



The Evolution of a Mother: Exploring the Subjectivity of Sujata in Mahasweta Devi's *Mother 1084*

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Abstract— *Mahasweta Devi's Mother of 1084 (Hajar Churashir Ma, 1974)* is a strong narrative that explores motherhood that mixes political criticism with personal pain. The narrative of Sujata, a mother confronting the brutal demise of her son Brati, a Naxalite insurgent, unfolds in Bengal during the 1970s amidst the Naxalite insurrection. This study examines the notion of motherhood in the text, emphasising how Devi redefines it beyond traditional stereotypes to embody resistance, trauma, and self-actualisation. It studies how Sujata, the protagonist of the novel, changed from being an outcast in a patriarchal home to a symbol of subaltern agency who fights against social norms and systematic oppression from a feminist and postcolonial point of view. The novel also talks about how politics, gender, class, and being a mother are all connected. Devi's main focus is her criticism of state violence and the middle-class family. This study highlights the transformative and evolution of motherhood as a site of dissent and reconstruction of identity.

Keywords— *motherhood, Naxalite, resistance, evolution, trauma, patriarchal, identity.*

Cultures and societies across the world view motherhood as a sacred obligation that demands selflessness, compassion, and unconditional love. This characteristics are also deeply imbibed in Indian literature, from the Sanskrit phrase "Maathru Devo Bhava" (Mother is God) in ancient texts to modern representations of maternal sacrifice. Mahasweta Devi, in her novel *Mother of 1084* challenges this idealised view of motherhood by showing it as a complex and contentious space where social exclusion, political awakening, and personal grief all happen at the same time. The novel is set in West Bengal during the violent Naxalite movement of the 1970s. It tells the story of Sujata, the protagonist who is also the mother of Brati, a young revolutionary who was killed by the government machinery. This essay examines the concept of motherhood and its evolution in *Mother of 1084*, emphasising on Devi's reinterpretation of it as a site of power, trauma, and political dissent. Devi sees motherhood as a changing force that is shaped by loss, resistance, and self-discovery through her experiences in the novel. It asserts that Sujata's evolution from a repressed bourgeois mother to an emblem of

subaltern resistance reveals the interconnections among gender, class, and state power, thereby challenging conventional notions of motherhood. The article analyses Devi's employment of Sujata's narrative to highlight the transformative potential of maternal identity while critiquing patriarchal and capitalist structures through an amalgamation of feminist, postcolonial, and Marxist perspectives. The research is segmented into four principal components: the conventional concept of motherhood, Sujata's personal anguish and solitude, motherhood as a mode of political resistance, and the relationship between motherhood and subaltern status and class struggle, which shows her evolution of Sujata's subjectivity.

In Indian culture, usually motherhood is often viewed as self-sacrificing, unconditional and always ready to shower love and care towards their children and husbands. The motherhood is stereotyped with these kinds of patriarchal notions. The Vedic saying "Maathru Devo Bhava" shows how important mothers are in the Indian culture. From this perspective, women are considered divine entities whose primary responsibilities are to protect their honour and care



for their families. However, Devi's portrayal of Sujata in *Mother of 1084* challenges this idealised representation by depicting motherhood as a source of conflict and exclusion. Sujata is a Bengali woman in her 40s who comes from a rich family. At first, she is shown as a submissive person who stays at home and lives with her husband, Dibyanath, and her other children. The family only expects her to be a good mother; they don't give her emotional independence or respect. Devi says that "Sujata was the mother of 1084 (Brati), and that her first act of rebellion was when Brati was two." She briefly refused to have children (Devi 23). This early acts of rebellion shows that Sujata; though submissive have her own agency, which sets the stage for her eventual change. Devi challenges the conventional notion of motherhood by illustrating how Sujata's family perceived her as "unwanted" and domineering. She feels even more alone because her husband is cheating on her and her kids don't care. She became a "living dead body" after Brati died (Devi 45). Sujata is pushed to the side, and her emotional labour is not recognised, which is different from the idealised mother's role. According to Shyaonti Talwar, "Sujata's past life, her isolation, her cheating husband, and her unwanted motherhood all ultimately lead to her self-realization, which itself becomes a convenient and powerful protest against the rotten societal value system" (Talwar 29). Devi criticises the bourgeois family for being hypocritical because they follow traditional rules while still letting unfairness based on gender happen. Sujata's self-awareness frees her from the passive, selfless mother figure and she evolves into someone who questions the rules of society that hold her back. The "double standard of morality and civil laws" that favors her spouse and silences her voice makes Sujata feel even more alone (Kumar 2017, p. 554). Her maternal duty is therefore a burden that separates her from her family and society instead of empowering her. Devi illustrates that motherhood can be a site of oppression rather than divinity by dismantling its idealised representation.

The morgue calls Brati's body "corpse number 1084," and it changes Sujata's mind and heart. The novel begins with a heartbreak scene in which Sujata is asked to identify her son's body. At this point, her pain is summed up: "He said, Come to Kantapukur. He said...You have to identify? Brati?" (Devi 85). Sujata is grieving for the first time, and it's both personal and political because the government is cracking down hard on the Naxalite movement. She feels even more alone because she lost her child and her family doesn't care. Devi portrays Sujata's trauma as a dual experience: the societal repudiation of her maternal identity and the emotional bereavement of her son. She is a "wounded psyche," and her "aggrieved mother" echoes the pain of other oppressed groups. Sujata learns about Brati's

dedication to the Naxalite cause, which helps her understand the social and political reasons why he died. This process is hard for her, but it changes her because it makes her face the fact that she is part of the bourgeois system, which Brati didn't like. Ashok K. Mohapatra says that "Sujata's corporeal motherhood shows through her memories how hard it is for Sujata's subaltern self to break free from an oppressive social order" (Mohapatra 12). Her sadness is a way for her to think about her past and recognize the compassion, fairness, and opposition to injustice that she shares with Brati. The novel's realism uses real events to make Sujata's pain believable, which is not the case with postmodernist techniques. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* uses memory to show how hard it is for parents, while *Mother of 1084* uses a straight plot to show how Sujata slowly wakes up (Mohapatra 14). This tragedy, however, does not incapacitate Sujata; rather, it ignites her insurrection as she assimilates Brati's revolutionary principles. Her memories of Brati, his idealism and kindness, are very different from how her family acted. This shows how emotionally heavy her "unwanted motherhood" is.

Devi's redefinition of parenting as a form of political resistance represents one of her most important contributions. The transformative potential of maternal identity is illustrated by Sujata's transition from a vulnerable, grieving mother to an active opponent of social and political injustice. She learns how bad class struggle and government violence can be when her son joins the Naxalite movement, which is a peasant-led rebellion against landlords and the government. Sujata meets Nandini, Brati's friend and Somu's mother. She is a working-class woman who has also lost her son. This makes Sujata think about her own loss as part of a bigger story of pain for people who don't have power. Devi says, "She looks at how her son was like her, caring for others and wanting equality in society, which is why he died" (Devi 67). Sujata's evolution is shown by the fact that she doesn't agree with the middle-class beliefs that her family holds. Brati's husband, Dibyanath, and her other children care more about money and social status than Brati's death, which they think was caused by his "criminal" activity. Sujata, on the other hand, agrees with Brati and says that "death is the only punishment for those who lose faith in the system" (Moorthy 349). This realisation transforms her grief into a denunciation of the "hypocritical culture" characterised by opulence, false piety, and ethical decline (Kakde 85). Devi's portrayal of motherhood as a form of resistance aligns with feminist theories that view the maternal body as a site of agency. Her recognition of Brati's body, notwithstanding her family's attempts to distance themselves from his legacy, constitutes a symbolic act of resistance against both

patriarchal and state authority. Sujata's position as a marginalised figure within her family and society reflects Simone de Beauvoir's concept of the "Other" in *The Second Sex*. Sujata transcends her "Otherness," asserting her agency through her maternal identity by embracing her son's revolutionary aspirations. According to scholar Sharmila Lahiri Maitra, the tension between the "Self" and the "Other" is evident throughout Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* (Maitra 3). Sujata uses her role as a mother to fight back against the system that killed her son. This makes her fight her own and her country's rights.

Devi's depiction of motherhood in *Mother of 1084* is closely linked to the Subaltern Studies collective's and Ranajit Guha's interpretation of subalternity. Sujata is a subaltern figure because she feels alone and helps people who are less fortunate, even though she comes from a wealthy family. Her conversations with Nandini and Somu's mother illustrate the capacity for mothers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to bond over their shared experience of losing children to state violence. Devi says, "She finds her life similar to her son's thoughts because she is not included in her own family" (Devi 69). Sujata links the middle class and the poor because she stands up for the subaltern, which includes Naxalites, tribals, and peasants. The novel also criticizes the capitalist system that keeps the state aggressive and class differences alive. Marxist feminist theory asserts that Sujata's position within the "production cycle," which restricts women to domestic and reproductive labor, affects her maternal role. Brati's rejection of the bourgeois family and Sujata's commitment to his principles challenge its status as a "normative hegemonic institution" (Talwar 77). Sujata's awakening, when she realises the "gap between the proletariats and the bourgeois" (Kumar 554), happens during the Naxalite movement, which wants to make life better for poor people in rural areas. Devi's activism, as evidenced by her statement, "My activism is the driving force of all my literary activities" (Sengupta 14), illustrates her desire to amplify the voices of the subaltern. In *Mother of 1084*, Sujata's sadness turns into a call for justice, with motherhood as a symbol of activism. Her compassion for other impoverished mothers, including Somu's mother, highlights the widespread maternal suffering under authoritarian regimes. Researcher Haresh Kakde's assertion that "in Sujata, the deprived mother, 'a new woman is born'" (Kakde 85) illustrates the potency of motherhood as a site of resistance and solidarity.

In Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*, motherhood is redefined as a complex interplay of trauma, resistance, and subaltern agency. Devi challenges the conventional notion of the selfless mother in Sujata's narrative by presenting a character who experiences social exile and emotional

turmoil, ultimately emerging as a symbol of rebellion and a mother who continuously evolves. Sujata's evolution from an impoverished bourgeois mother to a subaltern spokesperson illustrates how revolutionary motherhood can serve as a platform for addressing social and political issues. Devi's story takes place during the Naxalite uprising, which shows how state violence, gender, and class all work together. This is a strong statement about the structural things that make a mother who she is. This study analyses Devi's use of Sujata's motherhood to challenge capitalist and patriarchal structures, utilising feminist and postcolonial concepts to highlight the narrative's subversive power. Sujata's story is not just a personal tragedy; it is also a universal call to listen to the voices of the oppressed, especially mothers who have to deal with social injustice. One of the best examples of how being a mother can cause change is *Mother of 1084*. It makes us think about what it means for society and literature.

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