

Mary Oraon in Mahasweta Devi's "The Hunt"

Sandip Tikait
Department of English
Saltora Netaji Centenary College

- The geographical location of the story is Kuruda Village, near Tohri.
- Mary and her Mother Bhikni live in Dixon's Bungalow.
- Mary works for Prasadji (the present owner of the Dixon's Bungalow) as bonded labour.
- Mary's Mother Bhikni gets wage from Prasadji.

- Mary is an attractive and self-esteem woman:
- “ When Mary Oraon comes up, She looks at the train, as the passengers look at her if they see her. Eighteen years old, tall, flat-featured, light copper skin. Usually she wears print sari. At a distance she looks most seductive but close up you see a strong message of rejection on her glance.” (2)

- Mary has countless admirers at Tohri market. She gets down at the station like a queen. She sits in her own rightful place at the market. She gets smokes from the other marketeers, drinks tea and chews betel leaf at their expense, but encourages no one. (2)

- Mary's love life:

- Mary is mature enough to choose her life partner. There is no place for Mary in the Oraon society because of her skin colour as well as she is the daughter of an Australian man (Dixon's son) and Bhikhni. So, she has chosen Jalim of Tohri market.

- "They will marry when either's savings reach a hundred rupees.

She has let Jalim approach her on the promise of marriage." (2)

- Mary always wants a free life:
- “ Mrs. Prasad had looked for a match. Their gardener’s son. She had said, You can stay on the compound. Bhikni was ecstatic. Mary said, ‘No. Mistress Mother has said it to keep her worker captive.’ (2)

- She rejects firmly Mrs Prasad's proposal of marriage as she wants a decent life :

- “ – She will give shelter.

- A shack.

- He's a good boy.

- No. Living in a shack. Eating mush, the man drinking, no soap or oil, no clean clothes. I don't want such a life.

- Mary was un willing.” (2 - 3)

- Mary is very friendly with the women of the village but at the same time very ambitious. She does not want to live like them. She is mature as well as bold enough to face the world:

- “ Many men had wanted to be her lover. Mary had lifted her machete. They are outsiders. Who can tell they wouldn't leave her, like Bhikni was left with a baby in her belly?” (3)

- Mary is an intelligent, energetic woman:

- “ Everyone is afraid of Mary. Mary cleans huse, and pastures cattle, with her inviolate constitution, her infinite energy, and her razor-sharp mind, On the field she lunches on fried corn. She stands and picks fruit and oversees picking. She weighs the stuff herself for the buyers.” (4)

- “ ‘The money I save you, and the money I make for you, how much do you put together out of it yearly, Mistress Mother? Why should I take a cheap sari? I’ll dress well, use soap and oil, give me everything’ “(4)

- Mary knows the cunningness of men like Tehsildar Singh very well. She is conscious about her self-esteem and deals with him such a manner that the cheap man would realize:

- “ Tehsildar was sitting in the tent paying the men and women. Lots of people. Mary enters and throws the sari at him. She says , you think I’m a city whore? You want to grab me with a sari? If you bother me again I’ll cut off your nose. She goes off proudly swinging her arms. Thehsildar loses face in everyone’s eyes.” (10)

- Hunting is one of the most popular bloody sports among the tribal society. It is in their blood. They inherited it from their ancestors.

- Mary decides not to hunt the poor animals rather she would hunt down the beast like Tehsildar Singh to celebrate the hunt festival.

- As she felt that the beast like Tehsildar Singh would not stop to exploit woman, her tribal blood fumed to stop him with the ultimate lesson.

- All though is aware of the consequences of killing Tehsildar Singh.

- Mary always wants to escape from the clutches of Prasadji, and man like Tehsildar Singh as well as slavedom to live a free life:

- “ She will walk seven miles tonight by way of Kuruda Hill and reach Tohri. She will awaken Jalim. From Tohri there are buses, trucks. They will go away somewhere , Ranchi , Hazaribagh, Gomo, Patna. Now , after the big kill, she wants Jalim.” (16)

- References:

Chakravorty Spivak, Gayatri, translator. *Imaginary Maps*. By Mahasweta Devi, Thema, 2015

Thank you