Chapter 2: From Bondage to Freedom: Representation of Social Images and Reality

Mahasweta Devi is a social activist writing for the society. Society “is a group of people involved in persistent interpersonal relationships or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.”¹ She is a writer who delineates the problems of special social groups to depict their real life to tell their situations, problems, demands and needs of life.

Al-Beruni, the famous historian, provides the information about the caste system in India, “The highest caste is the Brahmana, of whom the books of the Hindus tell that they were created from the head of Brahma. And as Brahma is only another name for the force called nature, and the head is the highest part of the animal body, the Brahmana are the choice part of the whole genus. The next caste are the Kshatriya, who were created, as they say from the shoulders and hands of Brahma. Their degree is not much below that of the Brahmana. After them follow the Vaisya, who were created from the thigh of Brahma. The Sudra were created from his feet.”²

The Brahman is the supreme group in Indian society. This system of dividing people into different groups was started in Vedic
period in India where people started creating differences. It is also mentioned that casteism became so powerful that no one could go beyond his/her caste for any work like food and marriages. Brahmans believed that it is a system created by God. The people believed that this system was based on ‘birth’ and the rituals performed by upper castes which Brahmans considered pure and which were related to religion, were never allowed to be performed by Shudras. Brahman never took food if it was touched by Shudras. It was written by a traveller who came from China in 5th century A.D., named Fa-Shian that Shudras were ordered to create sound when they were crossing the road, so that the other people could save themselves from sighting.

The caste system was earlier based on the ‘karma’ but Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in his ‘Indica’ writes that the caste system later became rigid and caste came to be inherited rather than acquired by merit. The performances of religious rites and rituals were controlled by Brahmans. This caste system became formally rigid during British Raj when the British started to enumerate castes during ten years census. The British had the society which was divided into class and the British attempted to equate the class system with caste system. They gave the Brahmans special privileges which the Muslim rulers had taken away. During British rule, the caste system had expanded into more than 2,000 different castes and sub-castes.
In modern India where buildings, roads, cars are growing rapidly, so as are ‘Jatis’. But the new process of rigidity has been invented. The Indian government officially recognizes historically discriminated castes of India such as Untouchables and Shudras as Scheduled castes and certain economically backward castes as ‘other backward castes’. The Scheduled Castes are referred to as ‘Dalit’ in contemporary literature. “Article 15 of Indian constitution as enacted in 1950, prohibits any discrimination based on caste.”\(^3\) Article 17, declared any practice of Untouchability is illegal. Not only the laws have made but actions have taken to improve their condition as we can see the examples: In 1997, we got K.R. Narayan a dalit as a president of our nation; in 2009, Meira Kumar from dalit community, is the first woman speaker. But is this the real picture? The answer is ‘no’. As the records shows, they are few and the needy are many. The various relief programmes of the government, the reservation and all the help, have they really reached or they are still waiting for them?

In the census of 1891, V.A.Bains, the Commissioner of Census called them ‘Forest tribes’. In 1901, they were classified as ‘Animalists’ and in 1911, they were called ‘tribal animalists’. The Government of India Act specified them as Backward Tribes. At present, the tribe means “an ethnic group, geographically isolated, identified with one particular territory and having distinct social, economic and cultural traditions and practices.”\(^4\)” Indian classical text, the Mahabharata classes them with “the sinful creatures of the
A number of writings by the Anglo-Indian novelist depict different aspects of tribal life. Rudyard Kipling’s short story “The Tomb of His Ancestors” depicts the tribals as savages and immature people. Even the Indian writers also treat them as ‘the other’. Tribal India was seen as a primitive world untouched by modernity, materialism and corruption. Writers who wrote in Indian languages have a better understanding of tribes because of their interaction with the tribes. The writers respect their culture and campaign for the preservation of their culture but the people of other communities are presented in dark light due to writer’s preference for the tribals just as Gopinath Mohanty did. Many writers talk about their life, culture, their festivals, folk songs. Among them, one who is echoed more sustained and more reliable, is Mahasweta Devi. She takes tribals as human only. Her contacts with their joys, sorrows and sufferings are more touching and more realistic. She portrays the real humans as characters with their real life stories which she has used as the plot for her work.

Mahasweta Devi is a post-colonial writer but she raises the issues which are related with the pre-colonial India also. The British Empire covered a large area of the earth. It was deeply related with capitalism and imperialism. Imperialism was forced by the desire for profitable trade and enrichment. For this, the control over markets was essential that encouraged Britishers to capture foreign lands. “Colonialism was a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic
exploitation of others."⁵ This economic exploitation gave birth to a new group of poors. They were ignored by the British Empire and after independence, they become others in their own nation. Mahasweta Devi has been working and raising her voice for the ‘Other-India’. Her writing asks the questions of caste system, exploitation of the marginal, corruption and ignorance of government. She also criticizes the political powers and laws as it gives the marginals basic rights only in the law, not in practice.

“The term ‘postcolonialism’ is not the same as ‘after colonialism’, as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with. It does not define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured. Rather, ‘postcolonialism’ recognises both historical continuity and change.”⁶ On the other hand, it acknowledges that the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political map of the world has changed through decolonisation. But on the other hand, it asserts the promise, the possibility, and the continuing necessity of change, while also recognising that important challenges and changes have already been achieved.

Mahasweta Devi explains the historical continuity and change in her own manner. She projects that the exploitation of ‘Other’ communities has been in existence from Vedic period; only the way of exploitation has become more sophisticated. Earlier, they were
not allowed to participate in religious rites and other important works. Now, they are not allowed to be involved in a work which is related to their development. The modern society is divided into civilized and savage. The caste-discrimination is continued in India but the discrimination on the basis of colour was started during the British Raj. Though the British Empire has gone from India yet “the legacy of this negative sense of blackness is still apparent in the English language today- think of how many expressions there are in which ‘black’ is used pejoratively (as in ‘black market’, ‘black ballad’ or ‘black magic’).”

In India, a new group of Black and middle class appeared after independence. Now, they use education and position “to replicate the colonial administration of the nation for its own financial profit” which continues to exploit the people. “It is a situation when,” in Fanon’s words, ‘the national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement’.

So, again the profits remain in the limited hands and never reach to those who remain powerless and poor. This continous exploitation forced them to raise the voice against discrimination based on exploitation, they are labelled as ‘Naxalite’, Criminals and Untouchables. “Unfreedom, silences, slavery have stalked the existence of the dalit, low-caste tribals since the time the foreign invaders entered their world. But even the freedom of the nation from the foreign rule didn’t translate into the emancipation of indigeneous.”

The new administration does little to transform the nation economically. It does not set up new industries or alter marketing
patterns. It does not govern in the interests of the people. Instead it makes the new nation economically subservient to the old colonial Western powers by allowing big foreign companies to establish themselves in the new nation, by continuing to send raw materials abroad for profit rather than feeding the people, by making the nation into a tourist centre for wealthy Westerners. The national middle class profit by these manoeuvres but those profits never reach the people who remain powerless and in poverty. “A nation that remains economically dependent on the West, and that treats its people in this way, cannot call itself truly free from colonialism.”11

Through her writing, Devi depicts the story of colonial India. During the British Raj, a feudal system emerged which was against poor, tribal and women. The peasants had to struggle for seeds, water and fertilizers. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer. The small land holders were forced to sell out their land and became landless agricultural labourers. Mahasweta takes these landless labourers as heroes for her stories. She never makes them idols but depicts them as they are. Her realistic approach makes her a unique figure as a post-colonial writer.

Mahasweta covers the basic social demands for drinking water, literacy, irrigation and health care. She also uses her pen against non payment of minimum wages to workers in various unorganised sectors; problems connected to environment and
ecology. She is fighting for the rights of poor, dalits and tribes who are still untouched by the mainstream. They are settled in Tamilnadu, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujrat, Maharashatra, West Bengal, some North-Eastern states and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

According to the concept of Nation, land plays very important role. It shows the relationship between the people and the land. It gives the sense of ownership and belonging. As a post-colonial writer, Mahasweta depicts the sufferings of the dalits and adivasis. Land is the communal property in tribes but with the beginning of feudal system in Bengal and Bihar, the adivasis and non-adivasis peasants were forced to take loan at an excessive interest rates as their farmland was declared the legal property of British designated zamindars and when they couldn’t pay back, they became bonded labourers for zamindars. The freedom movements had deep impact on the lives of the peasant class. The Britishers tried to destruct their feeling of ownership of land. “Cornwallis had introduced the permanent settlement and it had already had the desired effects on zamindars. Now, the company had a goodly band of landowners, who were ever ready to say ‘yes, Huzoor’ should the sahibs choose to sky is green or it is pitch dark on a full moon night. They gave the government 10 rupees for every 20 they could squeeze out of the people.”\textsuperscript{12} The feudal system in India gave birth to bonded system. Now, India is replaced by distinct bonded labour district that are to
be found all over its map from Kashmir to Indian Ocean and from east to west, in every state.

In this system, a person becomes a serf labour under a person from whom he has taken a loan. He or a member of his family has to work for the creditor till the loan is repaid. But the rate of interest high. So once someone gets into this, he remains so till he dies. And Inter-generational bondage is its common feature. It has become India’s socio-economic culture – a product of class relations, a colonial history and persistent poverty. It is also known as debt bondage. It is not only because of caste discrimination but also because of inequality, inadequate education system, unjust social relations and government’s unwillingness to alter the status. She covers all these reasons in her work. She discusses poverty, inequality, government ignorance and due to this, the terrible condition of the large section of Indian population.

The modern India considers itself free from slavery. It is not true in the sense that the major part of Indian people are in the grip of bonded labour, child labour, agricultural debt bondage, bonded migrant labour. These are the new forms of modern slavery. Many acts and laws have been passed but “laws are only for papers”. The Bonded Labour System Abolition Act of 1976 specifies that the monitoring of labour violations and their enforcement are the responsibility of state government. Then, the Supreme Court of India has clarified bonded labour as the payment of wages below
the prevailing market wage or the legal minimum wage. Later, the court relies on PIL (Public Interest Litigation) where the citizens are able to petition’s court if they believe their fellow citizen’s rights are being denied and The Supreme Court promoted children’s education but refused to ban child labour. “A report by Anti-slavery International in 2008 revealed that dalit bonded labourers are employed to carry out the most physically straining and menial types of work in industries such as silk farms, rice-mills, salt-panns, fisheries, quarries and mines, tea and spice farming, brick-kiln, textile and domestic work.”\textsuperscript{13} Manual scavenging was abolished in India in 1993 but the reality is beyond our thinking that this inhuman practice is due to the caste bias, paid less than minimum wages and often forced them to borrow money so they got tied up in bondage relationship. Mahasweta tells that the mainstream believes in development but it works like machinery, human emotions are lost. The section of dominant people has converted their hearts into waste and barren land where we find “no sound of water, handful of dust.”\textsuperscript{14}

Mahasweta Devi appears as a ray of hope in this barren land for this poor section of our society. Sometimes, she is a mother to them and sometimes an elder sister. She condemns the system of slavery which is subjected to physical and sexual violence. She portrays the real India where the population of bonded labours with dalit is about 2 million. Not only Devi but the United Nations High Commissioner for human rights stated its range in 2000,
“Victims of slavery and slavery like practices frequently belong to minority groups, particular racial groups/categories of people who are especially vulnerable to a wide range of discriminatory acts, including women, children, indigenous people, people of low caste status and migrant workers.”¹⁵ This statement shows that Devi has a deep connectivity with these labours and her depiction of their real life shows her great concern for them.

Mahasweta Devi works as a social activist. This makes her work more difficult but she plays her role as an activist very soulfully. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her critique also foregrounds the repercussions of blending of literature and activism on the overall literary and cultural milieu. Spivak reads Mahasweta Devi’s stories as indices of the post-colonial nationalist evolution, and thus intervenes into the trajectories of Indian ‘national’ construction. Spivak theorizes the characters of the tribal men and women in Mahasweta’s texts as ‘subaltern’. “The space of the subaltern, she suggests, ‘did not share in the energy of [colonization-decolonization] reversal’ and had ‘no firmly established agency of traffic with the culture of imperialism’. Spivak sees this space as a dystopic ‘representation of colonization as such’.”¹⁶

Spivak reads Doulati’s story (‘Doulati the Bountiful,” Imaginary Maps) of superexploitation as one that ‘can push us from the local through the national to the neocolonial globe’ as it
fractures the agendas of nation-state and the logic of global capitalism that attempts to represent itself as benevolent to the agendas of ‘third-world’ nation-states. Spivak sees Doulati’s diseased, desiccated body spread-eagled on the national flag, as deconstructing the feminist and nationalist discourses. “In her deconstruction of multicultural, postcolonial politics, Spivak explicates upon the manner in which the ‘postcolonial migrant’ occupies a ‘subaltern’ space thus displacing the subaltern on “decolonized terrain”.”¹⁷

“Spivak’s critique, while being theoretically rigorous and critically the most nuanced, seems to submit itself to the same ‘representational politics’ which it aims to problematize.”¹⁸ Spivak’s analysis of Mahasweta’s fiction vis-à-vis the global, diasporic contexts is seen to inhere in the dynamics of appropriation aimed at giving a boost to her radical theoretical and discursive enterprise. And as such, her criticism acquires a nearly autonomous and hegemonising identity and tends to dominate the ‘creation’ from which it supposedly originates. The present study aims at avoiding this critical pitfall by maintaining balance between the ‘criticism’ and the ‘critiqued’ in such a way that both reinforce each other. For this, a strategy of close reading and socio-political contextualisation of the texts has been adopted. This methodology is premised on an understanding that Mahasweta’s writings are closely aligned with the reality of life and on the fact that her appreciation of reality which informs her literature is too vast to be
contained within narrow critical-ideological readings. Mahasweta’s own avowed aversion of theory and theorization reinforces the present interpretive strategy.

In her writings, she delineates the subjects of bonded slavery and bonded prostitution. These days, we can see other types of jobs most commonly carried out by bonded labourers in logging industry, work on ranches, domestic work, and forced labour in agriculture, food processing and sexual exploitation as a result of trafficking. Devi depicts those places of India which have natural beauty but are badly affected by bonded labour system. Palamau (Jharkhand), Daltonganj named Medininagar (Jharkhand), Singbhum all these parts of the country are full of mountains, forests and now tiger reserves. She says that the land of Vanvasi is captured by the government only to protect animals and industries. But if we observe the Vanvasi culture, we come to know that they have their own way to protect animals and as a matter of fact there is a need to protect adivasis as they have their own industries for development such as handicraft industries.

Not only Devi’s novels but her Bortika deals with this issue and search ‘Mukti Morcha’ which was founded by Swami Angivesh in 1981. It is a non-governmental organisation that works for bonded labours. There are many other organisations with which she is working for bonded labours. Her stories reveal the reality and unravel reliable facts about bonded system. Her research reveals
that in Andhra, they are called Gothi; in Bihar, Kamiya; in Gujrat, Halpati; in Karnataka, Jeetho; in Uttar Pradesh, Maat. She tells how deeply this system is rooted in our nation. “He is doing bonded labour for 38 years. Ganori is now 78- bond labour loans are the troops of blood-seeding-one rupee gives birth to thousand of rupees.”

She also discusses the problems of many labourers of Bihar and West Bengal who are driven out of their homes by terrible conditions, to work on contract and are cheated by shrewd contractors. She explores that the young tribal women are taken away to the Brick-kilns where they are not only cheated for money, but also sexually exploited by the owners and their employees. The same is with the migrant labourers who work in unfriendly unknown places with the dreams of education, health facilities.

But when the dreams invert into nightmare the time moves out of their hands. It is the story of not a single state but almost every state where thousands of migrant labourers both tribal and non-tribal, over the years, have worked on government projects. They have been recruited by contractors with the promises of good wages but returns defeated. Mahasweta believes that the system of contract labour is the brutal form of exploitation that has come up all over the country.

Mahasweta Devi believes in reality. She tries to find reality of her own. Once she went to Semra which was a Brahman dominated village, the village of owners of bonded labourers. The government
records revealed that 84 bonded labourers were identified and 43 were freed, given land and agricultural equipments. But what she found was horrible. It was true that they were freed and got the land where it was impossible to grow crops even with good facilities because it was barren rocky land far away from the village without a tubewell or other water resources. Now these freed ones ask the question “why were the freed ones mostly given barren, rocky and uncultivable land far away from their homesteads?" They get barren land and their valuable land goes to the big industrialists. “In Singur, the West Bengal Government is handing over a huge tract of land to the Tatas free of cost. The Tatas have indicated that they would pay Rs.20 crores 5 years from now. The government’s action is illegal and immoral. This will be the compensation for the acquired land. The rate of interest will be 0.01 percent. In that case the discounted value would come to 10-12 crores. This means the Tatas will pay 12 crores and in return take away property worth Rs. 100 crores. The state government knowing everything, but it completely illegally hands over a vast tract for a paltry sum destroying huge crop, and countless men. Is there any comparable precedent? The Government has been acting illegally all the way. The Chief of this government and his minions are liable to be proceeded against under clause 13 of the Anti-corruption Act of 1988.21” And at last, they have only one option to chose and that is bondage. Some say it is safer to enter debt bondage because if they refuse, they’ll be cruelly beaten. Mahasweta tells us about May
Day in 1981 where she met about 30 bonded labourers. All of them were freed but were back to bondage for their sheer survival. Among them were people who had borrowed rupees 80 and were serving their ‘maliks’ for over three to four years. She tells the story of Sitaram, 18 year old young boy who was a bonded labour for rupees 500 borrowed by his father 38 years ago. She observes many unheard and untold stories of this manner.

The Bandhuas are given names like Kamia, Seokia, Harwaha, Charwaha etc. Dharumaru is a special category among them. The ‘malik’ grabs any person and forces him/her to become a bandhua and the owners belong to uppercaste/Brahman. A man borrows money for food, hunger, sickness, marriage and becomes bandhua for lifetime. Sometimes they get meal from the ‘mailk’. So they do not die of hunger. But they do not have anything. Even the land on which their homes are, is owned by the maliks. The administration is not interested, neither are the political parties. It was abolished in November 1975 and replaced by a new system of contract labours in which “the young ones are waiting for the inevitable dalal to come one day and take them away.” They have big dreams in their eyes but their dreams shatter and they become contract labours. These labours are taken from every state of India by the agents of brick-kiln owners, factory and mine owners. They have man agents for men and woman agents for women. These agents handle 70-100 labourers. The labourers have no direct link with the agents. The incident of Kolaghat Thermal Power Project in which the labourers
were to be paid according to the measure of the ground excavated and not daily wages. They were cheated and the contractor made the largest profit and labourers work on slave pay even in government projects. There are lot of cases like this untouched and unheard but no one is there to touch them except Mahasweta Devi.

Another form of exploitation is migrant labour. When a person move from one place to another and does not get even a place for living, he/she feels cheated. The Indian Government declares that it is abolished but again in papers only, not in reality.

Devi stands firmly for tribals and dalits for whom no one is there to stand. She works against the exploitation and ignorance imposed upon the tribals. She desperately attacks the money-lenders, bond-masters, lumber contractors, development and relief workers, industrial and religious authorities. She portrays the real picture of development projects started for the welfare of downtrodden. But as a matter of fact, they are the projects to make money for only money makers. She reveals the dark stories behind the development projects and relief fund. She says that it is a matter of shame that after so many years of independence, we fail to touch the lives of the adivasis, ‘first settler’. Freedom, equality, democracy, national identity, and progress these words are beyond their imagination or they never reach to them. “The development, the relief supply, the education system, the irrigation system, the supply of drinking water, the health centres- all that is meant for 59
million 628638 tribals who forms 7.76% of the population of India, never reach them."

When such exploitation reaches its height, people come forward and raise their head against it. The best example is Naxalite movement. This term comes from Naxalbari village in West Bengal. This movement was started against local landlords and struggled to re-distribute lands among landless. It encouraged many Santhal tribals and other poor people to join the movement and start attacking local landlords just as Bhagat Singh joined the Boycott movement for Indian independence. Students left schools to join the naxalites. Mahasweta projects naxalite problem in *Hazaar Chaurasir Maa* and many more. The affected states of India are Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Devi’s *Hazaar Chaurasir Maa* shows the deep impact of Naxalites movement on the lives of three families. It is the story of an upper middle class mother, Sujata whose life is shattered when her son is killed for his connection with naxalites as his commitment to the revolutionary and communist and naxalite movement labelled him a rebel. Instead of providing any historical data of the Naxalite movement in West Bengal that exploded in the tribal region of Naxalbari in May 1967, when a policeman, Sonam Wangdi was killed by armed tribals, “Mahasweta would explore the politics and the passions of the peasant tribal revolt turning into a students’
revolt against bourgeois value and the academic institutions they sustained.\textsuperscript{23} She set the play to show “an apolitical mother’s quest to know her matyred naxalites son, to know what he stood for.”\textsuperscript{24}

“Devi re-creates the killing of Naxalites but she focuses on the later reactions and lack of reactions of a cross section of the survivors.”\textsuperscript{25} She also focuses on the economic and the social exploitation in rural and urban areas. The play depicts three different cultures, locations and economies with the help of Sujata, Somu’s mothers and Nandini. Through the family portrayal of events and happenings, Devi presents the issues of universal significance of violence, resistance and self-determination. Violence grows from anger as a fire of protest. Violence is ever harmful as in \textbf{Mother of 1084}; it spreads rapidly and covers the lives of young boys and their families, left them with wounds and scars. When Sujata, Brati’s mother goes to identify the body of 1084, she saw “there were three bullet holes on his body, one on the chest, one on the stomach, one on the throat. Blue holes. The bullets had been aimed from close range. The skin around the holes was blue. The cordite had left its burns. Chocolate-coloured blood. The cordite had scalded the skin around the hole to leave it parched and cracked into hollow rings. Three bullet holes; on the neck, on the abdomen, on the chest.”\textsuperscript{26} When Sujata sees her son on the death bed “she would have liked to caress his face with her fingers but there was not an inch of skin left smooth. It was all raw flesh, all battered and smashed”\textsuperscript{27} in the encounter. The mother is shattered,
broken left with question marks. “Rows and endless rows of question marks.” The play is not only a search of a mother for the reasons of her son’s death but also a search of self-identity in the male-dominated society. It also presents mother’s emotions for her son as well as a father’s hypocrisy for his reputation. The killing of Brati recalls the tragic memories of Barasat killing and Baranagar killing of the seventies. When the bodies of young men were found slaughtered on the road to Barasat and more than a hundreds naxalites were killed and their bodies were dumped in the adjoining Hoogly river. It makes the part of killing of Brati of the “organized massacre of the Naxalites in 1970-71, perpetrated by the police, the party in power, hired goons, and even parties of the Left establishment acting in unholy collusion.”

Through this, Devi wants to solve the problem of an abandoned mother. One way to search the truth is when Sujata realizes her own being as mother, gradually woman and at the end, a human being. With her husband Dibyanath, her own identity as a woman has lost somewhere. “She had been taught by life to take things as they came. She had never thought of asking questions. She never knew that she had the right to ask questions.” But Brati, her son was different from his childhood, loves reasons, never scared. He revolted with his friend Somu against the rigid, partial system of the corrupt government. His death becomes the symbol of victory of corruption. His death is also the symbol of new life for his mother in searching her own self. His death also shows that the urban youth is
also avid to fight for their rights. His death speaks that even the rebellion belonged to upper class families also become the target of tyrannical regime of corrupt government. Just as Brati, whose father had enough money to make his name disappears but his mother had lost her son and found her own identity.

Mahasweta is not only concerned with the sufferings and exploitation of poor but also focuses on the agonies of motherhood through the naxalite problem in India. Motherhood as we know is a universal phenomenon and mother cannot forget her children. “The loss of a child to a mother is perhaps one of the biggest losses.”31 As a mother, Sujata’s emotions are true and natural but the community as a whole is more important than her emotions. Her emotions are shattered by her husband when he has removed everything that belonged to Brati from his house: “Have you asked them to remove Brati’s portrait to the second floor?

Yes
Brati’s shoes?
Yes.”32

Sujata’s emotions are destroyed when she tries to find the answers of her questions about his death. She feels that her “son became a stranger to his mother.” But Brati remained untouched to the feelings of his mother because he had lost faith in the social system. “Brati had decided for himself that freedom could not form the path society and the state followed.”33 Sujata was shattered to
hear from Somu’s mother that “Brati would speak, laugh, ask Somu’s mother to make some tea, to give him a glass of water.”

She was hurt to know that he remained untouched by his mother. He was close to Somu’s mother too. His memories were not only hers alone but others also remembered him, “blood of her blood, the child whose birth had endangered her life, the young man who had become so strange and impregnable to her.” Somu’s mother knew what her son was up to but Sujata did not know anything about her son’s changing behaviour and his life’s goal. “Sujata as a mother had lost out to several thousands of mothers, for she had never known what Brati was up to.”

This play raises the universal issue of motherhood – a mother who lost her son, shattered and broken sometimes by her own husband and sometimes by the changes that couldn’t change the society.

In this play, Devi also presents the two classes of society through Sujata and Somu’s mother; “the two fathers, Somu’s and Brati’s, lived in the same country, but poles apart”. Devi, through Sujata’s family shows the luxurious life of her husband and other children. They have enough money to make his son’s name disappear from the list of killed young men. Sujata’s husband and Brati’s father was a reputed figure in the city but his reputation had become malignant for a mother’s emotions. She thought after Brati’s death it is possible that Brati was long dead to his father when he refused to take his car to Kantapukar. Then, he used his contacts and Brati’s name vanished from the newspapers. Not only this, his
life soon came back to the track. But the other side of coin is darker than that. Somu’s sister “had lost her father soon after Somu’s death. Since then she had had to give tuition from morning till night in order to run the household. The fire of the cremation pyre burns up all the fat in the body. The fire of domestic responsibility had burned up Somu’s sister. She bore a severe anger in her looks. Somu’s dying had left her dead. He had been the only son in the family. It was his need to go to a good college, their father had not provided money for his sister’s education. She paid for her own education by tutoring children.”³⁸ These words show the struggle of a family for their basic needs. Somu’s mother shows the helplessness of hers due to insufficient money and power. “I have no contacts, I don’t have the money to hush things up or get things done.”³⁹

Mahasweta discusses the issue of naxalite problem in India but with that she also raises the issue of poverty which divides India into rich and poor. As a true writer, she documents the realities of Indian society. Her depiction of the lives of the poor is undoubtedly realistic. Devi depicts the terrible plight of poor families through Somu’s family and in the play, there are lots of words which show the helplessness and poverty of his family, as Somu’s mother said, “My dead husband was a poor shopkeeper, he didn’t have any capital. He had a stall selling exercise books, pencils and slates. It had taken him a lot to raise this house.”⁴⁰ She further says, “I am a doomed woman, doomed from birth. Even the wild
foxes and dogs weep over may fate…..my man never had a chance
to learn how to read or write. He was the eldest in the family. He
had to run the household. Back in the old country he had a plot of
fertile land. Here he had nothing. He was not the kind of man to
grab whatever came his way and improve his lot. It was nothing but
misery, misery, all the way.”

The problems, sufferings of poor families make them helpless before the circumstances. “This
daughter of mine has given up college. She spends all her time
giving tuition and learning typing. The younger one her aunt took
away, still there are two more. It’s not easy, Didi, to feed four on
what she earns from tuitions.” Their life becomes miserable. They
can’t afford to maintain even their house. Sujata’s eyes see their
house as “the thatched roof had come down on one side and had to
be supported with a stick,” but nothing is there to support their
life. Poverty speaks from eyes of Sujata. Their home, their looks
speaks that they are facing the lack of money. When Sujata see
Somu’s mother, she “looked paler and more crushed. She looked
like someone who had surrendered to destiny in sheer despair. Her
appearance carried the look of death that one saw occasionally in an
abandoned child on a city pavement, a kitten in the gutter, or a
scrawny little crow.” Not only this life, but their future life has
also been destroyed as their studies are infected by the poverty.
Their career remains futile and with this present life, their future
would have been spoiled. Somu’s father fought for his son without
thinking about his own image and hoped that the police would help
him. But he did not know that only money speaks. Mahasweta gives lots of descriptions which show on the one hand poverty, the burning issue of Indian society and on the other hand, the lavish lifestyle of Brati’s family. Sujata lives a simple life even then, she “had an aristocratic bearing, a stiff upper lip, a watch on her wrist and an expensive handloom sari.”

As a devoted writer, Devi depicts the post-colonial problems of classes and poverty.

With the issue of Naxalites problem and poverty, she raises the voice against corruption as well. If Dibyanath had made his son’s name disappear from the list of killed young men, then, he surely gave enough money for that. Nandini told Sujata that Brati had told her that “his father bribed clients away from other firms.”

Brati’s faith in the present social system has lost, because he himself very closely saw and observed the corruption through his father. But even then, he was claimed as the worst criminal who was deserved no mercy. She has knitted many important issues in one. The play raised the serious questions like “but did that mean the end of the cause?”

Why must we beg for things that should be ours by right and get kicked in return?”

These questions emerge in each and every heart but why the fire remains only ashes and why it did not burn the corruption and poverty? Devi takes these issues and never leaves them as ashes but always burn them as fire.

The same fire is noticeable in Rudali. The issues of poverty, caste discrimination and corruption are depicted very neatly in
Rudali. She also knits the exploitative system of religion, feudal system and bonded labour system. Not only this, she creates a character named ‘Dulan’ who freely criticizes, explores, accuses and condemns the upper classes, their moral corruption, greed and hypocrisy.

Devi starts her story not as an individual but as a member of the caste she belongs to, “In Tahad village, Ganjus and Dushads were in the majority. Sanichari was a ganju by caste. Like the other villagers her life too was lived in desperate poverty.” She shares a common fate with the other low-caste villagers. As the low-caste, ganju, subaltern woman of the poorest of the poor class, Sanichari’s story is structured of multiple levels of exploitation.” Her relation becomes a source of suffering for her. Finally, her mother-in-law stated that her destiny was full of suffering because she was born on inauspicious Saturday. As a bahu, “she wasn’t free to speak up.” At the time of her mother-in-law’s death, she had not enough time to cry as she was so busy with the arrangements of cremation. Then, within three years, the brother-in-law and his wife were dead too. “Sanichari was on tenter hooks. There was no crying over those deaths either. Was one to weep or to worry about how to burn the corpses and feed the neighbours cheaply at the shradha?” The religious system of exploitation transforms her grief into stone. Mahasweta presents the religious system kriya ceremony as the exploitation of low castes. “Every death is mediated by religious demands for rituals that follow which further impoverish the
Sanichari’s husband dies of cholera after drinking the contaminated milk donated to the Shiva idol by the rich. So, she is made to pay twice over for ritual offerings. She shows how the ritualized system of religion slowly becomes the burden of poor and low caste; how for the sake of religion, malik-mahajans exploits the poor.

Then, Devi connects this religious ceremony with the bonded labour system as Sanichari borrows a meager rupees 20 for her husband’s shraddha and has to repay rupees 50 through bonded labour over the next five years. Devi has knitted beautifully three angles of life as a whole. She tells that the issue of poverty is connected with religion and it has become the reason for exploitation in the form of bonded labour system. “The economic stranglehold of the malik-mahajans is the social oppression of a religious system which controls through fear and superstition. Not once, throughout the story, is religion shown as offering solace, on the contrary, religion further impoverishes and enslaves causing indebtedness through its web of demands and obligations.”

Sanichari is caught in the web of bonded labour system to repay her debt. She was in the grip of poverty and with the debt of rupees 20, she became bonded slave forever. “You’ll all go home with wages to show for your labour. I’m slaving to repay a debt. I’ll go home with a handful of sattu.” In the story, Devi depicts the horrors of poverty time to time. She tells that “Two dead just as well. At least their own stomachs would be full.” The poverty speaks from the
stomachs and the reality is hunger as “there’s no bigger god than one’s belly. For the belly’s sake everything is permissible”56; “considerations of the stomach are more important than anything else.”57 Devi has given lots of incidents which show that history tells that rich become richer and the poor become poorer. Through the character of Dulan, she recounts and tells about the roots of exploitation and how these have got strengthened and systematized through history. “The tale Dulan told is very significant; it explained clearly how the ruthless Rajputs infiltrated this remote area of tribals and, zamindars, gradually built themselves up to the status of jotedars, establishing themselves as the masters of the area.”58 The outcome is the subsequent rebellion of Kol tribals, the protest of Harda and Donka Munda and their cruel suppression. “About two hundred years ago, in protest against the cruel oppression practiced against them, the Kols revolted… Harda and Donka Munda started sharpening their arrows, and a fresh tribal uprising was imminent.”59 Dulan’s description of historical events shows the killing of innocent people by the Rajput Sardars and Sanichari’s life is the picture of that exploitation. “Nothing changes over the years, neither the upper caste lust for power and land nor the violent repressive measures taken to quell protest and revolt.”60 Their holdings and power increased and the means of exploitation have become more lethal and sophisticated. Mahasweta traces the miseries and misfortunes of Sanichari but later she discusses the roots of our socio-economic-political- historical background of
exploitation. The basic issue of Indian society is money which creates the differences and discrimination of rich and poor, upper and lower castes. Money creates the group of poors facing poverty but it is not only a curse but the reason of exploitation.

Mahasweta also presents the hypocrisy, pretension and falsehood of uppercastes and compares it with the devotion and care of Sanichari and her group. Devi portraits Nathuni Singh, a wealthy son whose mother was on his deathbed but he isolated her in a single room without “no hakim, no kabiraj, no doctor, no herbal remedies, no medicines, no injections.” It is also mentioned that “he’s not willing to spend a paisa on trying to cure her, but plans to spend thirty thousand on her funeral!” The issue of prestige is more important than a life which we have found in *Mother of 1084* also. Not only men but women also show concerns about her status. Nathuni’s middle wife also wants to dominate over the other wives of her husband by showing the funeral ceremony of her father “May my father live long- but when he dies, then I’ll show everyone how a kriya should be held!” This prestige issue shows the hypocrisy of big and rich people and their love also depends on money. Nathuni’s middle wife belongs to rich jotedars so she is the most beloved one among three, “it’s bad luck that neither the eldest not the youngest but only the middle wife is treated as the beloved.” So it can be seen that the money creates the gap, not only in between castes but also in love.
Devi also clears that God creates man but it is man who creates classes and castes. Sanichari tells us that some diseases are inherited by poor and lower castes. “I heard that the upper castes never got small pox? That it was a disease of the poor and lower castes.” Devi is not only concerned about corruption, hypocrisy, poverty, exploitation of poor and low castes but also the bond of love and friendship. Firstly, we see the bond of mother and son when Budhua’s condition has worsened. Sanichari “running all the way she went, to ask the avid for some other medicine. She went even though she knew that no medicine could help him now.” But the love of a mother for her son makes her a suffering mother. “How could she accept that she would never again have to warm water for him at night, or rub him down with the auspicious swapnadya ointment which promised relief?”

Mahasweta shows the bond of friendship between Sanichari and Bikhni. Bikhni was her childhood playmate. They have become the old age support for each other. Bikhni and Sanichari were very happy with Sanichari’s house. “Right then and there she sprinkled the place with water and washed it down. She went off to the river and fetched a pot of water.” Bikhni and Sanichari became very close friends surprisingly or “as a game of chance- people who come from far away, strangers, can become as close as one’s own kin.” So, the story depicts the female bonding, the emotional bonding between the two. Sanichari and Bikhni are so closed to each other that Bikhni’s death shatters her. “She felt a landslide
within.” Her death brings a fear, fear of old age because “Bikhni’s death affected her livelihood, her profession.” Her death leaves her shrewd and manipulative.

Mahasweta Devi deals this intimate relationship between two older women with sensitive, affectionate tenderness. Devi shows other relationships of poverty with exploitation, exploitation with bonded labour system and hypocrisy with upper castes with great care and devotion. She also describes the historical background of exploitation. She writes the story not to entertain or to provide moral but presents the real condition of India. Without romanticizing the characters and situation, she portrays the real dark colours of ‘True India’.

These colours have become darker in Chotti Munda and His Arrow. Here, Mahasweta Devi concentrates her story on Chotti Munda’s life and discusses the problems of pre and post-colonial India. The hero, Chotti Munda “is a figure of continuity, from the ulgulan, to the emergency and post emergency.” In the story, the narrator not only rewrites the historical record but also establishes a relation between all the problems of India. She connects land and labour with historical rebellions. The feudal system of India gives the base to the various revolts. This system also provides the permanent problem of bonded labour system. Dhani Munda, an old Munda archer who changed the life of Chotti, was working under the ‘dikus’ in servile conditions. He cannot bear the pain of Mundas
sweating off for an infinite debt repayment. “As if he couldn’t bear to look upon the bonded sweated work of the Mundas for an infinite debt repayment.” Dhani and other people know that this debt bondage is a trap which never ends, never dies, “Ye’ll give bonded labour for a thumbprint, f’r a bit of rice-wheat to eat, I’ll not say yeah to that. This bonded labour won’ be quit in ten generations. Everyone falls into its trap. See all the Ganjus, Dusads, Chamars, Dhopas – all the oppressed, tribals and outcastes – tied up in bonded labour.” These words visualizes the unended, life long net of bondage in which only poor, oppressed people get into the trap. Devi shows that the bonded labour system affects only the oppressed tribals and poor outcastes. It is the system which is the earning source of moneylenders, contractors and the source of exploitation for poor and oppressed. This system tells the poor people that never borrow money because “Borrow means bond labour and all in t’ family line will give bonded labour.” They also come to know that “putting a thumbprint on paper at the behest of the moneylender it is in the net of interest that they are entangled.” But the exploiters also know that these poor people are the easy prey for debt bondage. “It’s very easy to bind the adivasis in debt. If they once put their thumbprint on paper, they give bonded labour for generations. Of course this is just as applicable to untouchables.” The high castes, moneylenders, land owners know well about untouchables- they can work for low wages and never argue. Lala Baijnath was just like that. His field
and yard work “was generally done by local Oraon sans Mundas and some untouchable castes. Baijnath prefers to have adivasi labour. Adivasis work for incredibly low wages. Don’t like bickering. They work as they give word.”

Devi also tells the inner secret of high castes as they never want their development, “in whatever way, it is right that untouchable and adivasi should remains poor.” They also believe that it is their natural duty to take bonded labour from adivasi and untouchable. They are so mean that they always watch each other’s interest so how they left poor adivasis or untouchables. The system swallows the entire village of Chotti where no one is left from debt bondage which presents the true picture of ‘Mother India’. “Do you that half Chotti village is his bonded labour?

What can you and I do?

Bonded labour!

This is your bloody glorious India.”

She depicts several times through different realistic characters that it is the life long slavery bond far from freedom. “Dukhia is the bond slave of the Nakata king’s manager. We too. But he has noting. His land and all are in hock on his thumbprint.

When will’t be repaid?
Dukhia says in a dry voice, bonded labour pays nothi’ back in his book. Me father’s father borrowed and bound our whole line.” 

The bonded labour system binds a person so many times. The system binds the generations in labour. The system affects the life of all the labours as they “call for bondwork all t’ time. Okay, we give. But if we cain’t sell grain from our fields, greens from our yard, hens an’ goats reared at home, then how to stay alive? A belly must eat a bit.” Because of bonded labour system, they didn’t have even to eat. There is nothing left which they can call their own. “Our homes, our bit o’ land, all tied up in bonded labour. In land held by ten generations of livin’, no Munda has anythin’ to call his own.” They know that “Debt’s not repaid e’en if ye give labour fer many lives.” And if they rebel or reject, they will have to face the dangers over their lives. “They put elephant on me hut. They took me for bond work. He has a feast. He taxes me I borrowed, so he took all me crop.” If they get that land by shares they get the barren, stony and dry land of poor quality which never produce anything except thorny rush and coarse grass but the land owners want their profit. So, the land is snatched and the untouchables and tribes are forced to do bonded labour on low wages. Every family of the village has bonded labour. Even then, they never leave hope for better life. After independence, they believe that “times are changin’. Now we’ve to make sure that we get all t’ jobs everywhere.” “The land will be in your hands. Everything will be new. No one will oppress anyone.” An ordinance was passed on
24 October, 1975, the bonded labour system is at an end, illegal. “All of you bonded labourers are now released, you no longer to give labour. Now in no way can anyone make anyone give bonded labour, no one can force bonded labour...The main point is, whichever boss or moneylender has a bond, or an old debt, all that is cancelled. No debts to be repaid, no boss to be bonded to. If your home and land are in hock with the moneylender for an old debt, the moneylender will return it.”

But the laws are far from reality. They are never applied. “They’ve made t’ law, t’ law’s made, but they put a stone in t’ law, an’ t’ law tumbles. T’ debtor, t’ labourer, will charge that boss?”

So, the state makes the laws because they have to be made but they need never be enforced and those for whom the laws are made need never reap the benefits.

According to the laws, there’ll be punishment against bonded labour system but “who’s goin to press charges? Ye’re Gormen, lemme ask ya, who’ll press charges? If boss moneylender takes yer life t’ polis see no fault. If t’ debtor-labourer says a word they catch ‘im. Me dad he went crazy with that Lala’s father’s terror and put a noose ta his neck. And this Lala sends me son Harmu to je-hell house with land pressure. Who’ll bring charges agin t’ Lala lord? There’s allus drought, there’s famine. We’ve to go to t’ Lala to borrow for food. A court case!..Is there anyone beside him, behind him? Will t’ court take him? Doesn’t t’ lawyer and t’ clerk skin alive Munda, Oraon, t’ not to touch? Who makes this law?”

The laws are for papers only, never applied.
The tribals and outcastes have been suffering from pre-colonial period and still suffering in this post-modern era. It is hard to believe that the laws are really worked where they have lost everything due to this scorching system. The mainstream has the power and uses that power for its own purposes. They have the power to make the laws for their own benefits. To fulfill their benefits, they oppress the adivasis and untouchables because as Mahasweta Devi tells that “everyone has t’ right to harm adivasis and untouchables.”⁸⁹ If they really want to provide relief, progress, development to them then “why isn’t any Act for the welfare of the outcaste or the adivasi implemented? Why did the PM pass the Act during emergency, knowing that the Act will not be implemented?”⁹⁰ Because if the laws will be implemented, the pillars of the government—moneylender, land owners, contractors, their belly will remain empty. How they make their ocean of money? So, “the law’s there and the bonded labour’s there?”⁹¹ Devi creates the true picture of glorious India that how beautifully the Government of India has managed with two things together. Not only the laws and bonded labour system, but with corruption and poverty can also be managed by the government together.

Mahasweta Devi presents the picture of poverty through train which is the symbol of modernity, power and machine. But “it has no connection with the poor people standing on the platform.”⁹² The days of poverty in the life of poor is as long as the night of sorrow. The stories of Mundas tells that “they had put an’ f’r
ploughin’ an’ huntin’, t’ forest. Never did they say in storytellin’ that Mundas had stone mansions. We didn’t see any o’ that. We saw that moneylender has a mansion, Munda lives in a sal leaf hut, ploughs t’ moneylender’s field.” The difference between rich and poor is presented very nicely through the above lines. Every page of the books narrates the story of poor people, “we’re that poor, plough t’ boss’s land, eat rice if we get it, otherwise boiled cornmeal.” No house, no food, no work, no land nothing they have. Their lives become hell because they lack money. Due to this scarcity, the people died as they suffered from meningitis, small pox and doctors didn’t came ahead to save their lives. On the other hand, corruption increases just as our population. After independence, the government launched the five years plan for growth and development in agriculture and industry. For this growth, it had provided money but the corrupt people used that money for their own profits, “in five years, which fifty thousand will come back as five hundred thousand.” The contractor was getting contracts for making more and more money. “You’ll get such a rate that even with this you’ll have a fat profit.” He wants contracts, to make money, collect profit. These profit makers never leave even animals. They try to make money even from dead animals as seen that “the price of seven tiger skins has come to twenty-one thousand rupees, Daroga will get at least a thousand.” Each and every person, from head to toe can do anything to make more profits. For this, there corrupt people create such “statistics-
based paper theories, on the basis of which it is possible to construct completely unrealistic projects-in the implementation of which millions of rupees can be given to unsuitable persons-which are never implemented.” They snatch the money even from poor’s mouth and feel proud in doing this- “it is our right to take a cut from the work of labour. That way little drop of water makes an ocean for us.” They cheat the government, they cheat the poor workers and the government has no doubt on them because “the landed rich and the moneylender, if they give ten thousand rupees to the government, they cheat on taxes and take the opportunity to clear a million rupees.” So, the corruption makes rich richer and poor poorer.

Mahasweta also deals with the caste-discrimination in Chotti Munda and His Arrow. She depicts that the schools, hospitals and even water are far away from the low castes and adivasis. “What school! First we’re not school folks, ye’ve to hit ‘em hard to send ‘em to school and then t’ schoolmaster says, what’ll ye do with school? Go herd cones.

If they see Munda boys they chase ‘em off.

Readin’ and writin’s not f’r us.

By law it’s f’r ever’one but not in fact.

Oh let t’ Brahmans’, and t’ Lalas’, and t’ caste- hindu kids go to school.” Not only schools, but the basic need of every human
being, water is beyond their reach as “they don’t let adivasis and low castes take water even from government wells.” The high caste people have the thinking that low caste people don’t have right to develop, to be rich, to study and if they try, they torture them in many ways. “A Munda’ll go to government school here! Diku boys won’t study then, and t’ master chases off even t’ boys of Chhagan’s caste. They say, low caste, do low work, why d’ ye need ta study?”

Devi presents the real picture of India where law and order never works. It never cares for poor, oppressed people- “no one cares if all the harijans and untouchables die.” Devi again and again proves that the laws never cares for poor. On the contrary, the government snatches the land, their source of life from them. Devi describes the problems of India in Chotti Munda, before and after independence but in the post modern era, the same problem of land snatching by the government can be easily seen.

“In Singur, the West Bengal Government is handing over a huge tract of land to the Tatas free of cost. The Tatas have indicated that they would pay Rs. 20 crores five years from now. The government’s action is illegal and moral. This will be the compensation for the acquired land. The rate of interest paid will be 0.01%. In that case the discounted value would come to 10-12 crores. This means the Tatas will pay 12 crores and in return, take away property worth Rs. 100 crores. The state Government knows
everything, completely illegally hand over a vast tract for a paltry sum destroying huge crop and countless men. Is there any comparable precedent? The government has been acting illegally all the way. The chief of this government and his minions are liable to be proceeded against under clause 13 of the Anti-Corruption Act of 1988.”¹⁰⁵ Not only this, Devi discussed in ‘Chotti Munda’ about the corruption which is also presented by Pranab Ghosh that in Singur the share croppers will not receive any money from the government because they do not have any legal status. And also funds allotted for development of the tribals are pocketed by all powerful panchayats. These funds actually never spend on them. With the recent Singur incident, it clearly proves that Devi describes the real picture which is still not changed even after 64 years of independence.

Mahasweta Devi in Chotti Munda and His Arrow also deals with Naxalite movement but rare incidents are provided by her in this novel. When people raise their voice against the exploitation, oppression, they are called naxalites- “Hey, they’re Naxal boys. What name didja say, lord? Naxal. They cut down contractors and bosses, grab guns, fight tpolis.”¹⁰⁶ Sometimes people called them a venomous snake.

Mahasweta Devi gives the highlight of Baranagar-Kashipur massacre that happened in 1971 in Kolkata, West Bengal in which “three hundred hoodlums went and killed two hundred, two
hundred fifty Naxal boys n’ police said nothing.”107 Another incident of August, 1970, “Mrs. Modi said in Parliament about the Naxals, the Naxals will be fought to finish! That’s the green light. And right after that they dragged the Naxals out and started killing them.”108 But were they really Naxals or is it right to kill them especially when our government is not ready to give even hard punishment to rapists and terrorists? When this movement started, it was against the exploitation, injustice and oppression of tribals and outcastes. The supporters, fighters of the movement were called as naxalites. But they were fighting for their rights. Then, was their killing, encounters, torture right? “Three policemen are dragging along a young man. His face has caved in, his body has come loose. They have tied a rope round his ankles to pull him forward.”109 Such brutal behaviour even with their dead bodies creates terror but fire also many hearts.

With this work, Mahasweta Devi recreates many historical events. She depicts the horrible picture of our Incredible India. The bonded labour system, corruption, poverty, caste-discrimination and naxalism all are the problems of post modern India of 21 century where people create the image of our country as the new sun emerging in the sky of developed world.

“Mahasweta’s story-telling necessarily involves the multilayered tasks of – writing alternative histories, contesting accepted narratives, voicing the experiences of the subaltern, and
problematizing the hypocrisy and entrenched corruption of the mainstream elite that falsify the nation’s claims to a modern, secular, developmentalist, democratic status.”

Mahasweta’s stories can be read as activist, creative interventions against the modern, bureaucratic nation-state that, in the name of rationalist and secular developmental practices, ends up creating hierarchised binaries between the mainstream and the margins. It exposes the replication and perpetuation of colonial-colonized power-praxis within the postcolonial nation-state. Her fiction seeks to disrupt the geographical and cultural nationalism that homogenizes differences and suppresses multi-cultural character of Indian nation. “Her narratives serve to rupture the gendered and patriarchal moorings of Indian nationalism and dismantle the pretensions of welfare nationalism.”

This chapter focused on those works of Mahasweta Devi which creates fire in my heart such as *Dust on the Road*, *Rudali*, *Mother of 1084*, and *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*. These creations raise the recent issues which burn in the heart of Young India. The issues of bonded slavery, naxalism, corruption, poverty, hypocrisy, exploitation, caste-discrimination has taken deep roots in India. It is very difficult to uproot them. She depicts that government has taken many steps to restrict such crime but failed. But one cannot give up hope just as Mahasweta Devi has raised these issues because she wants people’s support against their suppression and
exploitation and a public for their better development without distorting their society. Mahasweta Devi believes that she is working on such issues and more and more support and work is to be needed.
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