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Interpersonal and Intra-Personal Issues in Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali*

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Abstract: Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* is a powerful indictment of the cultural and socioeconomic systems that sustain marginalization especially for women in rural India. The protagonist of the novel Sanichari, a low-caste woman who turns into a professional mourner, provides a lens through which to examine interpersonal and intrapersonal issues. The novel is set in the impoverished area of Chhotanagpur. Through Sanichari's life Mahasweta Devi explores the intricate interactions between social relationships and personal struggles bringing to light issues of caste gender exploitation and emotional repression. This paper analyses and looks at how intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts mirror larger systemic injustices and influence Sanichari's transformation.

Keywords: caste, class, interpersonal, intrapersonal, rudali

Introduction

Mahasweta Devi was concerned about the societal concerns. Her direct contact with native groups adds to the legitimacy of her work. She writes of the oppression, the persecution, the suffering of people who have so little. In her writing, slavery in all of its forms is an essential and compelling issue. She comments on how hard it is to be oppressed in multiple ways, by class, race, and gender. She doesn't see the oppression of women as separate from oppression of class and caste. Usha Ganguly, a famous director from Calcutta, adapts Mahasweta Devi's classic narrative '*Rudali*' into a play. It also did well at the box office. She was born on Saturday, and belongs to a low caste. It's her story. Everyone in her family is dying, one after another. Because she lives in a difficult social, political, and religious environment, she suffers greatly. She displays other women, but Devi is not a weak victim like them. Her childhood friend, Bikhni, accompanies her on a voyage of change. Bhikhni and Shanichari team together in a scheme to become professional mourners with support from Dulan the modern "Event Manager". Sanichari and her group turn the system that is hurting them against itself. They are brave women in what they do and in their lives. Women of every ethnicity and class have challenges because they are women. Bikhni, Prabtia and Gulbadan are married to bankers and prostitutes and have children of their own and they fight the system and win. B.Charanya points out: "Womanhood has two different images in the society. She is equated with "Shakthi", the goddess Durga and Kali. On the other hand, she is forced to be a dependent, under the male governed & defined social tradition and culture and she is looked upon as a sexual object or a property to be possessed and passed on from one to the other. These are the traditional images of women in the society" (0).

Discussion

The inflexible caste, class and gender hierarchies dominate Rudali's interpersonal relationships. Sanichari's relationships with other people are characterized by marginalization and exploitation which is indicative of the repressive social structure in rural India. The feudal system in which Rajput men from higher castes rule over women from lower castes like Sanichari is criticized in the novel. This dynamic is emphasized by the custom of hiring Rudalis to weep at funerals: affluent men who are heartless outsource their sorrow to underprivileged women thereby reducing tears to a commodity. Since the elite manipulates the oppressed as emotions for their own benefit this transactional relationship serves as a stark reminder of how dehumanized they are. Betrayal and abandonment are common in Sanichari's relationships with men including her husband and son. After her husband passes away she is left to fend for herself and her loneliness is exacerbated by her son's eventual desertion.

According to Dr. Vandana Vats, "The story reveals an unholy nexus between the socio- economic and religious system. The malik mahajans are socially and morally corrupt and use religion for their selfish ends. They exploit the poor people in numerous ways. They manipulate the situations, get the male members locked in jail anytime and the women become an easy prey for them. They make them work as bonded labour in their farms, sexually exploit them, keep them as prostitutes, discard them as and when they lik" (719).

The shattered family ties are a reflection of the larger social disregard for low-caste women who must fend for themselves. Sanichari's relationship with another Rudali and Bikhni provides a counterpoint though. "Everyone said-she's led such a hard, sad life. But finding Bikhni has been a blessing" (110). They become empowered by their relationship which is based on mutual support and suffering. By banding together with other oppressed women they overthrow the system that aims to govern them and fight against patriarchal and caste-based oppression. The way that interpersonal ties between the marginalized can encourage resistance against structural injustice is demonstrated by this solidarity. The feminist dilemma is how to retrieve motherhood as a source of liberation, not by eliminating it as an obstacle, but by redefining appropriate terms and conditions, by re-creating a social structure that can make motherhood conceivably a creative experience.

In addition, the novel criticizes the hypocrisy of the upper classes who maintain a façade of moral superiority while taking advantage of women's bodies and emotions. "For them, nothing has ever come easy. just the daily struggle for a little maize gruel and salt is exhausting. while those people spend huge sums of money on death ceremonies, just to gain prestige…" (9). Rajput men's emotional detachment and commodification of female labour are revealed by their reliance on Rudali's to perform grief. The way Sanichari eventually manipulated this system by planning Rudali's to demand higher wages shows how interpersonal dynamics can be changed to subvert power structures and shows a transition from victimhood to agency. Self-discovery and emotional suppression are examples of intrapersonal issues. Bikhni's presence enables Sanichari to envision a collective agency, transforming their interpersonal relationship into a revolutionary act against systemic oppression. This solidarity challenges the transactional nature of relationships imposed by the upper classes, who commodify the rudalis' tears for prestige. In one context, it is apt to quote:

When someone died in a Malik Mahajan household, the amount of money spent on the death ceremonies immediately raised the prestige of the family. The status of the Rudalis also rose. We can offer worship to Shiva as well. After all we've managed to save up sever rupees! (73)

The main focus of Sanichari's intrapersonal struggles is her slow path to self-awareness and emotional repression. Although she is supposed to act grief as a Rudali her own life is characterized by her incapacity to cry. Years of adversity, poverty loss and social exclusion, have made her emotionally numb to the point where she cannot afford to cry. This is Devi's way of criticizing the socioeconomic system that deprives people of their humanity and makes them repress their own sorrow in order to survive. The conflict, Sanichari has with the role society expects her to play and her true self is reflected in her inability to cry. When she faces her repressed emotions her metamorphosis starts. Bikhni's passing serves as a trigger making Sanichari confront her sorrow and admit her frailty. A turning point is reached when she starts to regain her agency following this intrapersonal reckoning. Sanichari not only demonstrates her external strength by uniting the Rudalis and opposing the exploitative system but she also finds a way to reconcile with her inner self and turn her suffering into resistance. It emphasizes the path from emotional suppression to empowerment.

The Rudali by Mahasweta Devi focuses on the interpersonal and intrapersonal struggles of the protagonist Sanichari. Mahasweta Devi's Rudali is a potent examination of the socioeconomic and cultural oppression that marginalized women in rural India must endure. Through Sanichari's interpersonal relationships and her internal emotional journey the novel examines the intersections of caste gender and class providing a profound commentary on both personal transformation and systemic injustice. Caste gender and exploitation are

interpersonal issues. Particularly in the Chhotanagpur area the strict hierarchies of India's feudal society influence the interpersonal dynamics in Rudali. As the upper caste Rajput men rule the social hierarchy Sanichari a low caste woman is exploited. Since the wealthy outsource their mourning to underprivileged women the practice of hiring Rudalis, professional mourners, to act out grief at funerals represents the commodification of emotions. This transactional relationship emphasizes the disparity in power where lower-caste women's emotional labour is used to uphold the elites' social façade. Sanichari is reduced to a tool for the performative rituals of the upper classes by her role as a Rudali which emphasizes how caste oppression and economic necessity govern interpersonal interactions. As a reflection of the systematic disregard for low-caste women Sanichari's relationships with men including her husband and son are characterized by betrayal and abandonment. She is alone after her husband passes away and her son deserts highlighting the dearth of trustworthy social or familial support for women in her situation. P. Suma points out: "Mahasweta Davi writes artistically articulated the feelings of women and their struggle for existence in the society. However, they had to face a lot of hurdles, created not only by men but also by other women. All the women writers never fail to tells this situation in the respective works. The emergence of feminist movement in 1960s try to secure equal rights and opportunities for woman in the patriarchal society" (521).

The interpersonal costs of poverty and marginalization are exemplified by these broken ties where survival pressures strain interpersonal relationships. However a different story of resistance and solidarity is presented by Sanichari's relationship with another Rudali Bikhni. Because they have both experienced oppression their friendship grows stronger. They unite with other oppressed women to form a collective opposing the caste and patriarchal systems that oppress them. As the women use their collective agency to demand better pay and assert control over their labor this alliance changes the dynamics of interpersonal relationships from one of exploitation to one of empowerment. Mahasweta Devi thus provides a positive critique of repressive social norms by demonstrating how interpersonal relationships among the marginalized can undermine systemic power structures. Intrapersonal Concerns: Agency and Emotional Repression.

The central themes of Sanichari's intrapersonal struggles are her quest for self-awareness and emotional repression. She is supposed to act out grief for other people as a rudali but because of the emotional toll of her marginalized life she is unable to cry for her own losses. Sanichari has had to repress her emotions due to years of poverty loss and social rejection which emphasizes the intrapersonal conflict between her true self and the survival-driven persona she takes on. The socioeconomic system that dehumanizes the oppressed and denies them the capacity to communicate their own sorrow is criticized by this emotional numbness.

The metamorphosis of Sanichari is a significant intrapersonal arc. When Bikhni dies it becomes a turning point that forces her to face her repressed grief and vulnerability. When she organizes the Rudalis to fight against their exploitation she transforms her suffering into resistance signaling the start of her empowerment. When Sanichari reclaims her humanity and asserts her identity against the forces that seek to erase it this transition from repression to agency represents an internal reconciliation, broader ramifications. Devi's Rudali criticizes the larger socioeconomic structure by drawing on Sanichari's intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. The book reveals the hypocrisy of a culture that marginalizes and exploits women while honoring them as goddesses. While Sanichari's intrapersonal journey highlights the human spirits tenacity in the face of oppression the interpersonal exploitation of Rudalis reflects the systemic commodification of female labour and emotions.

Mahasweta Devi emphasizes the connection between personal and societal change by fusing political and personal narratives. In conclusion, Sanichari's life is used to critique the oppressive caste, class and gender structures in rural India in *Rudali* with a passionate examination of interpersonal and intrapersonal issues. Her intrapersonal journey from emotional suppression to empowerment highlights the possibility of resistance and self-discovery while her interpersonal relationships expose the exploitative aspects of feudal society. Shubhi Bhasin and Pallavi Srivastava observe:

Mahasweta Devi …She has a deep knowledge of the socio-political condition of India. She is an iconoclast who, in her works focussed on the miserable condition of depressed and neglected classes and tribes. Her different stories and novels shower light on the day to day happenings in the interiors of our nation. She has also talked about the quest for equal rights for each and every individual, especially for females in terms of education, health facilities, employment opportunities and social well-being (22)

Mahasweta Devi presents a potent vision of both individual and collective agency through Sanichari's metamorphosis and her alliance with other women confronting the structural inequalities that shape the lives of the marginalized. Through Sanichari's intrapersonal journey from emotional repression to agency and her interpersonal struggles with caste and gender oppression Mahasweta Devi critiques systemic injustice in *Rudali*. Her metamorphosis and camaraderie with other women provide a powerful example of the strength of group resistance and present an inspiring picture of social and personal change.

Summing Up

In *Rudali*, Sanichari weeps for affluent foreigners to acquire a fortune. Ironically, she doesn't even mourn for her own loved ones and has to endure harsh circumstances. Erikson thought that we change who we are by changing how we relate to other people. Sanichari isn't changing who she is to feel better about herself, she's doing it to pay her bills. Her craft is a way to hide her sentiments, a protest against the severe laws of society. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Human Development, Sanichari's social issues are intrinsically tied to her mental health. Her internal instability stems from trauma, grief and loss. Caste, gender injustice and issues with money affect her relationship with others. Finally, Mahasweta Devi argues that a person's identity is not determined simply by his thoughts but also by the intricate relationships he has with others. This theoretical perspective shows the emotional force, social isolation, and struggle for honour that Rudali experiences in a repressive social environment.

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