

Hajar Churashir Ma: A “Herstory” of Resistance and Emancipation

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Abstract

The surface story of Mahasweta Devi’s novel *Hajar Churashir Ma (Mother of 1084)* is a cumulative of glimpses of the incidents of how Kolkata responded to the massacre of Broti Chatterjee and his comrades who took part in the revolutionary communist Naxalite movement in the early 1970s. But underneath the guise of the crucial socio-political issues, this text is essentially about a female individual – a mother – who resists her conventional, marginalized, ignored, and silenced survival, and emerges from the periphery to the center and from silence to voice in order to redefine her life. The way she executes an inward revolution (metaphorically paralleled with her son’s armed revolution) to materialize her sense of being within the dominating patriarchy (mostly performed by her terrorizing marriage) and the way she breaks through the stereotypes and exploitations to create her own place – both domestic and social – produce a remarkable personal “herstory.” This paper, thus, attempts to explore the “herstorical” journey of Sujata towards psychological emancipation through the passage of self-realization and political consciousness. The paper also observes that the portrayal of Sujata’s journey is not limited to a single individual “herstory” because it symbolically represents the struggles of many other Sujatas who fight against gender stereotypes and attempt ideological liberation.

Keywords: Herstory, Patriarchy, Domination, Resistance, Emancipation

The paper could have started like “A history of ...” but it has not, as the paper is not about “history” but “her-story” of Sujata who is the mother and the protagonist in the novel *Hajar Churashir Ma (Mother of 1084)* written by Mahasweta Devi in 1973. The paper uses the term “herstory” (as opposed to history, which is often criticized for becoming the product of a particular gender position that reduces the perspectives of identities other than men’s) because it attempts to reveal the text as a tale, or a discourse, entirely generated from a woman’s perspective, about her personal journey towards self-discovery and heightened sense of liberty from a completely threatened and dominated condition. Sujata represents many other women who are constantly struggling to preserve their individual identities inside the dominating patriarchic hegemony, and her story gets potentially emblematic to contribute to the discussions of women’s empowerment and emancipation. Prominent feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir asserts in her book, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, that the true meaning of liberty and freedom lies in self-recognition (60), and in the male dominated society, the biggest challenge for any woman is possibly to look for an independent identity and to pursue her own choices, as a woman is always accepted only in the expected, conventional, stereotypical, and archetypal ways. The narrator and the protagonist of this novel, Sujata, has to resist and fight against her subjugated and peripheral survival to come out as a rebel – to claim her voice, dignity, ideological liberty and psychological emancipation. As part of that process she first has to be aware of the fact that she has been deprived of the fundamental rights as a human both in private and public domain. It is a matter of great concern that though some of the recognized human rights, e.g., right to vote, right to education, etc., are generally enjoyed by women today, the right to equality or right against exploitation, are barely accessible since the social infrastructure is predominantly patriarchic. The dominance of the males or patriarchy infiltrates

every sect of human society and women are typically dispossessed of opportunities and spaces to nurture their individual capabilities. In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as “the power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour – determine what part women shall or shall not play, and which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male” (57). It is a blueprint of domination: politically generated with a purpose that aims at ensuring that all women remain under male control; it results in women’s being totally absent or objectionably present in discourses, including the quintessential texts of any sort – print, electronic, graphic – in which the women are either extremely naive and obedient or seductive and witchy). So, this paper observes Mahasweta Devi’s *Hajar Churashir Ma* as a creation of a counter discourse that not only brings the female perspective to the front but also provides femininity with power and positive energy. This text is made to magnify the toxic sexist notion of the world, and it can also make its audience psychologically capable of denying the acceptance of gendered foreground and background of exploiting women. Sujata’s “herstory” of surviving in the patriarchic cocoon and then her breaking through the gender stereotypes to establish individuality turns into “theirstory” of resistance and liberation that potentially reflects the journeys of many other women in achieving their own identities from severely volatile circumstances.

Mahasweta Devi is a West Indian Bengali fiction writer (born in 1926 in Decca, British India, but her family moved to West Bengal in 1930) and socio-political activist who is notably recognized as a loud voice, raised for the rights and empowerment of the abandoned and marginalized communities, often termed as “subaltern subjects.” Subaltern studies, suggest “‘subaltern’ as a name for the general attribute of ‘subordination,’ ... whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way” that signifies the group of people who are socially, politically, and economically outside the hegemonic power structure (qtd. in Ezzeldin 105). Devi’s writing against the exploitation of the tribal people and women makes her a postcolonial agent who allows the quiet to speak up; her philosophy of life is shaped by a dichotomy between “needful and needless” and she has “no interest in the later one” (“Talking Writing: Four Conversations with Mahasweta Devi”). Being a self-recognized communist, Devi never claims to be a feminist, but her interest in women’s issues comes from the notion that they live in the periphery of society and remain as the excluded “others” or the “subaltern subjects,” repressed not only by the elitist hegemony but also by the devise called patriarchy. According to her, “From my writing feminism oozes out, ... I have nothing to do about it”; she believes that the bodies become the source of oppression for women (“Global Feminisms” 22). Her sheer interest is in writing about women who are “doubly colonized” (both by bourgeoisie and patriarchy) and being a politically conscious author and a woman herself she considers it her responsibility to recreate Sujata, Dopdi Mehjen, Rani Lakshmibai, and many other unconventional women characters as the symbols of defiance. However, readers of *Hajar Churashir Ma* may consider it a politico-historical text since it offers a deep and introspective analysis of an emerging West Bengal by portraying how it contains and perpetuates the class distinction that keeps feeding the capitalists and makes the proletariat live below the poverty line. But a more intimate reading of the book can easily discover that under the surface of mainstream politics, it actually offers forensic details of how a phallogocentric and misogynist attitude of human society exploits women especially in both domestic and public

arenas, and how hard women have to fight with the whole system to ensure their voices, rights, and independence.

Talking about the background of the book in conversation with Naveen Kishore, Devi casually referred to how one night, a few Naxal boys came to her door and asked, “How come you are only writing about the Naxalite from rural context; but what about us who are being butchered on the streets of Kolkata every day? – 1084 came out of that” (“Talking Writing: Four Conversations with Mahasweta Devi”). But interestingly, the aspects of the Naxalbari movement: revolt of the marginalized; mass uprising to get minimum wages for the agricultural workers; massacre of the educated, communist, rebel youths by police; social responses of this political outbreak, are not the basic discussions of this novel. The heart of this text is decorated with the chronicle of Sujata’s metamorphosis: which she completes upon reconstructing a personal “herstory” that describes the process of resistance against her denied access to power. Thus, despite choosing one standpoint or ideology as politically correct (between capitalism and socialism), the text chooses to become a tale of a peculiar paradox of loss (of the son) and gain (individuality), and creates a counter discourse, deeply personal and emotional, produced mostly from the interior monologues of a woman. Sujata (the feminine version of *su-jat* which means of good caste, well-mannered, and refined) proved her naming appropriate: she was born into an upper middle class, educated conservative Bengali family; trained to be polite and well-mannered; taught to have a good English accent; and also allowed to graduate from Loreto College, Kolkata. She knew from the very beginning that all these privileges were targeted to get her married (her qualities were meant to lessen the amount of dowry) because conventionally marriage is the ultimate destiny for any woman, especially when the woman belongs to the South-Asian territory where female feticide (destruction of the female fetus) is highest in rate; the birth of a girl child is hardly celebrated; and the existence of a girl is always taken as a liability. Eventually, Sujata got married to Dibyanath who was a megalomaniac and used to believe in elitism, solvency, economic security and domination. Devi describes married Sujata: “*Tar ostittota hoye giyechhilo chhayaar moto. Anugato, anugami, nirab, ostittobin*” [She was living a shadow’s life. She was obedient, a follower, silent, non-existent] (Author’s translation, 14). And obviously after getting married, women are expected to behave in a certain way, where there is neither freedom of action nor freedom of speech. And when the family washes its hands off by sending the daughter away with a “good husband,” women like Sujata must push the limits of patience and tolerance. She can never question and challenge the “superior” as the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage is not “horizontal” (based upon equality) but rather “vertical” (authoritarian and tyrannical).

The evening of the second death anniversary of Broti Chatterji (Sujata’s youngest son who had joined the radical political group with a leftist militant ideology and got killed by the security forces of Kolkata) is crucial and climactic. Incidentally, it is the same evening when Sujata’s second daughter is going to be engaged. Disturbed by the duality of the moment, Sujata starts recollecting her memories over the past twenty two years. Fragments of memory take her back to the days when she was thirty-one and pregnant for the fourth time. She feels this is going to be her last day in this house, though she does not clearly know what she would do after leaving, but she is decided and repeatedly thinks, “*Ajker par Sujata thakben na. Ar thakben na*” [Sujata is not

going to be here anymore] (72). She is a very complex and conflicting character who undergoes a massive transformation: from a conventional obedient Bengali wife to a conscious individual who demonstrates resistance to the acceptance of domination and destroys the hierarchy by leaving her oppressive partner. The story of this transformation and evolution is very powerfully and dramatically narrated in a stream of consciousness and interior monologues of the protagonist almost like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, which also uses a similar narrative technique and details a single day in the life of an aristocratic wife named Clarissa Dalloway in post-WW1 England. Like Clarissa, Sujata is also preparing for the evening party and is also inwardly travelling backward and forward through time to interact with all the other characters and incidents. The way she visits her memories, the way she creates images of her past, can be visualized easily by the readers. For example, she remembers, "*Sholoi January shararat jontrona chhilo, gyane-ogyane, etherer gondho, chora alo, achchhonno jontronar gholate pordar opare dakardar norachora shararat, shararat, tarpor bhorbela, shoteroi January bhore Broti eshe pouchechhilo*" [The night of 16th January was tormenting, in part consciousness and part unconsciousness. The smell of ether, the harsh light, and the doctors' movements behind the curtain of the slumberous pain all night long. Then Broti arrived at dawn on the 17th of January] (11). That ambiguous, mystical, and overwhelming night was the beginning of something inexplicable to her; the infant had made her suffer and almost die, but he created the magical bond that she immediately shared with him. She continues reminiscing, and her recent discoveries about lives lead her to a kind of future where her imperfectly perfect life has become imperfect forever.

Sujata has performed as a conformist to the norms, to the conventions, and has always behaved accordingly in the days of her daughterhood, wifehood, and motherhood, until her fourth and youngest child Broti ended as simply a number on a corpse – 1084. It is only out of a deep sense of loss and remorse that she looks back at her own life and the other lives around her; she sensitizes the futility, hypocrisy, and corrupted ideological structure of the society and realizes their impact on the individuals especially those who defy the norm and tradition. While revealing the secrets behind her son's death she starts to divulge her own living, and understands that she does not even exist significantly as a human being. She wonders how she could never protest her peripheral and marginalized condition. At this point, she remembers, she said "no" only twice in her whole life, as Devi reports, "*Prothom bidrohota Sujata Brotir dui bochhor boyoshe koren. Dibyanath kichhutei oke ponchambar 'ma' hote baddho korte paren ni* [Sujata's first protest was made when Broti was two years old. Dibyanath could not compel her to become a mother for the fifth time] (40). It can be generally said that motherhood (in terms of when and how) all over the world rarely occurs based on the choices of women themselves. The studies of second-wave feminism suggest that women are often burdened biologically, socially, and culturally to become mothers even when they do not find themselves fit for the process, physically or psychologically, because they are not allowed to defy the universal concept of "ideal woman" which defines, signifies, and limits women in terms of maternity. Motherhood is an institution rather than an experience; maternity is not just a biological reproductive process but is a crucial weapon, using which men have been trying to domesticate women for centuries (Rich 42). Canadian author Sheila Heti also finds the "over-validation of motherhood" very disturbing, as it discursively perpetuates the process of stigmatizing women in terms of maternity. For instance, it comes up as a sense that "women's bodies belong to everybody but themselves. There is something threatening about a woman who is not occupied with children"

(qtd. in Feigel). In South Asia, this issue is even more complicated because it is not just maternity but repeated maternity that women have to go through. Mahasweta Devi was highly concerned about this crucial issue. While doing research for her short story “Breast-giver” (which appears in her book *Breast Stories*), she finds, shockingly, that “Women are having breast cancer as they overfeed too many children” (“In Conversation – Mahasweta Devi). Undoubtedly, each time Sujata experienced maternity, she encountered irreversible changes in her body and mind; and after each term she thought of not conceiving again. But she could not practically stop it until her fourth child Broti arrived. She discovered that she was physically, psychologically, and emotionally incapable of carrying another child and rejected her husband’s insistence for a fifth one. Certainly, for this disagreement, Sujata was subjected to bitter criticism from her in-laws and extreme behavior from her husband. She details, “*Dibyanath asey, Sujata jokbon porpor ma hoye cholechhilen, tokhono niyomito onno meyeder shabochoarjo korten. Erpor theke ta aro bariye den* [Dibyanath always had adulterous relationships with other women even when Sujata was repeatedly pregnant. Now, his indiscretions increased]” (40). Sujata knew about them, and so did the other family members including Dibyanath’s mother. But, except for Sujata and Broti, this open secret did not bother anyone and Sujata again chose to be silent as it was not the norm for an “ideal wife” to oppose any action of her husband’s.

Mary Wollstonecraft, the early feminist, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, suggests that women are sexual beings, but similarly men are also sexual beings; and the way female chastity and fidelity are necessary for a stable marriage applies to the males too (84). But the phallogocentric society takes it for granted that a man has the right to violate the ethics and principles of marriage, and maintaining loyalty and fidelity disproportionately falls on women. Nevertheless, Sujata has been a very loyal woman not only in terms of her sexuality but also in succumbing completely to her husband’s needs – she has practiced no right over her body or her mind. For instance, she was often compelled to engage in sexual acts with Dibyanath; she could not prevent repeated pregnancies (as her husband wanted more children); she did not question her husband’s affairs, and she never demanded access to any decision-making in family matters. It might seem surprising that an individual like her – who is sufficiently educated, has a job in a bank, and belongs to an aristocratic society – faces such exploitation and violence in the domestic arena. It is, perhaps, as Devi asserts, “Suffering peculiarly ... starts from home....Their society is also very, very cruel against women” (“Global Feminisms” 19-20); and she has to document the sufferings of women when representing her time. Thus, Sujata becomes Devi’s hero, a woman who suffers and struggles in a notorious marriage and with hostile gender disparity in society, potentially representing all women like her “about whom nobody writes,” though “they are everywhere around us” (“Global Feminisms” 22). Discrimination, domination, subjugation, and inequality of power are always present in any kind of discussion on gender, and the power that operates in the politics of gender is mostly Foucauldian. This power is subtle, fluid, everywhere, and embedded deep in the human psyche that functions in the conscious and subconscious levels. Since in power politics one group seeks to dominate by subjugating the other wherever there is a difference, the essential biological difference between men and women thus becomes the origin of the politics of gender. Kate Millet, in *Sexual Politics*, identifies marriage as the agency that preserves the conventional pattern of men’s power over women, which leads them to domesticity, dependency, maternity, and the deprivation of individuality, equal dignity, and liberty.

Like many other women, Sujata accepted her reduced and minimalized existence: she tried to digest the everyday insults and humiliation, buried her sense of prestige, dignity, and honor deep in her unconscious, never complained about anything, and was just surviving against all the odds, which were many. Still, there were two different phenomena that let her breathe and became the source of all her hopes, inspirations, and logical reasons for living. In Devi's words, "*Kaj na-chhara Sujatar dwtiyo bidroho*" [Not quitting the job was Sujata's second rebellion] as it provided Sujata with economic power – at least for a specific time each day (40). It is significant to mention that this is not a context-specific issue but rather a global one where parenthood only affects the career trajectory of a woman, not of a man. Worldwide, millions of highly qualified women leave their careers because they need to perform as mothers as parenting disproportionately becomes the responsibility of women. It is ironic that a household and raising of children are still considered as gendered activities although the present human society does not have a clear division of labor and women are working in the professional arena. There is no homecoming for women as after work, women actually enter a bigger workplace called the household. Despite continuous fights with her husband, Sujata manages to stick to her banking career though she had to make many adjustments and work very hard. At home, it was her youngest child Broti to whom she was important and with whom she could be herself. She tried to raise him as a compassionate, "*anubbutiproban*" [sensitive], and "*kalponaproban*" [imaginative] (29) person, though these qualities have always been considered as emasculating and effeminate. Feminist philosopher, Virginia Held in *Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global* considers this problematic and argues that, by attributing virtues like kindness, compassion, and caring for others as feminine and by discouraging men from having them, the society misses out important human values (102). Sujata was cautious about Broti because her older three children were just like Dibyanath – conventional, chauvinistic, and corrupt. They were greatly indulged by their corrupt father and grandmother. Devi describes, "*Brotir bela Sujata dakhol chharen ni* [In Broti's case, Sujata refused to relinquish control]" (29) to make sure that he would not echo them. She kept a hold on Broti till his youth to shape him into a very independent yet compassionate and sensible individual. Psychoanalysts have always theorized over the idea that parents try to live out their dreams through their children; it functions as a defense mechanism that alternatively satisfies individual egos. Likewise, Sujata was living through Broti: his reasoning, strong principles, analytical capability, challenging of the norms, being stubborn about his own ideologies, and his strong sense of individualism (which she could never achieve) used to give her a sense of fulfillment. And it was Broti who not only questioned and challenged the crooked social, economic, and political infrastructure of newly emerging nations like India (that outcast the minorities) but also found out the dirty politics within his own family and tried to destabilize it. Many a time, he questioned why his mother never protested the domination and exploitation of her life. Sujata understood that Broti knew about his father's extra-marital affairs (he witnessed Dibyanath's intimacy with his typist), and he was also aware of his mother's lifelong emotional sufferings. Once he asked Sujata to leave that place. But leaving is a difficult option. Mahasweta Devi believes that it is the social and cultural mindset of the people that never accept and recognize a woman who is not with a man – "Women are abused," but they "can get redress. But it's just not within their grasp. They cannot go. Where are they to go...?" ("Global Feminisms" 22). Sujata feels that she could have saved Broti from the catastrophic choice he made if she had left that house

in time. She also believed that her being extremely apolitical, subjugated, and taken for granted somehow instigated Broti into being aggressive and radical in political ideologies. She suffers from an intense sense of guilt. Despite the extreme remorse and sense of loss, though, she realizes that she had lost her identity and her living does not mean anything to anybody. Broti wanted her to come out from the see-saw of life-in-death and death-in-life, waiting for her resistance against the oppression. He also subtly showed her the ways through his own revolutionary path; so now she feels it is her turn to take the journey forward.

Metaphorically, Broti’s violent protest against the dominant hegemonic power of the state and his attempts to give voice to the voiceless underclass (rural peasants who fight to establish their rights on their own crops) parallels Sujata’s inward journey of resistance to claim her individual identity. Her way to battle is mostly at the psychological level, in the form of an “ideological resistance” ... “Resistance that manifests itself as a refusal to be absorbed” (Ashcroft 20). Over the past two years, after she lost Broti, Sujata gradually develops herself into a conscious individual. Broti was not loved at all because of his unconventional nature, but for Sujata, the most shocking issue was everybody’s indifference to the twenty-year-old’s brutal murder by the police. In the beginning, she starts fighting with her family to keep her dead son alive through his belongings – she tries to preserve his room, clothes, bedsheets, books, writings, and photographs for one long year. She struggles with extreme depression and starts wondering where she went wrong in mothering Broti. She realizes that it was the price she had to pay for raising a compassionate human being. She starts investigating the secrets of Broti’s life and death, and meets his fellow Naxal comrades and the families who lost their sons like her. She meets Broti’s girlfriend Nandini (a Naxal comrade who was captured and tortured by the police), who makes her realize how well she had raised Broti to be strong, independent and determined. Nandini’s personality as an extremely self-conscious, individualistic, and revolutionary woman was also a new discovery for Sujata. Now, at the age of fifty-three, Sujata looks back at her life and realizes she has been a caged, confined, dominated, violated, tortured, and silent woman. She thinks, “*Prothomato, ja ghote ta mene nen, oi tar shikkha, jibon theke paoa. Dwitioto, tar konodin mone proshno othe na, proshno korbar noitik odbikar je taro achchhe, ta Sujata janen na?*” [First of all, she accepted everything that happened. That was what she had always been taught. Secondly, she never asked questions; she did not even know that she too had the right to question] (29). But now, she feels an urge to be resurrected both for the sake of her revolutionary dead son and for herself. She makes herself able: she speaks strongly, she shouts, she quarrels with Dibyanath, she questions him about his affairs, she takes her own decision to leave her husband and the house he possesses. She destroys the “myth of womanhood” which suggests that being a woman means everyone can have an opinion about her life except the woman herself. Interestingly, Sujata’s sudden change in personality is also marked and viewed as hysteric, uncanny, and surreal by the people around her, but for her, this change brings her an inner strength that makes her express her emotions. She finds her voice and her confidence enables her to break the cage and embrace liberty.

The transformation of Sujata is thus radical; it makes her emerge from the periphery to create her space in the center, bringing her a powerful sense of individualism and hyper-consciousness that eventually negates and destroys the tyranny of her marriage. She welcomes and embraces her

second and opposite self (which, in Freudian language, is the alter ego), that questions, complains, challenges, defies, and resists the familial authority which is sexist, gender-biased, and exploitative. She ultimately recognizes herself as a free entity by coming out from the domain of psychological or emotional or ideological domination. The story ends very dramatically and ambiguously; it may indicate the protagonist's death or her physical collapse temporarily. Devi remarks on her writing: "I write in order to make people think, feel. I want to rob them off their sleep. I don't write to put them to sleep. I can't write things with happy endings" ("In Conversation – Mahasweta Devi"). But it is significant to mention that for the first time in her life Sujata could cry out violently: "*Ei kannay rokter gondho, protibad, shukhi shok* [This cry smelled of blood, of protest, and a happy grief] (95). The scenario of women resisting their imperious marital conditions is quite similar worldwide. Bangladeshi author Nasreen Jahan creates a very similar wife character in her story "Elenpor Biral" ("Allan Poe's Cat") in which the female protagonist compares herself with Edgar Allan Poe's black cat that was buried alive with the body of the murdered wife behind the newly plastered wall in the cellar, which symbolically saves her soul by rescuing the cat in her dream (interestingly that story also ends with a loud cry). However, Mahasweta Devi also dreams of liberating women from ideological slavery; she dreams of a society that will be free from stereotyping and reducing women to bodies, biological creatures full of instincts but not intellectual capacities. So she liberates Sujata and, through her, she connects to all other women who are striving for freedom and this text lives as one which is of the women, by the women, and for the women.

So, within the framework of historical realism, *Hajar Churashir Ma* is essentially a feminist text that is absolutely conscious of the living conditions of women in conservative gendered structures and opposes them. It transmits the message of potential psychological and ideological resistance of women inside the established patriarchy where power and discourse are both controlled by male hegemony. It also points out that the recent vibration of women empowerment is mostly like "Marxist opium," a mass hypnosis that shifts peoples' center of attention. For example, whenever women's rights become the discussion topic, people mostly look at the statistics like the percentage of girls getting formal education or the increasing ratio of women in the workplace. There is no doubt that these are essentially important, but women, to a great extent, have their formal rights in the public domain, but their experiences in the private domain – in families – are still traumatic because peoples' mindsets are still feudal. The centuries-old archetypes, stereotypes, and preconceived notions of women result in gender extremism, which considers and treats women as hereditarily defective and psychologically disabled. When every ideology is penetrated by these notions and when all the political and media representations of women get influenced by them, it is very difficult to comprehend the process and even more difficult to eradicate it. Fighting gender disparity or violence against women is thus very challenging as it is universal – in childhood, within abusive marriages, at workplaces, on the streets, etc. Physical violence is often very visible and a survey conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) could easily quantify that eighty-seven thousand women from all over the world were killed as a result of domestic violence only in 2017 ("Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women"). But the violence that functions at the psychological level is hidden and invisible, and therefore, more dangerous as it jeopardizes women's individual, familial, social, political, economic, and cultural identities without being detected. So, Devi's heartfelt narration of

Sujata’s “herstory” is not only thought-provoking, it is inspirational as it represents those who are abused, exploited, and violated, yet desperate to rebuild their lives. It becomes a tale impregnated not only with one but multiple “herstories” of numerous Sujatas who strive for their psychological and ideological liberation to protect individual dignity. At the same time, though, it is also true that Sujata cannot be generalized to represent the whole race of women because women are not clones of each other. They are singular identities and “theirstories” obviously differ in terms of the individual choices they make, except for the phenomenal similarity – they all are engaged in a never-ending struggle like Mahasweta Devi, who affirms, “I believe in resistance, I believe in protest and I believe that the struggle never ends, it goes on and on” (“In Conversation – Mahasweta Devi”).

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