ABSTRACT

The emphasis of my research work has been to explore and analyze Cultural Conflict in the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and Mahasweta Devi: A Comparative Study of the Selected Novels. It is an endeavour to examine Bapsi Sidhwa and Mahasweta Devi, who are two great artists in the realm of Indian English fiction. A comparative study of the two novelists of the kind provides a fascinating and rewarding experience. This thesis contains a detailed study of the novel as a genre as well as it depicts biographies of the fictional writers (Bapsi Sidhwa and Mahasweta Devi). The study encompasses the works of Bapsi Sidhwa and Mahasweta Devi with their different geographical, cultural and social variations. All the six texts represent varied voices and experiences of women in the Indian and Pakistani patriarchal socio-cultural contexts. The protagonists have similar experiences to some extent but each of the protagonists has adopted her own way to tackle the circumstances faced by her. A large number of critical articles and full length studies with regard to the two writers have appeared individually but no one has compared Bapsi Sidhwa and Mahasweta Devi as novelists for his/her research work.

Hence, this study seeks to examine the cultural conflict by these two contemporary women novelists, three novels of each writer in particular that have relevance for the study. The novels that are taken up for the study are: The Pakistani Bride, Ice-Candy-Man, An American Brat and Rudali, Aranyer Adhikar, Mother of 1084. The critical study of these six novels in juxtaposition with each other yields more penetrating insight into the cultural conflict in their lives of the women protagonists depicted in these novels.

All the six texts represent varied suppressed voices of the women characters because of the socio-cultural dynamics, overt or covert, in the novels. The protagonists have some similar experiences to some extent, even though they belong to different socio-cultural races and milieus, but each protagonist has followed her own way to tackle the circumstances and carve out her destiny. As and when the context demands, the elements of comparison and contrast are brought into focus in all the chapters so that the examination of the novels of both the writers results in the enhancement of each other’s significance. From critical perspectives, this is not intended as a feminist study of the novels or novelists under consideration. However,
it must be admitted that as the world presented in these novels is viewed by women, it is bound to project a woman’s point of view. It also tries to analyze the portrayal of men and women characters that belong to the rural and urban lower middle classes of the Indian and Pakistani societies. The prime concern of Mahasweta Devi has been the exploration of the role and importance of culture in the lives of men and women; her protagonists are always in search of their identity, basic human rights and socio-cultural life. Bapsi Sidhwa, on the other hand, attempts to focus on the role of culture in the lives of men and women; Sidhwa’s protagonists rise in revolt against the existing moribund cultural conditions and further seek their fulfillment and identity by charting their course, independently, on the strength of their personalities.