

Plea to the bonded laborers in Mahasweta Devi's play "Aajir"

Dr. Shikha Shukla

Department of Applied Sciences and Humanities, C.S.J.M University, Kanpur, India

Email: shuklasa.21@gmail.com

Abstract— *It was the mission of Mahasweta Devi to learning about transformation of society through her writing. Now and again, she expressed her disgust that the new political system has failed to safeguard the interests of the weaker sections of society and it also has failed to keep their commitment to common people.*

Keywords— *voice of the oppressed section, social discontentment, Poverty and ignorance, hunger, landlessness, indebtedness, and bonded labour.*

In the galaxy of Indian English drama, in spite of the exclusive monopoly of male dramatists, Mahesweta Devi is the only representative woman dramatist who made experiments with art of theatre along with the prolife experiment in fiction. She has expressed her creative vision through novels, short stories, dramas, social and political essays. Mahesweta Devi with her radical and unconventional vision gave a new direction to Indian theatre. She was born under the passing shadows of national movement for liberty and human survival. At a very early stage she came in contact with the supporter of political and cultural movement in Bengal. As a sensitive social thinker, she deeply felt the pain of people and downtrodden. She started writing articles to expose the problems of the marginalized section of society in the Bengal's dailies like Jugantar. For her exceptional awareness for the suffering of downtrodden, she was acknowledged as the most seriously committed artist. During the time of the formation of her creative impulse, she witnessed the upsurge of Naxalite movement and became a major formative influence in her eras. She was disgusted to find that the poor and unprivileged were consistently being exploited in the hands of intellectuals and political leaders.

The creative canvas of Mahesweta Devi covers the misery of the life of those who live beyond the glamour of metropolis of Calcutta. In her writings, she expressed the pain and suffering of the landed gentry. It was her effort to acknowledge the identity of the tribal and other marginalized groups in the mainstream of society. She

wants to write about the people who are struggling hunger, landlessness and indebtedness. In an interview with Gayatri Spivak, she mentioned the purpose of her writing. To quote; the tribal and mainstream have always been parallel.... The mainstream does not understand the parallel... They can't keep their land; there is no education for them, no health facilities.... They are denied everything... That is why I started writing about the tribal movement and tribal world.... I repay their honour.. (1)

It was the mission of Mahasweta Devi to learning about transformation of society through her writing. Now and again, she expressed her disgust that the new political system has failed to safeguard the interests of the weaker sections of society and it also has failed to keep their commitment to common people. She categorically declares, "I go on writing about people." It is distinction of Mahasweta Devi that she perceives the social discontentment as a natural response of exploitation and oppression. She pleads that the responsibility of the creative writers is to work as the instrument of transformation against the oppressive mechanism of human exploitation. She asserts;

"For a long time now, Bengali literature has indulged in a denial of society and has been played by on atrophy of conscience. The writers refuse to see the writing on the wall. The reader as turning away from them in revulsion. What can be more surprising than that writers living in a country bedeviled with so many problems... should fail to find material for their work in their own country and people."²

In this respect, Mahasweta Devi gave a new direction to Bangla literature by articulating the voice of the oppressed section of the society. She tries to represent the social imbalance and at the same time tries to dive deep in the consciousness of the characters who has been subject of victimization. It is only the widespread humanitarian concern of her literary creation that has brought her a global recognition. It is evident that Mahasweta Devi presents the issue of the sufferings of marginalized on the basis of her

own experience gathered through her affinity with the marginalized group like subjugation of woman, dalits, untouchable, tribal communities and the suffering of the bonded labors. Within this small canvas, Mahasweta Devi established her authority as a committed artist. The distinction of her art lies in that she has brought Indian English drama close to the voice of common man, beyond the sentimental and philosophical dramatic creed of Tagore and Aurabinado. Her dramatic world shares the shadows of reformative zeal of Badal sircar, Vayay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad. Her well-known plays are 'Mother of 1084' Aajir, Urvashi, O Johnny, Bayen and water.

Here we take for our study her play 'Aajir' in which Mahasweta Devi raises her voice against the exploitation of the poor and illiterate people in the rural areas. Paatan the protagonist of the play suffers perpetual slavery only for the debt of three rupees. Poverty and ignorance made him to face humiliation and injustice in the hands of the local landowner. The economic exploitation of Paatan take the form of physical exploitation and it ultimately culminates in the form of sexual exploitation. The whole life of Paatan becomes an uncompromised bond in which he was denied the right of emancipated and dignified life. Mahesweta Devi, through her dramatic world of 'Aajir' categorically acknowledges the identity of the bonded laborers and makes a significant effort to the reconstruct their voice, with her intense human sympathy. She never tries to romanticize the experience of the tribal and slaves for the sake of commercial popularity only but here she has documented how people survive in the subhuman existence under the burden of poverty, exploitation and oppression. She meditates that the most of the social evils are the off shorts of the present system, based on power politics and she also tries to find out a radical transformation in the society. In one of her interviews with Gayatri spivak, she conferred:

"After thirty one years of independence, I find my people still groaning under hunger, landlessness, indebtedness, and bonded labour... All the parties... have failed to keep their commitment to the common people. I do not hope to see in my life time any reason to change this conviction of mine. Hence, I go on writing... about the people."³

Mahasweta Devi holds that the system of slavery and bonded labour is product of poverty and faulty economic structure, based on the authority of the landlords. In the remote India, at the outskirts of Bihar, Assam, Bengal and other border states, the masters of land, manipulate the resources of nature to control the fate of the humble humanity, who are landless and homeless. These bonded

labors are deprived of all resources of mainstream of life and are dragged behind the veil of ignominy and shame. Besides physical torture and social depilation, they are left mentally cripple, even to think of themselves at the level of bodily ego. Their survival is the worst even than the animals. It is said that the birth of the concept of boned labour in India, is a product of debtor-creditor relationship. ND Kamble puts:

"In practice, bonded labour in India is the culmination of the debtor-creditor relation into slave and master relation. But the bonded labour is an outcome of the socio-economic system prevailing in India .Some people who were deprived and political power had to depend on those on who enjoyed these powers. Criminal poverty of vulnerable section expressed them to exploitation in the built-in-mechanism of the socio-economies system. Economic dependence and poverty of the under-privileged sections of society forced them to be slaves."⁴

The institution of slavery has been popular since the olden times and it exists in different forms, in different societies but the horrible impact of it can be seen in the formation of many post-colonial societies in Africa and Caribbean. The organization of European slavery over the post three centuries has its genesis in trading concession. For all pervasive poverty, labour is available at low cost and for their intellectual blankness; they could have been manipulated as insensitive animals. In America slaves were sold and purchased in the auction market. Eugene O'Neill, the eminent American dramatist in his famous play; 'Emperor Jones' presents, how the slaves are not only economically subjugated, but they are also subjugated at mantel level. The European institutionalization of commercial slavery in late 16th century afforded colonizing power. It is a paradox that the slavery is being encouraged by the progressive societies of America, France and China. Most of the slaves are bound to lead the life of subalterns and are not allowed to register their voice and existence in mainstream of life.

Mahasweta Devi is the first sensitive Indian creative writer, who has a realization of the need of the representation of the images and voices of the bonded labour on the stage. In the play Aajir, with the power of her pen, she articulates the voice of the bonded labour, who survives in the state of invisibility, wretchedness and inhuman condition. The play 'Aajir' was first appeased as a short story before it was transcribed in the form of the play during 1976-77. In the process of transcription of the story, the idea of exploitation and oppression dominated in her consciousness. To make a naked exposition of the horrors

of the passive vision of the subjugation of those slaves into a lively and more convincing exposition. It denotes that Mahasweta Devi like Tagore and Mahesh Dalton is convinced with this vision that the live performance in theatre affords a better opportunity to present a strong chemistry between the audience and the characters. This representation of the sight of brutality of power mechanism on the stage helps to establish a better and more effective mechanism of social transformation.

It is in this spirit that Mahasweta Devi in the play 'Ajir', deals with the age old social evil, which has reduced humanity from the level of savagery and barbarism. Mahasweta Devi, through the suffering of Ajir tries to investigate the instrument of exploitive mechanism that runs the humanity of unprivileged and helpless human beings. The hegemony of the ruling class, who controls the resources of power, and even the resources of nature, establish their authority on the weak and helpless human being. In the context of the structure and idea of the play 'Ajir', samik Bandhopashyay admits:

"Power operates beyond the law and with the tacit acquiescence of an exploited class hold in thrall by a load of conventional role obligation. Legal reforms or legal defenses for the exploited have rarely affected the expletive mechanism sustained by the illiteracy ignorance of the exploited."⁵

The protagonist of the play, pattern confronts with the society that denies him to live a respectful life. The fate of bonded laborer was imposed by his predecessors, who pledged their family and his fortune 'into the perpetual slavery' only for the sake of three rupees. The realization of the horrors of his own wretched existence makes pattan, a rebel. This bonded spirit revolts and he becomes restless to liberate himself from the clutches of slavery and want to lead a life of self respect and self-enlightenment. The representation of the restlessness of the pattan on the stage, and the subsequent fury born within his inner self, provides Mahasweta Devi a better opportunity to expose the reality of the affectation of the artificial practices of civil society. E. Satya Narayan comments,

"The naked stage gives the playwright greater freedom to present a character in the present enacting a happening in the past. And it also allows her to be more faithful in her dramatization of the realities of the oppressed life without recourse to unnecessary scenic displays. As such she takes every care to present hr case realistically"⁶.

The play 'Ajir' is constructed in the spirit of folk tradition with the little interference of artificial Paraphernalia. At the very outset of the play, there is

repetition of the voice on the dark stage, echoing the word 'Ajir', "the term Ajir stands for one who has sold himself to be a slave for a patty sum". The dark stage and the sudden drifting of light, illuminating pattan, who survives with the identity of an 'Ajir'.

He reveals how slavery is not a self echoing fate for him, but it is inherited from his forefathers, who were victims of terrible poverty because of famine. After this initial introduction, the crude dance of pattan is an imitation of the folk and tribal theatre, but it is also an unconscious revelation of his suppressed psyche. It indicates that the mental burden of slavery was so strong that he was helpless to maintain a harmony and balance of thought and action. He sings:

"It began with the drought,
With the crops drying up on the field,
And hundred dying of hunger,
And all the rice and all the grains,
Piling up in Raavan Shunri's granary,
Till my forefather Golak Kura,
To save his life"⁷

He was sold only for three rupees and according to the condition of the bond; other descendants of the family were automatically sold. He recalls the image of his forefather, Golak Kura. The scene shifts to the past, when Golak Kura was forced to sell his wife and children. The declaration of Golak Kura for the auction of his wife and children forecasts the apathy of human existence. It is remarkable that in the play 'Ajir', Mahasweta Devi contemplates on the issue of the lines of existentialist's dilemma of human existence. Fanon declares, "Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant truth"⁸

In the play 'Ajir', the whole scene of the process of auction and the ironical comments on Golak, has been dramatized as a mockery of human civilization. For his poverty and helplessness, Golak seeks consolation in his slavery because it attests permits the right of self survival. The singing of Golak and his confession of thanks suggest that there is a class of society in which there is little space for their voice and vision. He sings unmindful of the fact that he is going to pledge his spirit for the personal purpose. To quote:

"You are so kind, so kind, and master
You've taken away from me the greater care of all
We'll never have to worry about our blood again,
But master what's the price"⁹

He is being auctioned by Raavan only for 'one rupee'. When Golak denies selling himself for one rupee, Raavan

starts using abusive language to subdue his spirit. Mahasweta Devi accepts that in the process of marginalization language also plays a significant role. Raavan threatens him, "take it or leave it, Bastard, I'll give you three rupees. Have you ever seen three rupees in your life?" The idea of three rupees and the subsequent elation of Golak suggest that poverty is a significant determinant to decide the mental spectrum of the bonded laborers. He fills with pride and joy on the realization that his position is worth of 'three rupees'. For him three rupees affords him to understand that he can secure the future of his children with these three rupees. The pride and self-sufficiency of Golak indicates how, they have a limited spectrum of thinking. His wild laughter, amid his illusion of security creates a more intense dramatic situation, in which social problem takes deeper psycho-philosophical dimensions. He declares,

"I'll have my three rupees, for generations my people will have oil for their hair, clothes for their bodies, and rice for their stomachs. We'll be begging no more in loincloths for the water drained from cooked rice."¹⁰

This statement shows that for the bonded labour, to keep body and soul together, is a serious challenge. In order to celebrate the occasion of auction, the appearance man with 'Dhol' is an imitation of folk tradition. In the contest of the fortunes of Golak, it exposes how slavery for him was not an individual self choosing fate. He was expected to make a public confession of his slavery.

Mahasweta Devi in 'Aajir', with dramatic representation of this situation, indicates how slaves are bound to surrender their freedom, dignity and self respect. Raavan makes him to make a public confession of his slavery. Golak stands on such a state of humanity, that even he could not give words to his slavery. He declares,

"I and my wife name Gairabi Devi hereby enter into an agreement for perpetual slavery, which same will be bringing on me (Raavan raises a foot to point to Golak) and my wife (Raavan raises a foot to point to Gairabi) the two of us..."¹¹

In this statement, he fails to admit about his own progeny. The man with 'Dhol' completes his statements, in which he admits the slavery, even of the 'descendants'. In this manner, Paatan, Golak's son becomes a slave even before his birth. In this process, Gairabi, Golak's wife maintains silence and only shakes her head in consent, holding the hands of Golak. From the dramatic point of view this sight of bended head creates an image of chained labour. Gairabi is doubly subjugated because she has to bear the authority of the master and her husband. Golak accepts his identity with calm stoicism. "So I'm on Aajir now."

The second scenes of the play 'Aajir' focuses on the condition of Paatan, who in the present time, has to survive as an Aajir of Maatang who imposes all injustice and physical torture on his slaves. With his economic resources, he controls his own wife. He uses absurd language and obscene expression both for Aajir and for his own wife. With violence he imposes his own authority on Paatan and with his male domination he challenges his wife's authority by keeping a Mistress. He addresses Paatan "what a body the bastard has! Strong as a horse! I beat him up, and it is my hands aching now."¹²

He calls Paatan, 'a horrible sinner.' He ridicules Paatan's idea of marriage and respectable life. With the idea of the marriage of Paatan, he spits on the ground and shamelessly remarks, "Is there anyone who did give away daughter in marriage to an Aajir?"¹³

Mahasweta Devi in the play 'Aajir' moves with the argument that slavery is a matter of shifting of power, and it is not a permanent phenomenon. Maatang is proud of his authority, but the commands of the 'mistress', becomes a challenge to the domination of his authority. The queries of mistress about the papers of slavery of Paatan are the first challenge to the authority of the master. The mistress inspite of being a slave herself of the passion of Maatang becomes an instrument of revolt and reawakening and she tries to manipulate the situation to make Paatan free from Maatang's authority. She challenges Maatang, "What do you think you'll do if I tinker with your chest? Beat me up? I'm not your punnashasi, can't beat me."¹⁴

Maatang is shocked with the awareness of the Mistress.

Mahasweta Devi through the self confidence of the mistress ascertains that marginality is ever struggling to seek spaces in the 'Centre'. With the shift of the power, the marginalized group can assume authority to register their voice of the protest in the 'center.' The economic resources are controlled by Mattang but with the power of sensuality, the mistress establishes her authority and challenges on Maatang. She points out the weakness of Mattang:

"You are a clever fox! You tell Paatan you have his bond of slavery, and he does not dare run away. You tell me you've give me jewellery, you've given my father a share of the cropland, you tell me you'll give me a son, you have a sob for everybody, and then you go to punnasheshi's house and dance without a stick on your back."¹⁵

The oversensitiveness of the mistress for the suffering of Paatan and Maatang's open confession for the female sexuality justify that Maatang has a limited power. The voice of the mistress is the voice of perfect against the exploitation of Maatang. Maatang's failure to satisfy the

female needs of the mistress and also his failure towards his son prepares the grounds of the collapse of his authority.

In the play 'Aajir' Mahasweta Devi develops the argument that the slaves cannot be deprived of the basic human urges. The interest of the Mistress shifts in the masculine self of Paatan. Her overconsciousness for the fresh masculine of Paatan has some deeper significance in the context of the issue of marginality. Like Mahesh Dattani and Tagore, Mahasweta Devi accepts that these marginalized characters regain some higher values of life. The mistress tenderly massages Paatan with liquor. Paatan, in spite of his insignificant identity, soon gets an insight into the intention of the mistress. His confession, "I look upon you as mothers."¹⁶

Suggest that slavery no longer ruins the moral consideration. Like Champa of Mahesh Dattani's 'Seven steps around the fire' and Kamala of Vijay Tendulkar's play 'Kamala', Paatan exhibits a far more developed human consciousness. He fears from close physical contact of the mistress. Paatan's enlightened vision reflects those higher values of life, in which there is rare sublimity and the rare gravity of the personal relationship. At this stage, three things are remarkable in the character of Paatan-

- (1). His awareness of moral responsibility.
- (2). His awareness of personal relationship.
- (3). His warmth of sensations.

All these three factors suggest that the marginality cannot subdue human spirit. His self-reflective analysis gives an insight into his consciousness:

"She is my lady the Mistress. I should look upon her only as a mother. Yet why does my body burn with passion when I come in close to her? She told me: Son, if you are innocent, nothing should affect you. Haven't you seen, how at Chadak, the innocent, sinless devotees walk on fire, their feet unscorched. Son, if there is the touch of sin within you, and your body burns, bring devotion to your mind and quench the fire in its cool."¹⁷

The identification between the sensibility of Paatan and the mistress indicates that human sympathy is the only step to go beyond the burden or marginality. The mistress is so impassioned that she encourages herself, for marriage with Paatan. This idea of marriage with Paatan seems to be obscene and absurd, but it is a manifestation of the impassioned response of human consciousness. Mahasweta Devi distinctively identifies the human consciousness, where the duality born out of social discrimination merges into a single whole. With the proposal of marriage, the mistress makes Paatan mentally free. She makes him conscious of his position and ensures his freedom in the form of tearing

of the bond. The little confidence stirred by the mistress, fires the spark of freedom and self-dignity on Paatan. These efforts of the mistress, though motivated by selfish purpose, become the pattern to bring Paatan in the mainstream of life. Paatan is exulted on the idea of the tearing of the bond and in it; he perceives the dream of his liberation. He raises his feet, laughing loud, and "The Aajir bond! I'll tear it in to pieces and scatter them to the wind. Then (He shouts in exultation, and exists) then I'll be a man. I'll marry Bhumidas! I'll no longer be an Aajir, no longer."¹⁸

In the third scene of the play 'Aajir', Paatan with the encouragement of the mistress, emerges a fully developed individual, who can assert his right and choices. His encounter with a gypsy woman reveals his personality as a self-conscious individual. In order to escape from the trap of the mistress, he makes a plan of secret run away with the gypsy woman. The whole idea of marriage with a gypsy woman denotes that Paatan is gifted with equal intellectual insight. Mahasweta Devi explores the complex pattern of the story of exploitation. The idea of the suffering of the Paatan is further encouraged and supported by the suffering of Punnashasi, who works as a whore to appease the sensual desires of the masters, Punnashasi was forced to go naked from door to door with a pitcher on her head, praying for water. In the life of Paatan, the suffering and humiliation of Punnashasi brings a cathartic effect. He is horrified to get the impression of her image in stark nakedness. He comes to the realization that the ruin of the desire is a common destiny of all those who are powerless. Earlier, it was the confidence of the mistress that prepared Paatan to shatter his sense of reticence, the suspended fury of Punnashasi gives a new jerk to the consciousness of Paatan. She reveals her pain and apathy for the society that makes her survival difficult. In a rhetorical undertone, she declares:

Isn't a whore's body a human body after all? You bastards, you head to tar me up, and then I have to fast without a drop of water. O mother of the cremation ground! Have mercy on me, and let me pray for water! 19

Punnashasi, in the play 'Aajir' becomes the powerful instrument for the articulation of the voice of the marginalized. If the Mistress awakes the consciousness of Paatan, Punnashasi teaches him to register the voice of protest against those who work as the instrument of authority. Through her anguish, Mahasweta Devi reveals her own vision that the suffering of the marginalized is not the curse of divine, but it is an expression of the oppressive mechanism of the manipulation of the resources of power. The confession of Punnashasi suggests that more than physical suffering, she is the victim of mental and

emotional suffering. Her fury gradually converts into form of rebellion. She cries out:

“Why do you all inflict yourself on me when you know it is only a whore? Eh? Why do you draw the dust from my courtyard for your Puja? The famine and the drought come again and again. And the whole has to strips naked and call for the water to bring the rain down to you.”²⁰

Mahasweta Devi maintains effective dramatic crisis to induce appropriate development of action. In contrast to the anguish of punnashasi, the mob appears announcing the escape of Paatan. In the scene, the sudden rush of mob to subdue the spirit of Paatan echo the tradition of folk theatre. From the point of the theme, Mahasweta Devi suggests that marginalization is not a matter of individual only but it is also an expression of the whole social injustice. Mob makes Paatan to realize that being in ‘Aajir’ he can never enjoy liberty to escape his fate. He was forced to accept that Aajir has no right to enjoy happy and healthy life to maintain his freedom and family bliss. The circle dance of the mob around Paatan vitalizes the scene of slave auction. Mahasweta Devi very successfully exposes the apathy of the society for individual gains. The following chorus of the mob is significant enough to expose the public indifference for the emotional imbalance of the poor, like Paatan. The song echoes:

“The world is not for you,
The gypsy woman’s not for you,
As long as the Aajir’s bond’s there
“You’re just a beast
And Maatang Is your God
The gypsy woman’s not for you
The world’s not for you
Life’s not for you”²¹

The rage and anger of the mob is joined by Maatang and mistress. The mob raise Paatan by their hands and legs and bring him hanging head downward, to lay him upon the feet of Maatang and his wife. This scene, in the play ‘Aajir’ seems to be cured and spoils the sublime condition of theatrical requisites, but it is certainly a bold attempt of Mahasweta Devi to expose such horrible reality, associated with the life of marginalized group in society. The hanging heeds of Aajir makes alive the image of an animal. It is pathetic and poignant representation of the hollowness of the marginalized groups. The motives of Maatang and mistress are different. Maatang inflicts torture on him only to impose his authority as a master, whereas mistress to prevent him from running with gypsy woman, because of her own thwarted womanhood. However, the authorities of both of them take a destructive turn and they become almost

sadists. The mistress declares, “I’ll keep you tied in the courtyard and wipe with a new ‘Gamachha.’ I’d love to see your blood flow. I’ll keep you tied in the courtyard and then go to sleep tonight.”²²

They treat Paatan as a lifeless beast. The blood thirsty attitude of the mob creates a rare sensation in the play and it helps to establish the savagery, existing with human consciousness. With consistent whipping Paatan seems like an animal in pain. Mahasweta Devi, in order to give voice to Paatan, explores the sense of brutality that makes human survival difficult. The apathy of society is expressed in the declaration of the mob:

“We’d love to see his blood. Famine and drought scorch our lives. The world’s scorched. We haven’t seen any blood for ages, we haven’t killed a pig, haven’t slaughtered a buffalo for ages. We’d love to see the Aajir’s blood.”²³

In the last scene of Aajir, Paatan with a continues torture of Maatang, developed the thesis of bear pain. When mistress offers him come with her, he desperately admits that for an Aajir there is no place for free and independent survival. However, at this stage his vision develops a calm stoicism and he fearlessly gathers confidence to register his protest. His anguish and resentment shares the agony of Mahasweta Devi herself. She seems to establish that the economic structure of the society must be reorganized to safeguard the interest of the helpless victims, like Paatan. He no longer fears the position of mistress and reveals his own consciousness. Patten, inspte of being marginalized, sustains the dignity of human consciousness. His voice becomes the voice of whole community:

“Where there is a place without a master, without the villagers, without you without the Aajir’s bond? Where is there a country where the drought scorched people do not dance in glee at the sight of an Aajir’s blood? No I’ll go nowhere. What my forefather’s did... No, I won’t marry over. I won’t continue a family of Aajir’s.”²⁴

In this confession, Paatan’s contemptuous denial of his father’s decision and authority suggests that he is no longer a black headed but sustains a rare spark of humanity.

The last scene of the play Aajir is the final tearing of the viol of illusion of the hegemonic practices of the ruling class. The mistress leaves ‘Gamachha’, in which there was no bond. The bond was already rotten. It was only a false illusion of authority to control the fate of helpless victims, like Paatan. The shameless display of empty ‘Gamachha’ makes Paatan mad with anger. He feels himself betrayed. At this stage, Paatan loses his control over himself, and his suppressed rage assumes the form of violence and rebellion. He does not let the mistress finish her sentence, and hold

her by the throat. He becomes riled with anger and starts abusing language. In this state of bewilderment the echo of the voice, “no life for you, and no world for you! An Aajir no escape for you!”²⁵

No doubt, Paatan behaves as hunted animal, but it was his first transformation of the consciousness. The absence of the bond was not his failure but his ultimate triumph against the burden of slavery. He feels a sigh of relief against the burden of slavery. He feels a sigh against the ditcher of bondage in which he was kept. He gets the realization of his own identity against the oddity of social structure, in which his identity has been denied. He declares with calm consolation:

“Like everyone else in the world, I was a free man (stating a fact) and I alone didn’t know (looks at the dead woman lying at his feet) this luscious woman was for me, I don’t know (looks around) what are you waiting for? The police station quite far. Come let’s start moving.”²⁶

The ultimate redemption of Paatan from the state of slavery is a declaration of the triumph of the human spirit. In the play ‘Aajir’ the reconstruction of the voice and identity of Paatan, affirms the humiliation of human labour in the name of poverty is worst crime, imposed on man.. In a civil society, the idea of ‘auction’ of a man for a little sum of money is a manifestation of sickness, existing at the center of social structure. Aajir’s ignorance of the rottenness of the bond and the silent submission to the authority of Maatang indicates the mockery of the civil society. Through his ignorance, Mahasweta Devi affirms that the ignorance and illiteracy is the major cause of subjugation of the labour class. The reconstruction of the voice of Paatan is the process of reawakening of consciousness that motivates the marginalized to come in the mainstream of life. By the end of the play, the idea of tearing the bond anticipates the ultimate liberation of humanity against the voice of slavery band bondage.

REFERENCES

- [1] Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty, - ‘Notes for Anveshc/ Sabaltorn studies conference’ (Unpublished and Shelved at Anveshi Research center for women Hyderabad) pp3-4
- [2] Devi Mahasweta, ‘Preface’, Bashai Tudu (trans) Samik Bandno padhyay, G.C. Spivak, Calcutta: Thema, 1990
- [3] Devi Mahasweta, ‘Introduction’ five plays qtd Samik Bandhopashyay, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1986
- [4] Kamble ND, ‘Bonded Labour in India’, New Delhi: uppal, 1982
- [5] Devi Mahasweta, ‘introduction’ Five plays, qtd Samik Bandhopashyay, Calcutta: seagull Books, 1986,
- [6] Satyanasayan,E. E. ‘the plays of Mahasweta Devi’, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000,
- [7] Devi Mahasweta, ‘Five Plays: mother of 1084, Aajir, Bayon, urvasnhio Johny and water, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1986, Ibid, p.39
- [8] Fancn. ‘The Wretched of the Earth’ (3rd Edn) (Trans) Constance Forrington, Penguin, Hammonds worth, 1990, p252
- [9] Devi Mahasweta. Five plays: mother of 1084, Aajir, Bayen, urvasni O Johny and water, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1986, pp107-108
- [10] Ibid., p.40
- [11] Ibid., p.40
- [12] Ibid., p41
- [13] Ibid, p42
- [14] Ibid, p42
- [15] Ibid, p42
- [16] Ibid, p43
- [17] Ibid, p43-44
- [18] Ibid, p45-46
- [19] Ibid, p47
- [20] Ibid, p50
- [21] Ibid, p51
- [22] Ibid, p52
- [23] Ibid, 53
- [24] Ibid, p53
- [25] Ibid, p55