

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**III BA ENGLISH, V SEMESTER 2020-2021**

**SUBALTERN LITERATURE**

**CODE: 18K5E11**

**UNIT- III- DRAMA (DETAILED)**

**1. Rudali (Translated by Usha Ganguli) – Maheswata Devi**

**RUDALI**

**Summary:**

In a compelling narrative, Mahasweta Devi's Rudali scrutinises how the traditional image of a crying woman can be subverted against the background of outrageous corruption. Here the women do not cry at their own destitution, but their tears rescue the men from their shame. Engrossed in their lust for property and lacking in emotions, the Rajput men in Chhotanagpur area hire the rudali to cry at the funeral of their family members. But a powerful bonding between two rudalis who join hands with a host of sexually exploited women can eventually gather enough potential to confront the hypocrisy surrounding the tyrannical social structure. The present paper focuses on how in a rotten world order of rustic India fears can also be a thing for sale and how the oppressed women manage to manipulate chaotic situations for their advantage.

Rudali is the story of a subaltern woman Sanchari who lived in utter poverty. Her mother-in-law hated her for her misfortune. She believed that Sanchari was destined to suffer as she was born on some inauspicious Saturday. The oppression Sanchari didn't cry at the death of her mother-in-law, brother-in-law and his wife and even at the death of her husband.

**Essay**

**Author Introduction:**

Mahasweta Devi is an eminent Indian Bengali writer and a renowned social activist. She used her socio-political writings as a tool to give voice to the voiceless subalterns, who are subjugated and silenced by the society. Her writings are based on her experience and knowledge of the marginalized community. She documented the immense struggles of low caste people in India and presented the root cause of their problems to the world. This paper attempts to explore the plight of the central character Sanchari in Mahasweta Devi's Rudali. It analyses how Sanchari resisted and reconstructed herself to emerge as a more empowered woman.

Mahasweta Devi is a unique blend of writing and activism. In her opinion, literature cannot be separated from the joys and sorrows of common man. She is not an armchair scholar sitting

pleasantly in her home and making fictitious pictures of the sufferers. She has always used her writing as a weapon to attack any exploiting agency and unveil the ugly faces of the exploiters. The plethora of novels, short-stories and plays by Mahasweta Devi matchlessly portray the unwritten tragic lives of the landless farmers, tribals, labourers and suppressed women. She is certainly one of the influential writers in India writing in English and also fighting for and about subalterns. The splendid portrait of our country progressing by leaps and bounds appear to be totally fake after realizing the trauma of the downtrodden portrayed in her writings. Truly great and really pure (Maha - sweta) Mahasweta Devi surely deserves a salute for her selfless and tireless dedication for the upliftment of the marginalized. When asked in an interview what she planned to do the rest of her life, Mahasweta Devi answered that she wanted to fight for the downtrodden and write creatively if and when she finds the time. True to her words, she has consistently been fighting for the cause of subaltern communities. For her activism and writings, this octogenarian has been awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Bhartiya Jnanpith award, the Ramon Magsaysay award and the Padma Vibhushan. But all these awards together cannot recount the glory of who is the true example of woman empowerment, who has heard the voice of the voiceless people so far, who has lived and thought and fought and worked and written for the upliftment of the downtrodden, who has shaken the soul of many, who has shown a mirror to the so-called shining India, she is really an ideal for those who want to use their skills for the betterment of others.

#### Questions:

1. What is the profession of a Rudali?
2. Sketch the character Sanchari?
3. What is the main theme of the play Rudali?
4. Why is Sanchari unable tears at the death of her beloved once?
5. Write a short paragraph on the setting an atmosphere of Rudali?

## THE SCAR

### Summary:

The Scar is a modern Dalit autobiography and is an important work for Dalit assertion and emancipation. It reiterates the fact, that India villages are doubly caste conscious and cruel. The author, K.A. Gunasekaran narrates the familiar tale of caste oppression and prejudices prevalent in Indian Society. The bitter experiences he underwent as parayar boy effected his psyche and creates an everlasting scar with in him.

## ESSAY

### Author Introduction:

'The Scar' is a modern Dalit autobiography and is an important work for Dalit assertion and emancipation. It reiterates the fact, that, Indian villages are doubly caste-conscious and cruel. The author, K.A. Gunasekaran narrates the familiar tale of caste oppression and prejudices prevalent in Indian society. Growing up as a boy from the Parayar caste, in the milieu of Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities, K.A. Gunasekaran narrates the familiar tale of caste oppression and prejudice prevalent in the villages of Tamil Nadu. As the narrative unfolds, the reader is shown how the 'low' caste negotiates differently with the three religious communities. The deep pain of the Paraya surfaces through the risible anecdotes that ridicule the grievously unjust practices of the 'upper' castes. The book emphasises the fact that Indian villages are doubly caste-conscious and cruel, and that Dalit emancipation rests in better education for the community. Gunasekaran writes in an earthy and colloquial style to capture the innocence, cruelty and drama of a South Indian village. Considered the first modern Dalit autobiography in Tamil, The Scar is an important book calling for Dalit assertion and emancipation.

K.A. Gunasekaran's 'The Scar' is a graphic and confronting narrative of the life experience of a Paraya—an aboriginal agricultural community and one of the Dalit communities formerly known as Untouchables—from Elyankudi village in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu. The Dalits lived in abysmal conditions in the villages of Tamil Nadu. They were segregated from the upper-caste residents and forced to live in filthy enclaves, away from the main land. The narration begins with the author's recollection of his days in the surrounding villages near Elayankudi. Gunasekaran describes the life led by him and the upper caste Muslim people living in Elyankudi, a big village market place in Ramanathapuram district. As a son of a teacher, Gunasekaran was respected by the Muslim community and was given special access into their homes and the mosque. He often went along with his Muslim friends to the mosque for prayers. Similarly, Gunasekaran frequented the Rasoola Samundram – inhabited by the Parayars and Chkiliyars (Arundathiyar) only. His friend, Wilson, taught him to play the 'harmonium'. Along with Kalairaj and Dr. Muniyandi, Gunasekaran staged plays during Christmas. Gunasekaran had first experienced caste-stratification in school.

A school clerk would enter the class and ask: 'How many in this class are Parayars?' he would ask. Put up your hands! How many are Pallars? Stand up, I will count. Look, all of you should come to the office after class to pick up your scholarship forms which should be filled up within a week's time .... They would reinforce caste identities by labelling us Pallar, Parayars and Chakiliyas. To help finance his

education, Gunasekaran's father appealed to some rich Muslims. As his father was illiterate, he had to approach Karnam, the village headman (VAO) for his signature. Throughout his school days, Gunasekaran did weeding work in farms to earn money. He accompanied his grandmother to the irrigation tank to catch snails and slugs for their food. Dalits generally eat snails, fish, dry fish etc. Very rarely can a dalit afford to eat a decent meal. Gunasekaran purchased second hand clothes for Deepavali. Once, his grandmother sent him to a shop to buy oil at south Keeranoor, occupied by the Konar people. He had to walk through fields on a narrow bund. On seeing a man coming from the opposite direction, he lifted one leg off the bund to allow easy access. On passing by, the man slapped Gunasekaran. Untouchability has had tremendous physical and psychological repercussions on dalits. The abusive 'Paraya' is used synonymously with dalits. Gunasekaran experienced and understood the implications of caste discrimination early in life. In spite of his status, he was respected by his Muslim friends. They appreciated his mannerisms. He was also a good singer. Kamaraj, a Congress leader, offered him the Kalimar colour-soda in appreciation of his voice. As a student, he was selected to sing devotional songs and the National Anthem at school. Later, he sang for AIR Trichy and became popular as Elayankudi Gunasekaran. His brother, Karunanidhi, enrolled him in the Harijan Hostel for free education. The caste discrimination experienced in his boyhood had a devastating effect on Gunasekaran's psyche. This psychological humiliation made another scar in his heart. Post-independence, he observed that all dalits in India experienced similar discrimination.

Gunasekaran narrates another painful experience. He had set up a shop with a gift scheme in front of the Thovoor School in his village. A boy from the upper caste refused to pay. When Gunasekaran asked him to pay up, the boy yelled, "Get lost Paraya!" and ran away. Gunasekaran chased him to his house and called for his parents. That same evening, eight upper caste men came to his *periamma's* (aunt) house. Gunasekaran's relatives fell at their feet and pleaded for mercy. When upper-caste people enter the colony of dalits, they do not offer any resistance. Rather, the Dalits are extremely passive and obedient. On a warning issued by the Konar people, Gunasekaran was forced to leave Elyangudi.

During one summer vacation, Gunasekaran went to Tanjavur and joined a group of folk artists. They performed the 'Karagattam' dance for temple processions. Gunasekaran played the 'thamuku' and 'pambai' and also sang cultural songs. He earned enough money to fund his college and hostel fees. After receiving his M.A., he continued to stage folk shows. Gunasekaran was the Dean of The School of Performing Arts at Pondicherry University. He is interested in folk theatre (folk art and literature), music, writing novels and directing plays. Currently, he is Director of International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai.

#### Questions:

1. Who is K.A.Gunasekaran?
2. Describe the significance of the title "The Scar"?
3. Cite any incident in short story Scar that focuses on the cruelty of caste discrimination?
4. Why are the out caste compelled to live in unhealthy places?
5. Is the story Scar an autobiography? Discuss?

#### UNIT- IV- SHORT STORIES

2. A Corpse in the well

## A CORPSE IN THE WELL

### Summary:

A Corpse in the well is a short story that focuses on caste discrimination that is deeproot in the sum of the Indian Villages. An outcaste called Anna in the story is asked to take care of a corpse that haf fall in into the well. He had to stand and god the well throughout the night till the cops. The police arrived and threatened Anna to fetch the body from the well. After completing the job and returing home Anna's son the narrator recollects the injustice done to his father in the name of caste discrimination.

### Essay

#### Author Introduction:

A Corpse in the Well is an extract from the book Taral Antaral, an autobiography by Shankar Ramchandra Kharat, an established Dalit writer in the post independence Indian literature scene. The story's primary themes seem to be on emphasizing the difference in power that exists in villages, and how the Mahars, or Dalits, are treated cruelly and in an almost sub-human fashion. The unfair method in which they are bossed around serves to highlight a broken system and ideology.

In the story, the boy's father, referred to only by the title 'Anna', is performing his village duties. A corpse had been found recently in the well, and the Mahar on duty (Anna) was assigned to guard it until the police arrive. Anna had been waiting at the well for the entire night, when his son, the narrator, arrives to give him some food. The father, in an exemplary display of loyalty towards his duty, refuses, saying that he'll only eat once relieved of his duties. At this point of time, the police arrived, and ordered Anna to fetch the body from the well.

Anna refuses initially, but, noticing the policeman's flaring temper, he enters the well. A snake in the well's shallow water causes a fright in both the son and the father, but eventually the body and Anna are successfully drawn up from the well. As the son heads home, he reflects on the injustice and the deadly work involved in village duty.

The head constable, or the policeman, is depicted in quite a negative light throughout the story. The fact that he, a police officer, a supposed implementer of the law, resorts to such primeval means of discrimination to get his job done, induces a sick sort of irony in the reader.

#### Questions:

1. What is the main theme of the short story "A Corpse in the well"?
2. Who is Anna?
3. Is a A Corpse in the Well an autobiography?
4. How does the politician treat Anna?
5. How does the narrator bringout the injustice shown to the out caste in the story "A Corpse in the well"?

## 1. The Joys of Motherhood

### THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD

#### SUMMARY:

The joys of motherhood is a novel written by Buchi Emecheta. It was first published in London, UK, by Allison and Beauty in 1979. The basis of the novel is the necessity for a woman to be fertile and above all to give birth to sons. This novel explores the life of a Nigerian woman, Nnu Ego. Nnu's life centres on her children and through them, she gains the respect of her children and through this novel Emecheta reveals and celebrates the pleasures derived from fulfilling responsibilities related to family matters in child bearing, mothering, and mentoring activities among women.

#### ESSAY

#### Author Introduction:

Buchi Emecheta is one of the first African women novelists to address the issue of the conditions of women and their battle for self fulfillment and emancipation. In her novel, the joys of motherhood, she explores the positive and negative effects of modernization on women as well as their imprisonment between tradition and change. Through the story of Nnu Ego, the protagonist; she also shows how the strict traditions discriminate women who are regarded as men's property. Producers of children and are placed in second position on the social pyramid.

Nnu Ego, the protagonist, stumbles across the Yaba compound, almost delusional with grief. She makes her way to the waterfront, heading to Carter Bridge, intent on throwing herself off. The action shifts to twenty-five years previous to this moment, in the village of Ogboli in the Iboza homeland. Agbadi, the esteemed local chief, is enamored by the one woman he cannot possess, the beautiful and strong-willed Ona. During a hunting trip, Agbadi is gored by an injured elephant and not expected to live long. Ona slowly nurses him back to health. As he heals, he humiliates her in the compound by loudly forcing his sexual attentions on her. She becomes pregnant as the result of this union. If it is a boy, the child will belong to Ona's father, but if it is a girl, Agbadi will accept responsibility. When Nnu Ego is born, a medicine man concludes that her *chi*, or guiding spirit, is the slave girl who was forcibly killed and buried with one of Agbadi's wives. Within the year, Ona dies during childbirth.

Sixteen years later, Nnu Ego is of marrying age. She is first betrothed to Amatokwu. When she does not become pregnant, relations cool between her and Amatokwu, and she is soon moved to another hut to make room for a new wife. Nnu Ego is relegated to working in the fields and taking care of the new wife's infant son. When Amatokwu catches Nnu Ego breast-feeding the hungry child, he beats her. Nnu Ego returns to her father to rest and recover, and the marriage ties are severed. Dedicated to finding his daughter a better match, Agbadi arranges a marriage between Nnu Ego and Nnaife, who lives in faraway Lagos. Nnaife's older brother escorts Nnu Ego to the city and her new life with Nnaife.

Nnaife and Nnu Ego live in the Yaba compound, where Nnaife does laundry for the Meers, a British couple. Happy in her marriage, Nnu Ego becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, Ngozi. She also starts her own business selling cigarettes and matches beside the road. One morning, she discovers Ngozi dead in their one-

room home. Distraught and devoid of hope, she rushes to the waterfront to throw herself off Carter Bridge. Nwakusor, an Ibo man coming off his shift at work, prevents her with the help of the crowd that has gathered.

Recovering from Ngozi's death is a slow and painful process. Eventually, Nnu Ego becomes pregnant again and gives birth to Oshia. She decides to focus solely on raising the child instead of making extra income at her market stall. But economic pressures set in when the Meers return to England and Nnaife is suddenly out of a job. Nnu Ego resumes her local trade in cigarettes. Nnaife eventually secures a position that takes him far from home, working for a group of Englishmen. While he is away, British soldiers enter the abandoned compound and tell Nnu Ego that she and Oshia must vacate the premises. Nnu Ego takes a rented room in another part of town, where she gives birth to another son, Adim. Left on their own, the family slowly succumbs to malnutrition. Neighbors step in to help. Nnu Ego returns from her search for more contraband cigarettes to find that her husband has returned, flush with money. Nnu Ego secures a permanent stall in the marketplace and pressures Nnaife to find his next job.

One evening, Nnaife's friends arrive with the news that his brother has died in Ibuza. Nnaife has inherited all of his brother's wives, but only one will come to live with them in Lagos. Adaku arrives with her daughter, setting off tensions and rivalry between the two women. As Nnu Ego tries to sleep nearby, Nnaife invokes his rights as a husband and has sexual relations with Adaku. Nnaife starts a new job cutting grass for the railroad. With less space and more mouths to feed, Nnu Ego and Adaku become pregnant around the same time. Nnu Ego gives birth to twin girls, while Adaku's son dies shortly after he is born. Feeling they are not being given enough money to support the household, the women go on strike. Nnu Ego's firm resolve eventually wavers, and she cooks a large conciliatory meal. But Nnaife does not come home to enjoy it. He has been forced to join the army and is shipped off to India and then Burma to fight in World War II.

With Nnaife away and his pay partially secure in a savings account, Nnu Ego, again pregnant, takes her family to Ibuza and to the deathbed of her father. After his two funerals, Nnu Ego is unwilling to return to Lagos. However, Adankwo, the eldest wife of Nnaife's older brother, urges her to return to the city to keep an eye on Adako. Nnu Ego returns to find that Nnaife had been home for a brief visit and had left some money for her that she failed to receive. Relations between Nnu Ego and Adako grow increasingly strained, culminating in Nnu Ego's rude and brusque treatment of one of Adako's visiting cousins. When Nnaife's friends step in to resolve the conflict, Adako decides that she and her daughters will move out on their own. Impoverished once again, Nnu Ego spends the last of her savings before learning she had not been receiving her husband's yearly stipends due to an institutional error. Nnaife returns and spends most of this windfall. Though Nnu Ego is pregnant again, Nnaife decides to return to Ibuza, where he impregnates Adankwo and returns with a teenage bride, Okpo. Nnu Ego gives birth to twin girls.

The family moves to a mud house in another part of town. First Oshia and then Adim announce their intentions of furthering their educations. When Oshia tells Nnaife he has won a scholarship to study in the United States, Nnaife denounces him for his dereliction of his filial duty. Taiwo's marriage is arranged to an Ibo clerk, but Kehinde runs away to marry a Yoruba. Hearing the news, Nnaife flies into a rage and attempts to murder Kehinde's father-in-law with his cutlass. Nnaife is put in jail, tried, and sentenced to five years, a stint that is reduced provided he return to Ibuza after his release. Nnu Ego has also returned to her homeland, where she dies several years later, alone by the roadside. Oshia returns to honor Nnu Ego with a costly funeral, befitting her sacrifices as a mother.

Questions:

1. Describe the significance of the title 'The joys of motherhood'?
2. Write a short paragraph on plot construction of the novel, the joys of motherhood?
3. Sketch the character of Nnu Ego?
4. What is the message conveyed by the novelist in the novel the joys of motherhood?
5. Write a short paragraph on tradition verses modernity with reference to the joys of motherhood?

Faculty Member

**DR.J.MARIA MONALIZA BURGESS**