Chapter I
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The present research work has used *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper* (Nicholls, 7th edition) as the basis for its style manual. All the notes, references and page numbers appear, therefore, as per the same in the thesis. Besides, *British English* has been incorporated in as the sole register for the thesis so far as its linguistic presentation is concerned. In addition, almost all the emphases appearing in bold-face form or italics in the thesis are, for the most part, the researcher’s own.

**The Theory of Subaltern:**

*Subaltern* is the word derived from Latin. In the Latin, it means *of lower status*; ‘sub’ as *next below*, ‘alternus’ as *every other* (COED 1434). Besides this, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary has the following interpretations of the word:

1. *(n.)* an officer in the British army below the rank of captain, especially a second lieutenant; *(adj.)* of lower status (1434).

The Random House Dictionary also gives the following meanings of the word:
(adj.) 1. Lower in rank; subordinate. 2. (Mili. <Brit>) noting a commissioned officer below the rank of captain. 3. (Logic) [a] noting the relation of one proposition is implied by the second but the second is not implied by the first. [b] (In Aristotelian logic) denoting the relation of particular proposition to a universal proposition having the same subject, predicate, and quality. [c] of or pertaining to a proposition having either of these relations to another. (n) 4. One who has a subordinate position. 5. (Brit. Mil.) a commissioned officer below the rank of captain. 6. (Logic) a subaltern proposition. (RHDEL 1413)

The Wikipedia, an online encyclopaedia, gives two types of definition of the term:

1. Subaltern is a term that commonly refers to persons who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure. (Web 22.04.2010)

2. The term subaltern is used in postcolonial theory. The exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is disputed. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes — a person rendered without agency by his or her social status. (22.10.2010)

The web asserts it further that originally a term for subordinates in military hierarchies, the term subaltern is elaborated in the work of Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structures of
political representation. Ranjit Guha along with his associates has published a twelve-volume series entitled *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* and in the very first volume of the series, he explains the group’s role behind the title:

> The word ‘subaltern’ in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, ‘of inferior rank’. It will be used in these pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. (Guha vii)

The aim of the study, in Guha’s opinion, is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies, and thus help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area. Guha further adds that the subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they [the subaltern groups] rebel and rise up. Guha does not seem to be happy with the historiography of India dominated by the elitist class. To him, colonialist elitism (neocolonialist form) and bourgeois-nationalist elitism (neo-nationalist form) are the products of British rule. Guha claims that the elitist historiography has been an inadequate phenomenon as far as goes the case of subaltern representation. It is generally argued that the term is a Eurocentric one. Undoubtedly, it was Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, who first used the term to refer to the working masses. Peter Childs and
Roger Fowler (2006) state that the term was first deployed by the Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci in whose opinion it refers to the non-elite classes, including but not restricted to the proletariat. They further state:

*Taken together with his [Gramsci’s] more fluid conceptualization of class-state relations, his development of a methodological programme for studying the history of the subaltern placed greater emphasis on the cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony and subordination.* (230)

Childs and Fowler opine that the term *subaltern* was decisively shaped by its encounter with a group of Marxist historians in India in the late 1970s and early 1980s that came to be known as the Subaltern Studies collective. The group has made an attempt to write history from below. The writings of the collective have been taken as a major contribution to postcolonial studies, say Childs and Fowler.

There may be a possible objection to the use of the term, *subaltern* when it comes to its use in Indian context. Therefore, the definition of the term introduced by Julian Wolfreys and others can help in this regard to a certain degree:

*Term, [subaltern] taken from the work of Antonio Gramsci and used initially to define proletarian and other working-class groups,*
subaltern is employed in postcolonial studies after Gayatri Spivak to address dominated and marginalized groups. (Wolfreys, et al 80)

If the given definition includes the groups that are dominated and marginalized, it means that subaltern can cover up the dominated and marginalized groups of Indian context—tribals, Dalits, women, etc., thus functioning, at least apparently, as an umbrella term. Keeping in view the very definition, the researcher has attempted to make the term adapt to the theme of the given research.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is accounted for as a seminal figure in relation to application of the aforementioned term. Her essay, considered complex as well as controversial—Can the Subaltern Speak? happens to be pivotal as far as go the discussions on subalternity, especially in regard with literary analysis. The exploration of the subaltern in the thesis, therefore, mostly rests on the essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ Sugata Bhaduri and Simi Malhotra have edited a book entitled Literary Theory: An Introductory Reader (2010) that comprises the essay by Spivak. Spivak is generally considered as a most eminent figure on the scenes of the world’s contemporary dais of literary theory. She has come to be widely known for translation of Derrida’s De la grammatologie, a foundational text of deconstructive criticism. Likewise, she is hailed as an authentic critic of and a consistent commentator on Mahasweta Devi. Spivak keeps at pains to deny that she was a disciple either of Derrida or Said for that matter¹. Can
the Subaltern Speak? happens to be one of the most significant texts on postcolonial discourse. John McLeod (2007) takes it for ‘a complex critique of the representation of human subjectivity in a variety of contexts, but with particular reference to the work of the Subaltern Studies scholars’ (191). To Spivak, the women are subalterns, the women specifically hailing from the ‘third world countries’. Spivak seems to have produced the essay under the influence of Marxism in which she has based her premises upon ideological discussions of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. She particularly seems to be interested in the discourse; and ‘power’, ‘desire’ and ‘interest’ form the key words of her critique on the subaltern. In Spivak’s opinion, ‘the intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society’s Other’ (264). She says that Deleuze’s reference to the workers’ struggle is problematic as it is, to her, a ‘genuflection’. She seems to suggest that the subaltern could not be subjected to a total surrender. Spivak wants to state further that Deleuze locates the struggle in ‘desire’ which is not appropriate:

[...] Moreover, when the connection between desire and the subject is taken as irrelevant or merely reversed, the subject-effect that surreptitiously emerges is much like the generalized ideological subject of the theorist. (265)

Spivak claims that Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari produce a mechanical opposition between interest and desire and ‘align themselves
with bourgeois sociologists who fill the place of ideology with a continuistic “unconscious” or a parasubjective “culture” (266). Spivak does not seem to be satisfied with the connotation the word theory offers. To quote her in this respect—

Since theory is also only ‘action’, the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group. Indeed, the subject is not seen as a representative consciousness (one re-presenting reality adequately).

(268)

Spivak believes that the leftist intellectuals do not represent the subaltern properly (269). When concerning herself to the small peasants [as the subalterns], Spivak says that they cannot represent themselves— ‘[…] they must be represented. Their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above’ (270). The quote above puts forth an indication that the subalterns, whether women or a similar commune, should choose someone from among them as their own representative to get voiced themselves. However, there seems to be a possibility of the chosen’s being domineering, thus the latter’s being an exploiter. Spivak does not entertain the idea of a family the frame of which turns masculine. To her, the symbols of bravery have always been patronymic. For example, she says that a man named Napoleon would restore the glory of a French peasant’s
family. This way, Spivak also criticizes Marx who, accordingly her, ‘seems to be working within a patriarchal metaphors’ (272) so far as his propositions fall in the historic tradition. Interestingly enough, she asserts that theory is ‘a relay of practice’. The intellectuals, not belonging to the subject class, come transparent in the relay race, states Spivak. She denegates such a role as an intellectual and emphatically evinces the role of the critic in the following words:

**One responsibility of the critic might be to read and write so that the impossibility of such interested individualistic refusals of the institutional privileges of power bestowed on the subject is taken seriously. The refusal of the sign-system blocks the way to a developed theory of ideology. Here, too, the peculiar tone of denegation is heard.**

(274)

Spivak thus ends the first part of her essay saying, again, ‘the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self’s shadow, a possibility of political practice for the intellectual would be to put the economic “under erasure” […]’. Spivak uses the term *epistemic violence* to refer to the intellectuals’ representation of the subaltern. The term has been used by Foucault thus being Eurocentric and meaning ‘destruction of non-western ways of knowing the world’ (web 21.09.2012). Spivak does not wish to recognize the ways of subtext of the subalterns as ‘subjugated knowledge’. She connects this epistemic violence to the discourse of women, particularly
in relation to the women falling under Hindu law. She blames the British to have brought the epistemic violence of the codification of Hindu law:

One effect of establishing a version of the British system was the development of an uneasy separation between disciplinary formation in Sanskrit studies and the native, now alternative, tradition of Sanskrit ‘high culture’. Within the former, the cultural explanations generated by authoritative scholars matched the epistemic violence of the legal project. (277)

Having stated the above, Spivak moves on to the area of the liminal with a special reference to the ‘women oppressed’. She calls the margins as ‘silent, silenced centre’ and the marginalized as the subproletariat who can speak and know their own plight—

According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First World, under the standardization and regimentation of socialized capital, though they do not seem to recognize this) the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here) can speak and know their conditions. (278)

After making way for the given thought, Spivak comes to the basic thematic question of the essay as follows:

We must now confront the following question: on the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and
education supplementing an earlier economic text, can the subaltern speak? (278-9)

Spivak asserts that Gramsci is concerned with the intellectual’s role in the subaltern’s cultural and political movement into the hegemony. She, therefore, puts the question—Can the subaltern speak?—directly to the Subaltern Studies group. Spivak takes the colonized subject for granted as irretrievably heterogeneous and is not ready to give up the possession of the British legal system. The essay also forms a deconstructive journey into analysis of the woman-as-subaltern. She wants to read her (the woman subaltern) regardless of phallocentric tradition:

When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work cannot say becomes important.

In the semioses of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of ‘the utterance’. (284)

Spivak also uses the concept of antre (the place of in-betweenness) derived from Jacques Derrida to interpret subalternity of women. She repents it that the female is often more overshadowed even during colonization, having no history of her own—‘If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (285).

In Spivak’s idea, the model of resistance without a theory of ideology can lead to a dangerous utopianism. For her, as for E. Said,
Derrida’s criticism moves the auditors into the text whereas that of Foucault in and out. Spivak is not happy with the postcolonial intellectual for their systematically unlearning female privilege. This, in fact, mutes the female subject as per Spivak. Spivak has the elite class under her focal point as regards the case of subalternity of the female. She wants the elite to take up proper measures to champion the cause of women. Referring to the Freudian history of repression, Spivak cuts her statement across the history of ‘abolition of widow sacrifice’ effected by the then British government in India. While doing so, she expands the case of ‘sati’, the living widow that is sacrificed upon the burning pyre of her husband. This all she bases upon her reading of the Rigveda and the Dharmasatra. Spivak seems to justify the nativist argument that ‘the women actually wanted to die’. Spivak calls J. D. M. Derrett’s remark— ‘the very first legislation upon Hindu Law was carried through without the assent of a single Hindu (298)’— as a case in point. This means that Spivak does not wish to think of the British’s interference with the religious law of India, that is to say, the ‘law of sati’. Moreover, she seems to have taken a u-turn on this when citing:

 […] the British in India collaborated and consulted with learned Brahmans to judge whether suttee was legal by their homogenized version of Hindu law. (303)

Actually, Spivak’s instance of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, discussed at length, forms the crux of matter of the essay. Her discussions that move round the
word, ‘sati’ make the background of the incident of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri’s suicide and thenceforth a clearance point of the theory of subalternity.

Spivak means to say ‘the self-immolation of widows was not invariable ritual prescription’ (302) and seems to consider it a mark of ‘real free choice’, ‘a choice of freedom’. The reader is taken into an enigma to determine whether Spivak wants to justify the practice of sati. However, she changes her position forthwith when stating: ‘Obviously I am not advocating the killing of widows’. She puts forth that the woman’s being is a sine qua non for make-up of a family:

The woman as wife is indispensible for gārhasthya, or householdership, and may accompany her husband into forest life. She has no access (according to Brahmanical sanction) to final celibacy of asceticism, or samnyāsa. The woman as widow, by the general law of sacred doctrine, must regress to an anteriorty transformed into stasis. (304)

Given the stance noted above, Spivak states ‘Here the possibility of recovering a (sexually) subaltern subject is once again lost and overdetermined.’ To come to the incident of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri. Spivak narrates the incident, which is the core issue of the essay as well as of the subaltern theory, in the following manner:
A young woman of sixteen or seventeen, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, hanged herself in her father’s modest apartment in North Calcutta in 1926. The suicide was a puzzle since, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time, it was clearly not a case of illicit pregnancy. Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence. She had finally been entrusted with a political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself.

Bhuvaneshwari had known that her death would be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion. She had therefore waited for the onset of menstruation. While waiting, Bhuvaneswari, the brahmachârini who was no doubt looking forward to good wifehood, perhaps rewrote the social text of sati-suicide in an interventionist way. (One tentative explanation of her inexplicable act had been a possible melancholia brought on by her brother-in-law’s repeated taunts that she was too old to be not-yet-a-wife.) She generalized the sanctioned motive for female suicide by raking immense trouble to displace (not merely deny) in the physiological inscription of her body, its imprisonment within legitimate passion by a single male. In the immediate context, her act became absurd, a case of delirium rather than sanity. The displacing gesture—waiting for menstruation—is first a reversal of interdict against a menstruating widow’s right to immolate herself;
the unclean widow must wait, publicly, until the cleansing bath of the
fourth day, when she is no longer menstruating, in order to claim her
dubious privilege. (310-11)

After citing the incident, Spivak concludes that the subaltern as a woman
has the ability to speak, wants to speak but she cannot be heard or read.
Spivak owns it up to her readers that she has, in fact, used the method of
Derridean deconstruction to interpret her own thesis— can the subalterns
speak? The overall access through her essay gives one a possible
impression that the fault lies on the androcentric side which does not offer
any space of discursiveness that can be used by the subalterns to speak. It is
therefore that the voice of them the subalterns has been suppressed. As a
consequence of the same, Spivak concludes her argument as under:

The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists
with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away.
The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which
she must not disown with a flourish. (312)

The theory of the subaltern is thus extended by Spivak. Mahasweta
Devi’s literature mostly deals with the subaltern sections of Indian society:
the women, tribals, untouchables, neglect children, etc. and for that reason a
detailed way across the term of subaltern happened to be peremptory,
which is why the above endeavour.
There are certain critics and theorists that have commented on the exploration of subalternity by Spivak. To start with Spivak’s own statements:

1. It [Can the Subaltern Speak?] seems all things to all men. For Neil Larsen, paean to Derrida, for Dipesh Chakrabarty an essay on a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze. For Moore-Gilbert it reduces itself to essentialism because the subaltern becomes the absolutely other. I don’t want to be an essentialist, but the women seem to get the hang of it better. [And Ipshita Chanda relates it to the idea of “ethical singularity” from my later work.] (Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray xx)

2. Additionally, I have never sought “to correct” Orientalism. My endeavor in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was to tell the story of Bhubaneshwari Bhaduri (and why she could not be heard), not to correct Said. Her name is never mentioned in the discussions of my essay. (xxi)

3. Indeed “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is not really about colonialism at all. It is about agency: institutionally validated action. (xx)

4. ‘Psychoanalysis in Left Field’ (1994) and ‘Echo’ (1996) are very much more postcolonial than ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (xix)
5. Rather, she [Spivak] wanted to consider the inability for their [subalterns’] words to enable transactions between speakers and listeners. Their muteness is created by the fact that even when women uttered words, they were still interpreted through conceptual and methodological procedures which were unable to understand their interventions with accuracy. It is not so much that subaltern women did not speak, but rather that others did not know how to listen, how to enter into a transaction between speaker and listener. The subaltern cannot speak because their words cannot be properly interpreted. Hence, the silence of the female as subaltern is the result of a failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation. (John McLeod 195)

6. […] In her influential and controversial essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1983), later expanded in her book Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999), she [Spivak] addresses precisely this issue of whether peoples in subordinate, colonized positions are able to achieve a voice. (Habib 748)

7. […] the problem which Spivak identifies is not that the woman cannot speak as such, that no records of the subject-consciousness exist, but that she is assigned no position of enunciation [and therefore] everyone else speaks for her, so that she is rewritten
continuously as the object of patriarchy or of imperialism. (Young 164)

8. Thus while Spivak concluded her provocative essay by categorically insisting that ‘the subaltern cannot speak’, postcolonial studies has come to represent a confusing and often unpleasant babel of subaltern voices. (3)

Many are in consonance with each other to term Spivak’s essay as ‘complex’ and ‘controversial’ whereas McLeod (204) calls it ‘influential’ in feminist criticism and in theories of colonial discourses. To him, the essay is difficult yet it rewards ‘patient reading’.

**Postcolonial Theory:**

Before gathering what ‘post-colonialism’ means, it comes imperative to define colonialism. Colonialism is all but the corollary of the British Empire in specific. There were many other colonizers apart from the British, to name a few, for instance: the French, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spanish, etc. *Colonization* and *colonialism* are the terms that form background of postcolonial theory. To discuss postcolonial theory therefore an outline of colonialism would help.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language puts its emphasis on the word *colonialism* to give the impression of colonization. It defines colonialism along with colonization the following way:
[Colonialism is] the policy of a nation seeking to extend or retain its authority over other peoples or territories. (291)

[Colonization is] i. the act of bringing into subjection or subjugation by colonialism; ii. the act of colonizing; iii. the state or fact of being colonialized. (291)

‘To colonize’, per the dictionary, is ‘to plant or establish a colony in’ or ‘to settle in a colony’. There are some dictionaries that define ‘colonialism’ as—

1. The practice by which a powerful country controls another country or other countries. (OALD 290)

2. Exploitation by a stronger country of a weaker country; the use of the weaker country’s resources to strengthen and enrich the stronger country. (WordNet® 3.0)

3. The policy or practice of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. (COD 282)

The Wikipedia offers the following explanation on ‘colonization’:

Colonization (or colonisation) occurs whenever any one or more species populate an area. The term, which is derived from the Latin colere, "to inhabit, cultivate, frequent, practice, tend, guard, respect", originally referred to humans. [...] Human colonization is a narrower
category than the related concept of colonialism. Colonization refers strictly to ‘migration’, for example, to ‘settler’ colonies,’ trading posts’, and ‘plantations’, while ‘colonialism’ deals with this as well as the ruling of new territories' existing peoples. (24.09.2012)

The Wikipedia categorizes colonialism as Classical (of Greeks and Roman) and Modern (of Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Persians, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, etc.). There are other concepts such as Imperialism, Neocolonialism and Cocacolonization (erosion of indigenous culture) associated with colonialism and postcolonialism.

Robert Young (2001) puts in a rudimentary difference between ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’ stating ‘colonization was pragmatic and until the nineteenth century generally developed locally in a haphazard way […]’ (16). To quote him:

Colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government’s perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power. (16-7)

To Young, colonialism is a corporate undertaking while imperialism a sponsorship of a state itself. Young adds it further—

However, by the eighteenth century, competition between European powers meant that many of the wars of the century were fought in the
colonial arena with the purpose of acquiring the riches of each other’s colonies [...] (23)

According to Young, an influential authority on postcolonial theory—colonial history means: slavery, untold, unnumbered deaths from oppression or neglect, of the enforced migration and diaspora of millions of peoples—Africans, Americans, Arabs, Asians and Europeans, of appropriation of territories and of land, of institutionalization of racism, of the destruction of cultures and the superimposition of other cultures (4). It would also look appropriate to re-quote Young in regard to colonialism:

Colonialism may have brought some benefits of modernity, as its apologists continue to argue, but it also caused extraordinary suffering in human terms, and was singularly destructive with regard to the indigenous cultures with which it came into contact. (6)

Bill Ashcroft seems to assume an ironical attitude of the colonial protest. He says:

Although the European view of the civilizing process was nothing less than enforced emulation—colonial cultures should simply imitate their metropolitan occupiers—the processes of imitation themselves, the ‘mimicry’ of the colonizers, as Homi Bhabha has famously suggested (1994), became a paradoxical feature of colonial resistance. (Ashcroft 2001)
Ashcroft adds that the English used by the postcolonial writers plays a cultural vehicle. Thus is the case of colonialism. The term ‘Postcolonialism’, say Ashcroft and others,

‘is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of many different cultural experiences it implicates, and, as the extracts in their reader demonstrate, it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact. Post-colonial critics and theorists should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to ‘after- Colonialism’ or after-independence. (2)

The Wikipedia gives the following definition of postcolonialism:

Post-colonial theory— as epistemology, ethics, and politics— addresses the matters of post-colonial identity (cultural, national, ethnic), gender, race, and racism, and their interactions in the development of a post-colonial society, and of a post-colonial national identity; of how a colonised people’s (cultural) knowledge was used against them, in service of the coloniser’s interests; and of how knowledge about the world is generated under specific socio-economic relations, between the powerful and the powerless. Identity politics comprise the perspectives of the colonial subjects, his and her creative resistance to the coloniser’s culture; and how that resistance psychologically complicated the imperial-colony project for the European man and woman. Hence, among the cultural media to aid colonisation was the anti-conquest narrative genre, which produced
colonial literature that ideologically legitimated the imperial domination of a people. (27.09.2012)

Taken into account the definition of colonialism, one aspect prominently comes forth: ‘the colonizers are the settlers’. Should the same be a premise, it would be difficult to exactly locate the ‘postcolonial’ in Indian context as has been stressed by Milind Pandit (2011):

[…] It is with the discussions of Said, that is his Orientalism, that the concept of postcolonial started taking its roots. He is responsible for propagation of the term. But when it comes to Indian context, I always feel doubt if the time post-British is appropriate for the location of the term. […] India is a country that is time and again dominated by foreign agencies, foreign rules and foreign authorities. That way we find that there were Greeks, Huns, Moguls, Portuguese and the British to have ruled this land. So, why is it the case that we apply this concept of Postcolonialism to the times after the British left this country? Why don’t we think that the times after the Aryans or Greeks or Huns or Moguls or the Portuguese left this country can also be postcolonial? It is a very complex phenomenon to define in Indian context, I must be honest at stating this. And as far as Said is concerned, it is all right for him should he locate the postcolonial in the post-British times— India’s is a different context as compared to that of the other countries. (45-6)
Peter Barry believes that the postcolonial writers writing against colonialism base their artefacts on European models:

The shift in attitudes in the 1980s and 1990s was towards postcolonial writers seeing themselves as using primarily African or Asian forms, supplemented with European-derived influences, rather than as working primarily within European genres like the novel and merely adding to them a degree of exotic Africanisation. All postcolonial literature, it might be said, seem to make this transition. They begin with an unquestioning acceptance of the authority of European models (especially in the novel) and with the ambition of writing works that will be masterpieces entirely in this tradition. (196)

Edward Said is generally looked to as the chief exponent of postcolonialism. Moreover, it would be sheer injustice to not mention Frantz Fanon, the basic inspiration behind ‘Orientalism’. M. A. R. Habib and Peter Barry club five (Fanon, Said, Spivak, Bhabha and Henry Louis Gates Jr.) and three names (Gates Jr., Spivak and Bhabha) respectively to expound their view each on ‘postcolonialism’. Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth (2001) is generally viewed as the most fundamental reflection on the postcolonial theory. Said’s Orientalism (1995) and Culture and Imperialism (1994) make a seminal discourse on the theory, it is widely acknowledged. Said explains what he means by ‘Orientalism’ as:
Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient— and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist— either in its specific or general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (Ashcroft 88)

Fredrick Cooper (2005) says that scholarly interest in colonialism arose when colonial empires had already lost their international legitimacy and ceased to be viable forms of political organization. He also criticizes the colonial elites that favoured colonialism:

Colonial elites— sometimes— claimed legitimacy on the grounds that they were remaking Asian or African societies in the image of Europe’s self-proclaimed modernity, and at other times they insisted that colonies could never be modern, that they would only go astray if their status hierarchies were undetermined, and that European rule was necessary to preserve this conservation order. (10-11)

Edward Said is especially unhappy with the way the oriental side is presented by the Occidental scholars. He declines their idea of considering the orient as a stereotype. The scholars often consider Asian countries as poor, unhygienic, backward and unfit-to-live-in. Said emphasizes it further that orient is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies; it is also the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of deepest and
most recurring images of the Other. Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture and has helped to define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience (Ashcroft, et al 87). Exemplifying Japan and Korea, Said adds to the emphasis stating that such countries are not only paramount in technological advances but have surpassed the west. Therefore, he appeals to them to create an ambience of pan-Asianism. Edward Said is thus strongly opposed to the formation of a negative image of the orient by the occident.

Fanon’s essay on national culture also speaks volumes for the essence of native culture and dismissal of a foreign one. It would be worthwhile to learn what he means by national culture—

A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less attached to the ever present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. [...] (154-55)

Fanon’s idea of nationalism is widely appreciated yet his attitude towards violence (that the lumpenproletariat should club with the fighting masses
and kill the colonizers) is not. However, Sartre has justified it in the following manner:

They would do well to read Fanon; for he shows clearly that this irresponsible violence is neither sound and fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself. (18)

Even Sartre had to keep at receiving end for his vindication of Fanon’s violent role. Moreover, he is seconded as well in the following terms:

In Sartre’s view the violence of the colonized ‘is no less than man reconstructing himself’. Critics hasten to attack Sartre’s incendiary language but overlook the fact that violence was generated by colonial Europe which, propelled by this violence, is now reaching ‘a mad and uncontrollable speed’ and ‘heading towards the abyss’. (Azzedine Haddour 2)

When commenting upon the Algerian conditions, Fanon has psychoanalytically pointed out the reasons behind suffering of the Algerians. Lack of food and loss of proper medication, says Fanon, sent the Algerians neurotic. Also, Albert Memmi has described the colonized the same way:
Everything in the colonized is deficient, and everything contributes to this deficiency—even his body, which is poorly fed, puny and sick. Many lengthy discussions would be saved if, in the beginning, it was agreed that there is this wretchedness—collective, permanent, immense. Simple and plain biological wretchedness, chronic hunger of an entire people, malnutrition and illness. Of course, from a distance, that remains abstract, and an extraordinary imagination would be required. (161)

Whenever the postcolonial discourse arises, there has been an indispensable reference made to Macaulay’s highly controversial minute of 1935, the very minute Gauri Viswanathan has strongly criticized in her Masks of Conquest (2009). It is vital therefore to see the exact say of Macaulay—

It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (430)
Macaulay’s attitude still attracts a lot of criticism. His opinion of intellectual superiority seems a partial truth ‘because we had a legacy of education then; it was Nalanda and Taxasila, the universities even his European predecessors used to educate at’ (Milind Pandit 47).

Margaret Drabble (2000) suffers a sense of indeterminacy when thinking use of the term ‘postcolonial literature’. She says:

Postcolonial literature consists of a body of writing emanating from Europe’s former colonies which addresses questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender, and language. The term should be used loosely and hesitantly, for it is replete with contradictions and conundrums. (Companion 808)

Cooper’s statement also seems to imply something of the similar kind:

The post- can usefully underscore the importance of the colonial past to shaping the possibilities and constraints of the present, but such a process cannot be reduced to a colonial effect, nor can either a colonial or postcolonial period be seen as a coherent whole, as if the varied efforts and struggles in which people engaged in different situations always ended up in the same place. (19)

Given all the opinions and statements above, one aspect comes up that postcolonial literature has the same sort of voice— decolonization of the
mind. Achebe, Thiong’O, and Coetzee are especially notable as creative writers that aim at decolonizing mind of the people that read them. Their literature voices it uniformly. Where Thiong’O wants to abolish English as a language from his nation, Achebe does not seem to have such an assumption. It is interesting to note the reaction of Thiong’O (1995):

Just because for reasons of political expediency we have kept English as our official language, there is no need to substitute a study of English culture for our own. We reject the primacy of English literature and culture². (439)

Language is an area of concern to many of the people hailing from the postcolonial countries. The problem is as to whether it is possible to do away with English. David Crystal (2005) has said, ‘No African country uses its indigenous language in higher education, English being used in the majority of cases’ (20). ‘In India’, says Crystal, ‘there are probably now more speakers of English than in the whole of Britain and the USA combined’ (24). He also adds that since politics, economics, the press, advertising, broadcasting international travel, education, and communications are the areas under dominance of English, English would function a centripetal force so far. Seeing ratio of English speakers—especially that of the nationals of commonwealth countries—around the world, it seems extremely difficult to banish English at least from the
contemporary scenes of the world. The artists like Ezekiel (1989) show the parody, but reality as well, through their art. The ones like Narayan (2007) insist on ‘native’ brand of English. The article 343 (2), Part XVII, Chapter I, of the Indian Constitution states that ‘for a period of fifteen years from commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement’ (Bakshi 286). It is widely acknowledged a fact that despite passing of 62 years since the above-mentioned commencement, English still stands foursquare across India. This means that postcolonial literature and language both remain under the influence exerted by English among the postcolonial commune on the globe. Crystal’s example would add to the emphasis:

[...] a few years ago in India, where a march supporting Hindi and opposing English was seen on world television: most of the banners were in Hindi, but one astute marcher carried a prominent sign which enabled the voice of his group to reach much further around the world than would otherwise have been possible. His sign read: ‘Death to English’. (12)

There could be an endless discussion on the postcolonial discourse. However, to conclude it, it would be politic to do so with Bhabha’s think.
Homi K. Bhabha, a Harvard Professor, is especially known to the world academia as an eminent thinker on postcolonial writing. To him:

**Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geographical divisions of East and West, North and South.** (Location 245)

Referring to agency, Bible, blacks, Gordimer, Lacan, race, sexuality and Rushdie, Bhabha develops his term **hybridity**. The term seems to heavily rely on cultural aspect of it. Bhabha’s preface (xx-xv) is a highly nostalgic account of his life whereas his introduction (1-27) has ‘borderline condition of cultural translation’ as the locus of his theoretical meditation. The introduction is mostly a discourse of minority with a special reference to the American milieu. Bhabha largely draws on Toni Morrison, Nadine Gordimer and Renée Green to set in his theory of **beyond**. He believes that ‘beyond signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future (5-6)’ yet leads to form a periphery of ‘a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities (7)’. To Bhabha the ‘beyond’ makes an intervening cultural space. It also creates a persistent havoc of ‘unhomeliness’ at both physical and psychological
levels. In Bhabha’s opinion, the world of postcoloniality is fraught with differences—physical, racial, sexual, political and cultural. He is mainly concerned with otherness:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation; it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. (95)

Bhabha’s is an ambivalent response to colonial discourse. His essay Of Mimicry and Man reveals that ‘mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge’ (122). Apart from the above, Bhabha’s discussions also occupy the space of discourse of Neocolonialism, a term coined by the Ghanaian politician, Kwame Nkrumah, to mean

the geopolitical practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural imperialism to control a country, in lieu of either direct military control or indirect political control, i.e. imperialism and hegemony. (Wikipedia 03.10.2012)

In fact, Sartre’s Colonialism and Neocolonialism (2001) plays a guiding force in this matter.
Mahasweta Devi:

Before dealing with Mahasweta Devi, it would suit the tone of the research work to make a passing reference to Indian Writing in English. M K Naik, an authentic scholar of studies in Indian Writing in English, says:

**INDIAN ENGLISH literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India.**

(Introduction 1)

There was a fix initially among the scholars as which name to use to refer to the writing in English by the Indians:

**Acknowledged ‘with a civil leer’ by many and damned ‘with faint praise’ by some for a long time, Indian English literature, designated variously as ‘Indo-Anglican Literature’, ‘Indo-English Literature’ and ‘Indian Writing in English’ (and once even regarded unjustly as part of “Anglo-Indian Literature”), is now more than a hundred and seventy years old.** (Naik, v)

Naik uses the designation ‘Indian English Literature’ to mention Indian writing in English language whereas K R S Iyengar (1994) designates it as ‘Indian Writing in English’ only. Over and above, Iyengar is known as a prior authority on Indian Writing in English, the fact even acknowledged by
Naik himself. Since both the books emphasize the ‘writing in English’, the regional literatures of India do not find any latitude in them. Moreover, Akademi’s ‘Ancient Indian Literature’ and ‘Modern Indian Literature’ by Sharma (2008) and George (1994) respectively comprise regional literatures of the country. The Booker honourees from India, however, have hauled Indian literary writings transnationally to a greater degree.

Margaret Drabble includes the following names as worth mentioning, in case of making Indian Writing in English, in her ‘Companion to English Literature’— Nayantara Sehgal, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Nirad Chaudhari, R K Narayan, G V Desani, Ved Mehta, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai, V S Naipaul, Bapsi Sidhwa (technically Pakistani), Gita Mehta, Padma Parera, Anjana Appachana, Gita Hariharan, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Amit Chaudhari, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, etc. Drabble believes that so far as goes the case of Indian Writing in English, ‘Rushdie gave Indian writing much wider currency’. She also credits it to R K Narayan, Nirad Chaudhari and Tagore to an extent. While speaking of Indian novel, Drabble says:

_The first Indian novel in English was ‘Rajamohan’s wife’ (1864), a poor melodramatic thing. The writer, Chandra Chatterjee, reverted to Bengali and immediately achieved great renown. For 70 years there was no English-language fiction of quality. It was the generation of_
independence which provided the true architects of the new tradition.

(29)


These artists use English probably under the realization that it is not possible to do away with it and partly under the speculation of importance of English at the moment. That is why they use it as a weapon termed by Rushdie, and Sara Menin, et al (2002) as *the empire writes back*. The postcolonial writers in a likely manner want to say:

*You taught me language, and my profit on ’t*

*Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you*
For learning me your language! (The Tempest, Act I, ii 6)

Mahasweta Devi is a name that hardly needs any introduction in the contemporary circumstances. She has become more extensively known to the world after being nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Daughter of Manish Ghatak, an eminent Bengali novelist and short story writer, and niece to Ritwik Ghatak, a celebrated film director, Mahasweta Devi is particularly recognized as a champion of tribal communities. She was born in 1926 in Dhaka to literary parents in a Hindu Brahmin family (Web 05.10.1012). Her initial schooling took place in Dhaka but after the partition of India she moved to West Bengal in India. She joined the Rabindranath Tagore-founded Vishvabharati University in Santiniketan and completed her B.A. (Hon.) in English and later finished with M.A. in English at Calcutta University as well. Afterwards, she married a renowned playwright, Bijon Bhattacharya who was one of the founding fathers of the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) movement. In 1948, Mahasweta gave birth to Nabarun Bhattacharya, currently one of Bengal's and India's leading novelists whose works are noted for their intellectual vigour and philosophical flavour. She got divorced from Bijon Bhattacharya in 1959.

In 1964, Mahasweta Devi initiated teaching at Bijoygarh College, an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta. During those days,
Bijoygarh College was an institution for working-class women students. Also, during that period, she also worked as a journalist and as a creative writer. Recently, she is more famous for her work related to the study of the Lodhas and Shabars, the tribal communities of West Bengal, women and Dalits. Mahasweta is also an activist who is dedicated to the struggles of tribal people in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In her elaborate Bengali fiction, she often depicts the brutal oppression of tribal peoples and the untouchables by potent, authoritarian upper-caste landlords, money-lenders, and venal government officials. She has written of the source of her inspiration:

I have always believed that the real history is made by ordinary people. I constantly come across the reappearance, in various forms, of folklore, ballads, myths and legends, carried by ordinary people across generations....The reason and inspiration for my writing are those people who are exploited and used, and yet do not accept defeat. For me, the endless source of ingredients for writing is in these amazingly, noble, suffering human beings. Why should I look for my raw material elsewhere, once I have started knowing them? Sometimes it seems to me that my writing is really their doing. (Web 05.10.2012)
Mahasweta Devi has the following honours to her credit— 1979: Sahitya Akademi Award (Bengali) for Aranyer Adhikar (novel); 1986: Padma Shri; 1996: Jnanpith Award, the highest literary award from the Bharatiya Jnanpith; 1997: Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and the Creative Communication Arts; 1999: Honoris causa - Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU); 2006: Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award from the Government of India; 2010: Yashwantrao Chavan National Award; 2011: Bangabibhushan - the highest civilian award from the Government of West Bengal; and 2012: Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Sahityabrahma, the first Lifetime Achievement award in Bengali Literature from 4thScreen-IFJW. ‘It is good to win an award’, said Mahasweta on Magasaysay occasion, ‘but my life is getting more and more crowded and I am not getting time to write’ (Web 07.10.12).

Mahasweta has worked in various capacities all through her life. She has run, to a successful extent, the Bengali journal, ‘Vartika’ and has acted a member of numerous grassroots level organizations, upper division clerk, (Central Government), school teacher, lecturer, journalist for a Bengali daily. N K Singh (2001) writes about her:
For the last thirty years she has been working with more than a dozen organizations devoted to the uplift of bonded labourers and tribes in West Bengal’s Purulia District. (368)

Gita Hariharan is also a fan of Mahasweta. When asked by Dhanyashree M. (Web 07.03.2011) who her favourite writer is, she said— ‘Coetzee, Amitav Ghosh. The Bengali Mahasweta Devi, who has written some of the most powerful fiction I have ever read’. Journalism, literature, and creative communication are the areas Mahasweta has exerted her cerebral energy in. Singh says, again, that Mahasweta is ‘devoted to the uplift of bonded labourers and tribes in West Bengal’s Purulia District’ (368). He also records Mahasweta’s plan to ‘continue to work for the tribal, non-tribal, poor and people in distress and write for them’ (368).

In fact, the oeuvre of Mahasweta Devi falls in the postcolonial era. There are many writers that belong to the postcolonial fictional world of India. Nonetheless, studying Mahasweta Devi in a postcolonial context was thought over more rewarding, hence the given topic for the present research work. Mahasweta produced The Queen of Jhansi (1956) as her first book. Her fight for the cause of indigenous commune is generally held as a compassionate crusade. Her social activism is all-pervading through her works like Mother of 1084 (2008), Bashai Tudu (2002), Chotti Munda and His Arrow (2002). Mahasweta Devi’s Dust on the Road (2010) makes the
magnum opus as far as one sees activism of hers. The protest through activism has been discussed at length in the second chapter of the thesis. Mahasweta Devi uses various techniques to proceed in her creative pursuit. Use of black humour is a special implement deployed by her to represent the subalterns. For instance, the texts like *Breast Stories* (2010), *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* (2003), *Bait* (2009), *Dewana, Khoimala and the Holy Banyan Tree* (2004), *Mother of Dusk and Dawn* (2004) and *Rudali* (2008) give an expression to the plight of the subalterns and to black humour. *Breast Stories* is a collection of three stories that is especially renowned for Draupadi the heroine of the story entitled the same. The protagonist becomes so immune to the stance that her immunity catches the villain of the story, Senanayak into a sheer discomfiture, a debacle on his part. The story does not seem justifiable when it comes to representation of a female, the way she is robbed of her honour though. The elements of black humour are also prevalent in the texts like *Chotti Munda, Mother of Dusk and Dawn* and *Mother of 1084*. The other stories *The Breast-Giver* and *Choli ke Peeche* are also marked with a pathetic discourse. The chapter finds a detailed analysis of the same.

History seems to be a passion of Mahasweta Devi. Her propensity towards it is quite evident in the novels, *Bedanabala* (2009), *Aranyer Adhikar* (1983), and *Titu Mir* (2003) and the biographical text, *Nivedita*
Sen and Nikhil Yadav (2008) term it a novel, *The Queen of Jhansi* (2009). Mahasweta has in particular brought to light those aspects of history of India that remained neglect in the mainstream record of the country. The stories of Birsa Munda, Bedanabala, and Titu Mir naturally deserve a special notice and Mahasweta every word of appreciation for their minute exploration therefore. Mahasweta Devi has proven it that even the prostitutes had a big share of their own so far as runs the issue of freedom struggle of India, a fact that was invariably kept into oblivion. Mahasweta has written almost on versatile grounds. She has penned some stories for children, like *Our Non-Veg Cow and other Stories* (2000), *Dewana Khoimala and the Holy Banyan Tree* (2004), etc. Apart from this, she has written many essays on bonded labourers, tribals, and untouchables the very ones that are published in *Dust on the Road* and that reflect an insider’s view. Mahasweta attacks the contemporary evil factors, mainly biased and amoral politics. She does not seem to spare anybody that deters the way of progress of the social rejects—economic, social, political, etc.

Mahasweta’s *Chotti Munda* and *Mother of 1084* could be seen as the texts tearing such politics apart. Her representation of the bonded slaves, tribals, untouchables and women holds the thinking community in a dilemma and touches the common readers deeply. The Brahmins, Rajputs, Sardars, Marwaris, Jains and, at times, Muslims play the utter and merciless
villains in the works of Mahasweta. They are emblematic of physical, psychological, economic and social exploitation. These are morally corrupt and act as what Forster (2005) calls flat and round characters. The subaltern characters, however, play the flat ones throughout. Mahasweta is deeply concerned about environmental and migratory issues. For instance, the titles *Aranyer Adhikar, Chotti Munda, Bitter Soil* (2009), *Water* (1997), *Arjun* (2001), *The Book of the Hunter* (2002), etc. bring out these issues. Her concerns about the women of old age are graphically evident in the works like *Rudali, Old Women* (2002) and *After Kurukshetra* (2005). The dominant communities, noted above— staunchly supported by the politicians and law, oppress and exploit the subalterns in every walk of life.

It seems quite probable that Mahasweta’s approach towards industrialization may be taken for Luddism but it seems to contain a sense of truth in it. Her writing certainly makes a way to create a space for representation of the subalterns to a particular extent. There are many remarks expressed by various people yet the following would presumably describe her writing in a nutshell:

As a creative writer, her contribution is important, both in significance and in volume. Her innovations with language and style have been recognized by critics and contemporaries as important contributions to the history of Bengali literary convention, and her
prolific pen makes here one of the most widely published authors in **her native tongue, Bengali.** (Maitreya Ghatak, *Dust on the Road* viii)

Mahasweta Devi has been criticized, when on mission activism, by certain politicians like Mamata Banerjee. For example, when Mahasweta termed Mamata’s rule as ‘Fascist’, the latter retorted: ‘Mahasweta had been tutored and she didn't approve of her remarks’ (TOI 22.11.11). In addition to this, Mahasweta also seems to have reached a compromise with Mamata, the CM as she stated, two days later:

‘I have full faith in Mamata Banerjee's leadership. Only she can rebuild a new Bengal. Her work among the poor, backward classes, tribals and minorities is well known.’ (24.11.11)

Though an octogenarian, Mahasweta keeps her activism up and unshaken. Roopika Risam (2006) says that Mahasweta Devi ‘sees the tribal people as emblematic of social oppression in India’ (Web 13.10.12). At an artistic level, she is criticized by Nivedita Sen and Nikhil Yadav for her narrative technique. The critics claim that Mahasweta struggles with narrative art:

*However, in the longer narratives like* Operation? - Bashai Tudu, Chhoti Munda and His Arrow or Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay and Pritha *that we find Devi grapple with issues of narrative presentation.* (30)

Maitreya Ghatak, one of Mahasweta’s translators and an editor, says that literary purists do not take Mahasweta’s writing in the positive spirit—
Mahasweta has been criticized by literary purists who feel that she is merely a chronicler of social reality. (Dust on the Road)

When one reads Mahasweta closely, one comes across the fact that the narrative style she uses for her presentation has some bohemian element in it. For example, when introducing an event, she makes a mix of the simple past or perfect past and simple present tenses. It seems a bit difficult to infer if she does it on purpose. Such a nuance is also a benchmark discovered in Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999).

It is also especially notable that when she explores a discussion of the untouchables and tribals, Mahasweta does not offer a single mention or allusion to the names like Mahatma Phule, Dr Ambedkar or Rajarshi Shahu, the people whose contribution to the cause of the downtrodden and depressed is taken for granted as par excellence. Another aspect that comes as preeminent in her works like *Chotti Munda, Mother of 1084, Bashai Tudu, Draupadi*, etc. is representation of violence. She quite openly vindicates the issue of violence:

[…] For I believe in anger, in justified violence, and so peel the mask off the face of the India which is projected by the Government, to expose its naked brutality, savagery, and caste and class exploitation; and place this India, a hydra-headed monster, before a people’s court, the people being the oppressed millions. (Bitter Soil, Introduction x)
Mahasweta’s texts reflect the idea of Naxalism, eminently those alluded above. Therefore, the violence is certain to follow in them. There is another fascination of hers that occupies some space in her literature; it is Rabindra Nath Tagore. The name very often occurs in her discourse and the Nobel Prize of Tagore also peeps in. Mahasweta has been translated into as many as fourteen languages with English, Italian, Japanese and French being the transnational ones. Mahasweta has sustained her own value as a creative-writer-cum-activist for the last over four decades. This is the reason why she is appreciated a lot with Spivak as her trailblazer proponent. It would be worth its while to quote Nelson Mandela, who spoke on the occasion of Jnanpith award:

She [Mahasweta] holds a mirror to the conditions of the world as we enter the new millennium.

On Translation:

Since Mahasweta Devi’s works are basically formed in Bengali register through and through, it was not possible for the researcher to acquire cognizance of the language to a required extent within stipulated duration of the research work. Therefore, the works of Mahasweta in English translation were preferred to those in the original language. A limitation the thesis carries, moreover, in this respect is that a text that is indispensable with a view to developing discussion of history in relation to Mahasweta’s works has been utilized in Marathi rendering; the reason
being that no English version of it was available during the course of the research. The text is *Aranyer Adhikar* (The Occupation of Forest), a novel rendered by Prabha Srinivas. Of course, translation carries its own confines so far to afford the original taste but one could not deny its own value in carrying the core of the matter it conveys.

John Mustain from Stanford University writes about translation history:

> The Renaissance has been termed "the great age of translations." The rise of Humanism inspired translators from various European countries to translate many texts, especially those of the ancients. England in the early 16th century lagged far behind the Continent in the production of translations: by 1528, for example, Xenophon, Suetonius, Sallust, Thucydides, and Caesar were all readily-available in French; English translations would come only later. (Web 09.10.12)

Edwin Gentzler, a leading master of translation theory, states:

> [...] Although considered a marginal discipline in academia, translation theory is central to anyone interpreting literature; in an historical period characterized by the proliferation of literary theories, translation theory is becoming increasingly relevant to them all. (CTT 1)
Gentzler has explored a new theory of translation called *polysystem theory*. In it, he speaks of cultural models. In fact, the concept of polysystem is Itamar Even Zohar’s given (Gentzler 106). The system deals with ‘the entire network of correlated systems—literary and extraliterary—within society [...] to explain the function of *all* kinds of writing within a given culture’ (114). The other points that Gentzler clears further have been ‘the science of translation’ and ‘deconstruction’. The theorist is optimistic about future of translation theory. Ravinder Gargesh and K K Goswami (2007) also speak of relevance of translation in the following fashion—

> The relevance of translation as a multifaceted and a multidimensional activity and its international importance as a socio-cultural bridge between countries has grown over the years. Not only do countries and nations interact with each other, but individuals too need to have contact with members of other communities/societies that are spread over different parts of the world. (T and I xi)

The writers believe that translation functions as a major tool for the transmission and preservation of knowledge and it is instrumental to have spread the major religions of the world. Christoph Gutknecht (2003) opines that ‘the job of the translator is to bridge the gap between two foreign languages’ (692). Clifford E. Landers (2010) also offers pragmatic guidelines to overcome the barriers posed by translation activity.
Riccardi’s *Translation Studies* (2002) attempts to analyse the panorama of complex phenomenon of translation theory.

Considering the aforementioned propositions on translation studies, it would come forth that translated books could offer a helpful hand so far from the perspective of research. Besides, virtually every theorist means translation to *bridge* the gap between people and cultures. The classic examples of translation—that have immensely helped the world, from the viewpoint of acquisition of knowledge of spiritualism and classics, have been Chapman’s *Homer* (2002) and King James’ version of *Bible* (2005). Thus the researcher has essayed to analyse Mahasweta Devi using her English *translation* as the bridge.

**Notes**

2. Thiong’O spoke on English in response to a paper on 24 October 1968.

3. A speech delivered at a national level seminar at Nanded, later published by Harnai Publication, Nanded.

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