



‘I’m mortgaged.’ Strength of a tyrannized in Mahasweta’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*

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Abstract: *Lachhima is used as a kept by Medininarayan who has sent his wives to their fathers’ homes as they cannot fulfill his sexual desire. Lachhima also takes care of her Malik’s son, Ganesh who exceeds his father in cruelty and lechery. After his father’s death Ganesh proposes Lachhima to come back to Ganesh’s house and live there as she used to do when his father was alive. Ganesh reads the silence and modesty of Lachhima as the weakness and fear of a dispossessed tribal. Later in the novel, Lachhima breaks her silence and becomes instrumental in bringing Ganesh’s doom. This paper will focus on the transformation in Lachhima’s character who from a submissive tribal turns to be an unyielding fighter.*

Key Words: *Lachhima, Ganesh, tribal, submissive, unyielding.*

Mahasweta Devi is the voice of the tyrannized and agonized tribals who do not receive primary facilities in life from a so-called civilized nation. ‘While nobody cares to pay heed to their claims to the right to survive, the hired writers pandering to the middle and upper classes content themselves with weaving narcissistic fantasies in the name of literature’ (Bashai Tudu, xxiii), Mahasweta Devi cannot ignore the demands of the time. Anjani Sharma writes : ‘Devi’s writings act as an eye opener for everyone as she records and criticizes the far-reaching consequences of the politics and the pathetic conditions of the tribal, dalits, bonded labourers, landless peasants and women. She makes the readers hear the voice of a part of the community that is otherwise voiceless. Around this core, Mahasweta Devi weaves the stories about real people who generally lie hidden in the great piles of statistical data. In a way, she has given names to poverty. Her stories are provocative, jarring and shocking to the point of being macabre’. Lachhima, in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, who is forced to live as a kept in Medininarayan’s house is in love with Mohor Karan and they are living in the hope that when Lachhima will be released by her Malik, they will marry and live happily. But Medininarayan is such an inhuman that he commands Lachhima wait for another eight-ten years to marry Mohor because she will be allowed to do so when Ganesh’s wife will come to that house. She earnestly requests ‘If you’re getting rid of me anyway, let me go now, Malik. Let me have someone to lean on. Or else where will I go? When I’m forty? I’ve served you all these years, shall I serve Chhota Malik for eight more years? You could keep a maid, no?’ Kicking out at Lachhima, he roars ‘Take the lower castes to bed, and they forget their place.’ Medini continues in anger ‘ You’re being kept in comfort for the sake of the boy. You know it, so do I. The bahu will not come to live here immediately after the wedding. When she does, you can go. Won’t Mohor wait?’ Lachhima feels so dejected and tortured that she prays to him for forgiveness. Having received the force of kick Lachhima’s ears bleed and he orders ‘ Wash the blood off your ears. Light the lamp and rub in some warm oil.’ Darkened and disappointed Lachhima secretly meets Mohor Karan and tells him to marry Dhanpatiya. Mahasweta writes with a touch of romantic note - ‘They sat under a mango tree. Mohor Karan looked at her hopefully. Lachhima lowered her face, doodled in the dust’. Then slowly, she says, ‘You get married. Dhanpatiya will be a good wife.’ After a short exchange of few words she also says -‘The Malik has bought me in exchange for three bighas of land. Just like he keeps bullocks and buffaloes. Even when the boy is married I won’t be let off. I’ll have to stay another eight years. Then I’ll be let off. That’s what he said.’ Despite her own penury, she offers Mohor Rs. twenty out of the deep-rooted feeling of love for Mohor and suggests him to buy two goats as wedding gift - ‘Buy two goats. Lots of profits. Think of it as a wedding gift. You lost so many years waiting for me. You could have married earlier.’ We feel for Lachhima, Mohor does so, but the Malik does not. They spend a short period of time together before their final separation. They do not want to be separated, but they have to be because Malik is more brutal than the beast.



During Ganesh's marriage ceremony Lachhima leaves Malik's house for his social prestige before other guests and feels a pure sense of relief reaching her hut where she spends some days after a long confinement. But Lachhima's feeling of freedom does not last long. When grandmother Gulal asks her why she has told Mohor to get married with Dhanpatiya, Lachhima 'with an uncharacteristic bitterness' in her voice says- 'Oh! How your heart is shattered! You're acting as if it's not Mohor Karan whom we've lost, but the Malik Medini Singh himself!' She accuses Gulal- 'Shut up. Mortgaged me for money, and land and cattle.' Her acute hopelessness erupts- 'I'm mortgaged. When I'm sucked dry, useless as an old cow, then he'll let me go. Why should Mohor sit around waiting? What will he do with me then? What're you worried about? There's land, you'll get your cow, there's money, what's your worry? You looked after me as a child, so when I grew up, you were the one I thought about.' This docile Lachhima gradually becomes unyielding with the development of episodes through the novel. When Ganesh runs into the SDO office to meet him unexpectedly, SDO takes him to a side and warns : 'Look, if you set fire to the forest and start trouble in their name, the police will go there. And I'll go, too'. Instantly Ganesh realizes who is the informer and wants to shoot Haroa who hides himself in his house and the door is obstructed by Lachhima. Ganesh asks Lachhima to allow him go inside the room because Haroa is his bonded labour. Lachhima screams that terrifies Ganesh- 'All these years you terrified him and got so much work out of him, without wages, all worth so much money. Did he murder a relative of yours? Was he yours slave labourer? That you scared him into being your slave for so many years?' In their fight both Ganesh and Haroa receive serious injury, but Haroa succumbs to death and his funeral ceremony is observed by the tyrannized people at the courtyard of Lachhima's house. Ganesh's illegal gun is seized by the police and he is kept in house-arrest. As he is wicked by nature, he manages to slip out of the window at night and goes to put the forest on fire with kerosene-tin, a rag, matches. But the tribals guarding the forest at night see Ganesh approaching to the forest, they make loud noise and Ganesh in panic runs to Lachhima's house where he asks Lachhima to show him the path to his house. Under such life-threatening situations Ganesh acts like Ganesh- 'Why should you stay here, come with me, stay as you used to, there. A good house, good food, I'll throw out my wife, marry again.' Lachhima feels a kind of explosion in her and tells him in a calm voice that she will save him, but not in the way he expects. She will do it in her own way. Then what she does, it is beyond Ganesh's imagination. She screams in the night 'like an angry kite' inviting her own people to her hut where Ganesh is hiding. Mahasweta writes 'A sea of armed people, voices raised, surged around the house in mighty waves. Lachhima moved aside, leaving the door free, and became one with the crowd.' Thus, Lachhima who has undergone sexual harassment throughout her life proves herself a fighter finally. Mahasweta's Draupadi is also a matchless fighter. Being raped by the members of the Special Forces throughout the night, Draupadi is offered a sari for her naked body in the morning. She reproaches saying 'What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?' Then she chooses Senanayak's white bush shirt for spitting a bloody gob. An unarmed and raped santal woman Draupadi leaves Senanayak stupefied- 'For first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid.' Mahasweta Devi says : 'By just making them non-existent, they do not exist for her, all this male stuff, they are trying to do this - by mass raping, by gangraping also you just cannot destroy a woman's spirit, she does not recognize their existence, they are non-existent for her' (*Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, xvii). In an interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Mahasweta says regarding the women resistance that 'Women do not do it all the time by going to the battlefield and raising their machetes' (*Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, xvii). With Sujata, the mother of 1084, Mahasweta Devi too makes a discovery of the roots of revolt. Unlike most of the other writers, Mahasweta cannot deny the social-role of a writer. In 'The Author in Conversation' She says : 'I think a creative writer should have a social conscience. I have a duty toward society. Yet I don't really know why I do these things. This sense of duty is an obsession, and I must remain accountable to myself. I ask myself this question a thousand times : have I done what I could have done? My house is full of them, they write to me, they come and stay with me, I go and stay with them. And this journalistic exposure is very necessary' (*Imaginary Maps*, ix).

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