

## ISSUES OF CLASS AND GENDER IN 'RUDALI'

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*Abstract: India is a land of various customs, traditions and languages and is enriched with cultural heritage. In our society, different patterns of people are living with certain values. Along with the regional effect, the lives are influenced by art, literature and cinema. Interests, accessibility and education are necessary to go through scriptures and literary works. Mahasweta Devi's "Rudali" is a short fiction which highlights the conditions, confrontations and critical existence of the marginalized class. "Rudali" represent the community of the needy, the community of rich men, the community of priests, the community of businessmen and the community of women.*

Key words: Marginalised, tradition, gender, community

The word "Rudali" stands for the professional mourners. In Rajasthan, when a rich man dies, the family members hire female weepers to exhibit grief. This practice is popular in this region and the women mourners wear black dress and they cry with unbound hair. Tears are turned into commodity and the elite class considers this custom as the social status to enhance the prestige. India is a land of various customs, traditions and languages and is enriched with cultural heritage. In our society, different patterns of people are living with certain values. Along with the regional effect, the lives are influenced by art, literature and cinema. Interests, accessibility and education are necessary to go through scriptures and literary works. Theatre has played a vital role in getting the attention of the audience and it has made a remarkable contribution with the visual method. Regional costumes, expressions, enactment, dialogues and socio-cultural representations on the stage touch every individual. This striking result has happened through the stage play also. Further, a new form that is cinema receives a great response from the audience. Though it is a type of entertainment, somewhere it leaves a message to public and paves way for conscious rising.

Mahasweta Devi's "Rudali" is a short fiction which highlights the conditions, confrontations and critical existence of the marginalized class. Usha Ganguli has staged this Bengali fiction in Hindi with the assistance of Rangakarme. Next, the same literary piece has made into movie in 1992, directed by Kalpani Lajmi. Places and regions which are displayed in the movie exhibit the areas of Western Rajasthan. It is a deserted and barren place and nowhere greenery can be seen. Poverty, scarcity of water, feudal system, class disparity, domination and unhappiness are highlighted. Colors, dialogues, costumes and songs articulate the context of the residents in these regions. Zamindars and the high caste priests use the religion as a tool to establish authority over the needy class. Compared to male actors, female actors are more in number.

With various characters, practical attitudes of female life are exposed. Of course, the movie has screened in the modern era but the situation is same in the remote places of India as we watch on the screen. Liberation, and individuality sink in the clutches of the feudal lords and the suffocated people are unable to come out of the disturbed life. The characters in "Rudali" represent the community of the needy, the community of rich men, the community of priests, the community of businessmen and the community of women. Region may be different, the reality in the various Indian regions focuses on the same lively experiences. The screened story of Rudali unites the viewers' thoughts and inspires to exchange their ideas with others with an expectation to adopt changes. This media is not only open to literates, urban people but invites rural and illiterate public. The village, Tahad has shown in the movie and castigated existence of people is recorded along with a wish to survive in the exploitative scenario.

The movie opens with a zamindar. Workers and their dialogue with the land lords make the audience to understand the existed class differences, caste relationships, oppressive rules of the Brahmins, independent lives of low caste women, traditional family life of the upper class women. It assists the viewers to realize their own sustenance. The exaggerated peaceful village life perception is away in the movie. The entrapped lady, Sanichari within the political, social, economic systems stands to explain the poverty ridden context of her community. From the cradle itself, she is deprived of happiness. Her childhood without joy and games, the marital life with hardships and even her old age with loneliness trace out the life of ganjas and dushads communities. The unforgettable act of Dimple Kapadia on the screen is appreciable. Her physical appearance, manners, colloquial language, dress itself

communicate dehumanizing status of individuals. Her conversation with various characters is a mouthpiece to narrate the desperate life.

This technique links the viewers to understand the established socio-cultural situations in the rural parts of India. In conventional way, an ideology or a struggle or constraint is expressed in the literary works with male characters. But, the movie focuses on the female characters and it highlights community's sufferings through different stories of women. In the short story, Mahasweta Devi attempts to mention the experience of ignorance and illiterate state of the rural people. While on the screen, the feminist issues are disclosed with a struggle to live. Sanichari is cursed as unlucky in her childhood. Hardships to get food continue even in her marital life and her old age sets an example of bold and courageous life. Relationship of Sanichari with her mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is not good. But she understands, cares and is very sensitive to support these women. Economic deprivation places her to work along with her husband equally. They work together to earn their livelihood and render the family responsibility. As shown in the cinema, this character is associated with many talents like dancing, music, painting and gardening. She faces the established order and controls her grief and tears without any stress. She stands to think of survival against the series of deaths in her family. In each funeral time, she contemplates practically and adopts herself to the happenings. Oppressive religious hold forces her to submit to the clutches of the money lenders. Her daughter-in-law runs away after Badhua's death. So, his child grows up under the care of Sanichari. The appearance of Bikhni in Sanichari's life transforms her. She is a very active lady, works as a professional mourner. She collects news of the dead persons in markets, bajars and at the bus stops. Playing the role of a leader, she offers work to whores, prostitutes and other women. This grief and tear business has passed to Sanichari after Bikhni's death. Here the comparison of the lives of Bikhni and Sanichari is similar. Sanichari is free from the ties of all family members and Bikhni leaves her son and wanders alone. These abandoned ladies come together and act confidently to lead life. The concepts of tears, grief and hardships of women are handled positively by extending support to the marginalized women. The understanding of these old women is memorable. Sanichari has not only shared her little house but gives a significant place to Bikhni in her life. Bikhni impresses with her empowerment in the restricted exploitative system. Social, religious, economic and family norms fail to bind her and the assertive attitude is portrayed through her experiences. Among the needy people, she occupies the place of a business woman. Sanichari hesitates to become Rudali in the village but Bikhni copes up with day to day life.

In addition, she convinces her childhood friend, Sanichari and involves the prostitutes in this mourning profession. Even after death Bikhni stays in the image of Sanichari and agrees to continue the professional work of Bikhni. The character of Parbatia, nowhere submits to the sufferings. She leaves Badhua, the son of Sanichari and enjoys her freedom while wandering in different places. Prostitute life invites her in this oppressive society. The ironical status of the privileged women is screened in this movie. Though they termed as superiors, they are linked with the suffocated atmosphere. Shedding tears and expressing grief are prohibited. If they give birth to a female child, humiliations curtail their happiness. At least, the labour class women enjoy the liberty to go outside to get their food through earnings. But, the sophisticated women's group is turned to stressful life in their materialistic world. The zamindars are the dominant class in this region. From generation to generation, they corrupt people through the system of bonded labour. These land lords spend much money on the religious and funeral ceremonies. On the other side, the exploited class should ignore the materialistic things and should work hard to get food. The rituals and religious superstitions also extend the imposed codes on these lower caste people. For instance, Sanchari's husband dies by drinking the holy water of shiva temple. At this situation, she is forced to pay twice to perform ritual. So, she takes financial assistance from the landlord. The incidents throw light on the economical and religious suppressions by the hypocrites. The horror conditions are created to the land workers if they commit a small mistake. Dulhan is a striking character in the movie. His words indicate the history of this particular region and the power of the authoritative class. He indirectly assists the exploited class to make their sustenance in the critical juncture of life. He acts as a voice to create awareness among these people and inspires to stand against the injustice. It is an inspiring portrayal, which is required in every village to guide the people who suffer in dire poverty and oppression. He plays a leading role in empowering the village women and supports them at every level. His activities open new exposures to all people in this rural region. The village indicates the binary in the existence, status and food habits of these people. The rich or the poor, nobody is happy in this rural part. Cry and tears reduce the pain of an individual. But tears and emotions are not expressed freely. The superior class is not expected to show their tears and it is a matter of status to them. They hire rudalis in order to exhibit their status and tears are turned into commodity. On the other hand, the poor people don't have time and situation to pour out their tears. They face threat to express their emotions. This enlightening movie highlights the theme of survival. The deprived class gets a message through this cinema and inspires every individual to struggle for the survival. The characters register the co-ordination among the

community people, sensitivity of women, supportive attitude of the villagers, struggles within the adopted system. Of course, the various issues are displayed in “Rudali”. At the same time, an attempt is made to give inspiration and to create awareness among the outcast.

Reference:

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