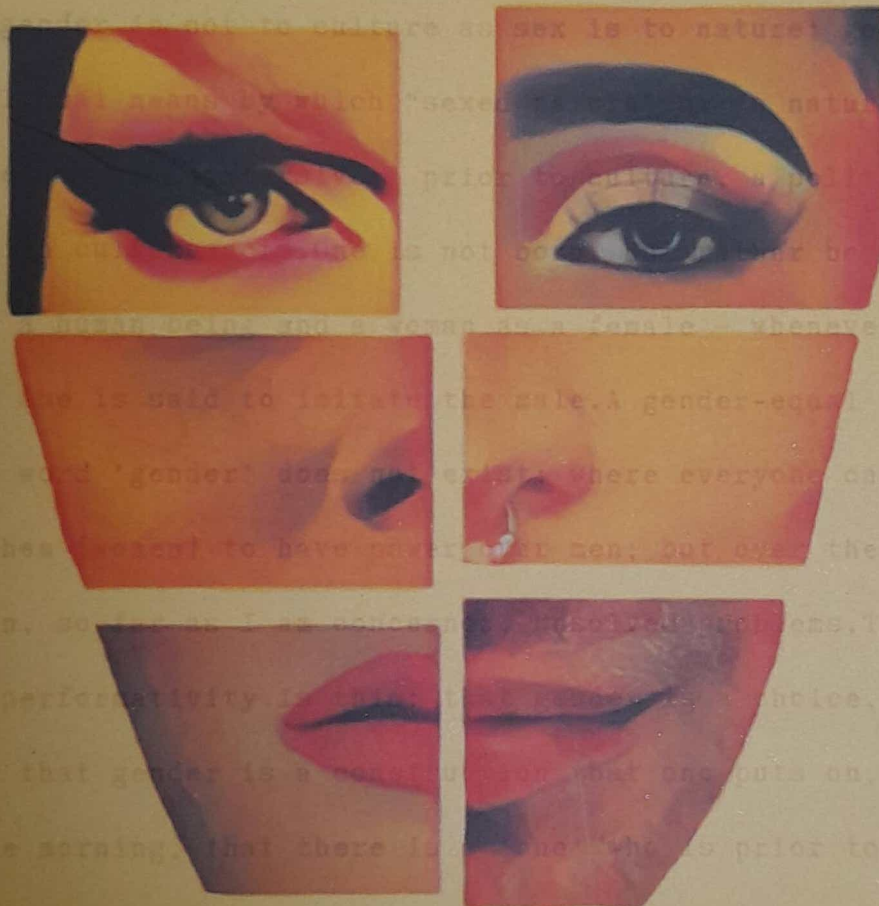


GENDER: CONSTRUCTIONS, CONNOTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS



Edited by

Sudeshna Chakravorty

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Marriage in Mahasweta Devi's Short Stories— Two (Re)Presentations

Debnita Chakravarti

Keywords: Re-presentation, patriarchy, marriage, feminist, society, oppression.

Mahasweta Devi is the literary voice of the voiceless. Be it low caste urban destitution or tribulations of the dispossessed tribals, the activist-author has come forward repeatedly to bring to public attention the trajectories and tragedies of underprivileged individuals who are too often unrepresented, or misrepresented at best. Best known for her empathy with and narration of the indigenous populations of the Palamau region, Mahasweta Devi has given visibility to these invisible sons of the soil on a global literary platform. But her perceptive artistic sensibility has also recorded other lives, other experiences, bearing witness to the daily battle for survival in a world that is inimical, if not hostile. Among her numerous powerful tales has emerged the narratives of women from across the entire spectrum of social strata. These women, existing in and negotiating with a male order, are what Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak calls the ultimate subaltern, denied a voice and an effective platform to articulate their predicament (Morris and Spivak).

This paper is a study of two of Mahasweta Devi's short stories. Originally called 'Talaq' and 'Premer Golpo', they have been translated into English as 'Divorce' and 'Love Story'. They form the bookends, as it were, of the collection of five stories in *Till Death Do Us Part*, translated by Vikram Iyengar (1998). This collection of five stories present a mellower side of the author more commonly known for her depiction of brutality and barbaric tyranny over the lowest social classes. Here she delves into the relationships of women with the men in their lives – husbands, lovers, sons, friends – in order to reveal everyday joys and sorrows of real lived lives. The two stories discussed in this paper thus re-present the familiar author in a different light, through lesser-studied aspects of her exploration of female selfhood.