Chapter 4

From Consciousness to Canons:
Locating Women in the Socio-Ethical Environment

In Indian society, woman has a specific place. She is honoured as a Mother, sister, wife and daughter. Her each and every role is reflected in different goddesses of Hindu mythology. However, ironically the same society disgraces the womenfolk in their respective roles. The disgrace and disrespect of women has become a global problem. For women’s right and equality, a movement of feminism has emerged.

Feminism is the belief that women must have equal political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights to men. Before the emergence of feminism, the world showed great histories of some extraordinary courageous women who proved themselves in the male-dominated societies. Sappho, the great poet of ancient Greek world; Joan of Arch, a French warrior of the fifteenth century; Queen Elizabeth I in the sixteenth and seventeenth century England are the names of some great women personalities. But they were few among many suppressed women.

“Feminism under the postcolonial situation actively engaged itself in a dialogue with the postcolonial theoretical formulations, questioning and reconstructing many of the ideological constructs that the postcolonial theory postulated.”

Along with such questioning, feminism also critiques the universalist human liberal
discourse for its patriarchal underpinnings. Contemporary feminists examine the postcolonial and postmodern ideological approaches and explore the patriarchal and sexist biases inherent in these. They engage into reconsideration and re-figuring of the ‘doubly colonized’ woman in the postcolonial world. Feminist interventions, while these foreground many important gaps and absences in postmodern, poststructuralist theories, in fact, at one level, share platform with postmodernist, postcolonial positions as all three identify with the situation on the ‘margin’ and critique the master narratives that define these groups as the West’s ‘others’, the ‘object’, and the ‘subaltern’.

“In current critical parleys, this shared ‘marginality’ is further problematised with reference to regional, ethnic, and cultural ‘differences’. The western monolithic construction of a ‘Third World’ that conveniently wipes out all the differences of culture, history, race and ethnicity is questioned and contested.”2 This line of argument informs the Indian feminist critics’ interventions who analyze the construction of female identity in creative writings of women and their relationship with the dominant political, social and cultural systems. In such analyses, these critics employ a two-fold strategy: they put to examination the universalist form of postcolonial theory, and interrupt to turn the postcolonial women into the western woman’s ‘other’.
The women’s movement of the 1960s was not the start of feminism. Rather, it was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action already possessing its classic books which had diagnosed the problem of women’s inequality in society and proposed solutions. “These books include Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which discusses male writers like Milton, Pope, and Rousseau; Olive Schreiner’s *Women and Labour* (1911); Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), which vividly portrays the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood; and Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949), which has an important section on the portrayal of women in the novels of D.H. Lawrence. Male contributions to this tradition of feminist writing include John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels.”

J.S. Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* proved a landmark in the history of feminism. Through this work, he came forward to support women’s equal right at work places, education and property.

The movement of Feminism asks why women have played a subordinate role to men in the human societies. It is concerned with the history of changes in the lives of women. According to the feminist theory, the subordinating role of women originated in the
primitive societies where women exchanged among father-dominated families through marriages.

This movement of Feminism was important “literary from the start, in the sense that it realised the significance of the images of women promulgated by the literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence.”

“The concern with ‘conditioning’ and ‘socialising’ underpins a crucial set of distinctions – that between the terms ‘feminist’, ‘female’ and ‘feminine’. As Toril Moi explains, the first is ‘a political position’, the second ‘a matter of biology’, and the third ‘a set of culturally defined characteristics’. Particularly in the distinction between the second and third of these lies much of the force of feminism.”

The representation of women in literature, then, was felt to be one of the most important forms of ‘socialisation’, since it provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted “acceptable versions of the ‘feminine’ and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations.”

In 1970s, “the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural ‘mind-set’ in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality.” Critical attentions were given to books by male writers in which influential
or typical images of women were constructed. Necessarily, the criticism which undertook this work was combative and polemical.

Then, the mood changed in the 1980s. Firstly, feminist criticism became much more eclectic, meaning that it began to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism—Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, and so on. Secondly, it switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female world and outlook, and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women’s writing by rewriting the history of the novel and of poetry in such a way “that neglected women writers were given new prominence.”

Feminist criticism has provided an opportunity to look at women in literature from women’s point of view. Mahasweta Devi among the one who raise the issues based on the pathetic and unbelievable condition of woman in Indian male dominated society. Her text shows that the exploiters of woman never consider her as mother or daughter or wife of someone. She has become the object of exploitation at the hands of male. Devi provides details of the struggle of woman to survive in this cruel world. She portrays women as victims of male sexual violence and get pregnant and are often sold for money. They are compelled to the life of prostitute, whores, bond-slave to earn their livelihood. Though Devi has
written about every minor details of woman’s life yet she doesn’t want to be branded a feminist writer.

   I never consider myself as a woman writer, as a feminist. Nothing. I am a writer. I am a writer and when I write, I write of such people who live much below the poverty lines.⁹

   When she writes about woman, she tells us the reason of their sufferings. “A woman in the poorer class, she suffers because of her class, she suffers because of her body.”¹⁰ Her stories reveal that woman always suffers whether she belongs to upper class or lower class.

   Her work reveals how she locates her women along with other marginalized dalits at the locus of utter alienation from the power centre. Deprivation, destitution, powerlessness that forms the core of her thematic concerns assumes an altogether different dimension when it comes to the female characters. “Colin Mac Cabe, in forward to ‘In Other Worlds’ comments on the articulation of gender in Mahasweta’s texts: “The force of Mahasweta Devi’s text resides in its grounding in the gendered subaltern’s body, in that female body which is never questioned and only exploited. The bodies of Jashoda and Dopdi figure forth the unutterable ugliness and cruelty which cooks in Third World Kitchen to produce the First World feast that we daily enjoy.”¹¹
The sensitivity and ironic intensity of Mahasweta’s idiom multiplies manifold when she documents the tensions and struggles in the lives of the gendered subaltern. Her ironic humour and her subversive barbs become particularly biting in her woman-centered narratives.

Mahasweta debunks and transgresses the narrow, apolitical, socio-personal grid to which the female protagonists are usually confined in traditional feminist literature/fiction. She abandons altogether the psycho-social narratives of introspection that dominate the middle class, urban women writers’ fiction to produce emancipatory texts of self-conscious rebellion where the ‘women question’ gets effectively contextualized/ embedded within the larger socio-economic forces operating alongside. Mahasweta addresses the gap in Indian feminism and dalit activism as neither of them have addressed to the concerns of the dalit woman who is placed at the locus of multiple victimhood due to caste discrimination and economic exploitation, patriarchy and sexual exploitation. Mahasweta does not treat gender, class, and race as analogous narratives; she rather takes them as interpenetrative ones. “The co-editors of ‘Women Writing in India’, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita note:

Throughout Mahasweta Devi’s varied fiction women’s subjugation is portrayed as linked to the oppressive of caste and class. But in the best of her writing she quite brilliantly,
and with resonance, explores the articulation of class, caste, and gender in the specific situations she depicts.

Her texts focus on the constructedness of ‘femaleness’ within situational discourse and on the contradictions with it. Such contradictions/paradoxes are evidence of community/class/ caste location being integral to a woman’s very self-definition.”

Locating her women at the intersection of ethnic, class, caste, regional identities, Mahasweta’s texts render the very category of “woman”, the paradigm of ‘resistance’, and the activity of ‘reading resistance’ in feminist literary writings, critical.

Her work **Outcast: Four Stories** covers four women characters- Dhouli, Shanichari, Josmina and Chinta. They are victims of the most severe kind of exploitation by modern society. The first female ‘Dhouli’ is a Dusad’s daughter. “She’s a dusad, an untouchable, did she expect a house and land?” Because of her caste, she cannot get the basic things to live. Devi introduces her as “a dusad’s daughter. A widow. An unfortunate woman. She had no father or brother;” her husband was a bonded labour and after his death, her condition becomes miserable. Not only poverty, but also social bondages start working on her after her husband’s death. “After becoming a widow, a randi, you were not supposed to look in a mirror. Not supposed to look at yourself. Not supposed to wear shellac bangles, a dot of sindoor on your forehead, anklets of cheap metal. She was attractive. But a pretty face was no use to a randi.
She couldn’t marry again, could she? Never again would the other girls call her to sing wedding songs like ‘sasural chale sita maiya or paint rangoli patterns of birds and flower on the walls of a bride’s home.” These social restrictions make Dhouli a living dead. Her father was also a bonded labourer who took loan for her wedding and ‘gouna’ but died without re-paying it. Her life with her husband was not good as “her husband was no good. He would beat her.” Her life with her husband and without her husband was and is horrible. Her condition becomes worse when Misrilal, a young Brahman enters her life. He is crazy for Dhouli but firstly Dhouli does not accept his love for her and calls it a game, “you’ll play your games and push off, but what will happen to me? Look what happened to Jhalo! And Shanchari” these illustrations suggest the series of exploitation, women meet at the hands of men. Dhouli also has become the victim of high caste people. Misrilal and Dhouli get into the affair and she becomes pregnant. Misrilal leaves her alone with his child in her womb. But “it’s always the fault of the woman. For not considering a Brahman’s honour, she’s even more to blame.” Even the woman of upper caste has the same thinking about women. “The men of our family have planted their seed in so many dusad and ganju girls.” The same pain Dhouli is suffering and “her kinsfolk rejected her because she had fallen in love. She had kept aloof from the men of her community.” Dhouli faces rejection from upper caste and her lover, Misrilal. He gets married and shifts to Dhanbad with his bride. Now, Dhouli
surrenders to her fate, defeated and shattered, hopeless and ruthless. She has become a prostitute for money and food. Her words “never come empty-handed”, and whoever is ready to pay can come,”21 shows that the love, emotions all are lost and now she lives only for hunger and to survive. That’s why, we can not see the same love in the eyes of Dhouli in the last meeting with Misrilal. Misrilal shows his rejection to Dhouli to be a whore but Dhouli replied him “you left after you’d had your fun. Your elder brother tried to kill us by denying us food. I had to save your son and myself”22 all the events project that the crime is somewhere created by the society. “The collective strength of that society was far more powerful than an individual’s strength. And those who had forced her to be a whore were the ones who controlled society.”23

The story raises post-modern issues related to India. The caste- discrimination, exploitation of poor and low caste by rich and upper caste people, poverty hunger and prostitution. Hanumanji’s words, “Dhouli can not practice prostitution in this village. She can go to some town, to Ranchi and do her whoring there.”24 It shows the “direct repression, which is the product of societal power structure interlinked with the hegemony of a dominant class.”25

Not only Dhouli, but the next heroine also suffers terribly like Dhouli. Shanichari is an Oraon girl from Rata. Her story is told against the background of the Adijati Raksha Movement. She is used only as an instrument for several hungry sexual beasts. When
she was sixteen, she enjoyed her life with her grandmother and became her parents’ right hand. Her story is soon connected with Adijati Raksha movement. It is connected with police, struggle, violence and adivasis. “The BMP, CRP and BSF are combing the entire area and have unleashed a reign of terror. They are killing, torturing, plundering, destroying the crops.”26 The BMP had burnt down their huts along with saris.”27 They took their young girls into the forest and raped them. In the fight, Shanichari lost her husband and became one of their victims. “The forest provided enough roots and tubers for them to survive on. But the forest could not provide them cloth to hide their shame.”28 In such circumstances, Gohuman Bibi appears as a ‘veritable goddess’ who offers them new clothes and a job in the brick kilns in Kolkatta. There, the owner Rahmat inspect all the girls thoroughly and give them the list of instructions. But Shanichari doesn’t accept his illegal conditions and she protest, “We won’t work here. Send us back.”29 Rahmat suppresses her protest in his cruel way. He has used her to make others happy. Mahasweta’s words express “When you’re too tired to keep your eyes open, the head mastaan will call out your name in the daily auction. Today you go to him, tomorrow the driver, the day after the munshi.”30 Continuous suffering at the hands of men just because of a body’s hunger. “The malik’s friends arrive in hordes from Kolkata. They force liquor down your throat till you pass out. Pull off your clothes. What happens next only your body knows.”31 All other companions of Shanichari- Joshmina, Lugri,
Jhini and Phulmani also faced such shameful situations. “Rahmat would dress Shanichari in good clothes and nice jewellery, rub fragrant oil in her hair- and then tear into her ruthlessly.”

Very soon she is replaced by other girl and she became reja. She became pregnant and returned to her people. “But how can you return home with a diku’s child in your womb?” “All the other girls had also been abused but she was the only one returning with a child in her womb.” This marginalization of Shanichari by the marginal is presented by Mahasweta Devi through a dialogue between the brother of her murdered lover, Chand Tirkey and the naiga, the village head-priest. “We should think about this as a community. There should be more Shanicharis in the future. Should we cast out our own women? Will that benefit our society?”

His words show the real problem of human trafficking in India. Shanichari is not the only victim but there are innumerable girls who never returned from such places. Like Shanichari, Fatima Bibi became pregnant while she was only 14 and her husband left her. She started working as a domestic servant in a flat, where the owner raped her when nobody was there, not once but repeatedly.

A similar incident takes place with Josmina, the heroine of ‘The Fairytale of Rajabasha’. Josmina is the wife of Sarjom Purti. Their’s a true love story of marriage and happy living, but as the rain stopped, the life of starvation started. With dry land, “a snake slithered into Sarijom’s impoverished yet peaceful home through the crack caused by hunger. The snake was Nandlal Shahu” He
was poisonous and gave bites without warning to their unwitting victims.

He sells girls to make money and is always in search of a prey. He shows dreams of good jobs, higher wages, and good food to poor people. “An excellent job. Big farmers. Plenty to eat. Work for a short period. Work for a short period. The two of you will get, say, about four hundred a month. Enough clothes. Work for a year and at the end of it- baap-re-baap! You’ll come back with almost five thousand bucks!”37 Mahasweta Devi projects the character of Nandlal Sahu in these words: “He had two fine houses in the districts of Monoharpur and Raikera. And two wives in those two houses. Now, his first wife, who lived in Rajabasha, was pestering him for a pucca brick house.”38 To fulfill this desire of his first wife, Nandlal sold Josmina and Sarjom. Throughout the story, Mahasweta suggests that these tribals are nothing but only ‘maal’, ‘goods’, ‘commodities’. ‘Send the maal to Punjab’, “To Niranjan she was just fresh meat; dark, jungle flesh which he had paid for.”39 But Sarjom and Josmina are in the dreams of good job and good food and “Nandlal sold them both for four hundred rupees.”40 He was shocked- “your father will work! Your grandfather will work! I brought you and your wife from Nandlal for four hundred bucks.”41 They are scared and wanted to escape from the hell but unfortunately are in the jaws of a wild beast. Soon, Josmina is sexually exploited by the malik- “A few days later, the Malik came to the hut and stripped. Josmina naked. Baby Masidas watched in
fear as his mother was abused. Arrey, this hut is here just for this-
ha ha ha. We have an efficient system.”

She suffers everyday and turns into a stone. “Niranjan Singh came the next day and the next. Gradually, Josmina turned into a ghost- ridden presence.”

She works hard in the fields and the courtyard and after all field work, “at tiffin time, she would surrender her body to Niranjan and work in the fields again.”

Sarjom and Josmina have left the hope of escape from there. But Josmina again tries for her husband’s freedom and asks Niranjan to leave him on her behalf. But Sarjom never accepts such sacrifice. They try to escape and “left behind four months due with Niranjan.”

But there is no escape from such slavery. They are caught by another beast, named Karnal Singh and again “the same work-routine, the same everything. This time they were not locked up at night and Karnal Singh took Josmina away at nine every evening.”

Again they run away after a month and are again caught by another wild beast. Sukhram, Niranjan, Karnal Singh, Pritam Singh, Gyan Singh and Sardar Dileep Singh all again and again come forward to shatter, to break the dreams of Sarjom and Josmina. “How exhausting and repetitive parts of their life story all this running away is!”

when they reach their village after a long slavery, “Josmina realizes that she is carrying the child of the Punjabi man who has raped her.”

She knows that her own community will never accept and tolerate this and possibly her husband would do penance, she commits suicide by drowning herself in the Koyena river. To save her husband, she sacrifices her
life, “Oh Koyena, please ask Kolhan not to make Sarjom pay a penance. He doesn’t have money.” The story of Sarjom and Josmina ends with a sad note but “the fairytale of Rajabasha did not end”. Such stories of exploitation of ‘others’ shows that the affluent society has used not only their resources, their labours but their body too.

Next story in the book depicts the same exploitation of Chinta, a widow. She is “short, fair, wearing silver bangles and a tattooed necklace.” She is a young widow who works as a maid in houses. She tells her story to Mahasweta Devi, “when I was widowed, I had just the one boy, Gopal. I had four bighas of land, Ma. plus two rooms, a couple of goats and a cow. But Gopal was just an infant, how could he take over the land and start farming? I pleaded with the other villagers. Some of my in-laws said, “you’re a young widow. Give us custody of your land.” I didn’t agree. They turned against me. It was a terrible time, Ma. I was so young then- men began to prowl around my house after dark. I would hold on to Gopal, bar the door and call god’s name. A terrible time!” Devi narrates her terrible suffering. She gets eight rupees at the end of the month; even then, she patiently suffers and fights hard times. As Mahasweta Devi depicts the indifference of modern people who never sympathise with sufferings of poor people. “Fully aware of how helpless she was, the mistress of the house where she worked had vociferously bargained for a salary of eight rupees a month when the going rate was twelve. But she was always as patient and
uncomplaining as a beast of burden.” She is silent even over the lustful eyes of paanwala who “not drunk, fully in his senses- tried to clasp her in his arms. In the process, tearing her sari. He laughed and began to sing out loud.”

Everyone is ready to suppress, exploit and enjoy other’s helplessness. Not only men, women also enjoy such exploitation of the poor. As Devi portrays “the landlady’s pet crow, sporting an ornamental nose-ring, snatched a biscuit from the little girl’s grasp. Even the crow knew that the child was helpless and had a rope tied to her waist.” Devi makes it clear that these are the people who know her suffering but never sympathize. “She had had to pawn her silver bangles for ten rupees. I also realized that her fellow mates were keen to lend her a little money in exchange for her utensils. They said, “she has some fine bell-metal bowls and glasses. It’s unlikely that she’ll ever be able to claim them back.”

Mahasweta ruminates, “Poor people like us are killed off in many ways.” After her husband’s death, she fights against her in-laws. Then, a new man named Utsab enters her life. A handsome Utsab makes many promises to her and tries to win her through her child, Gopal. “Bought him sweets, was really kind to him. Chinta’s heart began to soften.” She tells Devi that Utsab wanted to marry her, took her to Calcutta. She took all her metal utensils with her but then nothing new happened in the woman’s story. “He ruined me and then left me. Didn’t marry me, didn’t give me any ornaments. He would beat me up, take all my money and after giving me these
two daughters, he absconded.”58 She confesses several times that she became a sinner, she is a sinner. She cannot go back to her village. She needs money for penance. “Chinta had to now spend two hundred rupees as penance for having sinned. She had to feast the people of her village on rice and pithey. She also had to forsake her two girls.”59 But there is no guarantee that after all these ordeals; she will be accepted by her community. With only wages of eight rupees in a month, how can she afford to live with three small children? She cannot manage her life. She needs more money to organize the penance rites. Two men come to her. They are her late husband’s uncle and his son. She tries to serve them paan and tea. The paanwala always has lustful eyes on Chinta and paanwala also has money. “If Chinta had been smart enough and not so scared of sinning, she could have benefited from flirting with him.”60 But she doesn’t do that. She sells her daughters for ten and eight rupees each. After that, Chinta comes to meet and say goodbye to Mahasweta Devi, “Her eyes slowly filled with tears. She sniffled, then said, “Gariber bhagoban nai go, Ma. There’s no God for the poor.”61 Her words touch the heart of not only Devi but that of every other reader.

These four stories show the male-domination over woman and male sexual violence against women. These four women clearly present that male violence against women is easily occurred because of the domination of men over women in the Indian society. The Delhi gang rape case is the best example of the
exploitation of the female. The incident took place on 16 December 2012 in New Delhi (capital city of India) when a 23 year old woman was brutally beaten and gang raped in a private bus. The girl died of her injuries thirteen days after fighting with death. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated, “Violence against women must never be accepted, never excused, never tolerated. Every girl and women has the right to be respected, valued and protected.” But does this really happen? Mahasweta Devi shows that in every era, every class and caste, woman suffers and suffers because of her body.

The same suffering is the fate of another poor girl named Doulati, whom Mahasweta Devi portrays with extreme pain. ‘Doulati the Bountiful’ is the story of Her *Imaginary Maps* which narrates the bonded labour system in the form of highest degree of exploitation. The story is set in the district of Palamau, Bihar, where small communities are in the grip of bonded slavery. Doulati is a Nagesia, a small community in Bihar which lives in the web of slavery. She becomes the victim of her father’s slavery. Misraji is a Brahman who shows some sympathy towards tribals. His words influence ‘Others’ – “There’s no fault in the earth as seat. The earth is everyone’s mother. Our birth and our life are on this soil.” But he is a hypocrite. “I really dislike bonded labor. I am compassionate, most compassionate. My forefathers left Kamiyas. I have freed them.” By his words, he tries to influence Crook Nagesia. But when he says that he’ll marry his daughter Doulati and repay the loan he has taken, it is the height of hypocrisy. The
tribals always become victims of outsiders and upper caste’s hypocrisy and artificiality. Gradually, they are caught in the web of bonded labour system. And “Paramanada took away Crook’s fourteen year old daughter Doulati one day. Crook protested greatly.” But he, as a helpless father, can’t do anything. It is unbelievable for everyone. “Everyone shock their heads repeatedly. No, no one had ever heard such a thing. There is some other thing here, some profound conspiracy of the Master society.” Yes, big conspiracy which will soon change the life of a free girl into that of a bonded prostitute. Everyone knows the system is illegal but is practiced in broad daylight and offers good return to the owners. When Doulati is with Paramanada, she enjoys good food which her father, mother had never eaten. She has beautiful dreams in her little eyes but she remembers her place and compares the place of brick walls and clay tiles with her own place where one can see only trees and sky. The story depicts that the very next moment she is sold by Paramanada to Mr. Babu Latia and the deal takes place before her own eyes but she doesn’t understand. She gets two new saris and many other things for make-up and rice and vegetables and yoghurt. Everything is a dream for her. “Doulati thought that what was happening was all a dream. Rice is something to be eaten on feast day.” But her dreams do not last long, they are shattered when Rampiyari, Paramanada’s assistant takes her to the room where Latiaji rapes her. “Doulati tried to shout, fear choked her voice. The man pulled her up roughly. Then pulled off her sari.”
Her voice cracked out in terrible pain. She now comes out from her dreams and she gets into the reality of her life that she is in the whorehouse of Rampiyari. She is sold to Latia who is a contractor, “Latia threw a handful of banknotes at Paramanada. He said, Tell Rampiyari, this girl is now mine.” So, where her father’s slavery ends, Doulati’s starts. Rampiyari is the witness of Paramanada’s hypocrisy and business. She feels that not only Doulati but many other girls like her are caught in his web only by this way of marriage. “This animal says marriage, he’ll marry a Dusad, Dhobi, Chamar, Parhayia girl? Brahmans? Who burn harijans? They catch you to make you a kamiya…wrap up. I’ll hold you. They catch you to make you a Kamiya…now they’ll eat the fruit of your work….why are you crying? Don’t cry. They caught me one day, too…come, hold me, walk. Later I’ll teach you more. You won’t be able to go out, you see. This is called bonded labour.” She has seen many girls and all are whores like her. Their lives are slightly different from others but all have the same pain and marks of bonded labour system. No one becomes bonded labour by choice but out of necessity.

Mahasweta Devi introduces many bandhua-randis at Misra’s brothel. One by one, all are similarly trapped here. Rampiyari, Somni, Jhalo, each one with their distinct past come here. Like Somni, she tells Doulati that she is married and left her husband and son at home. Doulati was shocked that even a married woman
is also in their grip. The conversation between Somni and Doulati makes it clear:

“They brought me from Barha village:

Did they say they would marry you?

Why should they? I was already married.

Yes, yes. And I have my man at home.

How did you come?

Was there another way? My man took two hundred rupees from him, to get land. Hoo, in a year it became four thousand rupees. Then the god said to my man, you won’t be able to repay, you are a Kamiya. Send your wife. Your debt will be repaid in five years, your wife will return home with money in hand. I kept my son with my husband and came here.”71 But after coming to brothel she has three sons from Latia. And all have become beggars. Not only Somni, Reoti has almost the same story and a son from Latia. “And it was Latia’s truck that hit him and crippled him. As a cripple he gets more begging.”72 Kalawati died in the brothel due to her physical weakness; Reoti and Gohumani are burned by the clients’ cigarette butts. Such is the torture that these girls suffer after becoming bonded prostitutes. The burden of slavery for ever makes them dull and weak. There is no hope of freedom among them. “If a kamiya woman becomes a whore the boss makes a lot of profit. No clothing, no cosmetics, no medicine. You have to borrow for
everything and boss adds all the loans to the first loan. No whore can repay that debt in her lifetime.” 73 So, it is the loan that is always unpaid.

The story presents that the boss never thinks about a woman as someone’s daughter, wife or mother. She bears the unbearable torture and exploitation but can not leave the place. “The boss can grab our women’s honor twice a day, virgin or wife or mother, he doesn’t give a damn. Their children must be borne. And here they’ve brought Kamiya women and made them whores.” 74 Among few recent cases, a woman named Soma tells her story. She tells that she belongs to Nepal and at the age of eleven, she and one of her cousins were sold and brought to a brothel in Sonagachi, the biggest red light area of Kolkata. “She initially resisted when she was locked in a room with a client and suffered heavy thrashing. She tells “I was afraid of the tall, elderly men I was very small then. Now I don’t fear clients. I have gotten used to.” 75 Almost the same story but Doulati didn’t know that she was sold, not even her father. This happened most of the time. Doulati was in her dreams and Paramanada was in the disguise of her groom. But now Doulati knows that she is a bonded slave and can never find release from the web. But the torture, physical exploitation, mental suppression again and again, forces her to ask for freedom. “Doulati lay down near Paramanada’s feet. God! Your three hundred rupees have come through five times. Set me free then? Paramanada had laughed. He had said, yes yes, you’ve seen the principal. But
interest? I bought you clothes, those fifty-two rupees? My body is compassionate, your money has now increased by interest to two and a half thousand. And all my accounts are written down. When it’s repaid in principal and interest, you will be freed.” His words make the clear picture that there is no place for ‘freedom’. Now, everything is dead inside her and she serves and serves Latia as a lifeless creature. But a day comes when Latia loses his interest in Doulati and asks for another one. “But one morning naked Latia started screaming. Rampiyari! Hey Rampiyari! Call Mishir. Ask him to show me a new harijan girl. I am not having fun in Doulati.” “Fun”, just for fun, they have spoiled the life of so many daughters, wives and mothers. What an irony? How can a human destroy the life of another human only for fun? But it had happened and it is still happening in our big, modern, civilized cities of educated and sophisticated people. Doulati is the prey for Paramananda Mishir, Latia and then Singhji, another contractor who is not like Latia but soon changes come and Paramananda Mishir dies. His son, Baijnath Mishir is a bigger devil than his father. He believes “the boss remains a boss and the servant stays a servant.” He also believes that his father was fool, the person who made the lives of thousands of girls’ hell by his own hypocrisy, diplomacy and betrayal, was he really a fool? If it is so, then it must be true that Baijnath is really a monster, huge monster. He orders Rampiyari “the feeding money will go down more, the number of clients will go up more. Body! Kamiya woman’s body! If the body dries up she’ll depart. Famine’s
on the way, is there any shortage of harijan kamiya women?” He tells of his cruelty in his own words “Somni has become a beggar in ten years by father’s rules. By my rule Doulati will become a beggar in five years.”

Devi shows that the low caste people are merely a commodity for upper caste system. They never care for them as human beings. They never feel their sorrow, pain and sufferings. The same has happened with Doulati. Singh’s departure and Paramananda Mishra’s sudden death changes the life of Doulati. Paramananda’s property is inherited by his son and he is a better economist. He believes that it is more profitable to reduce their rates and take more customers than to have fewer customers paying more money. So “the number of clients goes up, up and up in Doulati’s room. Doulati starts drying up fast....Baijnath tries to raise the interest money as fast as possible.” Doulati’s health deteriorates fast. A day comes when nobody enters Doulati’s room. The reason is “red swelling all over the place. I can’t take clients. Fiery hot inside the passage” and cough. All these sufferings make her free from the whorehouse and she reaches hospital. The doctor is amazed that she has come from Madhpura to Tohri. For the doctor, it is shocking that she is only twenty-seven year old and has become a skeleton. The doctor tells her that she can not get proper treatment here and needs to go to Mandar. She starts her journey to Mandar, “walking on, walking on! Dragging her feet, Doulati comes to the front of a large hut. A very big hut, close to Tohri. Doulati felt as she stepped
in the front yard that it was very carefully clay-washed. And as she
groped to the middle of the yard, Doulati realized that she would
no longer get to Seora. Pain is climbing her entire chest, upward,
upward. Doulati lay down. The pain became cough, the cough
became blood, Doulati closed her eyes."83 Her death makes her a
bird free from bonded slavery. No one can release her from this
slavery except death. Her death symbolizes freedom.

Through this story of Doulati, Mahasweta Devi raises not only
the issue of bonded labour system on a big canvas but the
exploitation of woman only for man’s lust. Devi depicts that each
and every woman in Misra’s brothel has a different story of her
journey but all of them have reached the same destination and
almost same end. Somni, Kalawati, Gohumani, Jhalo and Doulati all
are physically exploited by high caste society just for ‘fun’ and
‘money’ that shows the glory of Indian woman as depicted in
scriptures is gone. Doulati’s death shows that our India is diseased
by bonded slavery. There are lots of laws to abolish this system but,
as always, these laws are only on papers, they are never applied in
practice.

Another story ‘Breast Giver’ in **Breast Stories** depicts the role
of mother in Indian society. It depicts a working woman who works
for her family and earn their livelihood. She actually refused a
subordinate role for her family. At the end, her job has become a
curse for her. The story has a character with the mythical name,
Jasoda, Lord Krishna’s mother. She starts her story with the straightforward sentence which portrays every aspect of her life, “Jasoda doesn’t remember if her aunt was kind or unkind. It is as if she were Kangalicharan’s wife from birth, the mother of 20 children, living or dead, counted on her fingers.”84 The story tells that Jasoda was an orphan and was raised by her aunt. She has number of children but doesn’t have close bond with any one of them. She always had a child in her womb. “Motherhood was always her way of living and keeping alive her world of countless beings. Jasoda was a mother by profession, profession as mother.”85 She makes motherhood a way of living. She earns by her motherhood only. She produces children so that she can serve as a wet nurse for those young women who never want to sacrifice their figures for motherhood. In this story, Devi shows that woman has become machine to produce children only. Her husband has lost a leg in a quarrel. When he was in the hospital, Nabin was the person who helped him but Kangali’s suspicious mind set says, “What? When I wasn’t there, you were getting it off with Nabin? Jasoda then grabbed Kangali’s suspicious head between the two hemispheres of the globe and said, Two maidservants from the big house slept here everybody to guard me. Would I look at Nabin? Am I not your faithful wife?”86 Even after a great devotion to her husband, her purity and her loyalty is under suspicion. It’s natural in India, where ‘Sita mata’ was not spared and had to prove her purity. So, Jasoda is the very common Indian woman.
Mahasweta Devi portrays her picture only as a mother in the story but she portrays men’s lustful eyes even on mother also. Nabin’s thinks of Jasoda only as, “the heavy-breasted, languid- hipped body of Jasoda floats in his mind’s eye.” It shows the mentality of men towards women whether she is a wife or daughter or mother of someone. In Indian culture, mother has a significant place. She is a goddess, a divine who tries to save her children from evil. But men’s eye search only one thing in women—her body. Devi is true that woman suffers only because of her body.

Jasoda, who is the mother of 20 children, plays the role of mother to her husband also. As Mahasweta Devi tells that the magical soil of India turns a wife into a mother even for her husband. “Her mother love wells up for Kangali as much as for the children. She wants to become the earth and feed her crippled husband and helpless children with a fulsome harvest.” “Such is the power of the Indian soil that all women turn into mothers here and all men remain immersed in the spirit of holy childhood. Each man is the Holy child and each woman the Divine Mother.”

Indian people like to see their women in the role of Sati-Savitri and Sita. Jasoda perform the role of Mother Earth very perfectly. For her husband and children’s sake, she takes the job of wet nurse. Her motherhood, motherly feelings can be seen in this profession. “Does it hurt a tree to bear fruit?” , her words present her motherly affection. Suddenly, her value as mother increases. “Jasoda’s place in the house is now above the Mother Cows.” People tell Kangali
that “your woman is the mother of the world.” Not only this, Nabin who had lustful eye on Jasoda, also calls her mother. “Whenever he saw Jasoda he called out Mother! Mother! Dear Mother! Faith in the greatness of the Lionseated was rekindled in the area and in the air of the neighbourhood blew the electrifying influence of goddess-glory.” “Everyone’s devotion to Jasoda became so strong that at weddings, showers, naming and sacred threading they invited her and gave her the position of chief fruitful woman.” She has become the goddess, reincarnation of mythical Yasoda, mother of Lord Krishna. “Her person and her status, both are commodified in this exchange of mothering for a living.” But her usefulness ends with the end of her commercial utility. “Now is the downward time for Jasoda the milk-filled faithful wife who was the object of the reverence of the local houses devoted to the Holy Mother.” Everyone’s attitude towards her has changed suddenly. Basini said to Jasoda, “You’ll wash your own dishes. Are you my master, that I’ll wash your dishes. You are the master’s servant as much as I am.” The eldest daughter-in-law said to Jasoda, “Look here, Brahman-sister! I didn’t call you, you begged to stay, don’t break the peace.” Jasoda realised that she had lost her place as a divine mother. Her health also degenerates and she is unable to understand why this has happened to her. Nobody is there to talk, to listen her suffering, her emotions but the son of eldest daughter-in-law asks about her. He tells that caste really matters not humanity, “Look here! She’s a Brahman’s daughter, if anything
happens to her, it’ll be a sin for us.”

So, just because of her caste, she is asked for food and medicine. A doctor and hospital all are because of her caste, not by love, by care towards a human. The doctor has confirmed it as a “cancer of the mammary gland.” But again, it can be noticed that the caste system is so strong that no one can believe that such dangerous diseases can do any harm to upper caste people, when the eldest son says, “Only the lower classes get smallpox. I don’t need to be vaccinated. An upper-caste family, respectful of gods and Brahmans, does not contract that disease.”

So, they don’t send Jasoda to a hospital. Not only this, Jasoda’s health makes everybody worried and they now want to get rid of Jasoda. So, he called her sons and tries to recall them that she is their mother, “It’s your mother, she fed you so long and now she is about to die! Take her with you! She has everyone and she should die in a Kayastha household?” Suddenly, they become lower than the Brahman and again forget humanity just because “if Brahman-sister had died in our house, we would have had to perform the penance-ritual.” And constantly, her health gets worst and she feels extreme pain in her last moments: “pain, tremendous pain, the cancer is spreading at the expense of the human host. Gradually Jasoda’s left breast bursts and becomes like the crater of a volcano.” And one night she understands that her moment of death has come and she thinks, “after all, she had suckled the world, could she then die alone?” She dies and is cremated by an untouchable. Here, death knows no bound and bondage of caste.
Here, Devi depicts that the lady who becomes professional mother of almost 30 children, at the time of her death, no one is there to put a drop of water in her mouth.

This story portrays two kinds of women - one is Jasoda who, for the sake of her husband and children accept the role of professional mother and on the other, are the daughters-in-law in Haldar’s house, can not sacrifice their figure for their newborn babies. “The wives are happy. They can keep their figures. They can wear blouses and bras of European cut. After keeping the fast of Shiva’s night by watching all-night picture shows they are no longer obliged to breast freed their babies.”105 They are hypocrites.

Another protagonist, Chandidasi Gangadasi also faces the same situations in ‘Bayen’ in the work entitled Five Plays. She is a grave-tender by profession. She is a victim of superstitions, ignorance and gender discrimination. She is brave and courageous but at the same time, she is kind-hearted and caring mother. “Mahasweta touches the larger space of the social forces that separate mother and son in a male dominated system.”106 The opening parts of ‘Bayen’ shows the deep intensive pain of a mother when she expresses her emotions to the dog, Jhumra. Chandidasi talks and tells the dog about her happy days, “when I hadn’t become a Bayen, I had everybody. I used to rock him like this, suckle him, all that milk, a real flood, the milk from the breast spilt on the floor.”107 She told her pain to her husband also, “when I
guard the graves through the night, my breasts bursting with milkache for my Bhagirath back home, all by himself. I can’t, can’t stay away from him.”

But her pain and sufferings never melts anyone’s heart, not even her husband’s. Malindar, Chandidasi’s husband narrates the story of her journey to be a bayen. He tells to his son, Bhagirath, “your mother was a descendant of Kalu Dome. Her name was Chandidasi Gangadasi, she used to bury children.”

He tells the story of Kalu Dome who asked for his community and got all the cremation grounds of the world. This story has changed the life of Chandidasi and is supposed to be a Bayen who dig up the graves and raise the dead babies, kiss them, suckle the dead children. But as a mother, she cannot continue her job because she feels hurt in burying the little dead bodies. She feels love for every child, because of her own child. But again the place and value of a mother is lost and the social system has separated a mother from her son. “She is awarded the severest of the penalties—she is banished from human world to the condemned world of the supernatural.”

But no one can separate her motherly sensitivity from her heart. When she meets to her son after a long time, she still has motherly care, love and affection for him. She blames her husband and says, “The Gangaputta’s to blame. Father of a son, a government servant, a permanent worker at the morgue and you can’t keep an eye on your son! The boy comes here in the evenings, stand there. What if a snake bites him? Or if an evil wind’s blowing? If anything happen to him, whose loss will it be?”

Her love for
her son is still there and only her son understands it. At the end, she
dies and saves the lives of the people of the community that had
ruined her life. Her son grieves at her death saying “My mother, the
late Chandidasi Gangadasi, sir. Not a bayen. She was never a
Bayen, my mother.”

Mahasweta Devi highlights the static social
system which ruin the life of a mother; that separates a mother and
a son.

Devi portrays the height and inhumanity of superstition that
makes a mother suffered. Mahasweta presents the ways of
controlling women especially in low caste Dom community. In the
male-dominated system, a woman becomes the victim of social
norms and her independence, self-respect and pride is crushed by
the society. So, Mahasweta Devi through “Bayen’ reveals the
vulnerability of the tender maternal sentiments in the face of
dogmatic, superstitiousness of male-dominated social system.”

In the work of Mahasweta Devi, the sphere of mother is
closely knitted with love, care, sufferings, exploitation and death of
her emotions, son or herself. Jasoda, Chandidasi were full of love
for their family but their end is miserable. The same mother is
Sujata of Mother of 1084. She is an urban, middle class woman
without the sufferings of poverty but she also suffers due to the
death of her naxalite revolutionary son. After the tragic death of her
son, she “discovers in her dead son an articulation of her identity
which she is never able to achieve under the oppressive hypocrite

bourgeois social system. She lives under.” Mahasweta Devi depicts different colours of woman but the colour of motherhood is the most powerful and sparkling one. As it is depicted in the stories of two mothers in which mother loses her value and dies in the end but her death invokes readers to rediscover the place of mother in the Indian society. These stories make the reader think and re-think about the Indian social system. Devi portrays the suffered and exploited mother in the beginning but in the end, her death makes a mother aware not to be suffered and exploited.

Her next piece of work is ‘Behind the Bodice: Choli ke Pichhe’. The story portrays a woman who is gang-raped in police custody and chooses prostitution as a profession. The story opens with a journalistic piece, “What is there’ was the national problem that year. When it became a national issue, the other fuck-ups of that time e.g. crop failure- earthquake, clashes between so called terrorists and state power and therefore killings, the beheading of a young man and woman in Haryana for the crime of marrying out of caste, the unreasonable demands of Medha Patkar and others around the Narmada dam, hundreds of rape-murder-lockup torture etc. non-issues which by natural law arose but failed to attain highlighting in the newspapers- all this remained non-issues. Much more important than this was Choli ke Pichhe-behind the bodice.” It highlights the contemporary issues of national importance. The characters, Upin and Shital and Gangor are centralized with the theme of beauty and reality. “Upin is an
itinherent ace-photographer, Shital a famous Himalaya-climber.”

They are husband and wife. Gangor introduces in the story with the discourse of Shital and Ujan “whose photos are these? - ‘A high-breasted rural woman sits slack with her breast shoved into an infant’s mouth. The breast is covered with the end of her cloth. The same girl is walking with many girls carrying water on her head. Breasts over-flowing like full pitchers.

Whose photo, Ujan?

Uajn says, Gangor.”

She works at Jharoa as bonded labour. “Gangor’s crowd came to Jharoa looking for work. They’ll work on a piece-wage basis in the kilns for light bricks and tiles.” Upin takes the snaps and Gangor asks for money. As a photographer, he respects beautiful things like Gangor. She captures his thinking and his imagination, “Gangor enters Upin’s head. No, those pictures are not here. Gangor at night, roasting doughballs on a dried cowdung fire, bent slightly forward under the dirty red cloth the cleavage of her Konark chest resplendent.” He compares her breast with the cave paintings of Ajanta. Whenever Upin takes her photo she asks for money, “two rupees per picture.” Soon Mahasweta’s story visualizes the whole picture of exploitation- “Gangor was weeping and keening, with her cloth in her mouth….tell the Camera- Sir, why not take me away? A cloth to wear… a bite to eat…a place to sleep for mother and child…what to do sir…no field, no land, living
is very hard… pots and pans…stone and knife…cleaning rooms…laundry…I’ll do anything Sir…”

Gangor’s words clear her terrible situation. She has no food, no cloth, and no land nothing but still life is there. She works hard for her child but her motherhood is also in danger because the contractors are not good people. And it is proved when Upin is failed to find her even at her own place. No one is ready to tell anything about her and Upin thinks that something wrong has happened with her- “Suddenly a message flashes through Upin’s brain. Upin realizes the boy must be Gangor’s. And somewhere a terrible conspiracy is at work. That’s why, the people are stony silent.”

Soon he comes to know from the caretaker informs Upin that Gangor has committed a sin- “Women have to be careful in Shiva’s world. You’re punished if you don’t understand this. The police came here because of the girl so many times….so many times…when the girl doesn’t understand the police are men too, they will craze if you tease them.”

He furthur says “you’ll see her in the market after dark” and fully drunk. Upin realizes that he should save her. “His sense of emergency takes him to the chullu- stand, where it smells of curried tripes, of the strong country liquor.”

He finds Gangor when ‘Choli ke Pichhe starts playing. Both look at each other and she takes him as her client- “you snapped many many times my chest, sir. But I knew your plan. Otherwise would you have given so much cash?”

Unbelievable for Upin that she has become a whore, selling her body for money. “Gangor takes off her choli and throws
it at Upin. Look, look, look, straw-chaff, rags-look what’s there.”

The scars of gang-rape can be seen easily by Upin- “Two dry scars, wrinkled skin, quite flat. The two raging volcanic craters spew liquid lava at Upin- gang rape...biting and tearing gang rape...police...a court case...again a gang rape in the lock up.”

Such stories were not as common in India as it is today in India. As a matter of fact, rape becomes most common crime against woman. It has become the national problem of India. According to 2012 statistics, New Delhi has the highest number of rape-reports. The days are gone when women came here from abroad and stayed in Delhi just because of security reasons and felt safe there but now rape cases in India have doubled between 1990 and 2008. In March 2013, a Swiss couple who was cycling from Orcha to Agra was physically assaulted by eight locals and the woman of thirty-nine year old was gang-raped in front of her husband at a village in Datia district. In 2012, Delhi gang-rape case shook the roots of Indian culture and society. It involved rape and murder of 23 year old female. It shows the cruelty knows no limits. No foreign woman or an upper caste woman is safe in India, so how can a dalit be. "If you are a poor woman who is raped, you cannot even imagine a life where there will be justice. If you are a poor woman and a dalit, then the chances of justice are even slimmer.”

There are many cases of dalit girls:
1. "Six year old dalit girl was raped for 3 hours by at least seven men in Dabra, Hisar, Haryana," her father committed suicide after the incident.

2. "Dalit woman gangraped in Cuttuck, Odisha. She was twenty eight year old and found in a critical condition." 

3. "A pregnant dalit woman was gang-raped by three men. She was only twenty two year old." 

4. "Sixteen year old dalit girl was abducted, raped and forced to eat some poisonous pesticide by an upper caste man and dumped outside her house." 

5. "A twenty-two year old dalit woman was raped in Hadadad village of Bhavnagar, Gujrat."

We can not imagine such worst situations. There are thousands of cases which tell that mostly male thinks of woman only as an object or a body to be used, nothing more than that. There are number of cases in which woman never takes step to report or to verify the culprits because of the fear of society. But Mahasweta Devi's woman character Dopdi shows the courage, the power that every woman should have against crime. She stands as Kali or Durga. She starts a battle against men, against crime.

Devi's work 'Draupadi' narrates the story of Dopdi who lives with her husband Dulna. Her name is actually "Draupadi Mejhen."
Born the year her mother threshed rice at Surja Sahu's at Bakuli. Surja Sahu's wife gave her the name."\textsuperscript{135} Now Dopdi is with her husband "Dulna and Dopdi worked at harvests, rotating between Birbhum, Burdwan, Murshidabad and Bankura."\textsuperscript{136} But after an incident, their life has changed. Devi here gives an account of naxalite movement and after that the story revolves round the naxalite movement. "In 1971, in the famous Operation Bakuli, when three villages were cordoned off and machine gunned, they too lay on the ground, faking dead. In fact, they were the main culprits. Murdering Surja Sahu and his son, occupying upper caste wells and tubewells during the drought, not surrendering those three young men to the police."\textsuperscript{137} Through these words, Mahasweta Devi presents the different aspects of Indian society. It tells of landlord and peasant relationship, caste-discrimination and exploitation of low caste and poor people. Here caste overtakes humanity. It also informs of active hands of Dulna and Dopdi in the killing of a few atrocious landlords and because of it, "Dulna and Dopdi went underground for a long time."

Through the story, Devi says that Indian constitution provides equal rights to everyone. But in India, it is only on papers. The Special Forces are ready to blow out tribals. "Not merely the Santhals but all tribals of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes appear the same to the Special Forces."\textsuperscript{138}
Mahasweta Devi also portrays the inhumanity and cold-blooded cruelty through the character of Senanayak. He is the villain in ‘Draupadi’. He is the representation of the state. “Whatever his practice, in theory he respects the opposition. Respects them because they could be neither understood nor demolished if they were treated with the attitude, it’s nothing but a bit of impertinent game playing with guns.”

Senanayak is an educated upper class military officer. He is intellectual but at the same time very cruel. The killing of Dulna shows his inner cruelty. To attack on an armedless man or woman is his speciality and his hypocrisy—“army informant Dukhiram Gharari saw a young Santhal man lying on his stomach on a flat stone, dipping his face to drink water. The soldiers shot him as he lay. As the 303 threw him off spread-eagled and brought a bloody foam to his mouth, he roared ‘ma-ho’ and then went limp.”

Senanayak presents the separation in theory and practice when he orders his soldiers to wait and watch—“leaving Dulna’s body on the stone, the soldiers climb the trees in green camouflage. They embrace the leafy boughs like so many great Pans and wait as the large red ants bite their private parts. To see if anyone comes to take away the body. This is the hunter’s way, not the soldiers.” It shows that Senanayak behaves like a brave soldier but he is actually not.
On the other hand, Dopdi, a simple woman, beloved wife and a brave comrade who takes more active part even after her husband’s death. So, the order is placed, “Catch Dopdi Mejhen. She will lead us to the others.” And Dopdi, she is the real comrade who never wants to run away in hardships. She does not scare of police or army and also their torture- “No. tell me, how many times can I run away. What will they do if they catch me? They will kounter me. Let them.” Her words show her courage. She often heard about their torture. There was a story of a boy of 22 who was encountered by them. “When they kounter you, your hands are behind you. All your bones are crushed, your sex is terrible wound. Killed by police in an encounter… Unknown male…age 22…” During the operation Bakuli, her name is not Dopdi, her name is Upi Mejhen.

Mahasweta Devi has connected all the colonial and post-colonial issues. The caste system and exploitation has become the reason of Naxal movements. Through Dopdi, Devi visualizes the events of an operation against zamindars- “Surja Sahu arranged with Biddi-Babu to dig two tubewells and three wells within the compound of his two houses. No water anywhere, drought in Birbhum.” Only the upper caste has the right on water to drink, to bath. “No, the untouchables don’t get water.” this has raised the voice, burned the fire in the hearts of other villagers and “Surja Sahu’s house was surrounded at night. Surja Sahu had brought out his gun. Surja was tied up with cow rope. His whitish eyeballs
turned and turned, he was incontinent again and again.” Dulna’s description shows that the people were facing the curse of bonded slavery from many years, “My great-grandfather took a bit of paddy from him, and I still give him free labour to repay that debt.” This long life slavery makes people angry and such movements begin around the areas. Dopdi is one of them who protest against injustice. She is the real comrade, true fighter who can sacrifices her life for the sake of others. If she is encountered by police, she never tells anything to them- “I swear by my life. By my life Dulna, by my life. Nothing must be told.” Soon she is caught by the police but her catching is compared with bird. “Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the forest, and uluates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings.”

Like Hardy, Mahasweta Devi portrays the capturing of Dopdi in nature’s lap and also the ways of conveying a message to others through nature’s messanger. Devi’s description of her capturing is presented in a very natural way. When she is caught, “no one touched her, and she was allowed to sit on a canvas camp stool. At 8:57 Senanyak’s dinner hour approached, and saying, make her. Do the needful.” This order of Senanayak has cleared his character. He gives the order of Draupadi’s rape but does not take part in it. Though he is educated, intellectual military officer but he has no emotions and respect for his enemy. He is completely opposite of
what he believes theoretically. She is gang-raped by Senanayak’s officers. She does not know how many has made her. “How many? Four-five-six-seven-then Draupadi had passed out.” not only many people but also many times, she is scratched by the wild jackals. Again, Devi’s description is seen closely connected with nature when she again describes her rape- “the moon vomits a bit of light and goes to sleep only the dark remains. A compelled spread-eagled still body. Active pistons of flesh rise and fall, rise and fall over it.” Then, the time comes when she is ordered to be brought in. suddenly, a cloud burst among the group of jackals when “Draupadi stands up. She pours the water down on the ground. Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth.” Her behaviour is seemed strange to everyone. But the reaction of Senanayak is marvellous to see her naked. “Senanayak walks out surprised and see Draupadi, naked walking towards him in the bright sunlight and her head high.” Her posture shows readers that now this is the time when nobody can stop her, it is the time when people sees a woman who can challenge the identity, place and value of a man. Senanayak shouts ‘what is this?’ He never expected such way of revolt against him. The description of his fear raises a feeling of revolution, feeling of emancipation and strong sense of revolt against such exploitation of woman just because of her gender. “Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hands on her hips, laugh and says, the object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don’t you want to see how they made me?” Her questions terrorize
Senanayak, “what’s the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?”\textsuperscript{157} And at last, “Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid.”\textsuperscript{158} Her incarnation as an emancipated woman makes it clear that this is the place where male leadership stops.

Though her name is taken from ‘Mahabharata’s Draupadi but her life is not like hers. She has no body to save her respect. On the other hand, everyone is ready to disgrace her. That’s why, she takes stands against this male-dominated society. The mythological Draupadi is a helpless feminine figure who is dependent on the paternal powers for her respect and requirements. But Dopdi, a tribal girl is a strong female who can fight with anybody for her respect and rescue. It shows that “the meanings that the Mahabharata episode assigns to sexual assault and nakedness, i.e, shame, loss, fear only serve to consolidate the operating relations of power. Mahasweta’s Dopdi ironically reverses the semiotics of these signs to produce a sense of bewilderment, incomprehension and scare among the male-violators.”\textsuperscript{159} She has become an ideal for all those woman who suffers and fears from the society because of their rape. Her action makes the male society weak. By violating the honour of a woman, man assumes superiority but Dopdi’s stand against them has shaken the roots of male world terribly. The same thing has happened when Delhi gang-rape case has opened the eyes of whole nation. Devi has drawn attention of readers earlier than
this case has happened. If woman become kali or Durga like Dopdi, it will definitely not occur. It shows that how closely she knows and studies the modern, civilized Indian society.

Mahasweta Devi’s Dopdi is a tribal woman who is actively involved in the naxalite movement of the late sixties. Though Mahasweta Devi has taken the mythological name for Dopdi but her life is completely different from the aristocratic Draupadi. She had five husbands to rule, to share and to protect her “under a pact of partnership sealed and sanctioned by their mother.” On the other hand, Mahasweta’s Dopdi has one husband only who has already been brutally murdered by the police. It is well-known that Draupadi is an aristocratic woman who shares and obedient in her conduct to the patriarchal ideological imperatives. “When dishonoured and humiliated before the ‘rajsabha’, she appeals to the masculinity of those present to come to her rescue” and Draupadi is infinitely saved and clothed by Lord Krishna’s miracles. Devi rewrites the episode but here men easily succeed in stripping Dopdi. No one has come to save and protect her dignity. She is the only one to protect herself. So, she takes a step and stand on a place where male horrifies from the power of a woman.

She is the incarnation of Goddess kali who can destroy the man power. This description makes readers agree with Devi that Dopdi “challenges the brutalizer to kounter her and instead of lamenting at the loss of the supposed “respectability”, she goes
forward to question the masculinity of her maker.”162 “She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak’s white bush shirt to spit a bloody gob at and says, there isn’t a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, kounter me- come on, kounter me-?”163

One of the most powerful eponymous characters of Mahasweta Devi, Dopdi challenges Senanayak to encounter her. Devi ends the story with Senanayak being “afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid.”164

Mahasweta Devi discusses all the issues of pre and post modern India that are interlinked with each other but the dominating aspect of this section is the role of woman in Indian society and in the life of men. This chapter depicts all the crimes against women. It clears the picture of sufferings and horrible plight of women. All the women characters appeared in this chapter are exploited by male society. Woman has become a sufferer who suffers because of her body and male-thinking about women. The chapter visualizes man’s point of view is to dominate or exploit women as they are made for this only. Mahasweta Devi clears it through Doulati and other female characters that are considered only as a commodity. Though Mahasweta Devi portrays the deplorable conditions of women yet she depicts the emancipated woman who takes stand against men. The last story of Dopdi inspires woman society to take step against man’s oppression and
torture. This section forces us to take a strong action against crime and tells us that there is a need of change in laws and thoughts of man. We definitely need a thinking that can change and improve the life of woman in India.
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