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Portrayal of Casteism and Exploitation of Women in *Draupadi and Breast Giver*

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By

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in the Dissertation entitled 'Portrayal of Casteism and Exploitation of Women in *Draupadi and Breast Giver*' being submitted to the Department of English, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Bachelor in English is my original research work.

The Dissertation embodies the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

Ishika Thapliyal

SLE-1074

Date:

Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled 'Portrayal of Casteism and Exploitation of Women in *Draupadi and Breast Giver*' submitted by Ishika Thapliyal has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

Women's status in society, especially that of underprivileged women, is heavily influenced by the perception of weakness and carelessness. In place of 'poor', 'tribal' or 'peripheral', the phrase 'marginalized' is employed. Women who are marginalized lack a 'proper' status and identity in society. They are the tribal, the impoverished, the outcast, or the rebellious women. Their sorrows had been avoided for a very long time, and they weren't even thought of as 'wrong' but rather as standard consequences of daily life. The stories of Mahasweta Devi depict the horrific reality of women's suffering as well as their capacity for endurance and resilience. The linear story that is absent from most popular literature is presented to readers in her works. Her literature explores a variety of female social situations and positions as well as the materialistic ways in which they exploit their bodies for social and economic gain.

This research work deals the short stories *Draupadi* and *Breast Giver* from the book *Breast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi in order to explain the paradoxical position and representation of women in society as well as their uneven voices. The two 'Breast stories' are examined in the study along with influences from other cultures, mythical infusion, and underrepresented narratives. A discussion of women's subordinate status and the commercialization of their bodies is explored through critical analysis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Mahasweta was born on January 14, 1926, in Dhaka, Bangladesh; however, her family eventually relocated to West Bengal as a result of the partition of India. Mahasweta Devi is a significant personality in Bengali literature. She criticises political leaders for taking advantage of the poor and the underprivileged and the literary establishment for failing to speak out against social injustice. Devi stood up for the ‘subalterns’, the poorest of the poor who were excluded from and denied rights by an authoritarian and exploitative society, according to cultural critic Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. Devi viewed herself as a pan-Indian author who wrote for a national audience in an effort to raise awareness of the condition of the poorest sections of Indian society. She incorporated a variety of linguistic registers into her stories, including Sankritized Bengali, localised colloquial idioms, tribal dialects, and snippets of Hindi and English. Her books, plays, and short stories were influenced by history, myth, folklore, and modern reality. Because of her significant labour on behalf of the Sabar tribe, she was affectionately known as ‘The Mother of the Sabar’. On July 28, 2016, the iconic and glorious mother of Bengal died as a result of multiple organ failure. Within the sea of contemporary popular literature, Mahasweta Devi's work stands out in a distinctive way. She avoids the pointless or extraneous, and her writing has little to do with the small daily habits of the rich. There is no romanticism in her straightforward, non-rhetorical writing.

Her characters are realistic, multi-dimensional, and well-formed; they are from the lowest socioeconomic class. They are necessary in the eyes of Mahasweta Devi. *Breast Stories* was initially published in Bengali, but in 1997 feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translated it into English. *Draupadi* and *Breast Giver* are the titles of the two stories covered in the paper. The breast, a metaphor for the exploitation of women from marginalised groups, serves as their commonality.

Anthology of two strong female narratives by Mahasweta Devi, *Breast Stories*, charts the flow of social insecurity and female subjection through a variety of lifestyles and down the mountains of subaltern neglect. The piece explores the 1970s Naxalite movement's battlegrounds, Harishal's grimy alleyways, and the sinister kilns of Jharoa and Seopura. Mahasweta exposes the patriarchal cesspools in addition the hypocritical culture and abuse of power that lie behind the 'choli' and 'beyond the femininity of the breasts'. The misuse of authority and power by the putative guardians through degrading torture and is another topic covered in the paper.

The protagonist of *Breast Giver/Stanadayini* is a 'professional wet nurse' who is left alone as soon as no one wants to nurse from her weary breasts. In *Draupadi*, a tribal Naxalite named Dopdi Mejhen tells the story of how she was 'apprehended' by the military and subjected to a bestial rape, torture, and mutilation of her breasts while fighting against zamindari corruption and servitude. Iris Marion Young, a Social Feminist and Political Theorist quotes "Breasts are a scandal because they shatter the border between motherhood and sexuality" (Young).

The breast is only described in science as 'two prominences on the top ventral area of the torso of primates'. It is only a component of the human figure and an essential component of the female body in terms of sexuality and procreative sustenance. The breast has always been a potent representation of femininity in literature and an elaborate signifying being a motherhood and womanhood. Numerous people have been nourished and nurtured by the breast numerous Nobel Prize winners and the canons of literature. Whether the booming corset industry in the Victorian era, or the enigmatic 'choli' in India, the breast has constantly been a focus of considerable concern in the society's androcentric sociopolitical framework.

Two of the most well-known works by the renowned Indian painter Jamini Roy, *Santhal Woman* and *Santhal Woman and Child*, also depict the sociological notion of the Santhals and the subalterns.

However, these same breasts of sustenance, nourishment, and maternity in Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories* stand for womanly defiance and bear witness to the unacceptable act of woman's body being objectified.

Devi weaponized her female characters, while the other authors further feminised them. The woman served as the focal point of upheaval, revolution, and transformation in her stories. In *Draupadi*, a story of a solitary lady who stood resolutely against man controlled society and police viciousness, the breast, which has generally been a sexual image, fills in as an indication of resistance. A source of motherhood, sustenance, and survival in 'Stanadayini' (*Breast Giver*), Jashoda had been reduced to a commodity and her breasts had lost their value. She was nothing more than an exhausted resource. This essay explores the significance of breasts in stories and how readers' perceptions of these physical characteristics are profoundly affected.

Aim of the Research:

This essay examines the society of Mahasweta Devi. Breasts serve as an extension of women's roles, significance, and status rather than focusing on the position of women in the stories as the title *Breast Stories* advocates. The essay also analyses the two tales using Hélène Cixous' *Écriture féminine*, or *women's writing*, theory from 1975, which she first used in her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* and Marxist Feminism.

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Chapter: Two

Portrayal of Casteism and Exploitation of Women in

Draupadi:

In Indian mythology and Vedic literature, the name Draupadi is well-known throughout history. The unyielding woman who, for a period of thirteen years, refused to tie her hair before washing it in the blood of those who had made her feel inadequate and had contributed to her powerlessness. Prior to analysing Mahasweta Devi's *Dopdi*, it is important to establish the plot of the novel that bears her name and identify any similarities and striking differences. *The Mahabharata*, which is credited with giving birth to Indian mythology, features Draupadi as its female lead. Draupadi's tale is spooky yet incredibly potent in its defiance. Draupadi is technically wedded to five men—the Pandavas— but she maintains her dignity and fulfils her family's needs despite this fact. “In both, the case of Durga and Draupadi, what happens to their body is a result of patriarchal voices which denies them agency” (Hoque). The disrobing of Draupadi, also known as the ‘Vastraharana’, is one of the most important events in the Mahabharata and one of the main causes of the decisive battle of Kurukshetra. The Pandavas are invited to a gambling game known as Pasha by Duryodhan, the blind king Dritarashtra's son. As is customary, declining the invitation to the game is a serious offence. Yudhishtira was unaware that the game was a ruse to seize all of his quantifiable and private possessions. He gambles too much and is a bad player, so he risks his own brothers and loses.

He eventually resorts to self-destructive gambling after continually losing his army and money. The humiliation of the monarch of Indraprastha was Duryodhan's ultimate goal, and he succeeds in doing so when he advises Yudhishtira to burn his own wife. After Yudhishtira loses, Duryodhan requests that Draupadi be brought before the judge. She rationally tells he can't stake her because he had lost. Draupadi challenges this very action. In spite of Dushashana's heroic efforts to demean her dignity, Draupadi continues to beg Lord Krishna for help throughout this pitiful agony, and when he tries to strip her off, it is evident that her sari continues to cover her. When the King recognises Lord Krishna's divine involvement, he goes on to right his sons' wrongdoings. In terms of her modern namesake, this is the tale of *Draupadi*. In Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*, the Draupadi of today is very dissimilar from her namesake. There is a variation in the marital context in addition to the obvious differences in era and circumstance. The patriarchal control, the manipulation of power by those in positions of power, and the widespread denigration of a woman's body and self-worth persist, nevertheless. Although times may change, attitudes do not.

A Naxal or Naxalite is a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), which was established in Calcutta in 1969, and which claimed to be the successor organisation. The name of the West Bengali village Naxalbari, where the Naxalite peasant insurrection took place in 1967, is where the word 'Naxal' originates. Far-left communists who support Maoism are known as naxalites. Their roots can be found in the Naxalbari peasant rebellion of 1967, which caused the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to split, resulting in the creation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) two years later. Naxalism was an effort by tribal people to protest state structural violence, such as the stealing of land for mineral extraction. Poor communities who lack access to running water, electricity, or public healthcare may accept social services from Naxalite organisations in exchange for their support of the Naxal cause.

One of the principal intentions Dopdi went after Surja Sahu was to rearrange water for drinking and water system, according to some critics. They also claim that since the state was absent, the Naxalites were able to perform state-like functions, such as enacting redistribution policies and building irrigation infrastructure, to establish themselves as the legitimate authorities in these areas.

Dopdi is a lady who deviates from the societal norms and tribal/agrarian ideas that the zamindari masters would have her adopt. The two cops notice how Dopdi's name contrasts from the rundown of Tribal names they got, Dopdi stands out against conventional wisdom. Mahasweta Devi conveys a sense of the authority figures' grip over the tribal people and the tribal women from the very beginning. A phoney sense of self-imposed superiority and upper class snobbishness are also suggested by the conversation surrounding her name.

Through seemingly insignificant events like these, Devi depicts the subaltern narratives in brilliant way. Ironically, it is Dopdi's murder of the zamindar—the spouse of the woman who gave her this name—that sets the plot's wheels in action. A nationwide arrest warrant was issued for the couple after they managed to elude operation Bakuli. As a result, they sought sanctuary in the jharkhandi forests, which are a terrible natural enemy to those without special training. At the point when Arjan Singh can't secure the pair and their gathering of progressive Robin Hoods, the military master Mr. Senanayak is acquired to give exhortation and assume responsibility for the activity. In how the story develops and plays out, Senanayak plays a crucial role. They start by scouring and encircling springs and other water sources with his group of mercenaries who are dressed in army uniforms. The army hunts down and kills the Santhal guy after receiving information from army informant Dukhram Gharari about him at a spring. They quickly realize that the man who cried "Ma-ho" (Devi 24) before he passed away was no one else but Dulna Majhi, the person most desired. Dopdi still aids the Naxals despite the death of her spouse since they had both given up on having a

family and children in indulgence of cleansing the world of corrupt zamindars and police officers. She is eventually captured after being betrayed by her own men Shomai and Budhna.

The lawbreaker should be put under furnished assurance and held in a safe area as per police/armed force fear convention until a legitimate request is gained from the hierarchy of leadership. Be that as it may, imagine a scenario in which the levels of leadership is really a pecking order, with Senanayak enthusiastically anticipating his prey.

Senanayak is too hungry when Dopdi is taken to camp, and at 8:57 PM he remarks: "Make her. Do the needful" (Devi 34). It is necessary to emphasise a crucial aspect right now. Dopdi was never truly described in a way that was centred on her gender; Mahasweta Devi always portrayed her as a rebel and a warrior. Dopdi was a Naxal before to being apprehended, a rebel opposing the unjust regime.

Dopdi Mejhen is a lady under a corrupt, male-controlled society as soon as she is taken prisoner. She is a woman from a disadvantaged group who is suffering at the hands of lustful, violent, and cruel men who swore to defend the nation. The captured woman is reduced to nothing more than flesh as Senanayak, a commander, openly orders his soldiers to commit gang rape. Senanayak transforms her into a woman only to deprive her of her femininity and dignity. Although the terrifying description of Mahasweta Devi makes the readers uneasy, it accomplishes its goal:

"She struggles to move because her arms and legs are still restrained by four posts. Around her waist and behind her lies something sticky. ... her own blood. The only thing gone is the gag. She clutches her lower lip with her teeth just in case she says the word water. She feels blood coming from her vagina. Who exactly came to create her? A tear seeps from the corner of her eye, embarrassing her. She lowers her lightless eye to the murky moonlight, reveals her breasts. Her nipples are torn, and her breasts are chewed raw. The number? Four, five, six, seven, and Draupadi

was out cold. When she looks around, she notices something white. Her own fabric. Maybe they left her behind to be devoured by the foxes. However, she can hear footsteps stomping. When the guard notices her turning his head, he leans forward and grunts at her. Draupadi averts her gaze. She won't have to hold out for long. Once more, the making of her procedure starts. goes on. The moon throws forth some light before falling asleep. Only the shadows are left. Over it, active flesh pistons rise and fall repeatedly” (Devi 31).

Devi encapsulates centuries of violence against women, abuse of authority, and abuse of power in just three eerie and agonising phrases. The one who was to be captured and caught is severely assaulted the entire evening. The animals prodded her while she was unconscious and tried to establish their dominance and superiority on a social and moral level.

Her “breasts are chewed raw, the nipples shredded reducing the breast” (Devi 35), which is frequently a symbol of nurture, maternity, and overt sexuality, to nothing more than flesh. The very guys who stole a woman's motherhood, rights, and permission when they ravaged her body as infants while nursing on her breasts. Draupadi is stripped naked, gang raped throughout the duration of the night, and has her breasts bit off by the very men who had sworn to defend the nation. Inhumanely tying her up and ‘making’ her into "active pistons of flesh rise and fall, rise and fall over it"(Devi 35) are the ‘same men who were supposed to be the citizen's protectors’.

As opposed to her namesake, this Draupadi was not saved from this desolation by a brilliant intercession. The ones who called themselves warriors alternated debasing and dishonoring her womanhood and her pride while just the moon watched peacefully as her light featured the awful deeds of brutality that continued as the night progressed. A single night stand's acts served as a beacon for several thousand unreported instances of assault against women and abuse of power. She begs them to murder her all night long and for the suffering to stop, but it doesn't. When the authority

figure is the offender, how do you report a crime? After the animals had their rounds of cruel delight the following morning, Dopdi Mejhen was commanded to be brought inside. She rises up when told to go to the Burra Sahib's tent, pours the pot of water that is given to her, shreds the remaining portions of her clothing into pieces, and then moves towards Senanayak while still being completely unafraid.

While her body had been destroyed, she still stood there with a more resilient mind. A woman who had previously glimpsed Hades' face was present. "Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds" (Devi 36). Draupadi lost her status as a woman overnight. She was an opponent to be taken seriously. She represented all the women who fought back against their attackers.

"In *Draupadi*, Devi presents a strong woman who despite being marginalised and exploited, transgresses conventional sexual and societal standards. Dopdi subverts the physicality of her body from powerlessness into powerful resistance. She does not represent the tribal woman by romanticising her depiction of Dopdi but instead realistically re-presents her through simple language and complex emotions. *Draupadi* recognises a woman's body as an asset through which they can resist the socio-political objectification of their bodies and overcome oppression" (Hoque). Mahasweta Devi illustrated the history of male violence against women. The horrifying phrase "The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?" (Devi 36) spoken by Draupadi as she stands in front of everyone with her bloodied and injured body exposed, is followed by a terrifying glance up at Senanayak. He had tried to tame the woman he had taken last night, but all that was left of her was her daughter, who was proud of her native place, and the black blood of Champabhumi. Senanayak dreadfully asks where her clothes are.

A man who had once been so able to tear Draupadi's womanhood was currently unfortunate of confronting the undeniable repercussions of his demonstrations, especially like Frankenstein feared facing the repercussions of his underhanded deeds. Senanayak moves farther as Draupadi moves closer. She continues to approach him while bleeding profusely, laughing maniacally, as he urgently tries to understand their bizarre behaviour. She spoke with a voice that put an end to the harassment of countless men "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" (Devi 36).

Here the namesakes both agree and disagree. Both women were stripped of their clothes and humiliated; one was in a royal court encircled by people whose job it was to protect the royal family, whereas the other was in an army camp with men whose job it was to defend the rights of the lady they mistreated without giving it a second thought. Even if the eras may have changed, the humiliation, sorrow, and suffering have not. The aid makes a difference. While Dopdi of Jharkhani was the weapon herself, Draupadi of Indraprastha had divine assistance from Lord Krishna and afterwards had his sons to exact retribution for her dishonor. She didn't get any assistance or deliverance. "Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid" (Devi 33).

The bosom is a powerful scholarly image. By and by, the bosom is power itself in Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*. Dopdi, rather than Draupadi of Indraprastha, was both the person in question and the aggressor. The debasement and false reverence of the state and of the specialists bet away Dopdi's life in the possession of monsters and beasts dressed as men, similarly as Yudhishtira had finished with Draupadi. Devi does not romanticise tribal women or the sufferings of the Naxal warfare, in contrast to the majority of current authors. She exposes an unvarnished, raw aspect of reality and is not afraid to accuse the wrongdoers, whoever they may be.

The army views Devi's Dopdi as a sexualized object rather than a woman in order to denigrate her femininity and rob her of her dignity. The ferocity of her deeds and the tenacity of her battered breasts echo her husband's raging battle cry, "Ma-ho" (Devi 24). A lone woman stood up to a legion of 'guys' who were abusing their positions of authority, their power, and the police. The story becomes more than merely a literary work as a result of Draupadi's chilling commentary on Senanayak's deeds; it represents numerous unreported crimes against women and challenges macho and patriarchal symbols.

Two mutilated bosoms go about as an image of freedom and liberation till the end, raising doubt about the disappointments of the public device, debasement in, key, influential places, and the unconcealed maltreatment of power. Beck and Bose admire devi "Voicing and articulating the muted and the silenced, representing the gender margins within that of caste, the cause of the gendered subaltern, empowerment and radical feminist realism, and an attempt for subaltern speaking have been attributed to her fictional texts"(Beck and Bose 441).

Michel de Certeau recognizes the marginalized as a silent majority and is an advocate of the common/poor people's tactics. Their methods of action shed light on reality and rearrange the order . According to Certeau, walking is a verbal act. When the marginal/common people go through the streets, they oppose the prevailing economic order through both their strategies and routine actions.

Devi, a member of the higher caste and 'a middle-class Bengali communist scholar', travels long distances through tribal communities to observe and take part in their daily activities. The underclass women's lack of access to economic, political, artistic, and When Draupadi confronts the person who tortured her, her strategies come together in a single instant. She then creates a space for herself to express herself. Senanayak becomes quiet as Draupadi, who is being pursued and kidnapped,

asserts her right to speak even in the final days of her life. She is a collectivist organizer who ‘goes to the streets’ to fight against exploitative order and manages to evade the troops for six years.

Portrayal of Casteism and Exploitation of Women in *Breast*

Giver:

The breast and, while we're on the subject, the woman to whom the breasts belong are the subjects of the second tale in the trilogy, *Breast Giver*. Author Mahasweta Devi gives her characters ironic and thoughtful names. The same is true in the case of Jashoda, who stands in for Yashoda, Lord Krishna's foster mother and Nanda's wife. A wet nurse is referred to as a ‘Stanadayini’ in Bengali, which means ‘one who lends her stan’ or breasts. Now, the breast is the primary symbol and source of concern in this tale. Bengali Brahmin couple Jashoda and her husband Kangali were struggling to make ends meet while raising their three kids. While his wife stayed at home, Kangali worked as an assistant in a candy store. Kangali was a spouse who devotedly cherished his better half — or, all the more exactly, her body. He propelled himself facing her at whatever point his solidarity directed “...when Kangali’s body didn’t drill her body like a geologist in a darkness lit only by an oil lamp” (Devi 39).

Other characters in this story are the Haldars of Harisal. The youthful child of the strong Haldar family was a fretful kid who just needed to delight the “whim in mind or body” (Devi 40). He regularly exploited the cook and, when he was done with her, got her dismissed. One more of his impulses was to drive the family's pristine Studebaker vehicle. He drove, running over the “feet and shins” (Devi 41) of poor Kandalicharan who was charmed in dreams of stroking his better half's “large round breasts” (Devi 41).

The Haldar chief was worried about the ‘Brahman’ his son had ran over, as if that were his sole crime, while the others were worried about the unfortunate man's life. Sadly, it was a Brahman

instead of an untouchable man or lady. The Haldars assumed responsibility for Kanganicharan's treatment more out of a sense of religious obligation than out of human sympathy. Kanganicharan was unable to work due to the loss of his feet, so he relied on Mr. Haldar's assurance that he would open a shop for him. The family also subsisted on the food that Mr. Haldar's family supplied to them. But when Mr. Haldar passed away, all those promises went up in smoke, leaving the couple completely helpless.

Jashoda started out in an determination to find a job as a cook at the Haldar home. Devi now shows how a lady looking for a commercial job progressively becomes commercialized herself. The Haldar household decides to hire Jashoda as the family's wet nurse.

A story of commercialization, objectification, and pollution of motherhood's sanctity is told through the transition and plot development that occur as a result of this choice. It should be noted that Mahasweta Devi highlights the difficulties of the oppressed subaltern women and their families throughout *Breast Stories*. Jashoda was not employed, even if it was not explicitly stated in the conversation. her breasts were. They just saw two bosoms full of milk that were ready to be suckled by the swarms of kids that adorned the Haldar family in her. From that day on, Jashoda would start working as a professional mother while Kanganicharan would work as a trained father at home, taking care of the kids and cooking. Devi displays the sexism and fundamental degrading of Jashoda's commodification-

“Over a dozen lucky milch cows reside in some state in spacious rooms on the ground floor of the Haldar mansion, which is surrounded by a paved courtyard. They are cared for by two Biharis who act as mothers. Mountains of molasses, rind, bran, hay, and grass exist. According to Mrs. Haldar, a cow will produce more milk the more she eats. The Mother Cows are now above Jashoda's

position in the house. The sons of the Mistress take on the form of Brahma and bear children. Jashoda protects the progeny” (Devi 46).

Thus, in just one paragraph, Mahasweta Devi shows how the Haldar household views her as little more than a commercial cattle addition to their breeding farm and a resource to relieve the wives' concerns about sagging breasts. She is merely a piece of livestock that the Haldars are feeding and fattening. “Jashoda might be above the Mother Cows” (Devi 52). She is the product that is Jashoda. The Haldar family's children are raised by the body attached to the breasts known as Jashoda. Devi underlines the terrors of the underclass and the oppression of society again and time again. When the exact people who adored Jashoda and her husband for being devoted high caste Brahmins use her as cattle, she makes a subtle jab. Even the exalted and mighty Brahmins cannot escape the old-fashioned classism and economic avarice. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak is quick to point out that Mahasweta Devi also uses Jashoda and her mammary glands to represent postdecolonization India, referring to it as a “Milk mother” (Devi 63) like Jashoda. Devi alludes to two parallel scenarios, the first in which British invaders replaced the Haldars and exploited India like Jashoda for their own expansion and gain.

Furthermore, she discusses the citizens of the nation. She claims that even though the country feeds thousands of people, they mistreat her and treat her like a commodity. India offers essential insights into the struggles of the oppressed that the media and periodicals readily overlook because it is portrayed from a subaltern, marginalized viewpoint. Ranajit Guha says “the subaltern classes were subjected in varying degrees of domination [...] [particularly in the sector of] productive labour [in which] workers and peasants [do not have any voice to arise]” (Guha,5). Similar to Jesse Pope in Wilfred Owen's day, media and press romanticized their battles and wars rather of assisting them or supporting them. Further, because Jashoda is now a ‘common utility’, Mrs. Haldar takes

extra care of her and her family. Jashoda's body, her breasts, and her nutritious milk were for everybody to share, according to their own perverted version of the Communist ideology. She was merely a machine in the home, waiting to be milked for the self-imposed 'greater good' of the Haldars' great state. Spivak goes on to say: "As soon as the value of Jashoda's milk emerges, it is appropriated. Good food and constant sexual servicing are provided so that she can be kept in prime condition for optimum lactation" (Devi 88).

The arrangement was accepted by all members of the Haldar family. The wives were overjoyed that having children did not tarnish the perfection of their bosoms and allowed them to wear "blouses and bras of European cut" (Devi 54). For the next thirty years, Jashoda raised a large number of kids while also giving 20 infants their first sip of milk. Jashoda was never concerned about finding food, clothing, or care for her family or herself throughout those years. Then Mrs. Haldar also passed away, placing Jashoda in a situation she never anticipated. She went from being welcomed to celebrations as a divine figure to having to beg for a job as a cook and being made to live with the very servants who had once worshiped her. Without her 'stan' in the four corners of the Haldar household, Stanadayini was nothing. She had grown out of her breasts. She was little more than a vessel for the 'mammal projections' that raised numerous generations of infants to become men and women. Those same men, and their spouses, rendered her worthless when there were no more mouths to feed or nurse. Jashoda questioned her place in the family while sharing a basement apartment with the household staff. She was no more than a dim memory of her role as the 'Milkmother', the wet nurse. Even her own spouse had found an attractive younger woman. Kangalicharan was no longer enthralled by Jashoda's worn-out breasts. Since the role-reversal implied a challenge to his masculinity and patriarchal beliefs, he was unable to accept it. Jashoda was a depleted resource now that he had enough money and a younger woman to enjoy during his

“prime” (Devi 61). She was cut off from both of her shelters as a result, and since her body was no longer useful, she was doomed to live as an outcast. “Now is the downward time for Jashoda the milk-filled faithful wife” (Devi 62).

A peculiar illness gradually overtook her body and mind as the days went by. She appeared to be suffering from postpartum depression. Jashoda felt alone and purposeless after caring for children who nursed from her breast for years. Her empty breasts resembled a ship without a rudder. She found it hard to comprehend that her physique, which had previously brought her recognition, money, and respect, was now useless “Her breasts feel empty, as if wasted. She had never thought she wouldn’t have a child’s mouth at her nipple”(Devi 63).

Her body had been commercialized and commodified for years, turning her into an object and a machine that was now abandoned and broken. The eldest daughter-in-law's eventually became aware of her physical illness, and the only reason they continued down that path of thought was their dread of being held accountable for sin if the Brahmin female passed away at their Kayastha home. A lumpy, red lesion was found, and additional examination revealed it to be fatal breast cancer. It should be noted that Mahasweta Devi promotes breast cancer awareness and early diagnosis in a novel predominantly dedicated on ‘female objectification and subaltern difficulties’. She works to spread awareness of a disease that claims hundreds of women each year . A woman who was deceived by the bosom that gave her the title “Milk-mother” (Devi 63) lays here. The very bosom that fed and nourished several individuals. The visits and the caregivers disappeared as her disease got worse, ‘running sores’ across her bosom become vile. Even her own husband, who affectionately stroked her breasts, abandoned her. She raised sons and daughters over many years, but none of them ever came to her aid. The mother, who denied to accept that her own bosoms and

her own 'milk-children' had deceived her, fell into disbelief and delusion. She has delusions- "the sores on her breast kept mocking her with a hundred mouths, a hundred eyes" (Devi 67).

The people she treasured and raised went away as her disease got worse. Her own husband abandoned her and deprived her of her rights as a wife and mother. She was abandoned in the chilly hospital bed by the kids she raised and fed. She could "see her milk-sons all across the world everywhere she turned" (Devi 74). All she saw in her final moments, as cancer drained her body and vitality, was her milk sons, who were all around her. A mother who had had numerous children throughout the years passed away all by herself as a Hindu female. No identity, no memories, and no name. She was simply the Brahmin wet nurse who would pass away by herself.

Her caste, her occurrences, and — in particular — her bosoms procured her the profound respect died such that anybody might have anticipated. She turned into one more anonymous soul lost in the commodification, and commercialisation of everything. Ironically, she was burned and cremated by an untouchable. Death does not make distinctions. The tale of the breast, as well as the woman whose breasts they are, is told in *Stanadayini*. Mahasweta Devi illustrates how a sacred birth ceremony is profaned by greed, self-indulgence, and selfishness, as well as the objectification of the feminine body. She was the Stanadayini, Jashoda. Her individuality as a woman had long since been taken from her, and all that was left of the "Milk-mother" (Devi 63) were two empty, milkless bosoms, one of which was cancerous and the other to suckle on. According to Simone de Beauvoir, motherhood is the main barrier to women's independence. Parth Debnath (Doctoral Research Scholar) says "One such third world feminist writer is Mahasweta Devi. Devi was not only a writer or a professor but an activist as well, who fought for the rights of marginal people. Devi's literary creation has always depicted the pains and struggles of marginal people, especially women. Devi's

famous story *Stanadayini*, which was translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, titled as *Breast-giver*, portrayed the multi-dimensional repression and deprivation faced by women”

(Debnath). The trivialization of women's household chores is criticized by Marxist feminism. However, Devi's *Breast-giver* questions western feminism's presumptions that childbirth and childrearing are unpaid domestic labor. Jashoda builds her profession on the maternal and feminine processes (gestation and lactation). According to Spivak's study of the narrative, the mother-by-hire business concept is a form of Marxist feminism. Devi constructs the maternal idea in a subtle way. In the Indian culture, motherhood is typically linked to divinity and the nation.

However, *Breast-giver* displays a tandem of several discourses, including the discourses of the family (the biological mother), of religion (the goddess), and of the country (motherland) The situation of the economically underprivileged woman is presented by including the agenda of mothering through the image of the mother. Politics are incorporated into the legendary character of Jashoda through its economic component. Jashoda's gendered pain is not lessened by her intentional self-sacrifice.

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Chapter Three: Conclusion

Mahasweta Devi, a social activist and writer from Bengal, devoted her life to helping India's underprivileged groups and adivasi communities in an effort to make them part of political and historical memory. *Breast Stories*, a work of contemporary culture by Mahasweta Devi, offers a focused ethnographic setting for exploring and challenging the numerous layers of traditional and capitalist patriarchal forces that violently conspire to undercut, degrade, and ultimately destroy women's reproductive systems and welfare. Vandana, a Lecturer says “Mahasweta’s fiction aims at inverting such hegemonic, over-privileged, ever-signifying system of relationships and attempts to bring low what was high through the strategies of subversion and reversal. Her stories come across as the post-colonial, subaltern, gendered responses that serve to topsy-turvy such hierarchical structures, generating aesthetics of opposition in the process” (Vandana).

We see how mothers in *Breast-Giver* strategically use their breasts to eke out a subsistence existence so they can feed their family. These mothers are motivated by struggles for food and water security. These local accounts of women's lived experiences provide evidence of how patriarchal capitalist violence against women has forced women to use their reproductive systems as owned loci of procreation and surplus value in order to protect themselves and subsequent generations from poverty and despair.

The two tales of the breast and the woman to whom they belong can be explored here. Two tales of subaltern struggle and rebellion against political schemes, abuse of power, brutality by the police, and exploitation by the upper class. Two excellent but unheroic women. Mahasweta Devi, like Wilfred Owen, does not idealize the sorrow and pain that the two women went through. Nalini

Sharma quotes “*Breast Stories* is a refreshing book for those who want to dive into Indian feminist fiction, especially for people like us who have the privilege of sitting in front of our computers and reading this review” (Sharma) . Her work can be categorized as resistance literature because its goal was anguish for the reader rather than his enjoyment. What it offered was a reality that needed to be altered rather than contemplated. Nalini Sharma says “Devoid of wishful thinking, these powerful stories draw attention to the systemic oppression that numerous women face today in the Third World. Rape has been used as a weapon of war in Columbia, Iraq, Sudan, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Women are constantly harassed on the streets, be it in the metropolitan city of Delhi or underdeveloped villages. Our bodies are policed and objectified not only by monsters but also by well-intentioned men. This book is a reminder of these bitter truths and many more lest we should forget” (Sharma).

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