designed by the common sense of society. Common sense is defined by the Italian Marxist intellectual ‘Antonio Gramsci’ (1891-1937). He says, Common Sense is the embedded, incoherent, and spontaneous beliefs and assumptions characterizing the conformist thinking of the Mass of people in a given social order.² It means that common sense may not be true, or it might be the experience of some few, but this particular experience is generalized and later bestowed on a whole society as the experience of all people of the society. Through this common sense, few or the ruling class benefit. Sujata challenges this idea of common sense. She complains about the acceptance of the person in society on some false assumptions. She says, if Brati had been like Jyoti, or a drunkard like Neepa’s husband Amit, or a hardened fraud like Tony, or had run after the typists like his father, he’d belonged to their camp.³ (imaginary communities where people having the same region, language, country, caste, class, race, etc. are gathered together but once their interest is changed they switch to the new group with new interest thus at a time they are having multiple identities. When there are clashes they drop particular at a particular time). The same could be said about families. Sujata says if Brati had been immoral, corrupt, and following common sense existing in society, he would have been accepted by the family, society, and the state. But he refused to do so and he becomes an outsider (Foucault’s mad people are an outsider in society) for a family and a threat to the state as he challenges the so-called law and common sense of the society.

There are many incidences in drama where the function of patriarchy could be seen. Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Indian society. It works beyond caste, class, and religion. India society was divided into four Varna, and women were considered in nowhere. It means half of the population has not been considered worthy of living and was exploited in every possible way. State and family work together for limiting the movements of women in public places. Dr. Babasaheb Aabedkar has said that ‘I count the progress of society based on the progress women achieved’. Parenting has remained a problem in society, where boys are always preferred and girls have to suffer in many ways. Girls are deprived of Education, freedom, health, and public places. They are considered property like other objects in the family. They cannot own the things at their father or husbands’ homes. At one point, when

Brati’s death is informed, Sujata asks Jyoti to take the car out to visit Brati, and then Sujata’s husband says ‘not our car’. When Sujata asks why not, he replays saying, "My Car, at Kantapukur? No". Thus, we can understand that for a while, Dibyanath had forgotten himself as a male in the company of Sujata but when it comes to authority then he comes to his original position as head of the family. At first, he says our car but when Sujata questioned him, he replies with the words ‘my car’. But through the search for his son’s death, he finds her place in society. She finds the state and patriarchy’s role in her life. When she comes from outside, she is asked by her husband about being where she replays saying, “Since I don’t have the right to question you about your affairs, you too don’t have the right to ask me anything.”

Patriarchy functions consciously and unconsciously. And it exploits both men and women. Brita could not talk about the things at his home though they were an important part of his life.

Parenting plays an important role while growing children at home. And Brita’s family failed to do so. All the members of his family, except his mother, Sujata hate him without knowing him. They never asked him about his opinion or his dreams. Even Sujata who is supposed to be close to him couldn’t know him properly. Therefore, after Brati’s death, her search for Brati begins. Nandini, Brati’s friend, while speaking about the commonality of parenting of poor and rich says, though our revolutionaries belonged to poor, rich, and left-wing families, they all had a common thing and that’s, "the children and the parents were strangers to one another. The same happens with Somu’s sister who is deprived of education. Somu’s mother admits it after the death of Somu. She says, when Somu was alive we paid all attention to him and never paid attention to schooling her daughter. She has no education even though she is struggling to survive and is prone to fall victim to society.

State Apparatuses in the Drama

Mahasweta Devi elaborates on how poor people are treated when it comes to justice. When the mob gathered at Somu’s house his father ran to the police station, because, he had trust in the system. He thought the police would help him to save Somu, Brita, and his friend from the violent mob. His exact words are, "They'll.... Still alive if the police come. I'm sure they'll come. But the situation was beyond his understanding. They had not filed his complaint against the mob, and he had to returned helplessly. Somu’s father couldn’t bear this and dies of heart attack. His mother says, “they only sent their vans when it was all over to collect the dead bodies.” The next question she asks is heart piercing words, “O God! Is there no justice in this country? God! No Justice? It reminds me of the drama Justice by John Galsworthy, where the drama ends with justice getting done. Justice is done by the death of the individual. The same happens with some and his father. Now, somu’s sister and mother have become vulnerable to society. Families without a male are hardly accepted in society. Nandini also faces torture at the hands of the police. She says we are never understood by our family and society. We pledged all we got for revolution but we are denied being heard and worst reactionaries show us sympathy and the public goes against us. Even police have tortured us mentally, and physically. After the torture she says, the wound will be healed but I won’t be normal again. Thus, any voice of dissent is considered a threat to the state power and is curbed using Repressive State apparatuses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is visible to mark the concept of power and its exercise among the given society and the family. Families, religion, the education system, and other things are the main agencies, that carry power and perform it in society in multiple ways. These are the Ideological state apparatuses that control society ideologically without using any force. People are made to act in a certain way. They get exploited by their consent. The violence using arm force comes under Repressive state apparatuses where people are controlled by arm forces. The Court, Police, army, jail, and hospitals are the means to perform the repressive force to control society.

Thus, the present research paper has given an outline of the novel Mother of 1084 written by Mahasweta Devi. Devi has, through her novel, rightly pointed out the deeply embedded concept of an ideology, patriarchy, gender, and power which are mainly responsible for the unequal and exploited plight of women in society. Women are exploited in multiple ways by society. They are outcasts from society. State, family, society, court, police, and all apparatuses are used to control women. All the time they are controlled either by the armed force or by ideological consent. Women are victims of society throughout history. And, this is rightly framed by Mahasweta Devi in her novel Mother of 1084.

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