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Women's Resistance in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*

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Abstract

This research paper portrays patriarchal hegemony in Indian society and the voice against it through the bonding of women. Mahasweta Devi has selected Barha, a real place in India, to tell a life-like story of Lachhima, Putli, Rukmani, Pallavi and others in order to show how ideology of patriarchy treat women and how females' bonding and their collective effort of resistance play important roles to question traditions which promote patriarchy and its oppression. Moreover, through this fictional text, the researcher brings women's issue at the center of writing, discussion and debate in the theoretical frame of feminism. To carry out this task, the researcher brings theoretical insights related to feminism of GayatriChakravortySpivak's Can the Subaltern Speak?, Ketu H. Katrak's Politics of the Female Body and other too. By applying these tools, this research paper tries to find out how the unification and collective voice of women including Lachhima's provides the possible ways to challenge and change the domination of men. Hence, this paper attempts to extend the horizon of alternatives of maintaining gender equality and freedom in the society to make it a better place to live in.

Key Words: Victimization, Exploitation, Kept-Woman, Unity of Women, Resistance

This research aims to analyze MahaswetaDevi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* for its representation of suppression of women. The dominant male characters, Medini, Ganesh, Barkandaj, Nathu and others dominate their female counterparts, Lachhima, Rukmini, Ganga, Gulal, Putli, Pallavi and others. The major female characters of this novel suffer at the hands of their husbands, *maliks*, and male co-workers. But, the domination of males does not remain for a long time. Women go through transition and transformation which is studied through the theoretical insights

propounded by GayatriChakravartySpivak, Ketu H. Katrak and others. This study raises the issue of exploitation and domination of women by patriarchy in contemporary India. Although women seem to be dominated by patriarchal ideology in the beginning and middle of the novel, towards the middle and end of the novel, they become stronger. Particularly, in the beginning and middle of the novel, Lachhima carries out all the orders given to her by her *malik* and *chhotamalik*, Medini and Ganesh respectively. But, she does not comply with any order given to her at the end of the novel; rather she rebels openly to kill Ganesh. In this way, Lachhima's emergence as a revolutionary woman reflects women's resistance. The study deals with the oppression on women by the agents of patriarchy, and women's struggle for their freedom.

Through this novel, the author presents the impact of patriarchy in its extreme form in the then India's rural areas called Barha and Nawagarh where the impact of India's independency from Britain has not been felt. This research aims to show patriarchal domination and the factors behind its continuous existence in the then Indian society, and to propose the possible ways of resistance adopted by the females. Devi questions such practices through the life-like incidents of fictional characters, such as Lachhima, Rukmani, Ganga, Pallavi, Putli, and others. The questions that arise in the research are; what are the factors that force females to rebel against males? How do they resist patriarchy in order to transit and transform themselves? Solving these queries will be the aim of this paper.

While talking about the story line of *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* by Devi, it sets in Barha, Nawagarh, Tohri and other parts of Bihar. This novel narrates the story of male domination over female. Along with it, the same novel shows how the male *Rajputs* of Barha like Medini, Ganesh, Barkandaj, Nathu and others dominate not

only their servants and servants' wives, but their own women as well. The victims in this novel are Badki, Chhotki, Sita, Saraju, Majhli, Lachhima, Putli, Rukmani, Pallavi, Ganga, Mori and others. The story begins with a scene of birth of Tritirthanarayan who is later named as Ganesh, a Hindu God. His mother, Chhotki dies just after giving a birth and seeing him with a tooth in his mouth. He is the only son of his family.

Medininarayan, father of Ganesh has three wives and after the death of Putli, he gives the responsibility to take care of Ganesh to Gulal, a barber woman. Gulal is forced to call Lachhima, a central character of this novel, to take care of Ganesh because Medini does not have his faith on his other two wives who are sonless. Medini used to be a bodyguard to the *zamindar* of Nawagarh. Wife of *zamindar* also feels very jealous due to the birth of Ganesh, the God in Medini's family. After few days of his birth, Medini beats his wives, Badki and Majhli and sends them to their parental homes in the accusation of attempting to kill Ganesh by spell. Their brother and uncle come to Medini to settle down the family disputes but go back agreeing with him that the women are guilty. Medini has five daughters and he manages their marriage in the early age. After their marriage, he neglects and never goes to meet them.

Medini starts sleeping with Lachhima who is a kept woman to him. She tries to marry with Mohor Karan but Medini rejects. In the village, all the *Rajputs* have their kept women to satisfy their lust. During celebration of Holi in Barha, Medini suffers from paralysis but Lachhima nurses him and gets recovered. She serves him for twenty years. Ganesh gets married to Putli, a daughter of Nathu, the head of the *Rajputs* in Barha village. Their marriage was fixed when they were very small. And then, Lachhima gets freedom from the duty of Medini. After few days of Ganesh's

marriage, Medini dies but Lachhima does not attend his funeral. Putli also gives birth to a daughter that makes Ganesh angry. Then, he starts beating and neglecting her.

Then, a lady from Mumbai, Pallavi Shah comes there as a social worker to help and uplift the poor people of Barha village. But, Ganesh tries to rape her which forces her to go back to Mumbai. Because of her return, Ganesh feels ashamed and burns the houses of the poor. He forces Putli to call Rukmani, who is going to marry with her lover, in his house as a helper. When she comes, he rapes her and makes pregnant. Rukmani is an illegitimate daughter of Nathu, a *zamindar* and Ganga, a low caste woman. After knowing she is pregnant, she commits suicide. Oppressed people of Barha comes together to sing a song about Ganesh's involvement in the death of Rukmani. By seeing their unification, *maliks* feels very insecure and starts unification against them. Mori and Ganga leave the village and go to forest where so many people like them are living after being forced to leave the fields by their *maliks*.

All the women and other poor people go to Tohri where all the government offices located, to complain against Ganesh. In the early phase, they are not taken seriously but later they are heard. Sub Divisional Officer, SDO at Tohri warns Ganesh not to torture them. In the middle of the story, Lachhima marries to Haroa. He is a bonded man of Medini and later to Ganesh. One day, Ganesh kills Haroa for messaging to SDO against him. Lachhima manages a big funeral pyre for Haroa. After it, she also leaves village and starts living in the forest. Ganesh is investigated for killing Haroa. Putli also leaves him and starts living in her parental home. The mother of Putli threatens her husband not to force Putli to go back to Ganesh.

Ganesh is under custody of two policemen in his own home. But, at night he manages to escape from custody and runs towards forest with kerosene, rag, and matches in order to burn the whole forest and the people living inside it. While going

through forest, he is noticed by some of his earlier preys and they chase him. Ganesh, the once chaser is being chased by his earlier victims. He runs and reaches at the house of Lachhima. He requests her to save him from her people. She agrees and takes him inside of her house. But, she shouts loudly to tell about Ganesh's whereabouts and her people come to kill him. She also becomes one of them. The novel ends with the death of Ganesh.

Mahasweta Devi was an Indian social activist, journalist and writer. She was born in 1926 in Decca, British India. Her parents were highly educated. Her father was a poet and novelist, and her mother was a social worker and writer. She completed an M. A. in English from Calcutta University. She had married twice but got divorced. In 1964, she taught at Bijaygarh Jyotish Ray College where working class women were the students. She is more famous for her works which are related to the study of the tribal groups, farmers and women. Most of her works are about the struggles of women in Bihar, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In her writings, she often portrays the brutal oppression of tribal people, women and the likes by potent, upper-caste landlords, lenders, crooked government officials and males. Her notable works are Rudali, Aranyer Adhikari and Titu Mir. Because of her works for oppressed and women, she had been awarded so many times such as Padma Sri Award in 1986, Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997, Padma Vibhushan Award in 2006 and many more.

Once while talking about the source of her inspiration for her writing, Kalpana Bardhan captured 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 noble, suffering human beings. Why should I look for my raw material elsewhere, once I have started knowing them? Sometimes it seems to me that my writing is really their doing.

(24)

Here, Devi talks openly about the source of her writings. She is one of those who speak for voiceless. She gives more priority to ordinary people, neglected people. She loves their struggle for not to give up. She is attached to them because she finds the meaning of life in them. So, from her side, she writes for them, about them in order to inspire them to fight till they get their rights and equality. She further accepts that there is no need to go away from them in the search of contents of her writing because they are so real and inspiring.

Scroll Staff writes, “On 23 July 2016, Devi suffered a major heart attack and was admitted to Belle Vue Clinic, Kolkata. Devi died of multiple organ failure on 28 July 2016, aged 90.” Realizing the loss of Devi, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, “Mahasweta Devi wonderfully illustrated the might of the pen. A voice of compassion, equality and justice, she leaves us deeply saddened. RIP.” Modi has felt sorry for her death because she was the living example of power of pen and her voice for justice, equality and love was also highly praised. The tweet of Modi was included in *The Hindu*.

Since the publication of this novel, it has received numerous appreciations and criticisms from different forum of critical scholarships. Different critiques have viewed their opinions differently. And some of them are mentioned below;

Firoz N., in “Writing for/with Subaltern: A Study of Contemporary Indian Fiction with Focus on Mahasweta Devi’s Works” examines dehumanization in boned

labor system, a by-product of feudalism, “One day, suspecting Haroa’s absolute servility to Medini Singh as a result of a bond, Lachhima asks him... Mahasweta elucidates the numerous ways through which feudalism, in nexus with caste system, attempts to subjugate the spirit of the subaltern communities, reducing them to slaves” (185). Through these lines, Firoz N., depict the plight of bonded people mentioned in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* which is the result of feudalism. They even don’t have a right to deny the command of their *maliks* and the live example of this system is Haroa who just puts himself forward whenever and whatever Medini orders. And, Devi has picked up this issue and exposed it by showing how it turns human beings into slaves.

Similarly, KoyelChakrabarty, in her “Women as Narrative Props and the Problematic of Women Rights in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri SriGanesh*” opines, “The novel taken for study largely underscores the Human Rights problems both social and economic... the repression of the fundamental and human rights by the high- class society and its establishments, including the government machinery” (46). Koyel has pointed out the issue of human rights mentioned in the novel. Most of the people who enjoy them are from high class, and higher caste. People who do not belong to high class and caste do not get chance to enjoy the rights. In their names, upper dogs enjoy the rights and even they are denied to access fair justice by this or that.

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 shows the standing point of Devi that is marginal. She further says that Devi tries to question the concept regarding India. Though it is free from Britain, but inside it, there are still so many colonizers. People call India as a ‘developing, democratic and civilized’ but another dark face of India is violation of fundamental rights of women. Devi dreams of better India where there is no exploitation, no discrimination and no violation of fundamental rights.

RadhaChakravorty, in her book *Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers: Rethinking Subjectivity* states, “Mahasweta’s current reputation as a writer rests largely on her own self-projection as champion of the tribal cause and decrier of class prejudice” (94). Here, Chakravorty, appreciating the contribution of Devi working for so many years for the tribal and back warded communities writes that Devi is a champion because of her way to present the plight of tribal and marginalized communities. In her writing, she calls for the end of class system where there is always domination on lower class, tribal and women. She tries to speak for those who cannot speak. And Devi successfully speaks for the betterment of their economy, politics and social security too.

Similarly, while reviewing Devi’s works, Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose in “Dispossession, 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). Beck and Bose try to tell about the contribution of Devi in the field of literature and most importantly in Indian society. During 1970s most of the writers neglected the plight of poor in their fictions. They were busy in celebrating independency of India from Britain in their writings. But, Devi gives full space to the poor in her novels. She speaks for the oppressed. She

feels an urgency to accept marginal as one of the strongest contents of the fiction. She also accepts that the internal independency of downtrodden must be written about. So, she writes for the oppressed. She retells how to distribute power and what is the value of human. She questions them who never accept the equal presence of downtrodden.

Mahasweta Devi's skill of envisioning better world where there is a balance between vice and virtue has been appreciated by RadhaChakravorty. She, in *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspective* expresses, "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).

Chakravorty talks about the writing style of Devi. Through it, Devi presents her dream land which is the place like utopia, heaven where there is no war, oppression, exploitation, rape, domination, and the likes. Chakravorty tells us about Devi's writing style through which she attacks on anarchy and dystopian.

Primarily, most of the aforementioned reviews are confined to the issues like, feudal system, human rights, and the tribal life. Some of the reviews like Firoz N., KoyelChakrabarty, and JyotiYadav seem to be limited up to the Devi's presentation of the then India which is ruled by feudal, her voice for the tribal, human rights and her writing style. On the other hand, RadhaChakravorty remains limited up to Devi's voice for tribal and class prejudice seen in the society. On the contrary, other reviewers like Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose have intensively focused on the poor and their space in the society. They have reviewed on how the case of poor has become a central part of writing of that time which was particularly initiated by Devi. Their reviews, therefore, seem to be circumscribed up to the subject matter of feudal system, human rights, tribal, and Devi's writing style in the then India. These all reviewers have given credit to Devi for her dream to make India a better place to live

in.

Thus, it is evident from the reviews on the novel that none of the critics has thrown light on the novel from the perspective of victimization of women and their resistance. They have not attempted to explore the depth of women's suffering portrayed in this novel. They have even forgotten to show the importance of persistent resistance of women to transform the patriarchal domination and their status in the society which takes them as the followers, shy, coward, and object of lust.

Unlike the above mentioned reviews, the researcher, in this research paper, is attempting to explore this novel through the perspective of victimization of women and their resistance which is a new perspective for reading this novel. It helps in showing women's role in the social reformation and the significance of collective voice of women for their own establishment in society with dignity as men get. The researcher is going to use this perspective because it is a new perspective for reading this novel too. Regarding theoretical insights to deal with Devi's novel, the researcher has brought theoretical insights of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Ketu H. Katrak and others.

Regarding the significance of this study, the researcher believes that this approach further will help to understand the condition of women deeply and their ways of tackling the problem of oppression, discrimination, patriarchy and the likes. This research work, therefore, departs from the views of aforementioned reviewers and add one more critical insight to the study of this novel which may be useful for the future researchers to understand the growing consciousness and resistance among women in post-independent Indian society.

Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" have been used to show how 'the figure of women disappears' in the

world of men, how they are taken as the property of men, how they are silenced and the likes. Similarly, the insights of Ketu H. Katrak from her *Politics of the Female Body* have been used to deliver how traditions only give supremacy to men. And, she explains how women's body feels exiled with itself. It means how the women give up their dreams and themselves initially to get safe landing in the society. Further, she tells us about the positivity of being exiled from herself which later helps to resist patriarchy. She gives emphasis on resistance against oppression on women. By the help of her concepts, the researcher is going to show the male domination on women like Lachhima, Putli and Pallavi, and the significance of their endless resistance to overthrow such practices.

Moreover, to show the sameness of women's oppression and their union due to their sameness, and how it helps them to speak against exploitation, the researcher has used Chandra Talpade Mohanty's ideas from *Feminism without Borders*. By the help of this, the researcher is going to show the political, social, cultural and economical significance of their bonding to get their rights back. Similarly, Rosemary Sayigh's idea shows how politically active women like Pallavi are made silent within and outside house.

Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" argues,

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of women disappears ... Such would be the property of repression, that which distinguishes it from the prohibitions maintained by simple penal law: repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-existence and consequently states that of all this there is nothing to say, to see, to know. (304)

Position of women in the male dominated society lets the male to suppress and exploit

them. In this context, males are privileged and women become subalterns where women do not have anything to say, to see and to know as the males' privileged status cast them an injection to become silent, and affirmation of non-existence.

The similar type of situation is also present in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*. Narrator of this novel narrates, “Ganesh’s wife had no authority in the house hold... She had to press Ganesh’s feet every day” (80). These lines show the power of patriarchy over women. Putli is a Ganesh’s wife, a *Rajput* woman but she does not have any power in the house. It is because she is a woman who is just an object for man, Ganesh. Similarly, other lines also help us to make this concept clearer. Putli said, “Then he’ll beat me to death. He kicked me once, now I can’t walk straight. If he beats me like that, it’ll kill me. He’s so strong” (84). This dialogue tells us about the repression done on women by men. Putli is badly beaten by Ganesh which causes her problems while walking. It is done by men because they think that women are ‘the property of repression.’ Putli feels that she is nothing, her existence is erased. She even cannot charge him back because he is stronger than her physically and socially.

The best example of making silent to women is delivered by Nathu, a Rajput. Nathu said to his wife, “If you want peace and happiness for your daughter, be quiet... Is your daughter dying because she has to cook for her husband and herself? ... If you make a fuss, you’ll lose her” (85). This dialogue proves how the existence of women is disappeared and silenced. Nathu threatens his wife to be silent for the sake of her daughter. She is forced to remain quiet otherwise she will lose her daughter. These lines possess a great sense of fear, threaten which automatically make woman silent. So, it shows the condition of Putli’s mother where ‘there is nothing to say, to see and to know’ because if she tries to say, see and know more about her daughter, she will lose her. So, she is forced to remain silent by her own husband and

son-in-law, Ganesh.

Spivak further in the same essay opines, "...the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant... the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (274). It indicates that there are so many categories of subalterns in the society. All of them are speechless. If they wish to speak, they cannot and they do not have their own history too. It is true that if there is no historical record then there is no chance of record in history and voice of women. They are under double victimization. The same spirit is given in the lines expressed by narrator while narrating the incidents of Misir, Putli and Ganesh. The narrator delivers,

No one knows what Ganesh's wife Putli felt about [the death of Rukmani].

But at night Mishir woke up startled. He could clearly hear someone crying.

Some girl... he heard Ganesh's roar of anger. 'How dare you stand out here crying at night! Won't it drive Lakshmi out of our house?'

'How can Lakshmi stay here after all this?'

'Shut up!'

A resounding slap. Heartrending scream. (127)

Misir is economically oppressed who works for Ganesh just in return of food and shelter. He does not have any power rather power is exercised upon him. He heard Putli crying at night and he also knew that Putli was heavily beaten up by Ganesh but he never spoke against it. He remained quiet and just became a silent listener. When there is silence from a male, we can easily guess that what the condition of a woman be like. The figure woman gets a double shadow. Here, Putli is crushed. Her response is made meaningless rather she is made a puppet. She is 'even more deeply in shadow' in comparison to Misir where he does not go through an excessive torture as

Putli goes. These abovementioned dialogues also prove the concluding line of Spivak's same essay, "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak" (307). It gives us a picture of such a space where there is no place for women to speak for themselves. Everywhere they are controlled, silenced and guided.

The same type of situation is also depicted in the novel's next dialogue too. When Gulal, a kept-woman of Medini, goes to meet Medini's daughters after their marriage, they tell about their situation to her. While talking to Saraju, a daughter of Medini, she said to Gulal, "You'll be going to see Sita, tell her about me. Say, her *didi* is not the master of her own desires, it's all up to these people" (19). Here, Saraju tells us the position of women in society where they are compelled to murder their wishes. Her male counterparts are the controllers of her desires. She is not allowed to act and speak according to her wishes. It means she is not given any space to speak and when she tries to speak she is not heard even.

Spivak in her "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" claims, "[The] notions of kinship or clanship are anchored and consolidated by the exchange of women" (28). Spivak claims that women are just taken as the instruments to continue kinship or clanship in patriarchal narratives. They are as the objects to be exchanged just to satisfy the males, to repair a broken relation, and to tie a new close relation. The same type of environment is also mentioned in this novel. When Medini sends his two wives, Badki and Majhli to their parental homes by accusing them to attempt killing Ganesh using black magic, the narrator says;

The results were immediate. Badki's elder brother and Majhli's younger uncle arrived ... Both listened with deep attention to what Medini Singh had to say. They were both males and they agreed that Medini had acted fairly ...

[Majhli's uncle] said, 'What is to be done now? We three are men, we understand the ways of the world. It needs to be sorted out.'... [Again Majhli's uncle said], 'All right, if you don't want them, let it be. Shall I arrange your marriage with my younger daughter?' (10-11)

From the above lines, it is crystal clear that women are used as objects to establish relation. Those two men came to solve their family dispute. Rather providing justice to the left-women of Medini, they agreed with Medini by accusing the women. The relation of these three men was not good because of Medini's decision to chase away his own wives from home. To maintain and repair their relationship, Majhli's uncle offered Medini to marry his own daughter. This point shows that men exchange women to anchor and consolidate their relation. So, it also shows that women are only an object to be exchanged in case to repair or start a new relation.

Similarly, another event in the novel also shows how women are exchanged in the name of continuing kinship and clanship. Barkandaj Singh, the head of *Rajputs* in Barha village, searched five boys for Medini's five daughters. After it, he said to Medini,

'*Bhaiya*, I'd given my word- I have kept it. Now, I've something to say.'

'Tell me. Anything.'

'If all turns out well, make my granddaughter your daughter-in-law. This is my request.'

Medini said, 'If all turns out well.' (17)

This depicts the reality that relation is made in the cost of woman. Here, granddaughter of Barkandaj and son of Medini are very young but their marriage is fixed which shows child marriage and at the same moment use of granddaughter as a thread to begin relation. She turns out to be Putli who suffers a lot because of her

grandfather's decision to marry her with Ganesh. Therefore, both the dialogues indicate that women are all the time used as an object to continue relation without estimating its negative impact on women.

Similarly, Ketu H. Katrak, in *Politics of the Female Body* presents how tradition promotes patriarchy. In her book, she further states;

Traditions are often to control the female body . . . Both within the family and outside, tradition designates female roles within patriarchal frames and parameters: a woman as wife and mother is valorized . . . women's subordination is supported by family and perpetuated both in the private and public realms – whether it is unequal wages or gender discrimination in the family and the workplace. (157)

Here, it is clear that tradition is on behalf of male only. Tradition all the time tries to guide and control women. It allocates female roles by being based on 'patriarchal frames and parameters.' Women are accepted when they become a good mother or wife. Domination over women is even supported by the family whether that is within or outside family.

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* too, we can see similar kind of incidents where traditions designate certain roles to females. Once narrator narrates;

Medini Singh had ill luck with wives. As per local custom he married twice. Both wives had daughters. Chhotki, the youngest, was chosen for the son-line on her palm. Now, she at least did something worthwhile. Birthed two daughters, caused Medini a whole lot of heartburn, then became the mother-of-Ganesh way for going on to heaven. (6)

Here, it is said that Medini had married twice which is permitted by society too.

Women are given the role of birthing sons, not daughters. If they bear son, they are

accepted easily otherwise they are boycotted. It also shows us the importance of son in society. Son is taken as the gate opener of the heaven. It is established in the name of tradition.

Similarly, another event in the same novel also presents the female roles designated by patriarchal society, “Lachhima ... bringing up Medini’s son and running his household were doubtless very important” (21). The duty of nurturing and caring the babies assigned to women. And even the duty of doing all the household works are also assigned to women only. This is further mentioned below in detail when Lachhima said, “I swapped and swept the house clean, kept huge containers plastered with cow dung and mud ... Didn’t let the boy’s feet touch the floor till he was two” (22). She did all the works like sweeping, caring son more than the daughters. Similarly, “But at night, pressing Medini’s feet, [Lachhima] said ...” (24). The act of serving man is the duty of a woman and it is highly valorized in society.

In the same manner, when Medini sent his wives back, “The results were immediate. Badki’s elder brother and Majhli’s younger uncle arrived ... Both listened with deep attention to what Medini Singh had to say. They were both males and they agreed that Medini had acted fairly” (10). This line also shows the acceptance of those traditions which directly damage the life of women. Here, women are thrown out of their home, they are made homeless but also it is not questioned which proves the ‘subordination is supported by family.’ Similarly, the line which the researcher has mentioned earlier is also applicable here. Nathu said to his wife, “If you want peace and happiness for your daughter, be quiet... Is your daughter dying because she has to cook for her husband and herself? ... If you make a fuss, you’ll lose her” (85). It is delivered just after Ganesh beat his wife- Putli which is not liked by Putli’s mother

and she wanted to talk back to Ganesh but made silent by her husband, Nathu. He supports Ganesh and his act of beating Putli.

Rosemary Sayigh in her essay titled "Gendering the Nationalist Subject, Palestinian Camp Women's Life Stories" shows how women are victimized in their house and outside. With the help of nationalist movement, she writes, "The female nationalist subject is doubly constrained, both by the barriers that obstruct her entry into political action, and by the obligation of eventual return to the home and resumption of the symbolic and reproductive roles associated with essentialized notion of women" (176). It means in the nationalist movement also the role of women is made silent by the male counterparts. Their entry in the political realm is not accepted. Despite it, if they enter, they will be threatened. Even after playing a political role, they have to conduct their household works too. Sayigh is talking about the Palestinian women, but it is very relevant in the world created in this text, Barha village too.

In this novel, women take part in political movement but they are not accepted. In this context, Pallavi is the best example of it. She was only twenty-three years old and wanted to do better works for the poor people of Barha. She was suggested not to go there by SDO at Tohri. But, she went there, and what happened to her that is told by narrator. The narrator says;

Ganesh set eyes on this Pallavi ... the women workers from the Gandhi Mission were also detested by Ganesh and his brethren. They believed that only fallen women would do this type of work. For the likes of Ganesh, women were only commodities for their use. At the time of Independence, a unit from the Mission came to Barha village to do drought relief work. Gajomoti abducted one of the girls, raped her and let her go. No one even

recorded the unfortunate girl's complaint. (89)

Pallavi went to Barha but Ganesh took her as an object to be used by men. He did not like her involvement in politics. He thinks that the world of politics is only for men, not women. Pallavi wanted to help the poor people of Barha but her wish is challenged by men like Ganesh. Ganesh took women as 'commodities for' men. Similarly, the same dialogue also includes the event which was happened to another girl. When she came to Barha, she was also raped by Gajomati, a *Rajput*. She tried to complain against him, nobody took her seriously and made silent. So, the situation of these two girls who wanted to join politics, they are mistreated, their existence is questioned and raped which is very inhuman. Yes, it is clear to us that Pallavi's and 'unfortunate girl's entry in to the world of politics, outer world which is opposite to traditional role is highly challenged by Ganesh and Gajomati.

Women are not only challenged outside but also in their house too. It is an obligation to them that they have to return their home after outside contact. In this text too, Pallavi could not stay Barha any longer. So, she went back to her place, Mumbai. But, her father and brother did not give her full space as they used to give her. When Pallavi returned to Mumbai, "She found that her name was mud in her own home. Her father and elder brother began to rebuke her bemoaning the scandal ... her father [said], 'Go abroad. Study. If you stay here, you'll only cause another scandal'... Now Pallavi could say nothing except 'Yes Baba.' But she had a nervous breakdown before she could go abroad" (94-95). Her father ordered her to go abroad and study there. It is done not because of love for her, but because of fear of scandal she might cause. Her father and elder brother took her as a scandal creator. Rather than helping her to get justice, they blamed her for whatever happened in Barha. She gave her consent to her father because she had no other

option but she lost her normality and admitted 'for psychiatric treatment' (95). A brilliant, talent, social lady- Pallavi had her dream to work for others, but could not get her dream fulfilled because of obstruction of men inside and outside of home.

In the patriarchal society, males hold the right to lead a promiscuous life whereas women are expected to follow chastity and ethical life. Males are free all the time but female are bounded everywhere. In patriarchy, women's identity is created according to their purity but males are always pure despite making 'impure' to women. If any woman starts extramarital affairs, she will be boycotted by the same society. But, in case of men, whose role is equal to women in the relation, walk freely by raising their heads in the same society.

In the text too, same type situation is available where women are taken as the object of male lust. Even in the old age Medini never 'released' Lachhima. Narrator tells us that, "Medini was close to sixty, but he could put away two seers of meat, a bowl of ghee and twenty *rotis*. Ghee and meat excited sensual desire. Hence, Lachhima slept with Medini" (21). These lines show the existence of women as a target of male lust. Medini, in his sixty too had a kept-woman and slept with her.

Similarly, another line also proves it, "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). The *Rajput* males keep other women beside their own as their kept-women. They take women as the objects to fulfill their lust. Similarly, when Ganesh saw Pallavi, "Ganesh's flesh and blood burned with unsatisfied desire, a desire that roused him, made him hunger, a desire which Nathu's daughter was incapable of satisfying" (89). He does not care who she is whether his wife or not. Whomever he sees

beautiful, he goes for them and satisfy his sexual desire. Because of him, she goes back to her own place.

The death of Rukmani is also because of lust of Ganesh where he raped her without thinking about its effect on her. When Ganesh sees her for the first time, “The fire in his blood ... Ah! What pleasure! The turmoil in his blood began to subside. ‘*Na . . .na . . . na, Malik.*’ Rukmani’s words turned into sobs, then moans” (108). Ganesh raped her despite her rejection. She cannot save herself because she is a woman and Ganesh is a man. And the society also presents female as the property of male.

Moreover, Ketu H. Katrak in her *Politics of the Female Body* talks about the importance of ‘internalized exile’ adopted by women and how it becomes the source of their power to speak against any kind of domination and one of the best ways to resist patriarchy. She opines;

Female protagonists undergo what I term ‘internalized exile’ where the body feels disconnected from itself, as though it does not belong to it and has no agency . . . The experience of internalized exile unfolds as a process that includes the female protagonists’ complicated levels of consent and collusion to domination. The unfolding, indeed the process of the body being exiled, brings female protagonists to a ‘liminal’ state of consciousness . . . I interpret liminality as a space for the female protagonist to cope with, and at times to transcend exile. They resist domination and attempt to reconnect with their bodies and communities. (2)

While talking about the concept of Katrak closely, she tries to tell us how women feel disconnected with their own bodies due to excessive domination from patriarchy and how they regain their body back by using the strategies like a strike, starvation, illness

and the likes. They do not have any sense of self. They believe that their life is not theirs but it is others. They are forced to accept whatever they are directed to do. One positive aspect of it is that they become strong enough to tolerate the torture which gives them a kind of consciousness to change the domination done on them. So, they try to reconnect with their body and community in order to speak against injustice happening upon them.

In the text too, there are so many events where women go through internal exile. When Lachhima knows that Medini is not interested to 'release' her from the grab of him in few years then "Lachhima stayed in Medini's house as she had always done. But somewhere, something had changed within her. She became a lifeless puppet in her work, in bed at night" (26). Lachhima rejects her own existence. She is there with him, but has denied any type of connection not only with him but also within herself too. She has no hope of life.

Another similar situation is also there when Gulal finds that Lachhima is no longer talking to her, "Gulal died of shame and guilt. She felt like a sinner. Because even Lachhima would not talk to her ... Lachhima had turned to stone" (54). She no longer has desire to talk to Gulal who has dragged her to the place where she is now. Similarly, she does not accept herself as a complete living human being. When there is the marriage plan with Haroa proposed by Gulal, Lachhima said, "How can I? ... Now I am an old woman . . . I'm dead, nothing but a filthy carcass" (67). She does not accept herself as a living figure. These lines indicate that she has gone through the process of 'internalized exile' where there is no hope, desire and dreams. Her 'body feels disconnected from itself' as if it does not belong to her, rather it is men's. She goes through the conflicts and consent with her *malik*. She sleeps with Medini but at the same moment she does not sleep with him. It means her body is with him but her

total being is absent somewhere.

This process of exiling herself makes her strong enough to endure other tortures because she has already accepted that any kind of torture will no longer bother her. She feels that this much is happening with her. So, what will be more than this? Later, exiled condition of Lachhima helps her to be strong enough to kill Ganesh, her *chhotamalik*. So, 'internalized exile' is also a tool to tackle the domination. Her problems help her to create union with those who have been through the same problems like her. She feels more connected with her community members and fights back with her *maliks*.

Furthermore, Katak's *Politics of the Female Body* tries to show the role of the writer. She suggests that the writer can play a great role to oppose domination over women done in the system of patriarchy. The writer does it by showing the protagonist's various techniques of coping with her objectification; they can present real scenario to the public. She writes;

A politics of the body involves socialization involving layers and levels of ideological influences, socio-cultural and religious, that impose knowledge or ignorance of female bodies and construct woman as gendered subject or object. Women writers present the struggles of protagonists to resist patriarchal objectification and definition as daughter, wife, and mother.... (9)

In the patriarchal society, women's body is politicized. Their bodies have been assigned certain roles. They are forced and convinced to live their lives under the certain boundaries. But, those restrictions are not permanent, they can be challenged. So, to challenge these kinds of socio-cultural practices, the author can perform her role by showing the struggles of protagonists like Lachhima who has done so many things in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*.

First thing, Devi herself is a female. In this novel, she has selected a female, Lachhima as her protagonist in order to show how plight a female is because of patriarchal thoughts and how to deal with such plight. Lachhima's acceptance and resistance to domination is presented in order to motivate other women to speak against hegemony. When Medini tries to convince Lachhima working for him by offering her more money, land, food, and shelter, "Lachhima seemed to shiver with fear. She said, 'No no, don't give me any more land, *Malik*, you don't have to give me anymore'" (26). She rejects his proposal to give her more land in return to her work. Here, she denies her value with land and money. Here, Devi tries to tell women that we should not sell ourselves for material value.

At the ending phase of the novel, Devi presents Lachhima as a rebellious, fearless and challenging character. When Ganesh shoots Horao in his thigh, "Then Lachhima picked up the sickle. Ganesh stared at her. Lachhima said, 'Get out. Right now' (147). Similarly, when Pallavi comes front to talk back to Ganesh regarding his threaten to AbhayMahato, she said;

'Who're you? Why're you threatening him?'

'I'm Ganesh Singh. In Barha village, what I say goes.' ...

You're trying to scare them because they don't know any better. I've told them, there are no *maliks* anymore. This is independent India.'

'... You've got our blood up.'

Pallavi stamped her foot, 'I shan't go. Your animal threats don't scare me. I refuse to go. (90)

It gives us an idea of being strong. Though there might be a strong male character, women should not get scared of him. As Pallavi speaks to Ganesh, all the women also speak with full confidence while facing dominator, male. After observing these lines,

we can say that Devi has created the female characters that are phenomenal, courageous to challenge their dominators. On the basis of these lines, we can say that Devi is successful to portray the hardships of protagonist, Lachhima 'to resist patriarchal objectification' of female.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her *Feminism without Borders* says:

The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary social and anthropological universal. This for instance in any given piece of feminism analysis women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of shared oppression. What binds women together is a social sameness of their oppression. (22)

Mohanty says that women are generalized and oppressed and exploited due to patriarchal norms and values. They are treated as a secondary subject in society and are compelled to live under the domination of males. Mohanty, therefore, urges for women's unity in patriarchal society in order to raise their voice against any kind of mistreatment to them. Almost every woman has faced the same problems like rape, molestation, domestic violence, unequal access to property and so on. To deal with these kinds of common problems, they must come collectively to defeat patriarchy and to maintain peace and security for themselves. Here, thus, Mohanty focuses on the importance of women's unity by indicating their problems which are same.

In the novel too, all the women go through same problems and later they unite and fight back for their rights and freedom. The female characters from low caste have a same problem. They are the kept-women of their *maliks*. They are raped and made silent by their *maliks*. They even get pregnant by them. And at last in their old age, they are given freedom from their womanly duty. The protagonist of this story,

Lachhima also has gone through the same process. She is forced to sleep with Medini, “Medini was close to sixty ... Lachhima slept with Medini” (21). She is a kept-woman of Medini so she must sleep with him. Similarly, Mori is a kept-woman of Barkandaj, a father of Nathu. And, Ganga is a kept-woman of Nathu.

Beside this, Rukmani was also raped by Ganesh. When she goes to his house as a helper to Putli, he raped her, “*Na . . . na . . . na, Malik.*’ Rukmani’s words turned into sobs, then moans” (108). Ganga loses her daughter, Rukmani who commits suicide just after knowing that she is pregnant. Later, Mori rejects to work for Nathu, “I can’t work anymore. Mori stood up. Said, ‘I’ve slaved for your father since I was twenty ... I’ll stay home’ (124). Mori and Ganga go to forest to live. They build a kind of bonding because of loss of lives in their family due to *maliks*, because of their status as the kept-woman. Just like Ganga, Lachhima also loses her husband, Horao. He was killed by Ganesh. She also goes to jungle to stay with her people. These types of events show the sameness of their oppression in patriarchy and their union against domination as well.

Though women are taken as the followers and silent, but actually they can speak for themselves, they are capable to raise their voice. When there is too much domination, they revolt against it and get their voice heard. Putli is going through a hell-like life in Ganesh’s house which is also known by her mother too but her mother is made silent by her father, Nathu. But, the interesting part is that when the limit of torture and silent passes, Putli with her daughter run to her parental home. Putli’s mother warns her husband and son, “My daughter, granddaughter and I will leap into the well” (162) if Putli is forced to go back to Ganesh. Here, the steps of leaving Ganesh’s home by his wife, Putli and the threaten of Putli’s mother to her father and brother can be taken as their acts of making themselves speak, and heard by men.

After being raped by Ganesh, Rukmani killed herself, “In order to turn everyone’s eyes towards [Ganesh], Rukmani hanged herself from a burnt-out *amra* tree in the abandoned *bhangitoli*... she had used a sari” (116). When she was alive, neither her *maliks* nor her own people pay serious attention. But, when she hangs herself, her community members come together for her justice. She chooses suicide as a way to be heard and she is successful in doing so, “Not in life, but in death, Rukmani proved her strength. The *Rajputmaliks* were stunned by this unexpected turn of events” (119). All the women come together for her funeral and when they arrive at Ganesh’s home, they call out him and ask him to see his ‘Glory.’ During her funeral, they all not only speak for her, but also for themselves. They couldn’t be made silent, “Rukmani’s suicide triggered a series of unexpected events. The tale of Ganga and Mori leaving was told and retold by all the villagers” (127). They do it because they want to be heard. Despite so many lone or collective efforts of Nathu and other *maliks* to stop them, they do not remain silent, they speak for themselves. They speak against injustice done by their *maliks*.

The last part of this novel very clearly depicts the victory of women, particularly the victory of our protagonist, Lachhima. Ganesh was under custody in his own home at night. But, he managed to escape from there to fire the jungle where people who left village were living including Lachhima. When he was on the way to jungle with a medium-sized kerosene tin, a rag and matches, he was noticed by the people who were awoken to protect forest from the anger of Ganesh. They had ‘no mercy. Their pent-up fury burst out in a scream and they surged forward [to him] ... Ganesh, as if guided by some strange instinct, ended up, panting, in front of Lachhima’s hut’ (163).

He requested her to save him from her people. He tried to convince her by

forwarding the proposal of keeping her with him in his own home and he said, “Why should you stay here, come with me, stay as you used to, there. A good house, good food...”(164). It indicates the patriarchy may try to control but women ‘make themselves heard.’ Here, Ganesh tried to persuade Lachhima by providing her offers, but she took her own personal decision for the first time in her life and she said, “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 played with a sickle of Horao skillfully and screamed loudly;

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 forest, responded. Gradually human voices called out to one another. A tumult of voices. Then their screams—*harrrrr!*—leapt up to the sky in 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)

By these lines, it can be said that despite the extreme domination by men, women get their voice heard. Their sufferings make them strong enough which guide them to take a right decision in necessary.

When Ganesh tries to pacify his anger by burning the forest and people inside it, he reaches to Lachhima’s house. Rather than saving him, she calls out her own people to ‘kill’ him. All of them come together joined and Lachhima becomes ‘one of the crowd.’ By killing the oppressor, Ganesh, they all verify themselves that ‘how much the ruling classes may control’ their kept-women, and their own woman too, ‘they will always manage to make themselves heard.’ The death of

Ganesh is the victory of Lachhima, Rukmani, Putli, Pallavi and other women who suffer from Ganesh and the agents of patriarchy. This is not only the victory of these women, but also the victory of all women, and the death of Ganesh is not only the death of him, but also the death of all men who practice patriarchy and take women as their objects to fulfill their lust.

Through the analysis of *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that in every society, there is a dominance of particular social, cultural or political thought which directly or indirectly affects the lives of 'under' people. While talking about this novel, there is also a presence of dominant system, that is, patriarchy which suppresses women. It only gives priority to men and represents men as ruler, speaker, decider, power and the likes whereas women as docile, nurturing, follower, powerless, weak, silent and the likes. This novel presents the scenario of post-independent India where there was no effect of independency. Though the country got free from outer colonizers but internal colonizers were still there.

It draws the real picture of contemporary India where there was the brutal, tyrant, unjust domination and exploitation of *maliks*, husbands, brothers, and uncles upon their own women, kept-women, sisters, and daughters who are ignorant, fearful, excluded, marginalized, and ignored. They are forced to suffer from imprisonment inside their own house and *maliks'* house. So, Devi very tactfully presents the world where there is still fear of being abducted, raped, kept-women, boycotted, tortured, killed, silenced by men. But, the positive part of this novel is that it does not only dismantle the oppression on women and the irrationality and over valorization of patriarchal notion and tradition which supports it, but also invokes the sense of resistance to transform such tyranny, tradition, and subordinated condition by providing some strategies to overcome such domination.

Devi has questioned very beautifully to the people's glorification to the patriarchal ideologies which completely underestimate women. The title of this novel, *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is also cunningly challenged. Ganesh, the antagonist of this text is taken as the birth of Ganesh, the Hindu God, by the people of Barha. He was praised in his childhood as the God though he loves watching the killings of pigs, beating servants and others. As the time passes, the devilish nature of Ganesh comes out. He started torturing his servants, wife, relatives and villagers too. He tried to rape Pallavi but failed. He raped Rukmani which forced her to commit suicide. He killed Horao, a husband of Lachhima.

At the end of this novel, he was killed by those people who were once his victims including Lachhima. The God-like figure in his childhood becomes an animal-like figure at the end. The 'glory of Ganesh,' once glorified by all the villagers, is 're-glorified negatively' and questioned clearly in the novel. It can be linked with the glorification of ideologies which restrict the equal and independent existence of women. Therefore, those anti-women thoughts must be killed as the once glorified Ganesh was killed. And as the women took initiation to kill Ganesh, in the same way, women must work together to make a society free from domination, exploitation, torture and injustice.

To sum up, Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* successfully delivers the need of change in social system which is totally running based on patriarchal thoughts where women are taken as the instrument to fulfill the desires of men, where all the time the rights of women are challenged. This novel dreams a world where there is equality among all the members of society. It shouts for the world with rights, freedom, equality, social justifiable convention, independence and transformation and sense of security for women. Lastly, it is a work of art that justifies Devi's faith in

justifiable society which can be maintained through the steps of reasoning, shouting, revolting for overthrowing the patriarchy and its ideologies which are responsible for the sufferings of women. Overall, this novel establishes its position which raises the voices of those dominated, exploited, tortured, raped, killed, chased, kept-women for documenting their difficulties and making them strong and rebellious against any type of domination up on them. It envisions such a society which is better place to live with dignity.

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