



# The Significance Of Female Characters In Mahasweta Devi's Rudali

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**Citation:** Dr.D. Gururaj et al (2024), The Significance Of Female Characters In Mahasweta Devi's Rudali, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 16047-16050 Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i5.11357

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential role of women in Mahasweta Devi's social affinity reality and her reflection on the discovery that is the subject of this discussion. She still appears to be a stoic figure, though, and she continues to battle despite not seeming to think she will win. Sanichari, Dulan, and Bikhni, as they are portrayed in this scene, encourage her to get active and alter her circumstances. Rudali makes revelations regarding caste, class, and women. According to Mahasweta Devi, she frequently participates in the presentation of caste- and class-related concerns but not many women's issues. Caste and class, however, are inextricably linked to the gender question in some way or another.

**Keywords:** proposition, stereotyped, adolescent, downtrodden, stoic, tribals,

## Introduction

Mahasweta Devi was born in 1936 in Dhaka in Modern Bangladesh (then East Bengal). She moved to Bengal when she was an adolescent. She became associated with Gananatya, a group that aimed at bringing social and political theatre to rural villages in Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s. She did an M.A. in English from Calcutta University and worked as a teacher and journalist. She published her first in 1956, "Jhansi Rani" (The Queen of Jhansi), and she has written several short stories and novels. She won the Jnanpith, India's highest literary award. Major themes in her novels include tribals and their position, Naxalite (or Naxalbari), a movement and its impact, etc. She fuses literary activities with fierce social activism- she is a member of many societies that work with tribals and people. When she contested for the seat of Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, she said that she wanted the post to fight her battles for the tribals from a firmer ground. Mahasweta Devi writes a short story, "Rudali." Usha Ganguli recast it as a play and later made it into a Hindi film by Kalpana Lajmi. It was widely applauded and admired as an example of how class and gender work in holding downtrodden groups of people. The analysis here aims to examine the short story of Mahasweta Devi and the adaptations of the play by Usha Ganguly, which are the same adaptations as a play. "Rudali" tells the story of two women in the Ganju caste.

## Research analysis and interpretation

The title means professional mourners and the story tells how these women developed a good economic proposition. Issues concerning faith, class, caste, and the representation of friendship between middle-aged women are some aspects that one can consider fascinating adaptations of the same play. Rudali's about gender and caste, as well as women. Mahasweta Devi frequently claims she is interested in presenting issues related to caste and gender rather than issues related to women. However, caste and class can never really be segregated from the problem of gender, and somehow, or the other, gender issues will invade their tales. To anyone reading the story, it is clearly about women. However, that does not make it a feminist or a woman's text. As the story begins with Sanichari, one sees a woman bogged down by social and economic issues. His family's series of deaths leave her much poorer than before. However, she is depicted as a woman who can fight against these powers. One should take note of the narrative voice. The story is told in the third person, but it is told in a voice that is devoid of sentimentality. The numerous deaths are stated in the tone of the matter. This tone represents Sanichari's reluctance to weep. It is almost as if the story is telling us that if you are bad, death is not something you can mourn — because you are too poor. Is too much tied up with the money needed to complete the last rites? However, Sanichari does her duties stoically; she never challenges social conventions and does not bow under their weight. She goes about the spirit of her duties. At this point,

she appears almost like a figure of a kind from Mother India. If one has witnessed the Hindi movie Mother India, one can recall that it depicted the lonely struggle of a woman against village and natural forces; it showed the woman as a powerful creative force that could fight and win the war itself.

This is the kind of Sanichari that we see at the beginning, even though the narrative voice seldom, if ever, celebrates its' heart.' However, one sees the other protagonist, Bikhni, as the story progresses. Having a tale somewhat close to that of Sanichari, Bikhni is also a leader who has fought against society and poverty. However, unlike Sanichari, who, after all, has little joy in her, Bikhni is full of life; it is evident that the narrative voice introduces the two women's meeting. At the marketplace, Sanichari bumps into Bikhni, and Bikhni reacts with a string of abuses. Then, the two women use the most chosen invectives until they recognize each other as friends from childhood. It is an uncommon way of presenting the experience between two unique women, as conventional literature requires women not to use abusive, expletive language. Even peculiar is the portrayal of the relationship between women. It is often a wonder why literature and film seldom portray female friendships. Women's relationships are often shown in stereotyped ways-as a mother-in-law who battles and plots against each other; if they are friends, they ultimately fall in love with the same man and become rivals. Media only occasionally portrays women who share feelings and experiences as friends. In this respect, "Rudali" is unique. Sanichari and Bikhni are two middle-aged women who are shown as sharing a very emotionally fulfilling relationship. When they come to live with each other, Bikhni begins to take care of the house while Sanichari does odd jobs outside. Together, the two almost run by themselves a full-fledged family. There is little jealousy or envy in a conventional story or novel that one would expect from such setups. Bikhni also buys Sanichari a small gift, which she is pleased with. All in that is a very satisfying friendship. She is upset when the news of Bikhni's death reaches Sanichari. However, like all other deaths in her family, the narrative voice also presents this in a very unsentimental tone. Now Sanichari has some money put away, and so is not so worried about how much to spend on funerals- but she never gets to see the body of her friend as Bikhni dies elsewhere. Once, Sanichari finds herself forced to face the world, but she faces it differently this time. Here, one must distinguish between the Sanichari and Bikhni characteristics. Starting with Sanichari, watching as a quiet and stolid guy, Bikhni is more open-minded, fun-loving, and willing to try new things. A small detail is her passion for sweets- a fact that the reader likes her relatives only when it leads to her death. Sanichari is initially reluctant when Dulan gives them the idea of becoming mourners, as it is associated with a much lower caste and is typically a duty done by prostitutes. However, Bikhni is quite willing to try that out. It is Bikhni who comes to live with Sanichari for a while immediately still in 'here is and' mine' terms. However, some of the features of Bikhni have rubbed off on Sanichari by the end of the story. She goes boldly to the quarters of the prostitutes after Bikhni's death to have them join her rudely. Besides Sanichari and Bikhni, it is interesting that the other women are shown positively, especially the poor ones; the village's poor stick together when help is needed, and there is no rivalry, backbiting, or envy. Notably, Nathuni's wife wants to prove to the elder that she is superior to her father by holding a grand funeral. Maybe poverty has helped them appreciate each other and respect camaraderie. Studying the depiction of Dulan, Sanichari's mentor in times of need, is equally interesting, and he suggests women take up the mourning work. He had also bargained with them. When Sanichari and Bikhni become renowned as rudalis, Dulan even recommends starting an association of rudalis. He is portrayed as a friendly man, not as an out-of-the-way woman.

The story portrays a male character in that role does not allow us to see gender itself as the cause of any trouble. Rather, money and economy, or class, are the biggest differences and cause most problems. Here, we discuss the role of women in Mahasweta Devi's "Rudali," which describes the gender-caste difference that affects a woman's life. Sanichari and Bikhni struggled with the liberation of Western women. This dominance begins with religion-money relationships and also impacts society and people. The story begins as a character introduced as a Ganju woman into Sanichari. Right at the beginning, she is put in a social context, and her extreme poverty is shown to be something she shares with all the people in her caste. Sanichari' means one born on a Saturday and attributes all her ill luck to Sanichari's mother-in-law. One by one, the brother of Sanichari's mother-in-law, the daughter, and the husband die. Otherwise, she would be so caught up in keeping herself and her son Budhua alive that she forgets to cry. Her husband dies outside in a village, and a Brahmin is invited to Brahmins in her village, making her perform the rites all over again, saying a priest from another village would not have understood the temple traditions of a Ganju. This forces Sanichari to take out more loans, and she has worked for many years as a bonded laborer. The strength of her economic problem is such that she nearly forgot to cry. She brings up her son in some way and marries him. However, he is also weak, and Sanichari knows he will not last very long. His wife loves money and finery, but her ill husband cares nothing. The pact between her and Sanichari is that she will leave the house and her son, whom Sanichari grew up to love, on the day Budhua dies. Budhua dies, the inevitable happens, and the daughter-in-law leaves the house. Sanichari brings the grandson up as well as she can, but he, too, leaves the house with a party of magicians once he grows up. Sanichari leaves everything alone but does not give up; she searches for him from market to market. She bumps into a woman sitting there on one such trip, and the two continue to bicker. It turns out then that the woman is an old friend, Bikhni of Sanichari. Bikhni tells Sanichari her story, which is almost the same as Sanichari's— all of her family has left her, and she has put away a few rupees. She will have to continue all over again once this gets done. Sanichari impulsively asks Bikhni to come along and stay with her when she learns all this. Bikhni accepts, and the two arrive at

Sanichari's house. Fast, Bikhni's money is spent, leaving them wondering what to do. They decide to ask some questions about their neighbor, Dulan. Right then, in the village, there was a funeral. Dulan suggests that Sanichari and Bikinis are moving into that man's house and mourning and wall— becoming professional mourners. They are bound to make a huge amount of money.

This is a work usually done by the concubines or 'holding wives' of the dead rich men or prostitutes. Initially, Sanichari was appalled by the notion and its social implications. However, Bikini is all for it— and Dulan takes the two of them to a dead man's house. He shops for them and gets them a good price for their lamentation, and the two of them continue to wall and cry. They are doing a good job of becoming very popular and sought-after as experienced mourners. Sanichari also laughs at the irony that makes her, who could never shed a tear at any of her defeats, earn her living by crying over, tells Sanichari that he had seen her daughter-in-law in the field of prostitutes. Sanichari responds, saying she wants nothing to do with her. One day, Bikini tells her she wishes to go to Ranchi for the marriage of her nephew-in-law. However, there she is, getting a disease, and she dies. Sanichari is left devastated, but she is still unable to speak. She gathers her strength again at Dulan's suggestion and goes to the quarters of the prostitutes to introduce them to her home. Sanichari meets her nanny, who still refuses to have Sanichari meet her daughter-in-law there and refuses to do much with her. The story ends with Sanichari and the other mourners weeping and wailing for a dead Mahajan or landlord.

### CLASS IN RUDALI

Draw from a diary. By definition, it is proven that Sanichari, Bikhni, and all their citizens are very weak. In reality, right at the start, the narrator puts Sanichari's economic condition within a historical and social context— the narrative voice says it is like any member of her caste. Sanichari was very poor, telling us poverty was part of her caste. This naturally means that people of a particular caste have done the same work for centuries. This is the curse of the caste system— it is becoming a kind of vicious cycle from which there is hardly any escape. Even if people try to escape, there seems to be much resistance from the upper caste-class people. For example, one reason why 'upper' caste people are reluctant to let the 'lower' caste people study and get educated is that education would provide them with better job opportunities, making them more economically powerful. Rudali dealt with economic and social aspects. The relationship between one's caste and economic status is not divine law. Look at themselves, too. However, people often use religion to justify this economic condition. It is often heard that people say it is a result of how upper castes and lower castes that the caste they are born into is a result of their previous birth deeds. People will often inform you that if you have done a good job in your previous births, you will be born— And that you will do a decent job. By putting one's present condition within such a religious framework, we absolve ourselves of any obligation to improve the condition. In addition, the caste system is seen as being established by God as 'divine;' and hence as something that should not be abolished. All of this makes it difficult to connect the economic status of some castes to the clever ways in which the upper castes ensure that the 'lower' castes stay 'small,' and religion is a very useful tool for this. Sanichari is already in poor condition. If her husband dies in a neighboring village, there she is asked to perform his last rites, But when she returns to her home, she is forced to perform the rites again because the priest here informs her that a priest from another village has not been able to perform the rites properly. It takes money to perform rituals, and to get this money. Sanichari has to take out a loan — and to repay the loan, where she has to work as a labourer without pay. The final result of correctly executing this farce of 'last rites' is that the landlord has been getting free labour for a number of years. They often note that Sanichari's mother-in-law's character often sees her situation within a religious or superstitious context. She continues to tell her she is unlucky because she was conceived on Saturday. In a way, she means that Sanichari's economic condition is attributable to 'fate.' However, by this mentality, Sanichari is relatively untouched— she retaliates by asking if other-day-born people are any better. The response from Sanichari denies the role of 'fate' in deciding anybody's economic condition, and thus brings out the possibility of changing it. The talet shows that the delivery of last rites is a significant social and religious duty. It rarely matters how villagers look after old or sick people when they are already alive— what is important is how much they spend on funerals. This seems to work for people of all castes and classes— otherwise, for the second time, Sanichari would not have felt the importance of performing the last rites perform the last rites there. As she returns, But until we see Sanichari as being completely caught up in a religious frame of mind, we should also remind ourselves that if she had not done the last rites for a second time, she would not have been able to live happily in the village. The upper caste or class people are shown to spend much money on their funerals- their social positions depend on it. For instance, Nathuni's second wife insists that the funerals of her fathers have to be more lavish than all the funerals in this village. This importance given to funerals makes us professional mourners who can demand any money for mourning.' Since she and Bikhni are good at their job, the Mahajans (upper caste men) are willing to pay the sum. Sanichari, laughing, says that the rich people cannot even mourn for their dead— they want others to do it for them.

### CONCLUSION

The title carries multiple meanings. It refers to the community of mourners, a role that allows Sanichari to earn some money and gain a sense of control. It also highlights the irony of a woman who has never had the time to grieve for her family members. She has been preoccupied with finding funds for funeral expenses and managing life after death, ultimately dedicating her life to mourning for the deceased of other households—those very households that initially economically oppressed her. The reference to "runners" applies equally to Mahasweta Devi, emphasizing that despite her struggles, Sanichari has shaped her existence by mourning for others while neglecting her loss.

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