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The Realistic Representation of the Working Class in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*

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Letter of Approval

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Sri Sri Ganesh

Abstract

The research delves into the depiction of feudal domination and the subsequent class struggle between feudal lords and their oppressed workers. Analyzing the novel through the theoretical frameworks of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, the study illustrates how the feudal characters, Medini Singh and Ganesh Singh, embody bourgeois power, subjugating the proletariat characters such as Lachhima and Rukmani. Initially submissive, these workers transform by resisting, reflecting Marxist concepts of class consciousness and the inevitability of worker rebellion. The novel, set in rural areas of India, captures the extreme forms of feudalism persisting post-Indian independence and the awakening of the proletariat leading to the eventual overthrow of their oppressors. Lachhima's evolution from a compliant servant to a revolutionary figure symbolizes the collective struggle and triumph of the working class. Devi's narrative critiques the feudal system and celebrates the resilience and unity of the proletariat, aligning with Marxist and cultural resistance theories. The symbolic death of Ganesh signifies the end of feudal tyranny and the dawn of emancipation and equality, highlighting the novel as a powerful testament to the enduring struggle for social justice.

Keywords: Feudal Domination, Unity of Proletariats, Resistance of Working Class, Emancipation, Equality

This research aims to analyze Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* for its representation of the domination of feudal and their fall due to class struggle between them and their servants. The dominant feudal characters, Medini Singh, Ganesh Singh, Barkandaj Singh, Nathu Singh, and others dominate their farm workers, Lachhima,

Rukmani, Ganga, Gulal, Karan Mohor, Haroa, and others. Servants in this novel suffer at the hands of their *maliks*. But, the domination of *maliks* does not remain for a long time. Workers go through struggle which is studied through the theoretical insights related to the class struggle propounded by Karl Marx, and Raymond Williams.

This study raises the issue of exploitation and domination of feudal in contemporary India. Although field workers seem to be dominated by class ideology in the beginning and middle of the novel, towards the middle and end of the novel, they challenge and change the oppressive system. Particularly, in the beginning, and middle of the novel, Lachhima carries out all the orders given to her by her *malik* and *chhota-malik*, Medini, and Ganesh respectively. But, at the end of the novel, she does not comply with any order given to her; rather she rebels openly to kill Ganesh. In this way, Lachhima's emergence as a revolutionary figure reflects workers' resistance. This study deals with the oppression of servants by the feudal lords, and worker's struggle for their emancipation.

Through this novel, the author presents the impact of feudalism in its extreme form in the then India's rural areas called Tohri, Barha, and Nawagarh where the impact of India's independence from Britain has not been felt. Mahasweta Devi questions those practices through the incidents of fictional characters, such as Lachhima, Rukmani, Ganga, Karan Mohor, Haroa, and others. The questions that arise in the research are; what are the factors that force workers to rebel against *maliks*? How do they resist feudalism? This research work primarily aims to show the domination of the feudal and the factors behind its continuous existence in the then-Indian society. Secondly, this paper tries to show the possible ways of resistance adopted by the characters belonging working class to end the feudal system.

Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is set in Barha, Nawagarh, Tohri, and other regions of Bihar. In this novel, the proletariats are represented by Lachhima, Putli, Rukmani, Pallavi, Ganga, Mori, Gulal, Karan Mohor, Haroa, and other characters, while the bourgeoisie is represented by Medini Singh, Ganesh Singh, Barkandaj Singh, Nathu Singh, and other characters. The story opens with the birth of Tritirthanarayan, a Hindu god who is thereafter called Ganesh. Soon after giving birth and witnessing him with a tooth in his mouth, his mother passes away. He is his family's lone son. Ganesh's father, Medini, is married to three women. He assigns Gulal, a poor barber woman, the role of caring for Ganesh. Because Medini does not trust his other two sonless wives, Gulal is compelled to call Lachhima, the novel's protagonist and another impoverished lady, to look over Ganesh. Medini serves as the zamindar of Nawagarh's bodyguard.

Shortly after his birth, Medini beats his wives, Majhli and Badki, and banishes them to their parents' houses, claiming that they are trying to murder Ganesh with spells. After visiting Medini to resolve family conflicts, their brother and uncle return believing that the women are at fault. After being kept as a woman, Medini begins having sexual affairs with Lachhima. When she tries to wed Mohor Karan, he rejects him and plans to expel him from the community by plotting against him. He is served for twenty years by Lachhima. Next, Pallavi Shah, a Mumbai woman working as a social worker, arrives to support and elevate the village of Barha's proletariats. Nevertheless, Ganesh tries to rape her, which makes her return to Mumbai. Ganesh is humiliated and uses the burning of the impoverished people's homes as a means of controlling his rage. He and Putli are wed. He makes Putli summon Rukmani, who comes from a low-income family as well, to work as an assistant at his home.

However, he makes Rukmani pregnant by raping her. Rukmani is the illegitimate daughter of the impoverished woman Ganga and the zamindar, Nathu.

Rukmani ends her life after learning she is expecting a child. Singing a song about Ganesh's part in Rukmani's demise, the proletarians gather. Nathu's father's kept-woman, Mori, quits her employment with him. *Maliks* become uneasy when they witness the unity of the impoverished and begin to unite against them. After being driven from the fields by their *maliks*, Mori and Ganga depart from the hamlet and head toward the forest, where a large number of proletarian people reside. The story's midpoint sees Lachhima wed Haroa. He works as a bond laborer for Medini and subsequently for Ganesh. Ganesh murders Haroa one day. She then departs from the village and moves into the forest. Putli moves live with her parents after splitting up with him. In his own house, two police officers are holding Ganesh.

However, Ganesh escapes from detention at night and makes his way into the forest with match, kerosene, and rags, intending to set the entire forest and its inhabitants on fire. A few of his former servants see him walking through the jungle and start chasing him. Because the previous victims are pursuing the once-chaser, this moment is crucial. He dashes and arrives at Lachhima's home. He asks her to protect him from her folks. She shows him around her home. However, she lets out a loud cry to alert her people to Ganesh's position, and they arrive to murder him. She turns into one of them as well. Ganesh's death signifies the novel's conclusion.

Devi, a writer, journalist, and social activist from India, is the author of this novel. In Decca, British India, she was born in 1926. Her parents had advanced degrees. Her mother was a writer and social worker, and her father was a poet and novelist. She graduated from Calcutta University with an M.A. in English. She was a teacher at the Bijaygarh Jyotish Ray College in 1964, where the pupils were women

of the working class. Her efforts in the study of proletariats, women, and tribal are what have made her most well-known.

The majority of her writings focus on the hardships faced by the proletariats in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Chhatisgarh. She frequently depicts in her works the cruel treatment of tribal and economically underprivileged people by powerful landowners, lenders, feudal lords, and dishonest public servants. Aranyer Adhikari, Rudali, and Titu Mir are some of her best-known pieces. She received numerous awards for her writings on behalf of oppressed people, including the Padma Sri Award in 1986, the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997, the Padma Vibhushan Award in 2006, and numerous others. On July 28, 2016, this lovely treasure, warrior, was lost.

Talking about the source of her writings and their source, Kalpana Bardhan wrote what Devi said,

I have always believed that the real history is made by ordinary people. I constantly come across the reappearance, in various forms, of folklore, ballads, myths, and legends, carried by ordinary people across generations... the reason and inspiration for my writing are those people who are exploited and used, and yet do not accept defeat. For me, the endless source of ingredients for writing is in these amazing nobles, suffering human beings. Why should I look for my raw material elsewhere, once I have started knowing them? (24)

Devi discusses her compositions' inspiration honestly. She is one of the voiceless people's representatives. She prioritizes the underprivileged and common people more. She is inspired by their perseverance and struggle. She is devoted to them because she believes they hold the key to the meaning of existence. Thus, she writes about them and for them to motivate them to keep fighting for equality and rights. She

also acknowledges that since they are so genuine and motivating, there is no need to ignore them when looking for inspiration for her writing.

Since the publication of this novel, numerous critics have voiced their opinions. KoyelChakrabarty, in her “Women as Narrative Props and the Problematic of Women Rights in *The Glory of Sri SriGanesh*” writes, “The novel taken for study largely underscores the Human Rights problems both social and economic. . . the repression of fundamental and human rights by the high- class society and its establishments, including the government machinery”(46). The human rights concern stated in the novel has been brought up by Koyel. The majority control and enjoy human rights are from upper castes and higher social classes. No one from a lower caste or class has the opportunity to exercise their rights. Even though lower-dogs have rights in their names, they are sometimes prevented from accessing proper justice.

This is what JyotiYadav in “Women Writers on Our Time: An Introduction to Mahasweta Devi with Major Thematic Concerns” endorses when she says, “Mahasweta Devi, veteran Bengali author is one among the appealing voices who question the so-called developing, democratic and civilized nation called India. Marginals are still deprived of their fundamental rights even after so many years of freedom” (158). Yadav demonstrates Devi's marginalized and inferior position in this way. Devi, she continues, aims to subvert the notion of India. India is frequently praised for being growing, democratic, and civilized, but it also has a darker side where the fundamental rights of the underprivileged are violated. The feudal system is still in place and continues to work to oppress women, tribal people, the poor, and farmers. Devi envisions a better India free from oppression, discrimination, and feudalism.

RadhaChakravorty, in her book *Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers: Rethinking Subjectivity* writes, “Mahasweta’s current reputation as a writer, rests largely on her self-projection as a champion of the tribal cause....” (94). Chakravorty says that Devi is a hero in this instance because of the manner she depicts the issues faced by oppressed groups like tribal people. In her writings, she promotes the eradication of the repressive class system. She tries to speak up for those who are kept silent. Devi also speaks out forcefully for changes in their political, economic, and social system.

Similarly, while reviewing Devi’s works, Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose in “Dis-possession, Degradation and Empowerment of Peasantry and the Poor in Bengali Fiction” writes, “In the 1970s itself, Devi achieved a new construction of the poor in Bengali fiction and her view of society is subaltern and prompts change as she relocates power and redefines human worth” (442). Devi's contributions to literature and, most importantly, Indian society are described by Beck and Bose. The bulk of authors neglected the suffering of the poor in their novels during the 1970s. Writing essays to celebrate India's freedom from Britain kept them busy. Devi, on the other hand, gave the poor plenty of room in her works. She speaks for them. She recognizes them as one of the most captivating subjects in the novel. She admits that it is important to write about their freedom.

Devi’s skill of envisioning a better world where there is a balance between vice and virtue has been appreciated by RadhaChakravorty. She, in *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives* writes, “One of the most notable features of Mahasweta’s writing is the visionary, utopian . . . that acts as a counterbalance to her dystopian, ‘forensic’, critical perspective on the contemporary world” (108). Chakravarty talks about Devi's style of writing. Devi uses it to portray her ideal society, a utopian paradise free from

injustice, rape, war, and other such atrocities. In this line, Chakravarty describes Devi's writing style and target audience.

The majority of the analyses listed above are, in general, limited to talking about things like tribal life, women's exploitation, and human rights. Some reviews, such as those by Koyel Chakrabarty and Jyoti Yadav, appear to be primarily concerned with how Devi portrays the then India that was ruled by a small number of people, her support for indigenous peoples and human rights, and her writing style. In contrast, Radha Chakravorty is still limited to Devi's perspective on the inclusion of indigenous people in society. The underprivileged and their position in society, on the other hand, have drawn the attention of critics like Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose. As a result, their criticisms seem to be restricted to Devi's literary style in India of the time as well as human rights, the exploitation of women, tribes, and other issues. Devi has received acclaim from each of the reviewers for her intention to enhance living circumstances in India.

Despite so many reviews on Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, several gaps remain unaddressed. Much of the existing literature has focused on themes such as tribal life, women's exploitation, and human rights, often highlighting Devi's role as an advocate for marginalized groups. However, there is a notable lack of analysis regarding the representation and dynamics of the working class's resistance against feudal oppression within the novel. This research aims to fill this gap by employing Marxist theory to explore how the proletariat characters, through their struggle, challenge and ultimately overthrow the feudal system. By focusing on the detailed depictions of characters like Lachhima, Rukmani, and Ganga, who transition from subjugation to active resistance, this study seeks to highlight the novel's portrayal of class struggle and worker emancipation. This approach not only

deepens our understanding of the socio-economic realities depicted in the novel but also emphasizes the transformative power of collective action, thereby providing a fresh perspective on Devi's critique of feudalism and her vision for social justice.

The founder of the class struggle and the resistance of the working class is Karl Marx who has described it in his communist manifesto. To give credit to Karl Marx for his contribution to the concept of class struggle, R. J. Rummel writes, "One of the most powerful sociological explanations of social conflict is that of Karl Marx, who posited a class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie intrinsic to capitalist, industrial society." He is trying to say that Marx has given us a concept of class and social conflict where there is a class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels further write regarding who are high class and working class, "By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power to live" (14). Through this, they have clearly defined who the proletariats are and who the bourgeoisies are. To define proletariats further Marx and Engels write:

What is the proletariat? The proletariat is that class in society that lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labor – hence, on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the 19th century. (42)

The proletariat is that class of society that survives on its labor but does not get any kind of profit. They are all the time extremely exploited. They are not given a chance to enjoy freedom, refreshment, and a stress-free environment.

To show how written history is created, Marx and Engels again write, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (14). All written history is the product of class struggle which is why class struggle is crucial for the study of literature. Based on this, this novel also would not be without including the events of class struggle between upper-dogs and lower-dogs. So, the researcher tries to study this novel with the concept of resistance of the working class.

To show how the Marxists see literature, M. H. Abrams, Marxists view literature "not as works created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as 'products' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era" (149). Literature shows the specific time as it beholds the realities of that particular period. So, it is necessary to study literary pieces following Marxism and class struggle. With this idea, the researcher also tries to explain this novel from the perspective of class struggle.

Highlighting the use of property in feudal society, Rummel writes, “Marx highlighted the role of property ownership, whether of land or the means of production, in dominance and power. Historically, he saw primary social relations, culture, and ideology as reflecting property relationships.” Here, Rummel tries to show that property is a source of domination over the poor in society. The same thing is also mentioned in the novel. When Medini says,

“Yet even then Lachhima was my keep. I had given her ornaments for her neck, her arms, her ears.’

‘Silver.’

‘Good enough for people like you’ (3). Medini has given ornaments made of silver to make Lachhima work for him. She has exchanged her labor for property. He says it to Gulal that he has a full right over her because he has paid for her labor. Here, it is clear that property is a source of domination over the working class.

Similarly, another event also shows that property is a source of power. When Gulal says, ‘Now talk business, *Malik*.’ Ganesh says, ‘I’ll give you three bighas of land. And ten rupees a month. When you leave, you’ll get a cow’ (3). Here, Ganesh is ready to provide land, rupees, and a cow to Gulal and Lachhima. These things are all parts of property. In return for it, Lachhima has to work for him. Due to property in return, both of them become ready to work for him.

Similarly, in another scene where we can find that the property indicates the power. The narrator narrates, “The zamindar had acquired the title of ‘Raja’” (6). The title ‘Raja’ is not given to an ordinary human being who is poor, rather it is given to someone who has money, land, and other property. Here, the *zamindar* has got the title of ‘Raja’ because of his land. So, it also indicates that property is a power.

Similarly, the status is acquired based on what someone has. When Rani came to see Ganesh from another village, “Villagers had come to see her. Everyone was silenced at the sight of the Rani. As dark as she was fat, lips black from chewing tobacco. Covered in ten-twelve seers of gold ornaments” (7-8). All the people come to see her and no one talks. She has gold ornaments over her body. All of them become speechless due to her property which shows property as a source of power.

Similarly, property can also be used to settle family problems. Medina says, ‘I was afraid this might happen, so I didn’t hand the boy over to them. What haven’t I given them? Food? They eat all they want. Clothes? Ornaments? Do they lack

anything? Ask them both. I counted out a hundred and one rupees for each of them and started loaning out small amounts in the village. They do that too” (9). He has used his property as a family-management tool which convinces him that his property can bring solace to her wives.

Even the proletariat takes property as a tool to uplift their socio-status. When Gulal suggests Lachhima leave Ganesh’s house, Lachhima says, “I can’t leave the house. You take charge of sowing *arhar* this year. If we have land, we’re made” (15). After a deep consideration, Gulal suggests Lachhima leave Medini’s house, but she rejects and affirms land given to her would make her stable in society. In this way, we can say that property is taken as a source of power.

Similarly, the property can settle any rumor in society. Lachhima realizes, “One day her permanent address would be Mohor Karan’s house. She would not lose market value by living in Medini’s house. Because Medini had given her land” (16). Lachhima would marry Mohor Karan even after serving Medini. She would not have any problem because he has given her land. Land as a part of property becomes the source of power.

The property can be used to oppress others. The narrator narrates, “Medini pulled his feet back, kicked out at Lachhima, shoving her aside, sat up, said, ‘Take the lower caste to bed, and they forget their place. Who are you talking about? They’re my *dharampatnis*, my wedded wives. You have eaten my salt and now you’re biting the hand that fed you? Haven’t I written off land in your name” (25)? Here, it is clear that property given to servants in return for their duty to their *maliks* can be used to torture and humiliate the servants. The greed of getting land can make someone a slave and make them work in a harmful environment.

Showing the obstacle from the old class structure, in *Culture and Society*, Williams writes, “Culture is the product of the old leisured classes who seek to defend it against new and destructive forces” (319). Williams argues that traditional culture has been created by the old leisured classes, who now strive to protect it from emerging forces that they perceive as threatening. This suggests a defensive stance by the established elite against changes they view as potentially harmful. The force that works to change the old established culture is taken as the destructive force by the elite people. This novel is full of such events.

The defenders of old discriminated culture are presented in the novel as well. When Nathu Singh talks about Gandhi's Mission and law, Ganesh says, “That’s just legal jargon. Law, government- all this is far from Barha village, and will remain so. When it is time to bring them in, we’re the ones who’ll do it. We need to be united. This is all. Nothing else. The land is ours; we have the money; we have servants who will wield lathis on our behalf” (76). Ganesh is fully confident in controlling his village under his regime because he has land and money which can allure anyone to work in favor of him. He believes that no one can challenge and change the culture of his village.

Showing the defenders of oppression in the novel, Ramrup, and Ganesh talked about their *Kharidis*’ decision to leave their ancestors’ duties. Ramrup said to Ganesh:

‘If you’re too strict, they’ll all run off.’

‘Where will they go?’

‘Become beggars or go and live on forest land.’

‘Land belongs to the mighty Ramrup’ - Ganesh declared haughtily and stalked off. Now the feudal blood was aflame in his brain. (132)

Ganesh laughs at the steps of the poor of his village who are leaving their parental jobs and starting a new job. In this context, he has shown feudal blood in him as he belongs to feudal society. Here also, he tries to protect the oppressive system which is a part of the old culture.

Showing the misery of the workers, in *Culture and Society*, Williams writes, “Labor as the only property of the poor....” (17). Williams emphasizes that for the poor, labor is their sole form of property. This statement highlights the limited economic assets available to the poor, underscoring the centrality of their labor in their lives and economic survival. The same situation is also present in the novel. To show this scene, the narrator narrates:

Because the village was very much a creation of Rajputs like Medini Singh and nine-tenths of the land in the village was under their control. The rest, the majority, farmed the lands of the minority... Even a good year would not yield enough for them to eat. In years of drought-poor harvest-flood, the rule for debt repayment was a thumb impression in *malik's* ledger. They had to give him the lion's share of the crop plus, if necessary, free labor. (39-40)

Here, it is clear that the majority of the land of that village belongs to the Rajputs who are the minority in numbers. However, the majority of the proletariats remain landless and work hard in the fields of the Rajputs. They even do not get as much as they labor in the field. They only have labor to survive.

To show the lustful nature of the rich men, Marx and Engels write, “Our bourgeois, not content with having wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal” (25). They are not satisfied with their wives. They have an extramarital affair with their servants' wives as well. This scenario is also mentioned in the novel as well. The narrator reports, “The Rajputs of the village too were full of praise. The

high caste Rajput males were a hot-blooded lot. They solved this problem by keeping a low caste woman in addition to the wife at home” (27). This means that they have an extramarital affair with the wives of the low castes men who are poor and their servants. They not only exploit them physically but also sexually.

Similarly, one another event that shows the sexually exploitative nature of the bourgeoisie, the narrator states, one night, “Medini pulled his feet back, kicked out at Lachhima, shoving her aside, sat up, said, ‘Take the lower caste to bed, and they forget their place” (25). Medini knows that she belongs to a low caste and low economic status but he starts having sexual relations with her. He kicks her and scolds in a bad manner. This is what the bourgeoisie does in the name of their property and power; they sleep with their servants’ wives without their consent.

To show how the rich people try to suppress the class conflict caused by the class consciousness of the poor, George Lukacs writes, “The bourgeoisie did everything in its power to eradicate the fact of class conflict from the consciousness of society” (61). The rich always try to halt class conflict by using their power to its fullest. They try to suppress the revolutionary mindsets of the poor at any cost. The same scenario is also mentioned in the novel as well. The narrator narrates:

These rajas might fight cases against one another in court, but on one issue they were united. They were the masters of the *Kharidibanda*, now and forever...

After Independence, the Rajas had become big *jotedars*. But the *Kharidibanda* custom still existed. It wasn't legal? So what? As if the bonded labor system itself is legal! In such areas, whatever suited the *malik* became the law. (40)

These lines make it clear that the bourgeoisie can fight a legal battle against each other. But they remain united if the matter is about the proletariat. They have a common enemy which is consciousness in the proletariat. So, they come together to

defeat them. They are the *maliks* of their servants which gives them an extra benefit of implementing what they want in their society and their *kharidis*.

Another event where all the bourgeoisie are united, “After seeing the dead body of Rukmani, Nathu said, ‘It’s my problem, Ganesh’s problem, Chandrabhan’s problem, it’s a disaster for all of us’” (119). When the wife of Nathu suggests to him not to worry about the death of Rukmani as she has committed suicide because of Ganesh. Nathu responds angrily and says that is his problem and his people’s problems, not only the problem of Ganesh. So, he goes to Ramrup to say, “What was on his mind, ‘More troubles ahead for us. We must unite’” (125). As they have sensed a threat from their *kharidis*, they come to an agreement that they must unite to crush their bonded laborers.

Another example of unity among the *Maliks* can also be observed, “When Barkandaj becomes ready to give land to Mohor Karan, Medini goes to him and says, ‘Don’t give him land to sharecrop’” (50). As Mohon Karan is no longer going to marry Lachhima as Medini does not want to release her from his cage, Medini comes to Barkandaj and convinces him not to help Karan. As suggested by Medini, he does not give land to Karan. Barkandaj and Medini are the bourgeoisie and they unite in case of necessary against their servants.

Presenting the dark side of civilization, in *Marxism and Literature*, Williams writes, “Civilization’ had produced not only wealth, order, and refinement, but as part of the same process of poverty, disorder, and degradation” (18). Williams argues that civilization, while generating wealth, order, and refinement, simultaneously creates poverty, disorder, and degradation. He suggests that these negative aspects are not incidental but are integral to the same processes that produce positive outcomes. This society can be taken as civilized. But there are some elements of uncivilized as well.

In this novel as well, some scenes show disorder, poverty, and degradation in society.

When the Bhangi's festival ends:

Ganesh said, 'And you make up songs about us?'

The *bhangis* fell silent.

'I don't want to hear another one. I've shown you what I can do if I wish. If ever I hear a good or bad song about any *malik*- I'll burn down the *bhangitoli*.

No government, no Gandhi Mission, no contractor for animal hides will be able to save you.'

The *bhangis* left. (83)

Here, it is shown that Bhangis have a culture of dancing and singing against oppression done on them during festivals which is not liked by Ganesh. So, Ganesh threatens them not to sing against him and his people otherwise he would fire their settlements. It indicates the fear, disorder, lack of equality, and oppression in so-called civilized society.

Similarly, in another scene, we can see the oppressive nature of rich people. The narrator narrates, "Ganga's husband was the same. First a small peasant, then a landless farmer without a coin to his name, he became a field laborer for the very same *malik* who had taken everything from him. This system was created by the *maliks* of this village. After losing everything, one did not even have the freedom to go elsewhere" (113). The poor people are left with nothing to survive themselves. The husband of Ganga owns nothing because of the greediness of the rich man of his village. He even does not have the freedom to go wherever he likes to go. This is the reality of so-called civilized society which also possesses the dark side of it.

Similarly, in this scene, we can see how the rich people can degrade the poor ones. When Gulal talks to Medini, Gulal says, "People will talk.' Medini's laughter

sounded bitter and fierce. ‘People! I’m the only human being around. The rest are the animals” (2). His concept of taking other human beings as animals indicates his arrogance due to his wealth. His habit of degrading and humiliating others is also a part of the same society where there are bad elements.

Presenting how the working class gets a sense of consciousness, in *Marxism and Literature*, Williams writes, “The origins of a particular form of class consciousness are specified as 'forms of property' and 'social conditions of existence” (77). Williams explains that class consciousness arises from specific forms of property ownership and the social conditions in which people live. He implies that the way people perceive their class status is deeply rooted in their material conditions and their relationship to property. So, whoever comes under the working class, they try to get equal rights in society by being united. In the novel, there is the presence of the scene that shows the unity of the poor due to their social condition of existence.

After getting the information of class consciousness and the sense of oppression in the servants, GajomatiSingh goes to Ganesh and says, “You angered the SDO over the business of that girl in the *bhangitoli*. The *bhangi* went and joined hands with the *dusads*. And about Rukmani, Bigulal, and others went around saying all sorts of things, and now they’ve turned against us” (131). It is very visible that the acts of Ganesh bring problems to the whole Rajput community as he tries to rape Pallavi but failed. In anger, he burns the *bhangitoli*. Then *bhangi* and other proletariats come together as they share the same oppression which becomes the cause of the fall of their *maliks*. The sufferings of the poor and their pathetic existence unite them. They get the importance of being united because of the lack of property and their surroundings.

Similarly, SDO alerts Ganesh at Tohri regarding the consciousness of the proletariats. The SDO says to Ganesh:

And listen to this because *Malik*-Mahajans are grabbing so much land year after year and rendering so many people landless, there are outbreaks of trouble in many parts of India... Because your area is extremely underdeveloped because you have been practicing feudal modes of oppression, there still hasn't been any problem, but the problem might begin at any moment. (135)

SDO very clearly states that Ganesh and his people are mistreating their *kharidis*. They own most of the land in the village which might be the problem between the bourgeoisie and proletariats. So, the misdeeds of *maliks* are the reason for consciousness in the proletariats that would cause the fall of the bourgeoisie.

Class consciousness is also seen in Bigulal because of his poorness and surroundings. He says, "What are we to do, Lachhima? One by one we have lost our land, but even the *maliks* control our lives. When they need us, they make us their land, and for that, we stay hungry all year on empty stomachs. Which of us is not a slave for life, tell me" (123)? Here, he also presents the economic exploitation of the proletariats without being paid fairly, and not being allowed to work in the leisure time in different fields. Again, Bigulal says:

What a day it's been. I've never imagined I'd see the like. All my life, when there is no work in the fields, the laborers from the other villages have been free to beg, work as coolie, or do road construction work, but Barha's laborers were totally owned by the *maliks*. We would either have to starve or do the *maliks'* odd jobs for a handful of *bajra-makai-chattu*. The women would gather cow-dung to make cow-dung cakes. (143)

Here, he tries to question the feudal system of his village where none is allowed to work besides their *maliks* which is not the case in other villages. It shows that he is also class-consciously motivated. He is also able to see things economically which is the basis for class struggle for the working class.

Showing the rise of new culture dismantling the old one, in *Culture and Society*, Williams writes, "Culture is the inheritance of the new rising class, which contains the humanity of the future: this class seeks, now to free it from its restrictions" (319). Williams contrasts the previous statement by stating that culture is also inherited by the new rising class, which he sees as embodying the future of humanity. This class aims to liberate culture from its current limitations, implying a transformative and progressive role. In the novel as well, some scenes indicate the change in the social order for good reasons.

In the novel, sensing the emergence of a new social order representing a new culture, dejected and despairing Nathusays to Ganesh, "Oh, Ganesh! What have you done? He could not stop thinking that if Ganesh was arrested, it would be a defeat for the *maliks*. *Malik's* murder slaves as a matter of course- but they don't get arrested, do they? What was all this? The very existence of the *maliks* seemed threatened" (162). He says it when Ganesh kills Haroa, gets arrested for the same crime, and is put in house custody. He takes this event as a threat to their status as *maliks*. He is still taking the results of Ganesh's deeds as their defeat and shame. The killing of Haroa, calling the police, and being in custody, all resulted because of Ganesh, a bourgeoisie. So, it shows that the old culture of killing the poor and not being arrested and jailed has changed. Ganesh is arrested by police because he has killed Haroa, a poor man who was his servant. After seeing this scenario, one of the bourgeoisie gets upset and cries for the old cultural system where he becomes the power holder, and other poor

people become his followers. It has changed for the betterment of humanity and the better future. So, it indicates that there is no continuation of the oppressive culture. There is class consciousness in the proletariats who want to establish a new culture that is more human.

Another event where there is a rising awareness in the working class is when Lachhima knows that Haroa is exploited. Lachhima says, “What a fool you are! You don’t even know that a person sells himself by signing a bond? All those who work as *Malik*’s servants today are descendants of those who took a loan from him. They can’t repay it. So, they keep on working. For a share of the crop. That’s the system. What’s the arrangement with you” (35)? Here, she tries to learn from Haroa about his service for Medini and Ganesh. She also tries to make him aware of the wrong system of exploiting laborers. Her voice for him indicates her wish to establish a new culture of humanity and freedom. She is conscious so she asks Haroa regarding his oppression.

Showing the ability of the poor, in *The Uses of Literacy*, Richard Hoggart writes, “The working classes have a strong natural ability to survive change by adapting or assimilating what they want in new and ignoring the rest” (32). Hoggart observes that the working classes possess an innate resilience, enabling them to adapt to changes by selectively incorporating beneficial aspects and disregarding the rest. This adaptability helps them navigate and survive societal transformations. In the novel also, we can find out the events that indicate the ability to survive and change the social order in the working class.

To show the power of the working class, the SDO, an educated man, smiles toothily and tries to crack a joke, “That’s good. Then Barha village will leave the Middle Ages and step into the present. In modern India, the peasants no longer suffer in silence when the *maliks* oppress them. Now there is unrest everywhere” (136). Here, SDO signals the rise of the new social order leaving the Middle Ages and starting the new era. As the oppression of peasants increases, there is unrest in Barha because the *maliks* of that place have crossed all the limits of exploitation. This indicates the power of the poor who can fight for their rights, and create a new society by defeating the old unjust society.

Presenting the consciousness and ability to survive in Lachhima, another event from the novel is presented here. When she rejects the trap of property and becomes ready to leave the house, Ganesh says:

‘Besides your salary of ten rupees-take whatever you want. Baba said he’ll give whatever you ask.’

‘Nothing...’

Medini said again, ‘Money! A gold *hansli*...’

In a low, burning, unforgiving voice, Lachhima said, ‘Money! Hansli! You’ve ruined me, how can you undo that? How much money, how much gold, will it take? No, I shan't take anything. I bore as much as I could. (68)

Here, it is stated that she is not a beggar. She does not want to get more than what she has earned. She is very much conscious of the exploitation done by Medini and speaks against her *maliks* misconduct very strongly. It indicates that the poor can challenge and change the misconducts of the rich as she has spoken against her exploitation in front of her exploiters.

Showing the awareness for being united among proletariats, in his 1906 work, "The Class Struggle," Stalin writes, "The capitalists are organizing in a separate class with the object of curbing the proletariat. On the other hand, the proletarian camp is wide awake too... It is evident that the proletarians are also organizing in a separate class with the object of curbing exploitation." As much bourgeoisie is awakening against proletariats, proletariats are also very careful and strategic to end the oppression upon them by the bourgeoisie. Stalin further writes, "There can be no doubt that the class struggle will flare up with increasing vigor. The task of the proletariat is to introduce the system and the spirit of organization into its struggle. To accomplish this, it is necessary to strengthen the unions and to unite them." To put down the rule of the bourgeoisie, there must be unity among proletariats. In this novel as well, we can see the unity among the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariats. As the researcher has already mentioned the quotes indicating the unity of the rich, it is time to mention the unity among the proletariats for their freedom.

In the novel, as unity is seen in the bourgeoisie, there is also unity among proletariats. When the poor reach Ganesh's house with the dead body of Rukmani,

They were about two hundred strong. Bigulal called, '*Malik! Malik.*'

Ganesh came out. What's this? The *dusads*, the *bhangis*, staring at him with hot, angry eyes...'

Bigulal said, 'She used to live here. So, we brought her here once, for you to take a look. Brothers! Now blow the trumpet and beat the drums. (119)

Here, they all come together for the funeral of Rukmani and challenge the *maliks* for their misdeeds. They are no longer separated. They have very angry eyes that are waiting for revenge. They all come together to show their suppressors that they are united to speak against their exploitation.

Similar to Stalin, David Harvey also speaks for the importance of unity among the working class for their freedom and equality in society, Harvey states:

Assembled in factories, fields, offices, and institutions, individuals come together and develop a collective understanding of the common sources of their discontent and frustrations. From this, they begin to sense the class identity implicit in their varied experiences and on that common basis start to articulate collective arguments and demands. (18)

All the people belonging to the working class should unite and build a sense of togetherness to fulfill their collective demands. This is one of the ways to get what they need to get in their lives. In the novel also, there is unity among the workers.

In the novel, the scene where all the poor show a sense of unity is when Ganesh plans to fire the forest and the people in it, “Haroa thought for a while. Then he said, “You tell Ranka. Tomorrow I’ll be going to Tohri to repair the plough and the cart wheels. I’ll tell Abhay” (138). Haroa is also a proletariat. He says to Lachhima that he plans to tell his people about the conspiracy of firing the forest by Ganesh. This also indicates that proletariats also unite for their emancipation.

Similarly, unity among the poor is seen when Lachhima screams at Ganesh and says, “That doesn’t count anymore. If he killed someone it was in the British period. All these years you terrified him and got so much work out of him, without wages, all worth so much money. Did he murder a relative of yours? Was he your slave laborer? That you scared him into being your slave for so many years” (146)? She is asking for the calculation he has got from him. Whatever Haroa had done in the past was past. So, she challenges Ganesh for his exploitation of Haroa. Similarly, “Lachhima didn’t like Haroa’s working for Ganesh. Haroa worked only for his meal” (80). She is not in the mood to allow Haroa to work for Ganesh just for food. She

needs a fair wage for his labor. It indicates that she is ready for class struggle because she knows the economic base and class consciousness very well. This also shows the sense of unity among the poor where one proletariat, Lachhima speaks for another proletariat, Haroa against their exploiter, Ganesh.

Showing the support of reformers from the ruling class, Marx and Engels write:

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the progress of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. (19)

Here, it is said that at the time of change, reformers from the ruling class join the proletariat which is also seen in the novel as well. Pallavi is a rich girl from Mumbai, “Reaching Tohri, Pallavi recounted the true story to the SDO many times” (93). She comes to Barhato help the poor people of that area. She is in favor of the peasants despite her position as a bourgeoisie.

Similarly, another reformer from the bourgeoisie, the narrator, in another event, states, “Bilas Prasad was an undesirable outcome of this same social and administrative system. He was a government lawyer in Bhagalpur... When *Malik* Narayan Misra ousted twenty-one peasants, he took up the case and fought tooth and nail till he won a judgment in favor of the peasants” (153). Bilas Prasad is also a bourgeoisie but he supports proletariats by fighting the cases of peasants in the court and winning that case. It indicates that at the time of change, a small section of the bourgeoisie joins with the proletariats to bring change in an unjust society.

To show the importance of sacrificing whatever the proletariats hold for their real victory, Marx and Engels write:

The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property. (20)

All the proletariats have to become ready to sacrifice what they have kept as their own. It is which is pushing them back from their real status in society. So, they should be ready to demolish all the already set rules, duties, and other things that categorize them as inferior to the rich. In the novel also, the same kind of scene is presented. When Mori, an old poor woman who works for Nathu stops cleaning his cowshed which is only the source of survival for her. Due to the fear of being starved, she cleans it up. But she stops going to Nathu and cleans his cowshed. So,

A servant was sent from Nathu's house. Said, 'Mori! Why don't you come to clean the cowshed?'

'I won't be coming again, Bharat.'

Nathu came out to sit in the *katcheri* and said, 'What's this Mori? Why are you sitting here? Go on, go inside...'

'I can't work anymore.' Mori stood up. Said, 'I've slaved for your father since I was twenty. Now my body can't take any more. I'll stay home...'

Mori left. No saying '*Malik*' with reverence, no touching of his feet. (124)

Here, Mori rejects her traditional duties of cleaning the cowshed and leaves traditional rituals of touching the feet of *maliks* in the name of so-called respect. She speaks for

her interest. She becomes ready to give up whatever she holds for her survival. This is necessary to challenge the bourgeoisie.

Similarly, another event also indicates that the proletariats have stopped working as their tradition suggests them to do. The narrator narrates:

Like the *dusads*, the *bhangis* also slipped out of Ganesh's grip. Chandarbhan said, 'Oh Ganesh, what about the dirty latrines?'

'Go call the *bhangis*.'

'How can I?'

'Then do without the latrines. (96)

The traditional job of cleaning toilets is assigned to Bhangis who are the proletariats as well. But they have stopped cleaning the toilets of their *maliks*. It is necessary to change professions which gives them more respect and fair wages as well. It shows that the proletariats should sacrifice their comfort zone for real emancipation.

Showing the strongest force to end the bourgeoisie domination, Stalin writes, "The unity of the bourgeoisie can be shaken only by the unity of the proletariat." He states that the only power that can challenge the bourgeoisie is the unity of proletariats. No other than this can put it down. Similar to Stalin, Marx and Engels also write, "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear... the proletariat is its special and essential product" (20). It explains that only the working class can stand strongly to get themselves established with dignity by eradicating the exploitation of the bourgeoisie. The events related to this are also mentioned in the novel.

The last scene is very crucial in this novel where we can find unity among the proletariats, and where we can find them as the revolutionary class which does

not give up without getting their proper place in society. At the end of the novel, Ganesh is in police custody in his house. But he escapes from there and goes to the forest intending to fire it and people living in it. But his arrival is noticed by his former peasants. They chase him in the forest. While running, he reaches the hut of Lachhima and asks her to save him.

Lachhima says, “Only I could have saved you then. Today, I shall save you again. But not, Ganesh Singh, in the way you want me to. Today, I shall do it my way” (164). She plays with a sickle of Horao skillfully and screams:

Wherever you are, come quick! Ganesh Singh had come to set fire to the forest, he’s hiding in my hut ... Those who were asleep awakened. Those who had gone into the forest responded. Gradually human voices called out to one another. A tumult of voices. Then their screams—harrrrr! —leaped up to the sky in a tongue of flame. Racing forward like an all-consuming forest fire. A sea of armed people, voices raised, surged around the house in mighty waves. Lachhima moved aside, leaving the door free, and became one with the crowd. (165)

She does what her inner guides. She calls her people telling them about Ganesh’s presence in her hut. All the proletariats come with their screams, in the tongue of flame. Marching like an unstoppable fire. All are well armed and Lachhima also joins them and becomes one among the crowd. As it is an open-ended novel, we can imagine the death of Ganesh, a representative of the bourgeoisie at the hands of Lachhima and her people, representatives of the proletariats.

In conclusion, in this novel, the realistic representation of the working class is vividly portrayed through characters like Lachhima, and Rukmani who endure severe exploitation under feudal lords such as Medini Singh and Ganesh Singh. These feudal

characters epitomize the bourgeoisie, wielding their power to dominate and suppress the proletariat, who are relegated to lives of hardship and subjugation. The novel captures the essence of this oppression, reflecting Marxist theories on class struggle and the inevitability of worker resistance. Through detailed depictions of the workers' daily lives and the systemic injustices they face, Devi paints a picture of the socio-economic realities in rural India during the feudal era.

Despite the intense oppression, the novel also chronicles the awakening and resistance of the working class. Characters like Lachhima evolve from submissive servants to powerful symbols of rebellion, challenging the feudal lords' authority. This transformation mirrors the Marxist concept of class consciousness, where the proletariat becomes aware of their exploitation and unites to resist their oppressors. Lachhima's journey from compliance to revolt signifies a broader narrative of workers' resistance against the bourgeoisie, leading to the eventual overthrow of the feudal system. The depiction of these struggles emphasizes the potential for collective action and the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

Ultimately, Devi's novel serves as a critique of extreme feudalism and a celebration of the working class's resilience and agency. Through the lens of Marxist theory, *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* not only highlights the exploitation and dehumanization inherent in the feudal system but also underscores the power of unity and resistance among the proletariat. The novel's conclusion, marked by the symbolic death of Ganesh at the hands of the workers, signifies the triumph of the oppressed over their oppressors and the dawn of a new era of emancipation and equality. Thus, Devi's work stands as a powerful testament to the enduring struggle for social justice and the transformative power of collective resistance of the working class.

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