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THE THEMES OF GRIEF AND MOURNING IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S *RUDALI* AND *BITTER SOIL*

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ABSTRCT

The article analyzes the works of Mahasweta Devi and focuses on the themes of loss and grieving dealth with in the books *Rudali* and *Bitter Soil*. The study takes a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth textual analysisas tohow various expressions of loss and grieving are utilized to question the status quo. The paper also examines how sorrow and loss relate to economic difficulty, gender inequality, and social injustice. The study shows that grieving and grief function as a form of defiance against the repressive social system in Devi's works. These feelings are used against the institutionalized racism and sexism that maintain societal inequalities. The study also shows that disadvantaged groups' experiences of sorrow and mourning are intertwined with those of poverty and gender. The outcomes have important ramifications for current social challenges and itconfirms how literature fosters for social transformation. Devi's works deal with loss and sorrow that helps reader comprehend better the nuances of societal inequity and oppression.

Keywords: grieving, mourning, resistance, oppression, social inequality, poverty, gender.

The Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi is famous for her searing depictions of the plight of the underprivileged. Poverty, injustice and the disparity of the sexes are the recurrent themes dealt with in her writings. Devi disrupts the established social order in her tales and shows the truth about life. Grief and loss are the central themes in two of her most influential pieces, *Rudali* and *Bitter Soil*. The protagonist of Rudali is a lady of low social status who is paid to cry at the burial of the son of a rich landowner. The novel delves into the nuanced emotional experience of grieving and how it may function as a defiance against an oppressive societal system. In a similar vein, *Bitter Soil* tells the story of a tribal group who is driven from their homeland and into the city. The story's central idea is loss and mourning as the uprooted community tries to accept its new reality. In the narrative, Mahasweta Devi describes the earth as "our mother" and we need her desperately and we are her offspring.

Several critics have examined howMahasweta Devi deals with loss and grieving in her writings. In her work "Death of a Discipline," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak analyzes the idea of grief in "Rudali" and how it functions as a kind of resistance against the repressive social system. According to Spivak, "The mourning woman is a site of resistance, a figure of the underclass who speaks truth to power" (Spivak, 2003, p. 92). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "The Mourners of 'Rudali'" brings out the exploited and oppressed female body as a site of resistance and cultural intervention."

In the paper "The Politics of Grief in Mahasweta Devi's Rudali," Subhendu Mund examines how grieving and sadness are utilized to challenge established authority. Mund claims that "grief becomes a language of resistance and subversion that expresses the unspeakable and the unrepresentable" (Mund, 2014, p. 86).In the titled work work "Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader," Padmini Mongia investigates how gender and loss play a role in the story of "Rudali."

Specifically, Mongia claims, "Devi's story demonstrates how women's mourning is a means by which they articulate their marginalization and oppression in a patriarchal society." (Mongia, 1996, p. 275).

Likewise, in the paper "Mahasweta Devi and the Aesthetics of the Marginal," Abhijit Gupta analyzes the themes of loss and mourning focused in "Bitter Soil." Specifically, Gupta claims, "Devi's story highlights the trauma of displacement and how it results in a sense of loss and grief that cannot be fully articulated." (Gupta, 2007, p. 57).An attempt is made in the present analysis to explore how loss and grieving are used to question the status quo in both *Rudali* and *Bitter Soil*.

Devi examines the complexity of grieving and loss in the story *Rudali*, highlighting how these emotions may be used as a form of resistance against an oppressive societal system. Shanichari, a low-caste lady, is the protagonist of the tale. She is paid to cry at the burial of the son of a rich landlord. Devi uses Shanicharito discuss the oppression of India's lowest castes and how they are denied access to education, employment and other basic necessities.

Working as a Rudali (professional mourner) is a means of protest for Shanichari, whose group has been excluded by the prevailing social system. The author Subhendu Mund says, "Shanichari's crying disrupts the social order and exposes the hypocrisy of those who claim to mourn for the dead but are indifferent to the suffering of the living" (Mund, 2014, p. 86). Shanichari uses her sorrow as a weapon against the societal standards that would otherwise keep her tribe in the background.

The plight of a tribal tribe torn from its land and forced to relocate to the city is also portrayed in *Bitter Soil*. The story's central focus is on loss and mourning as the uprooted community tries to accept its new reality. Devi shows the anguish of losing one's home and the subsequent feelings of displacement and isolation via the character of Kalyani.Kalyani's sorrow becomes a weapon to her to fight the system that exploits and marginalizes her people. Abhijit Gupta states, "Kalyani's mourning is a way of articulating her community's sense of loss and displacement and how it has resulted in a deep sense of alienation and marginalization" (Gupta, 2007, p. 57). Kalyani uses her loss as a weapon to combat the established social system that has kept her people in abject poverty and social exclusion.

The themes of grieving and mourning are entangled with gender and societal inequalities by the author. In *Rudali*, Devi dramatizes women's challenges in today's patriarchal culture. Working as a rudali, as Shanichari does, is a female-only occupation that speaks to women's restricted options in a culture that actively works to silence them.

Devi's depiction of Shanichari's sorrow demonstrates how women's grieving may be used to voice their subordination and exclusion from power in a patriarchal culture. As Padmini Mongia puts it, "Shanichari's mourning is a way of expressing her community's sense of loss and displacement, but it also reveals the gendered nature of their oppression" (Mongia, 1996, p. 275).Devi also uses Kalyani, the protagonist of "Bitter Soil," to examine the interplay of gender and socioeconomic inequity. Kalyani is discriminated based on both her gender and her tribal background.

To sum up, *Rudali* and *Bitter Soil* by Mahasweta Devi are the two powerful works that examine loss and mourning in the context of social and economic injustice. Devi shows how sorrow and grieving can be means of resistance against the prevailing social order via her depiction of characters like Shanichari and Kalyani, who represent the members of the oppressed groups. The article discusses how the themes of loss and grieving overlap with those of poverty, gender, and oppression. In addition to being very personal, sorrow and grief may serve as political battlegrounds from which oppressed groups can demand equality and change the status quo.

The themes of social and economic inequity, gender oppression and environmental degradation that run through Devi's writings are not limited to the Indian milieu. Powerful insights into the complexity of social and political conflicts may be gleaned from her depiction of the hardships experienced by the oppressed populations and how they fight and persist through sadness and mourning.The study expands the body of scholarship on Mahasweta Devi's writings on the themes of loss and melancholy. It provides a comprehensive analysis of how these issues lead to poverty and gender oppression, and how they might be used as tools to challenge the established order.

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