THE PROBLEMATICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH

BY
KOYEL CHAKRABARTY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Sec-16 C, Dwarka
New Delhi-110075
THE PROBLEMATICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH

BY
KOYEL CHAKRABARTY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Submitted
in fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
Sec-16 C, Dwarka
New Delhi-110075
December, 2011
Certificate

This is to certify that the work embodied in the thesis entitled “The Problematics of Human Rights in Indian Fiction in English” is original and has been carried out by the author and that it has not been submitted in full or in part for any other diploma or degree of this or any other University.

Dr. Anup Beniwal
Supervisor

Dean
University School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Acknowledgements

I express my gratitude to all those who have helped me during the course of my research. The critical initial spur for the study came from my guide and supervisor Prof. Anup Beniwal who has contributed to it in many ways. Prof. Beniwal has been a brilliant supervisor who has always encouraged my efforts and showed me the right path that was to be followed. His academic inputs helped this study to grow and mature. I thank him sincerely from the core of my heart.

I am also very thankful to all the faculty members of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, for provoking complex thoughts about this project at the time of six-monthly seminars and helping me find their answers. It is for their guidance that this work has a multi-faceted approach.

I am very grateful to Dr. K.N Sharma for consultation and assistance about certain elements of this work. I am obliged to Dr. Manash Mukherjee who has always appreciated my ideas for this work and contributed some help in understanding certain concepts. Significant intellectual support was provided by my colleagues and well wishers of my workplace. I especially thank Dr. B.K Khan, Director, Gateway College of Engineering, Sonepat for motivating me through my study from the very inception of my work. I also acknowledge the support of Mr. J.N Sharma, Finance Manager, BRCM College of Engineering and Technology, for being by me for any academic requirement related to this work. Very special thanks to him.

The blessings and the whole hearted support of my two families were absolutely essential for this study to see the light of the day. I pay my whole-hearted thanks to Ma and Bapu who have burnt their midnight oil for me. I thank my in-laws, who had been boosting me up at times when I felt lethargic or pressed for time. Their loving presence put life into my academic pursuit.
The word ‘thanks’ seems curiously inadequate and wholly incapable to acknowledge Rudra’s contribution to this project. His persuasion, encouragement, deep concern has helped me to retain my sense and sanity through this excruciating task. His advice on the logicalities of this project has given new dimension to my thought and its implementation.

I am indebted to the staff of National Library, Kolkata, State Central Library, Kolkata, GGSIPU Library, Delhi, IIT, Delhi, MDU Library, Rohtak, itm University Library, Gurgaon, Sahitya Akademi Library, Delhi, for their help and cooperation.

I am very appreciative of Dr. Y. K Tiwari, Principal, AIET, Alwar, and his family for their conviction in me and Dr. Rekha whose affectionate concern has helped me to keep my spirits high in times of stress.

Koyel Chakrabarty
THE PROBLEMATICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIAN
FICTION IN ENGLISH

Abstract

The concept of Human Rights is as old as Literature. Being about life, literature takes its sustenance from life and, as such, it is not only an aesthetic construct but also a bearer of social and human significance. At one level, this literary concern manifests itself through the exploration and postulation of Human Rights. In the process it not only engages itself with human-right concepts, their vicarious possibilities but also paves way for interdisciplinary readings of literature and human rights. These seemingly distinct disciplines inform each other at the level of theory, praxis and pedagogy. Literary works can, therefore, be seen as potent and rich resources to correlate and study the concepts of human rights and vice-versa, as both literature and human rights become complementary to each other.

With the world wide acceptability of human rights, as laid down by the UNO, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), a consciousness for and awareness of human rights have become central to human existence. Consequently a tradition/culture of human rights and their sanctity have acquired literary-imaginative center stage. While human rights shape the creative credos of creative writers, literature, in turn, critically/actively intervenes into this aspect of human existence in its various dimensions. The proposed research project, by purporting human rights as evaluative framework and selected Indian fiction in English as case studies, seeks to explore and analyse the interface between the two.
Understanding Indian Literature in English through Human Rights perspectives involves a critical dissection of the chosen literary texts which would highlight and problematise certain Human Rights concepts embedded in them. The study proposes to evolve as a sociological and deconstructive reading of the literary texts chosen for the purpose. In its problematisation of human rights issues the study specifically focuses on the literary representation of children, women, Dalits and the marginal/tribal people in Indian Fiction in English and English translation. The study is based on the details of the following novels:

3. *Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai (1985)

This research work at the beginning introduces the human rights concepts and explains its scope of work in our daily lives. It further discovers and establishes the relationship between literature and human rights which is complementary to each other. Reading literature from human rights perspectives rather serves as a valuable addition. Contemporary Indian Fiction in English engaged with the human rights issues from pre-independence era to the 1980’s, either document
human rights violations, articulate a human right claim or offer a critique of the limitations of human rights discourse. Some of the topics around which the discussion develops are:

- the realization of the issues of human rights in each novel taken for study,
- discussion of the importance and graveness of problems in the lives of the protagonist,
- analysis of the circumstances from literal and human rights perspectives,
- examining and critiquing the role of the existing law, cultural mores, socio-economic constructs in society and lives of protagonists,
- dissecting the mechanization of exploitative system in which the characters are trapped and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness,
- finding the solutions provided by the authors, if any
- decoding the poetics and politics of representation by the authors, their closeness to reality and
- finally, justifying the probability of the novels to stand out as human rights documents.

**Chapter 1** of this research work is introductory in nature. Here an attempt is made to problematise the interface between literature and human rights through the survey of literature and the concepts of Human Rights as laid down in various human rights charters. This Chapter will also try to expound on the research methodology of the work and also underline the scope and significance of the study.

**Chapter 2** focuses on the issue on the Right of the Children vis-à-vis their depiction and representation under study.
Chapter 3 reviews the selected novels and scrutinizes them from the perspectives of Rights of Women. It also analyses the psycho-somatic struggle of women through time as delineated by the authors at the intersection of gender, class, caste, their rights of thoughts and expression and the way it impinges on the very notions of human rights and human dignity.

Chapter 4 problematises the issues of marginalisation with special focus on the delineation of the rights of Dalits, and tribal people and their representations in the texts chosen for study. In the process, the issues of differentiation, hierarchies and marginalization are taken up for detailed analysis vis-à-vis their creative representation in the texts. The Chapter also dissects the mechanization of exploitative system in which the tribal and the Dalit are trapped and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness.

Chapter 5 concludes the salient findings of the study and thereby sums up and concedes the poetics and politics of the representation and delineation of human rights in Indian fiction in English and suggests areas for further study in the field if possible.

The study understands and analyses the fact that human rights and literature when brought together and studied in the light of each other, the two individual disciplines grow more interrelated and prominent in its expression and understanding. Studying human rights considering literature as a manifesto of the society and times not only raise questions on its premises formulating it but also lends a scope to see through its politics and problematics working both universally and locally. Again, studying literature through the eyes of human rights not only increases the poignancy of understanding the characters and their circumstances, but also points to its fantastic attainability in real lives. After all, stylistic devices and narrative techniques speak more than that of dry law for human understanding. But viewing human rights
through literature does have a danger of over trusting the author’s point of view and judging the cases by overlooking the underlying political or biased vein in the words of the text. On the whole, this work tries to find solutions by bringing both the perpetrator of good and bad from the novels on to a same level and evaluates them from human rights perspectives. Apart from finding the two interdisciplinary chords running simultaneously in each text, this work successfully reads them as pronounced human rights documents considering the different nuances in their presentation with their poetics and politics thus, emphasizing the need of understanding the human rights concerns in literature.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting Human Rights and Literature: A Comprehensive Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children as Narrative Props and the Problematics of Human Rights</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of Women Rights in Indian Fiction in English</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematizing Dalit/Tribal Rights Issues in Indian Fiction in English</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A way Forward and Beyond</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Connecting Human Rights and Literature:
A Comprehensive Study

Human rights are rights that a person enjoys for being born as a human being. Rene Cassin, the principal drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights\(^1\) defines “the science of human rights as a particular branch of social science- the object of which is to study human relations in the light of human dignity while determining those rights and faculties which are necessary as a whole for the full development of each human being’s personality.” \(^2\)

The development of the human rights, in the west, can be traced largely through the legal documents and philosophical discourse, originating around the seventeenth century. The earliest example of conceptions of freedom and rights in codified form can be found in Hammurabi’s Code\(^3\) dating back at least 1750 BC, when Hammurabi, the king of Babylonia, consolidated regulations taken from the kingdoms he had conquered. Since then the arguments about formation, implementation and execution of these rights have been debated over and over again
in different countries and in different forms. But this is fait accompli that human rights are considered in all nations in one form or the other, in every age embodying through them the concept of better jurisprudence, the welfare of the people and maintaining peace and harmony. Officially, the Magna Carta, the Treaty of Westphalia, the English Bill of Rights, the United States Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and the United States Bill of Rights, can be taken as premises for the formation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in the United States. The Universal Declaration of Human rights emerged as a reaction to the atrocities and oppression caused by the Second World War. Apart from detailing the rights and freedoms of individuals for the first time, it was the first international acknowledgement of the ‘inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.' Almost all the countries of the world adhere to the principle declarations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in maintaining equality of rights, dignity, peace and brotherhood in peoples.

The preamble of the Declaration says:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal inalienable rights of the members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Whereas it is essential, if man not be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

On tenth December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations enforced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration
constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.  

It was hoped that the Declaration would be embodied into a Covenant of human rights creating human rights norms to be followed and abided by all nations. In that same year two Covenants were adopted as parts relating to the Declaration – The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Human rights are considered to be universal, indivisible and interdependent. Consequently, the term ‘fundamental rights’ tend to be used to indicate more importance of certain rights. Some rights are so important that they must always be given precedence in national and international policy. They include the basic rights pertaining to individual dignity as well as to their material needs. In importance, first are the civil and political rights and second are the social, economic and cultural ones. In recent years, academicians have started to talk about the existence of a third generation rights which are solidarity rights, for example the right to peace, the right to development, the right to food, water and to a clean environment.

Human rights are necessarily dynamic. If scrutinized, there are at least six features which are basic to the concept of human rights. First, all people have the right to lead a dignified and human life, and work towards achieving this for all people. Second, these rights cannot be denied on the basis of caste, colour, religion and gender. Third, they take no account of nation, race, sex or colour. People of all nations, colour, race, religion have same rights everywhere. Fourth, the developed and developing countries in all continents of the world must guarantee
the same rights to all their citizens. Fifth, follows the idea that, “all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity” and therefore, deserve the same opportunities and treatment, whilst simultaneously respecting their different cultures and traditions, political persuasion, sexuality, social origin, status etc. and sixth, governments must therefore work to create the same opportunities for all the people in the country. This may involve extra work to make those opportunities the same for certain sections in society e.g. women, children, the disabled and the marginalised.

The above features lead to a vital conclusion that rights are concerned with the relationship between an individual and the state. Consequently, it is for the government to create a society where each individual can enjoy and freely exercise his or her rights to the full. These rights are considered to be basic for the development of human personality and for the sake of human dignity. Examples of such rights are the right to life, freedom from slavery and freedom from torture. Human rights hold nations accountable for meeting the conditions which satisfy the promotion, protection and respect for these rights. But whatever may be the issue experts like Professor James Nickel, in the field of human rights, hold the view that compliance with human rights is mandatory and moreover, these rights are viewed as independent because they ‘exist and are available as standards of justification and criticism whether or not they are recognized or implemented by the legal system, or officials of a country.

Despite the widespread acceptance of the concept of human rights, there is necessarily no uniform agreement on what human rights are or on the substantive content of the term. Indeed what is grossly called as human rights has been a subject of moral, philosophical, legal and political debate. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is held in such regard for its
contribution to the international human rights regime that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and human rights have become almost synonymous concepts. As Jack Donnelly opines, “For the purposes of international action, ‘human rights’ means roughly ‘what is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.’” Despite such accolades, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights faces criticism.

It has been a matter of great study and symposium in different parts of the world on the question of the origin of the concepts and ideologies behind human rights. Even though the origin of the doctrine of human rights was compiled in the West, yet many scholars, both western and non-western, assume that the prevalence of ideas like equality, freedom within other cultures and religions, respect of dignity etc. are found in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Confucianism. There is a subtle tilt in approach between the west and the east while dealing with the human rights concepts. In the Asian and Third world countries, culture plays a crucial role in deciding the rights of the people. There is more emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of a citizen than the rights unlike the western thought which endows rights as individualistic in notion apart from culture.

India has always played an important role in the formation of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. India from its time of independence has actively taken part in the Human rights concerns. The Constitution of India very well reflects the key principles of the Universal Declaration of Human rights and allows sufficient free play of rights and liberties to its citizen. Indian culture, if studied profoundly, reveals in its roots the very notions of human dignity, freedom and equality-the main concepts plying behind the human rights declaration. A reading of the Hindu Laws will also reveal the origin of the ideology of Indian concepts of upholding
human dignity; rights and liberties that are influenced by the traditional values such as those existing in ancient Indian *Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, Upanishads and Dharmashastras*.

When studied minutely, it can be traced that Indian laws are evolutionary in nature and has been directly based on the ancient moral and religious codes. But these laws have been changed according to the needs of the time. At the centre of the human rights lies the idea of human dignity and equality which are very well described in the *Vedas* and *Vyasa Smriti*. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article14 of the Indian Constitution are quite similar to each other which talk about the equal rights and dignity of human beings irrespective of sex, colour, creed, and sect in the eyes of the law and that all people should abide by this law.

The impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on drafting of human rights Chapters in Parts III and IV in the Indian Constitution is felt throughout. Part III of the Indian Constitution speaks of the Fundamental Rights of its citizens and Part IV speaks about some Directive Principles of State Policies that recommends the citizens to follow certain duties and responsibilities within the Indian territory. India has acceded to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as to both the Covenants and deposited its document of accession with the United Nations, with certain reservations. The role of the Supreme Court of India is commendable in expanding the human rights and it has found Article 21 as a most fruitful Article.

While acceding to the Covenant, India expressed its reservation as to “enforceable rights of compensation for persons claiming to be the victims of unlawful arrest and detention against the state”, but in several cases the Indian Supreme Court has held that such rights of compensation are a part of Article 21, the right to life and liberty. In the comprehension of the Supreme Court,
the right to life and liberty includes right to human dignity, rights of privacy, rights to travel all over the world, right to speedy trial, right to free legal aid, right of prisoner to be treated with dignity and humanity, right to bail, right to compensation for custodial death, right to know, right of livelihood, right to protection of health and medical care, right to protection of childhood, right to equal pay for equal work, right of workers to fair wage and human conditions of work, right to social security, right of workers to participate in the management, right to shelter, right to education, right to healthy environment. Apart from these, are enshrined in the Constitution of India the usual civil and political rights, right to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, freedom to form association and unions, right to free movement, right to practice any profession, a vocation and to carry on any trade, business or occupations. The right to free and fair elections, democratic form of government and rule of law are part of the basic structure of our Constitution.

These fundamental human rights which are manifestations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights manifest themselves in political and governmental sphere by replacing absolutism and constitutionalism. The supremacy of fundamental rights implies that the government has the duty to refrain from a course of action which may result in the infringement of these rights. The sanctity of the fundamental rights can be gauged from Article 13 of the Constitution, which mandates the state to ensure that no ‘law’, which has been defined to include an ‘Ordinance, order, by-law rule, regulation, notification, custom or usage having in the territory of India the force of law is in violation of any fundamental right. Part IV of the constitution also contains some Directive Principles of economic, cultural and social justice and certain ideas which the state should strive to attain.
India has implemented the International Declaration of Human Rights and Covenant on the Social and Economics Rights and that all parts of the international Covenants in one form or the other in its constitution which may have a significant impact on the situation of the Dalits and other minorities; but this is to be interpreted to suit the will of the ruling group. Nation wise also India has implemented certain progressive rights for the protection of the Dalit and the Scheduled Castes/Tribes (SC/ST) which have been rendered positive results. According to K. Subba Rao, “what American and other highly developed countries have achieved through judicial decision and pragmatism, has been crystallized, embodied and improved upon by the Indian Constitution.¹⁸ The main difference between Part III and Part IV of the Indian Constitution is that the former in justifiable whereas the latter is not. This somehow imbalances the equation, if scrutinized from the human rights perspectives as every right mentioned in the constitution remains unsolved as without legal support most of the times rights fail to perform in reality.

To partly tackle this imbalance, on September 28, 1993, the government has set up a National Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Commissions in respective states and Human Rights Courts “for better protection of human rights and for matters connected herewith are incidental thereto”. The President of India promulgated an Ordinance which embodies the Protection of Human Rights Acts in 1993 (Act. No 10 of 1994).

A Human Rights Commission can investigate, study and deal with a particular violation of human rights and can forward a case in the court for its judgment. Any case that is dealt by the Human Rights Commission is deemed as a judicial proceeding. Though India’s concern for its citizen and the universal social order is provided as it had readily become parties to the
Economic, Social and Cultural Covenant and Civil and Political Rights Covenant with other states in the United Nations, but India has refrained herself from signing the mentioned Optional Protocol in the Civil, Political Covenants. The Optional protocol said that the committee established under the protocol will be empowered to receive complaints from individuals who allege a violation of their rights set in the Covenant. India’s denial of submission to this protocol means that no individual can complain to the human rights committee against any violation in India of any right protected by the treaty of the United Nations. India’s official excuse on this matter is that the ratification of the Optional Protocol would mean foreign countries interfering with its sovereignty. This somewhat paralyses the legislating power of human rights and weakens the overall motive of development in India.

Therefore, the past development of human rights can therefore be summarised as (i) its emergence in theory, (ii) its incorporation into legal form, and (iii) the internationalisation of the protection of human rights; that is, protecting human rights at the international level as well as at the national level. Today's development of human rights also has two additional aspects. The first is furthering the protection of existing rights at all levels - namely national, regional and universal levels- by means of, inter alia, national legislation, interpretation of the provisions of the existing human rights treaties by supervisory bodies established in these treaties, reinforcing the implementation systems, adopting additional protocols to the treaties, and the activities of the non-governmental organisations. In addition, the respect for human rights in the territory of a particular state can be taken into consideration in providing development assistance by the developed countries. That is why in India we find foreign NGOs and Social Working Organisations working with no resistant for the improvement of the condition of the people and Indian government makes it sure that these organisations get proper privilege for
working in the state territory only that they have to follow the laws of the Indian territory. This
inter-personal relationship for a welfare cause among countries strengthens the universal peace,
harmony, moral and ethical values that make human beings humane.

II

Man (here man is used to mean human beings) is a social animal and it is thus that man enjoys
living in groups. It is the human value imbedded in a culture that makes a man think about
rights. Human values and human rights are very closely related to each other while cultural
taboo s and ideologies differ depending upon state conventions. There have been certain
questions on the matter whether human rights are related to human values? Whatever may be
the answer to this question, scholars over the world unanimously notify to the fact that the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a treaty that is influenced and reflected by principles
based on world cultures and human values. In this regard, it may be noted that six of the twenty
five paragraphs dealing with specific rights in the Universal Declaration of Human rights
possess an economic, social, or cultural character. Upendra Baxi rightly explains that every
societal culture has well composed beliefs, sentiments, symbols that impart sense to the notion
of being human, no matter how many different registers of inclusivity… Within cultures,
distinctive legal cultures give rise to the practice of rights. In this sense, perhaps, human
rights may be described as ‘cultural software’ a set of mechanisms of hermeneutics power’,
that make, in a constant dynamic way, new understandings of what it means and ought to mean,
to be human. A proper study on the global culture of human rights will reveal that it is a
manifestation of many cultures together; rather it is a culture of many cultures. Another thing
that cannot be ignored is that, culture cannot be studied without the reference to the politics of
representation and law and human rights was framed after consideration of world cultures on
the whole. This again brings out the inter-reliability and inter-dependability of human rights and
culture.

The above discussion puts into light a vital point about the language of human rights that it
speaks. The Secretary General of the United Nations of the Convention of 1948 said that human
rights have a language of humanity. It encompasses the principles of morality, ethics together
with culture, economics and social rights of the people. Human values are beliefs of a person or
social groups in which an emotional investment either for or against something is embedded
within. They are the rules by which a society make decisions about right and wrong, should and
shouldn't, good and bad. They hierarchically prioritise the more or less important things in a life;
which is useful and not; when priority is to be given on one value over another. Values are socio-
cultural constructs that are widely expected to be followed by people related to that socio-
cultural sphere. Morals have a greater social element to values and tend to have a very broad
acceptance. Morals are far more important constructs about good and bad considered as a priori
over other values. Ethics, on the other hand, tend to be codified into a formal system or set of
rules which are explicitly adopted by a group of people. They are rules or standards governing
the conduct of a person or the members of a profession. There are ethics related to economics,
medicine, management, academics and so on. Ethics are thus internally defined in groups related
to a particular motive and adopted, whilst morals tend to be externally imposed on people.

Every culture has a set of moral and social values. They are many times influenced by the
religious taboos and beliefs too. These beliefs derive over the pre-history and are modified with
each generation. It is a basic goal of every culture, tribe or nation to maintain its own identity as
a group.²⁶ It is because of the wide cultural diversity among nations that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights took twenty eight years to take shape. It was framed keeping in mind the various cultural differences in different nations. Yet there are several contradicting issues when world cultures are discussed as many cultural taboos go against the goodness and welfare of humanity like that of the Muslim nations whose mode of cultural operation is very much different, relating to the women, from other nations and so there are several issues that the declaration could not talk about or bring in its periphery.

There are often conflicts between human rights and culture. Some apply this cultural relativism to the promotion, protection, interpretation and application of human rights which could be interpreted differently within different cultural, ethnic and religious traditions. In other words, human rights are culturally relative rather than universal. Taken to its extreme, this relativism would pose a dangerous threat to the effectiveness of international law and the international system of human rights that has been painstakingly constructed over the decades. If cultural tradition alone governs state compliance with international standards, then widespread disregard, abuse and violation of human rights would be given legitimacy. Accordingly, the promotion and protection of human rights perceived as culturally relative would only be subject to state discretion, rather than international legal imperative. By rejecting or disregarding their legal obligation to promote and protect universal human rights, states advocating cultural relativism could raise their own cultural norms and particularities above international law and standards and thus not only deny the international standards of human rights norms but also establish themselves as exemplary cases of tyrannous autonomy and vandalism.
There are and have been great debates on this issue quite lately but a simple and righteous conclusion to this debate is that traditional culture is not a substitute for human rights. This will be an important issue that will haunt every step in realising and analysing the various issues of this thesis relating to Indian culture and moral standards, when different novels would be studied as case studies. Hina Jilani in this context opines: “The administration of justice can be severely hampered if laws emerge from different understandings or perceptions of religion, and their application becomes uneven because of the religious, moral and social beliefs of those administering these laws.”

Culture should be one in which human rights must be established, integrated, promoted and protected. On the other hand, human rights must be approached in a way that is meaningful and relevant in diverse cultural contexts. It is interesting to note that the need to emphasize the common, core values shared by all cultures: the values of life, social order and protection from arbitrary rule etc. are all embodied in the human rights. Recognition and appreciation of particular cultural contexts would serve to facilitate, rather than reduce human rights respect and observance. Thus, the major drawback that the human rights concepts sometimes face is a thrust back from the cultural and religious set of taboos inherent in the minds of the people and organisations in nations respectively thereby hindering in the active functioning of the free play of the rights in people in different regions.

Therefore, every country and every individual must realise that human rights are not the gift or bounty of any political sovereign through legislation or any edict, but are rights inherent in human existence. The purpose of any law dealing with these rights is merely to recognize them, to regulate their exercise and to provide for their enforcement, and the related matters. Inviolability of some basic rights in a civilized society is based on this premise.
The next part of this Chapter explains the intrinsic relationship between Literature and Human Rights and explicitly relates how important it is for the world to consider literature as potent source of human rights concepts that can be used in theory, praxis and future framing new sets of human rights concepts that have not been addressed yet for the better understanding of the human world.

III

The concept of human rights is as old as literature. Being about life, literature takes its sustenance from life and as such, it is not only an artistic manifestation revealing a profound aesthetic construct but also is a bearer of social and human significance. At one level, this artistic concern manifests itself through the exploration and postulation of human rights. Literature in this process not only engages itself with human right concepts, their vicarious possibilities, but also paves the way for interdisciplinary readings of these two interrelated disciplines. These seemingly distinct subjects inform each other at the level of theory, praxis and pedagogy. Literary works can, therefore, be seen as potent and rich resources to correlate and study the concepts of human rights as both literature and human rights become complementary to each other.

Since the mid-twentieth century the language of human rights has become the dominant tool in articulating claims against oppression or injustice. In the past three decades, human rights have provided a preferred language for statements about morality and claims about justice and injustice. This is so because of its universal nature, as Costas Douzinas notes, “[human rights] can be adopted by the right and the left, the north and the south, the state and the pulpit, the minister and the rebel.” 27 The multidisciplinary attention to human rights in the humanities and
social sciences today explores the exchanges between political, legal, and ethical discourses on human rights and cultural texts including literature, the visual and performing arts, film, and popular culture. As Domna Staton opines, “connections between the humanities and human rights have existed historically and conceptually in the West through the mediation of humanism”.28

Since literature is the site of formal complexity and modes of multi-vocality that other humanistic discourses seldom approximate, exploring human rights in—and as—an aesthetic requires nuanced theoretical and comparative approaches.29 The contents and languages of the human rights has shifting vocabularies but basically the role of politics and culture threatens and constructs human rights principles and this is what literature, especially, fiction strives to represent. Novel being the socio-cultural mirror of the society shows and tells the lives of human beings from different angles, from various sections of the society, thereby bringing out the fundamental essence of human existence weighing against the negative forces that go against human rights. It is interesting to relate, the issues that the novels highlight are the issues which human rights concepts also upholds.

Discussing a protagonist in literature is nothing different from discussing human rights. A novel speaks about the socio-cultural and political norms in which the protagonist struggles to survive through different phases of his life and either perishes unable to withhold the social and psychosomatic pressures against him or wins over these negative pressures and overthrows the negativity for some positive, new ideal, thereby giving vent to a newer dimension of human existence and restoring back the lost human rights. Literature, hence in this form, not only brings
forward discourses interdisciplinarily related to each other in viewing society, human condition but also critiquing the socio-political, cultural norms and sometimes the human rights concepts themselves in relation to specific circumstances and conditions of life.

Literature triumphs in reaching those dark ends of human life, that sometimes human rights concepts fail to reach, because human behaviour and human mind cannot be judged according to set patterns and literature by showing the gravest possibilities, consequently act as both weapons for standing against oppression, pain, defeat, on one hand, and on the other hand, acts as a lighthouse of veracity, highlighting the need for change and advancement in socio-cultural thoughts, action, for documentation and future emancipation of human rights doctrines related to human perspectives.

It is not only interesting but advantageous to study the relationship between literature and human rights because it helps us to analyse the historical growth and development of literature through social protests and historical-social-political-cultural change through the ages. It compares and contrast the essential characteristics of such writings; highlights the points of views of the authors, realises the evolution of positive or negative forces in the society, politics, and culture through the times and analyses the cultural or neo-historical contexts that might have inspired the writings. There is also a chance to understand the social role of literary imagination, and the relationship between the author and those opposing forces that perpetually threaten fundamental rights. But it is sad to admit that as human rights inquiry continues to examine society and culture in general and artistic culture in particular, the aspirational utopian reach of human rights becomes more exacting and powerful. This is why literary writings can be taken as documents to
dis-cover the unwritten, hidden history behind the conventional history dealt in general. The texts become solid grounds to decipher the reality behind a tragic incident, the violation and atrocities done on the marginalised. They provide the marginal history a platform that can lacerate the civilized version framed by the oppressors thereby unmasking the truth behind each oppressed member and as a result emerge as solid deconstruction of the represented elements.

With the world wide acceptability of human rights, a consciousness for and an awareness of human rights has become central to human existence since 1950’s. Consequently, a tradition/culture of human rights and their sanctity have acquired literary-imaginative centre stage throughout the world. While human rights shape the creative credos of the creative writers, literature, in turn, critically/actively intervenes into this aspect of human existence in its various dimensions. Literature has always spoken about human rights through texts written against the formerly established hierarchy/ies, and later with post-colonial, feminist etc. writing and studies.

Although the discussion of human rights from a literary perspective requires a study of human beings and human nature; and human nature has been studied for centuries, yet the question arises whether literature has been used as a tool to interpret and judge the various appalling, overlooked and misinterpreted customs plying in a socio-cultural set up or not through the changing times. The answer is that, literatures has been neo-historically and culturally studied once and again for criticizing or deciphering society but the human rights of people have never been questioned until recently. Scholars of literature tend to overlook the role of law and rights in society when studying literature, as human rights are more than merely a sentimental discourse about how human beings “should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”,
to use the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human nature and thus human rights cannot be understood merely by logic or by reading the principle concepts embedded in the Declaration. Human rights maintain that we (human beings) are endowed with “reason and conscience” (1st Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.) Yet values are not based on reason.30 A great deal of what is an integral part of human nature and existence is unconscious, emotional, based on desires none of which have internal logic, yet this irremovable heterogeneity governs much of our lives. Though human rights and humanities in the form of literature speak about the same referred human world, yet there is a thin line of difference in linking between the two. Human envisioned as by the human rights is a creature in the eyes of the law and in relation to the state but in literature, human is an entity of flesh and blood, vulnerable to pain, pleasure, crime and benevolence. Literature can illuminate on human nature and existence in its fullness - with its logic and illogic – therefore it has a crucial role in understanding humanity and consequently the principles of moral propriety defined in human rights.31 In this case, the novel as a genre brings us closer to human rights.

It is wonderful to understand the two disciplines, literature and human rights, as indispensable sides of a cuboid, where the three dimensional sides show adjoining paths that reach to one similar end. Human rights are dry in nature filled with laws and charters suggesting means to attain specific goals, whereas literature is an artistic concretization of imagination and reality mixed in severed proportion which is also meant for reaching certain goals. What human rights as a subject thrives to achieve is an ideal situation of brotherhood, peace and harmony in mankind and nations marked by love, unity, creation, justice, well-to-do-ness; literature too at the end strives to ignite people in making its readers realise the ways to love, peace, creation,
justice, and well-to-do-ness. At the end both thrive to reach a unanimous end which is characterized by human peace and understanding both physical and psychological for the good of mankind.

A villain in literature is satirized, ironically said, and finally in most cases is debunked, either physically or through implicit suggestions, a hero is glorified for his qualities, good deeds and praised for restoring good against the bad and an anti-hero is left with the realization of truth amidst bewilderment and social injustice; but at the end all converge to one common goal and that is, to realise the dignity of life and human existence. And that is where we need to think, perceive and discuss the two disciplines; one complementary to another. Human rights strive to establish the best in all, protest the wrong, the injustice done to people and show a path towards attaining human dignity and peace in life. At the end of the discussion, whichever way we start, human rights or literature, we come to the same circular meeting point that champions human existence in all forms.

Reading literature as the mirror of times gives an opportunity to the scholars for realizing literature as a product of society, born through aesthetic constructs of the authors who are themselves human and vulnerable to the laws and language of human rights. In this case, the legal side of human rights should be interrelated with literature as human rights are also a set of cultural discourses (See II) as are literature. This takes us to a new path to critique and pry in the politics or the problematics of literature and human rights vice-versa. Thus, the relation between human rights and literature is complementary to each other, rather reading literature from human rights perspectives serves as a valuable addition.
According to the novelist J. M. Coetzee, the ‘dignity’ upon which human rights depend, ‘is not our essence but a foundational fiction to which we more or less wholeheartedly subscribe, a fiction that may well be indispensable for a just society, namely, that human beings have a dignity that sets them apart from animals and consequently protects them from being treated like animals’. 32 This is exactly what all fictions strive to attain, no matter what the theme or technique of a literary writing may be and this is why, I feel, literature must be approached from human rights prospect. But at the back of each interdisciplinary approach towards human rights and literature, law should not overwhelm the cultural mores of a society; rather it should have a balanced approach in understanding literature and vice-versa as both sentimental and legal dominion form a part of human rights talk. Though we recognize and analyse the limitation of law and culture in solving out the problematics of human rights in a layman’s life, yet we cannot pretend that literature or literary studies will serve as an answer to the problem of human rights violations—or that it will come to rescue the law from lawyers, legislators, politicians, diplomats and the people in power who make and unmake human rights according to the contexts required.

To sum up, both these distinct subjects, human rights and literature when brought together and studied in the light of each other, the two individual disciplines grow more interrelated and prominent in its expression and understanding. Studying human rights considering literature as a manifesto of the society and times not only raises questions on its premises formulating it but also lends us a scope to see through its politics and problematics working both universally and locally. Again, studying literature through the eyes of human rights not only increases the poignancy of understanding the characters and their circumstances, but also pointing its fantastic attainability in real lives. After all, stylistic devices and narrative techniques speak more than dry
laws do for human understanding. But in viewing human rights through literature does have a danger of over trusting the author’s point of view and judging the cases overlooking the underlying political or biased vein in the words of the text; this is also true for the human rights charters which are also influenced by some political thoughts and contexts. A scholar in this case is to look through the nuisances of both the disciplines and reach to some just judgment. This work finds the two interdisciplinary cords running undercover in each text thereby pointing the justness of the representation and enormosity of understanding the concerns of human rights in literature.

IV

Indian fiction plays a vital role in representing the historical culture of the country. Regional fiction or Indian Writing in English puts up a live picture of the society in which people live in at various nodes of time. Whatever goals the writings aim at, may it be history, anti-colonial, post-colonial, modern, post-modern, feminist etc. purposes, what comes up once and again is the story of Indian man and woman stressed or glorified against all odds and oddities. Indian literature is one of the oldest literary representations that highlight the demography and culture of the country. It is interesting to note that Indian culture has never taken the individual and society as antagonistic to each other. The individual and society is viewed as two complementary and incomplete entities tied to a relationship of mutual obligations, a commitment which was essential to ensure the well-being of all. Those who acted as the guardians of society and worked out the delicate nuances and detailed network of the social order were neither concerned about, nor even conscious of, the concept of human rights. They were more commercial about the moral dimension of a human being's activities than the legal aspect. Much emphasis was placed on the
understanding of society from a moral perspective. Of course, this understanding was highly elitist reflecting the Brahminical vision of a perfect society. It is true that certain values of Indian culture are contradictory to, and violative of, many Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. Yet there are many others which are similar to and supportive of many of the Articles contained in the Declaration.

Hence, the relationship between Indian cultural values and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is both conflicting and complementary at the same time. This will prove interesting as the work progresses as the major issues would be perceived in this light of dichotomy between human rights and Indian culture as represented in the novels chosen for study. As for example, the dictum of Indian culture dictates tolerance in human beings as a virtue in the Indian value system. Though strictly Brahminical in construct, it is embedded in the cultural ego of the country through religion. But tolerance is very much against the codes of human rights which are formulated for the assistance of the suffering lot. Again, Indian culture cherishes the freedoms of movement, education, expression, cultural and religious rites etc. in accordance to the concerns expressed in human rights.

The novel as a genre in India is a recent phenomenon and was of course written in regional languages. The novel in India came up in the British era at the end of the nineteenth century when writers were writing to upheaval the feelings of patriotism and national movements in people. Then it is an obvious observation that contemporary Indian literature will highlight the anti-colonial issues as the reflection of the times. Indian novel, esp. Indian Writing in English, if considered from a post-colonial perspective, is what Garrin, Griffith and Tiffin in *Empire Writes*
Back tells us, has passed through the stages of adoption, adaptation and now has become adept in representation, style and language. But the content it has always reproduced is strictly Indian. Besides being a representation of Indian culture and society, it was a medium to expose the Indian roots of culture and voice the demands, feelings, sentiments, to the world.

Because of her vast expanse and hundreds of languages prevailing in different regions of India, literature in India is varied and vicarious in its approach. Indian literature in the beginning comprised mainly verses written in the forms of epics, ballads, poems. In the early ages literature was elitist not only in its presentation but in readership as the authors were patronized to write for the kings and princes and literacy was strictly among elites. But with time, Indian literature, and especially, Indian novels portrayed the lives of common men, compressed between the good and the bad, dharma and adharma, right and wrong, rich and poor. Novels generally depicted stories of different class and caste, the issues like needs for social reforms, religion, women’s lives etc. were in vogue; then on the nineteenth century onwards novels spoke about the grassroots thereby highlighting the voices against reasons anti-colonial, anti-feudal or anti-social in nature. This is when the paraphernalia of human rights doctrinization through novels had been popularised in India. Early examples of such writings can be traced in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, whose Anandamath is considered as the first novel in proper, in Bengali, and others like Devaki Nandan Khetri and Munshi Prem Chand in Hindi, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhay in Bengali, Dalit and Marathi writings like Kancha Illiah, Ananthmurthy and so on.
Indian Writing in English started with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand to portray various sides of contemporary India and then went on to extend itself through the bold voices of the women authors like Anita Desai, Gita Hariharan, Arundhati Roy to diasporas like Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai.

This work explores examples of the contemporary Indian fiction in English that are engaged with the human rights issues, from documenting human rights violations or articulating a human right claim to offering a critique of the limitations of human rights discourse. Some of the topics around which the discussion will develop are:

- the realization of the issues of human rights in each novel taken for study,
- discussion of the importance and graveness of problems in the lives of the protagonists,
- analysis of the circumstances from literal and human rights perspectives,
- examining the role of law, cultural mores, and socio-political constructs in society and lives of protagonists,
- questioning the problematics of human rights in each case
- deciphering solutions given by the authors in each novel
- recognizing the poetics and politics behind the writings
- asserting a need to rehabilitate the working of human rights to restore the essence of dignity in characters taken for study.

The aim of this work is not only to interrogate the relationship between human rights and literature only, but also encourage and facilitate a dialogue between human rights and some of the critical fields in which these novels are more conventionally situated. Under a given topicality of some literary productions in human rights violations and struggles, my task is to
explore the works in the light of humanity and humanitarian angle. Literature is the form through which this work will deliberate on human rights.

It is innovative to comprehend that the human rights movement has given literature a new vocabulary, new standard, new mechanisms and reporting about it. Barbara Harlow points that “human rights reporting has itself become a genre, through a narrative, becomes itself a new literary form having its own rules and styles of presentation”.\(^{33}\) This is why this work has chosen novels, regional and national in flavour, translations of indigenous novels into English and Indian Writing in English to show the diversity of forms of representation through fiction – the life style, culture, moral, ethical and social violations in people; to put in another way, the human rights violations in different parts of India. In human rights, culture and aesthetics are intricately related to ethics and politics, sometimes inversely, and so human rights language in different novels change across discursive venues, people, culture and time thereby shifting in meaning, content, dialect, form and interpretation though keeping the basic essence unchanged.

My work takes Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, Gopinath Mohanty’s *Paraja*, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, Kapadia Kapadia’s *Seven Steps in the Sky*, Mahashweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Bama’s *Karukku*, and Omprakash Valmiki’s *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, for study which represents events from entire India, north, south, east and west, epitomizing the contemporary problems related to human rights violation and its consequences on the protagonists.

Understanding Indian English fiction through human rights perspectives will involve a critical dissection of the above mentioned texts which would highlight and problematise certain human rights concepts embedded in them. The study also proposes to evolve as a sociological and a
analytical reading of the literary texts chosen for the purpose. In its problematization of human rights issues the study would specifically focus on the literary representation of children, women, Dalits and the marginal/tribal people in Indian Fiction in English and English translation in the respective Chapters. This work will consequently give a chance to probe into a new dimension of the discussed issues in postulating a theory of human rights that can be applied in the study of literature.

The research work is divided into five Chapters based on the above categorization of each human rights concept where Chapter One is introductory in nature relating the interface between human rights and literature, Chapter Two focuses on the issue on the Right of the Children vis-à-vis their depiction and representation under study, Chapter Three reviews the selected novels and scrutinizes them from the perspectives of the rights of women. It also analyses the psychosomatic struggle of women through time as delineated by the authors at the intersection of gender, class, caste and nationality, their rights to thoughts and expression and the way it impinges on the very notions of human rights and human dignity. Chapter Four problematises the issues of marginalisation with special focus on the delineation of the rights of Dalits, and tribal people and their representations in the texts chosen for study. In the process, the issues of differentiation, hierarchies and marginalisation are taken up for detailed analysis vis-à-vis their creative representation in the texts. This Chapter also dissects the mechanization of the exploitative system in which the tribal and the Dalit are trapped and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness. Chapter Five concludes the salient findings of the study and thereby sums up and concedes the poetics and politics of the representation and delineation of the human rights in Indian Fiction in English and suggests areas for further study in the field if possible. It also analyses the progressive evolution from pre-independence to the present as seen
in the chosen texts, the gap between theory and praxis and the haunting ambiguities towards assimilation of human rights in India.

The research methodology for this work is mainly based on secondary data where consultation is mostly done on referred journals, books, gazettes, internet sources, newspaper and magazine articles etc.; interviews of relevant personalities can be recorded as the primary data if required. Otherwise, the literary texts and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are taken as the primary data for this research work.

V

Before understanding the novels in detail for their respective concerns and making critical analysis, the novels taken into consideration are discussed in brief to introduce their plots and thematic relevance.

*Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand (1935)

Written by Mulk Raj Anand in 1935, *Untouchable* is set in the outcastes' colony in the colonial period. The plot revolves around Bakha, a hard working boy, who never disobeys his father despite his repugnance for him and his lifestyle. Bakha works in the barracks of a British regiment and, has been “caught by the glamour of the ‘white man's' life (p.9)“. The simplest way for Bakha to imitate the Tommies was through 'fashun', "by which he understood the art of wearing trousers, breeches, coat, puttees, boots, etc. (10)". Changing one’s dress and adapting a superior, foreign style, Bakha thinks, would allow him to rise above caste, yet he received insults from his friends about his dress. They chide him for dressing like a sahib and trying to appear something what he is not. Dressing is what makes Bakha neither a Dalit nor a British. But
Bakha’s sincere attempt to be unique and different from his lot satisfies him a lot; it gives him the feeling of superiority among his inmates though by heart he knows that he is a Bhangi and can never get rid of caste. However, it seems to be the only way he can remove himself from his caste.

Bakha is a very dexterous workman; passerby's often marveled at his skill saying that he is, "a bit superior to his job, not the kind of man who ought to be doing this [cleaning toilets] (p.16)". Despite Bakha's skill and work ethics he has no chance of moving up in his life. He is forever confined to his dirty, demeaning job. Each day Bakha watched the Brahmin boys walk to school and he dreamed of going with them. "How nice it must be to be able to read and write! One could read the papers after having been to school. One could talk to the sahibs (38)."

However, he has no scope for education as outcastes were not allowed in school because "the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low-caste man's son (39)". Bakha's desire to be educated like the sahibs was so strong that he offered to pay a high caste boy to teach him to read. Bakha did not have much money to pay but idea was indicative of his intense desire for education. Education was denied to people like Bakha but by becoming educated Bakha hoped to distance himself from the stigma of his caste.

Bakha endures one of the most humiliating and depressing days of his young life in this novel. From sunrise he is forced to deal with discrimination, hatred and hypocrisy. He is woken up early morning by his father’s shouts. The first chore of the day is to clean the latrines before the rest of the community wakes up to use them. Bakha is compared to a slave a number of times throughout the novel. Despite Bakha’s hatred for his job and lifestyle he still feels proud when serving the higher castes. Bakha’s duty in life seems to be embedded into him. He has been
conditioned to do his duty and to do it well. That is why he takes pleasure when the higher castes compliment him on his job or show him some other signs of courtesy. Bakha hates his work but he recognizes that it is his duty, so he does the work with no complaint. The Gandhian strain in Anand is prominently visible.

While sweeping the streets, Bakha’s curiosity takes him to a local temple, where he climbs the steps to get a glimpse of the wonders inside. Untouchables were not allowed to step inside the temple in those days. While Bakha was peeping in, through wonderstruck, he was interrupted by the priest shouting, "Polluted! Polluted! (60)". Soon a crowd had gathered and they all terribly humiliated Bakha and said that they would need to perform a purification ceremony as an untouchable had stepped in. "Get off the steps you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service!" shouted the crowd (61). Bakha shocked runs down to the courtyard where a priest claims, "I have been defiled by contact (61)". Sohini, his sister, who too had come to clean the lavatories of the houses explains, "That man [priest] made suggestions to me, when I was cleaning the lavatory of his house there. And when I screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled." Bakha was enraged and flew into a tirade. Unfortunately the priest had gone and the crowd had dispersed. Anand here explains the hypocrisy of the upper castes in their attitudes towards the untouchables. The higher castes view them as impure and make them do all the menial labour, yet they are not adverse to sexual relations with them. Untouchable Sohini in public is very much touchable in private. It is a pity that the idea of impurity is only there when it suits the higher caste’s desires.

The story goes on to show several examples of the harsh treatment done to the untouchables. At the end of Bakha’s day he finds himself following a crowd of people who are going to hear
Gandhi speaks in town. Bakha listens attentively to Gandhi's speech and much of it strikes a chord in his heart. Gandhi tells the untouchables to stop accepting this ill-treatment, he wants them to refuse the leftovers of the high castes. The road out of untouchability is to purify their lives, they need to improve their hygiene, and get rid of their vices.

The story reflects a typical day in the life of a Bhangi, mixed with hunger, hope, small pleasures, insults and setbacks. The Dalits have no right to protest or express their emotions. Their rights are violated at every step of their lives. In the end, frustrated and bewildered Bakha finds three options to get past his drudgery. First, he meets a Christian missionary, who invites him to join Christianity so that the untouchability can be removed. In the second option, he is struck by the idea of sacrifice and Gandhism, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. The third option he considers as a solution to the entire problem is a flush system. Untouchable thus, is a representation of the wretched state of the low-caste and is a satire on the upper caste attitude towards the low. It is one of the novels of the first phase of Indian Writing in English that stands for human rights by highlighting Bakha as a Bhangi stereotype. The work delves deep through the problematics of an untouchable’s life from human rights perspectives and deciphers the politics of its representation.

*Paraja* by Gopinath Mohanty (1945)

Gopinath Mohanty’s award winning Oriya novel *Paraja* (1945), translated by Bikram K. Das (1987) into English, has wonderfully documented the life, customs, culture, festivals and art of the Paraja tribe of the Koraput district of Orissa. Being an eye witness of the Paraja tribes for many years as a government officer, Mohanty narrates the story of their poverty, struggles, deprivation and exploitation by both the non-tribals and their own fellow men.
*Paraja* deals with the problems in the lives of the Dalit indigenous/Tribals in the independence era. Mohanty’s intense personal involvement with the Koraput Tribes makes *Paraja* all the more a socio-anthropological document of the then philosophical and moral concern. The Kondhs and the Parajas are two colourful and proud tribal communities, living in tiny clusters of helmets in the southern parts of Orissa, who have been exploited by moneylenders and petty government officials for many years. They have felt in their body and blood that exploitation is as old as the hills and forest surrounding them. Yet they celebrate the joys of life; they drink and dance and sing; they find joy in nature. They find life constantly renewing itself in the quick-fading and slow-blooming buds of the forest.

Sukru Jani, the main protagonist, is happy in the beginning of the novel when he has his land, square meal a day and a peaceful life. But everything changes as soon as the lawmen interfere and prohibit him from using his land and the moneylender traps him to debt. The first rebuff that Sukru Jani faces in respect of his land is the sudden threat from the Forest Guard who charges him taxes and threatens him to annex his land which he claims as illegal. Duping Sukru Jani the Headman and his people ask him to pay a three score rupees as fine to the Forest Guard which they claim is an amount bargained and reduced for the sake of Sukuru-Jani’s honour and present economic condition. Sukuru Jani, who has the only option now to pay the money or spend the rest of his life in legal confinement, is now compelled to borrow some money from the moneylender, Ram Chandra Biso, and thus, sacrifices his life as a *goti* or bonded labour.

The major issues that *Paraja* as representations of society mainly highlight are social, political, economic and ethical in nature. The prominent and dominant concerns that the novel explores are the social evils of poverty, casteism, untouchability, class division and economic inequality,
illiteracy, child labour, pitiful living conditions, abuse of human dignity, exploitation of women and the repression of the fundamental human rights by the high-class society and its establishments, including the government machinery. Sukru Jani loses his land to the Sahukar who fools him creating a number of hoaxes. Taking advantage of his misfortune the landlord manages to convert his both sons to gotis and uses Sukru’s elder daughter as sexual bait. When Sukru mortgages his land to Sahukar, he immediately ruins him by confiscating it by buying the lawyers of the court. Unable to withstand the pain of their loss, Sukru and his sons attack the landlord and kill him. Paraja ends with a falling action where after Sahukar’s death we have least hope for Sukru Jani and his family. They are now pushed from one dark periphery into another—from bonded labourers to jailed convicts where their lives will be one of a tribal criminal’s; they will be beaten and tortured ruthlessly, probably more than any non-tribal criminal as this is the general mindset that the police have towards the tribes. Thus, we see that Paraja reflects the story of ‘shattered dreams’ where the tribal people are devoid of economic, social, civil rights.


Written in 2003, *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* by Mahashweta Devi also reveals the lives of the underdogs - the Lachhimas, the Rukmanis, the Mohors and the Haroas - as a contrast to the lives of their all-powerful overlords - the Medinis and Ganeshes. Mahasweta Devi's corrosive humour and cryptic style are at their best as she takes on issues of agrarian land relations, inter-caste violence, so-called rural development and the position of women in rural India. This novel is considered one of Devi's most important works. Lachhima, whose unleashed bitterness and anger of a lifetime against Medini and Ganesh is liberated at the end of the novel when Ganesh begs
her to save his life. She decides to save him, but on her own terms. The title of the work itself becomes a tool for subversion in this sprawling novel which takes the reader through a multilayered narrative into the socio-economic malaise of post-independence rural India.

This novel is set in Barha, an Indian village in Bihar, where Rajput Maliks rule with an oppressive hand over the low castes as kharidi subjects (bonded labour), bhangis, low caste-forest people and Adivasis who hover at the margin. Their women are not only used for household services, but also as concubines.

It is a total oppressive system, in which the majority sedulously toils for the elite. Lachima is "mortgaged" young by her grandmother to bring up Sri Ganesh, the newborn son of a widowed Malik, and to "press his feet" in the evening. As the boy grows up, her life is wrapped up in this task. Her promised husband is chased away. When age sets in for her, and Sri Ganesh has grown up and married, Lachima is just let go. To save herself from sexual harassment she marries Haroa, a hard working slave of Sri Ganesh.

Things stir when the people from outside intrude and Sri Ganesh tries to assert his absolute power in ever more brutal fashion. Repeated clashes between Sri Ganesh and the lower castes bring matters to head: after Sri Ganesh kills Haroa, Sri Ganesh meets his fate at the hand of both Lachima and the bhangis.

The underdogs in the novel are all upright, generous to a fault, hapless in confronting the power, while the elite is effete or oppressive, and the outsiders are ineffectual, corrupt, or both. Neither the Gandhi Mission, nor government officials, liberate the oppressed. Only revolution, at the village level breaks the fetters in the end. With the death of Ganesh the audience is not sure of the overnight change of fate of the Barha village from darkness to light but is at least hopeful of
the betterment of the situation. In the late seventies and early eighties, the villages of Bihar and Bengal had witnessed such Dalit/Naxal upheavals which were veritable proofs of the agonized rightless state of the poor in the villages. The authors, Devi and Mohanty by showing the cataclysm do not try to prove violence as solutions for the Dalit misery but portrays how deprivation can lead to violence and can impinge upon other’s human rights.

*Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* by Omprakash Valmiki (2007)

Valmiki tells a riveting story of his growing up in a village in the newly independent India in his novel *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*. It is a story of survival, of oppression as grievous as slavery or apartheid, and of victory, as the author gets an education and learns to embrace his identity and become a spokesman for his community. Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* is an autobiographical account of his birth and upbringing as an untouchable, or Dalit, in the newly independent India of the 1950’s. It is one of the first portrayals of Dalit life in north India from an insider's perspective. ‘Joothan’ literally means scraps of food left on a plate, destined for the garbage or for the family pet in a middle-class urban home. It is related to the word ‘jootha’, which means polluted, and such scraps are characterized as ‘joothan’ only if someone else eats them. India's untouchables have been forced to accept and eat ‘joothan’ for their subsistence for centuries. The word encapsulates the pain, humiliation, and poverty of this community, which has lived at the bottom of India's social pyramid for millennia. Although untouchability was legally abolished in the constitution of the newly independent India in 1949, Dalits continue to face discrimination, economic deprivation, violence, and ridicule.
Traditionally, Indian literatures previously have either ignored untouchables or portrayed them as victims in need of saviors, as objects without voice or agency. Valmiki has broken new ground with an authentic recording of these unrepresented experiences. He tells the stories of his life being a Chuhra, a caste that lies at the bottom rung of society. His heroic struggle to survive wretched preordained life of perpetual physical and mental persecution; the cruel obstacles he overcame to become the first high school graduate of his neighborhood; his coming to consciousness under the influence of the great Dalit political leader B. R. Ambedkar; and his transformation into a speaking subject bearing witness to the oppression and exploitation that he endured as an individual and as a member of a stigmatized and oppressed community, forms the important events of the book.

In 1955, despite Gandhi’s work on Dalit emancipation and the enforcement of new anti-discrimination laws, his father had a hard time getting him admitted into a primary school. When the boy finally got in, he was not allowed to sit on the benches but on the floor, away from the upper caste boys, at the back by the door, from where he couldn’t see the blackboard well. Other boys hurled epithets and beat him casually, turning him into a cowering introverted kid. Even the teachers looked for excuses to punish him, he writes, ‘so that I would run away from the school and take up the kind of work for which I was born’. In fourth grade, a new headmaster arrives who thrashed him almost daily for being audacious enough to come to school and one day he asked him to take a broom and sweep all the rooms and the playground in school. The hapless boy spent two full days sweeping, hoping it would soon be over. His family fell on even harder times when his oldest brother and wage earner got a high fever, and without access to a clinic, died.
Valmiki had finished fifth grade but their deepening poverty meant that he could not continue with school. He dropped out and began tending buffaloes in the field, watching with a heavy heart his schoolmates going to school. Over the protests of others, his brother’s widow pawned the only piece of jewelry she had, a silver anklet, to pay for Valmiki’s school.

Back in school, Valmiki continued to face severe discrimination. Though he consistently did well in his studies, his memories of school are suffused with pain and humiliation: from taunts and beatings by schoolmates and teachers in a ‘terror-filled environment’, to his exclusion from extracurricular activities like school plays; during exams, he was not allowed to drink water from a glass when thirsty. He had to cup his hands, and ‘the peon would pour water from way high up, ‘lest our hands touch the glass’. At times, he writes, “I feel I have grown up in a cruel and barbaric civilization.” He does remember fondly a couple of boys who befriended him and didn’t let caste come between them.

Valmiki left to pursue college education in the city of Dehradun, where his brother and uncle worked. They all shared a single room in a Bhangi basti. It was here that he encountered the works of Ambedkar, which shook him up; he “spent many days and nights in great turmoil.” He grew more restless; his ‘stone-like silence’ began to melt, and “an anti-establishment consciousness became strong” in him. Ambedkar’s books, he writes, “had given voice to my muteness,” and raised his self-confidence. His rage grew sharper and he became more active in college events, until his penury made him quit college and seek technical training in an ordnance factory, with its promise of a shop floor job that would judge him only for his work.

After a year of training, he got posted to the city of Jabalpur in 1968, moving in the ensuing years to Bombay and Chandrapur, Maharashtra. He begins to exhaustively read and began to publish poems and write a column in a local weekly, and write plays and short stories.
Dalits today constitute about one sixth of India's population. Spread over the entire country, speaking many languages, and belonging to many religions, they have become a major political force. As a document of the long silenced and long denied sufferings of the Dalits, *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* is not only a contribution to the archives of Dalit history, but a manifesto for the revolutionary transformation of society and human consciousness.

*Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* shows Valmiki’s deprogramming of the programmed Dalit self by making him successful as a writer, factory worker, responsible husband and a good son. He now boasts himself for being a Chuhra and never wants to lose this Dalit identity though it is this caste identity that has kept him in the abyss of torments. He demands rights but not at the cost of identity.

*Karukku* by Bama (2000)

Karukku is a poignant Dalit novel that speaks of the childhood experiences of the author. The significance of the novel comes from its social message. The author’s childhood is interspersed with events that repeatedly bring to the fore the harrowing experiences of a Dalit child.

Karukku means Palmyra leaves, which, with their serrated edges on both sides, are like double-edged swords. Karukku is the first autobiography of its kind to appear in Tamil. It is also in many ways an unusual autobiography. It grows out of a particular moment: a personal crisis and watershed in the author's life which drives her to make sense of life as woman, Christian, Dalit.

In this unusual autobiography, a young woman, Bama, looks back on her life from a moment of personal crisis, as she leaves the religious order to which she has belonged for seven years. She recreates her childhood in her village through a series of poignant memories and reflections.
Most importantly, she examines the simple faith which she grew up with as a Roman Catholic and restates it in the light of her experience as a Dalit and a woman. The story is a satire on the Dalit themselves and the caste system prevailing in India. She is very much bitter towards the Christian Missionaries who are hypocrites in their acts and words. The novel comes across as a sincere attempt to tell a story that is matter-of-fact indignant about ill-treatment in the name of class, caste and religion. The story is that of Dalit poverty, pain, neglect and of intolerable divide between a rich and a poor, a Dalit and a non-Dalit. It is a story that creates awareness in Dalits and appeals for free play of human rights.

Constantly reproved for being a member of a lower caste, the novel explains, the Dalit children go through severe abuse and torment. The novel is not just the story of the author alone. It seeks to expose the plight of thousands of Dalit children. The author also finds that several of her own people have internalized the inferiority that is imposed on them by the upper classes. She wants her novel to be a "two-edged sword". While on the one hand it challenges the oppressors who have enslaved and disempowered the Dalits, on the other hand, it reiterates the need for a new society with ideals such as justice, equality and love.

It seeks to establish a better society for the Dalits apart from questioning the oppressors. It does not retaliate violently to injustice. On the contrary, it seeks to emphasize on the importance of education, moral values and unity. During severe oppression, her people hardly questioned authority or fought against it. They rather sought to dodge the law temporarily and escape punishment than work towards long-term solutions.

She repeatedly talks about the importance of education for the Dalit child. She quotes her Anna's words, "Because we are born into the Paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or
respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities." (Page 15) She also stresses on the need for the Dalits to demand better wages for heavy physical labor.

The novel also talks about the cultural, social and familial life of Dalits. It does not confine itself to the oppression aspects or the militant stance. It elaborately describes the daily life, language, naming conventions, religion, culture, festivals, food habits, entertainment, games and kinship in the "paraya" community. The book talks about Bama's Dalit experience in different areas of her life. There are places where she is proud and happy the way she is but is angered by the treatment given to her. “Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack?” (Page 24)

At the end of the book in her "Afterword" she says, "It has been a great joy to see Dalits aiming to live with self-respect, proclaiming aloud, “You are a Dalit; lift up your head and stand tall”. This is probably what the author aimed for when she wrote her experiences down. Thus,

Karukku is not merely a militant voice seeking to liberate the Dalits from oppression. The language used in the book is that of the Dalits. This in itself is a form of overthrowing of established conventions for writing, as dictated by the upper castes. It also does the function of a memoir that has great cultural value for its contents. The book gives an identity to the Dalits by proudly recollecting, the cultural significance of being a Dalit, in the remnants of memories. The very fact that the author is a Dalit who seeks to decentralize the established structures is proof that half their victory is won. The book therefore becomes the harbinger of an awakening and a reiteration of the Dalit's freedom to question, rebel and reinterpret.
*The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai (1985)

Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea* is set in a small village called Thul, which is 14 kilometers from Bombay. Lila, the eldest child among four siblings, is thirteen years old, yet she is compelled to act like an adult. Her brother Hari, twelve years old, is the only person with whom she can share her troubles. Their mother is ill and needs constant care and nursing. She is anemic due to malnourishment and she grows weaker and weaker with each passing day. Their father, who has been out of work for months, is in a permanent drunken stupor; he arises occasionally to shout at his family. With two younger sisters to take care of as well as their mother, the life for Lila and Hari is not easy. Their father is not very useful as he is often away at the local toddy shop, getting drunk. There is a constant need for money as the family is almost always in debt. Frustrated with his life, Hari decides he has had just about enough and leaves for Bombay– the city where dreams come true and ambition yields.

Lila is left alone to manage her sisters Bela and Kamal, as well as her mother, and she somehow keeps the family strings together. Help comes from an unexpected source; the rich DeSilva's who give them work as maid servants. Meanwhile, Hari is new in Bombay and all alone. A kind restaurant proprietor, Jagu, takes pity on him and welcomes him to work in his restaurant, Sri Krishna Eating House. There, Hari builds a strong friendship with Mr. Panwallah, the lovable watch repairer whose shop is just beside Jagu’s. Through his experience with Mr. Panwallah and Jagu and the chain of events that take place in Bombay, Hari realises that he should return to his village with savings and help his family overcome their hardships.
Meanwhile, Lila, Bela and Kamal are forced to admit their sick mother in town hospital through the help of the DeSilvas. Their father turns over a new leaf, and accompanies their mother throughout her seven-month treatment without drinking and without having any debts. While Hari returns, he returns as a child who is adapted to the changing environment like the birds that are symbolized in the end.

Anita Desai has explicitly described in her very own style of writing, how Hari in the dilapidated conditions of the Sri Krishna Eating House finds warmth and affection through Mr Panwallah—owner and watch mender of the Ding-Dong watch shop. Mr Panwallah instills confidence in Hari and comforts him when he is terribly home sick. He even gives Hari a vivid and inspiring future and teaches him watch mending.

By describing Hari’s and Lila’s venture to keep their family up, Desai brings forth the issues of the violation of child rights and points out the free play of child labour even in big cities like Bombay. Desai’s portrayal of the plight of children is life-like but fantastic. Desai attempts to present the story from a child’s perspective that is awestruck and bewildered by the ways of the world. Everything seems new to him and he is willing to adjust at every step of his life, unaware of his rights, as because his aim is to earn some living for his family and see the family members happy. Though the world is ruthless to Hari, yet his inner spirit and dreams do not die as Desai too wishes to uphold the utopia where every child is growing up with adequate food, clothing, love, care education and eyes full of dreams.
Seven Steps in the Sky by Kundalika Kapadia (2009)

The novel, Seven steps in the Sky is the English translation of a Gujarati novel named 'Saat Pagla Aakashma' (1984), revolves around the life of the protagonist of the novel Vasudha and a few of her friends and relatives. It talks about the suffering that a woman has to go through being a female in this male-dominated society. This novel has won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1985. The novel unfolds the story of how Vasusdha, after thirty two years of marriage, finally dares to challenge her husband, Vyomesh's authority and leave home to fulfill her aspirations. It is also the story of several other women who yearn for fulfillment.

The novel depicts the life story of Vasudha, a middle class girl, who is married off in her tender age to Vyomesh, a hard-hearted patriarch, who tries to subjugate Vasudha’s aspirations towards life and identity. Vasudha is the narrator herself describing her-story along with different other stories of women trapped in the vicious circle of drudgery and commitments. The novel is an excellent representation of the plight of women at their in-laws where they are pressed between their quest for establishing their identity and their duty towards the in-laws. Kapadia in the very first part of the novel poses several questions that shake the strong foundation of the patriarchal constructs of the society. She is very strong in her motive and clear about the realization of the difficulty in which almost all women are set after marriage. Vasudha through her bitter experiences and with the cases of various other friends shows that a man only uses a woman for his lust and temporary needs. He can never understand a woman.

Through different cases, the author case studies the predicament of women in society of whatever class she belongs to. As its title suggests, the novel represents all women’s desire to walk in the clouds with all her dreams and aspirations fulfilled, which is definitely a utopia. The
writer yearns to establish a world that is devoid of gender differences and inequality thus upholding the concept of a rightful world for human beings. Kapadia is among the well known Gujarati feminist writers who vehemently protests against the man-women unequal status in society and envisions ways to counteract the patriarchal concepts thereby building a humanistic society. In her quest to be emancipated, Vasudha finally leaves her husband and family and becomes a part of Anandagram, a place where there is a classless-genderless existence of human beings in harmony. Apart from discussing the lack of women’s rights in women, she also takes up the issues of domestic violence and violation of different rights of women and suggests solutions to form an androgynous society.

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997)

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) is about a family living in South India in the years of liberalization. Arundhati Roy’s representation in *The God of Small Things* is something very different from all other novels discussed above. It is a novel that journeys deep inside and creates several suggestions all of which are intrinsically human rights related. The novel can be read as a novel championing for the cause of realization and implementation of the human rights concepts not only in the socio-economic field but also in the domestic affairs. It stands for the right to equality and dignity for all castes and classes, economic rights of women, equal wages rights for the Dalit, children’s rights, right to choose one’s partner and marriage, rights of thought and expression in a free society, rights against Dalit atrocities, against domestic violence and above all stands for right to life and freedom.

The story is told from the perspective of Rahel and Esthappen, the seven year old fraternal
twins who come to live in Ayemenem with their mother. Their father, Baba lives in Calcutta. Ammu had left him when the twins were two years old.

The family expects the arrival of Margaret and Sophie Mol, Chacko's ex-wife and daughter, who are living in England. Since Margaret's second husband Joe had died in a car accident, Chacko invited them to spend the Christmas in India in order to get over the loss. When they arrive, Sophie Mol is taken centre stage. So, Rahel and Estha stroll around on the river bank and find an old boat. With Velutha's help they repair it and frequently cross the river to visit an abandoned house on the other side. Velutha is an untouchable, whom Ammu and Chacko have known since their childhood. Their family have given him the opportunity to visit a school and employed him as a carpenter and mechanic in the family's pickle factory.

During the guests' stay Ammu is more and more attracted towards Velutha. One night they meet at the river where they sleep with each other. As it is not possible for an untouchable to have a relationship or even an affair with somebody from a superior caste, they have to keep their meetings secret. But one night Velutha's father observes them and, feeling humiliated by his son's overbearing behaviour, reports everything to Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. As a consequence they lock up Ammu in her room. There Rahel and Estha find her and, through the locked door, asks her why she's being locked up. As she is angry and desperate, she blames the two children that without them she would be free and they should go away. Hurt and confused they decide two run away and stay at the abandoned house. But Sophie discovers the twins' plan and demands to be taken along. While the three are crossing the river, which has risen from heavy rainfall, their boat capsizes. Rahel and Estha are able to
reach the other shore but Sophie cannot swim and is carried away by the current. After a long search for Sophie, the twins go to the abandoned house and fall asleep on its veranda. Neither do they see Velutha, who is sleeping on the veranda nor does he notice the twins' arrival. Earlier that night, Velutha had visited the house of Ammu's family, not knowing that their affair had been discovered. When he arrived Mammachi insulted him and chased him off.

In the morning the children's absence is detected. Then they receive the message that Sophie Mol has been found dead by the river. Baby Kochamma goes to the police and wrongly accuses Velutha of attempting rape on Ammu and kidnapping the children. When the police find Velutha sleeping on the veranda of the abandoned house, they beat him up so heavily that he almost dies. The twins wake up and observe the whole procedure. At the police station they are forced by Baby Kochamma to confirm the wrong statement which she has made. In the following night Velutha dies in prison.

After Sophie Mol's funeral Ammu and the twins have to leave the family's house because Chacko, manipulated by Baby Kochamma, accuses them of being responsible for Sophie Mol's death. Estha is sent to his father in Calcutta where he attends school and later college. Ammu is forced to leave Rahel in Ayemenem in order to look for employment. But Ammu is not able to earn enough for a living and so she dies of bad health a few days later alone in a hotel room.

Rahel returns to Ayemenem at the age of thirty one. She hasn't seen Estha since they were separated after Sophie Mol's funeral. She married an American and moved with him to
Boston. After their divorce she has been working to make a living. Now Rahel returns to Ayemenem because she wants to see Estha, who has already returned to their family's house. The intensity of pain and hollow in their hearts is expressed through their bodies in an act of incest. By breaking the rules of love like their mother, they try to understand her and Velutha better and fulfil themselves after such a long gap.


*The Hungry Tide* (2004) tells us a very contemporary story of adventure and unlikely love, identity and history, set in one of the most fascinating regions of the earth. Off the easternmost coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lies the immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sundarbans. For settlers here, life is extremely precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers and crocodiles are common. Unrest and eviction are constant threats. Without warning, at any time, tidal floods rise and surge over the land, leaving devastation in their wake. In this place of vengeful beauty, the lives of three people from different worlds collide. Piyali Roy, a young marine biologist of Indian descent but stubbornly American, is in search of a rare, endangered river dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris*. Her journey begins with a disaster, when she is thrown from a boat into crocodile-infested waters. Rescue comes in the form of a young, illiterate fisherman, Fokir. Although they have no language between them, Piya and Fokir are powerfully drawn to each other, sharing an uncanny instinct for the ways of the sea. Piya engages Fokir to help with her research and finds a translator in Kanai Dutt, a businessman from Delhi whose idealistic aunt and uncle have been longtime settlers in the Sundarbans. Kanai has come to Sundarbans in request of her aunt who wants to give him the notebook that her husband had dedicated to him at the time of his death. It contains the final
moments of the Morichjhapi massacre of which his uncle was a part. As the three of them launch into the elaborate backwaters, they are drawn unaware into the hidden undercurrents of this isolated world, where political turmoil exacts a personal toll where every bit of adventure is powerful as the ravaging tide. Already an international success, The Hungry Tide is a prophetic novel of remarkable insight, beauty, and humanity.

The Morichjhapi massacre incident of 1978-79, when government of West Bengal forcibly evicted thousands of Bengali refugees who had settled on the island, forms a background of the novel. Exactly 30 years ago, Dalits, in West Bengal, came to realise the true nature of Indian state that is being dominated, in every sense, by a tiny section of population but at a great personal cost. It was in 1979, when thousands of Dalits, refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) lost their lives at Morichjhapi, in Sunderbans, for their dream of resettling in the region which they considered part of their motherland.

Morichjhapi incident is a tragic tale of one of the most powerful Dalit Community- Namashudras of Bengal - who first became the victim of Hindu-Muslim communalism during the partition and later became the victims of their own castes in independent India. The complete silence of Bengal’s civil society for more than thirty years and the fact that Dalits were killed by Communist government of West Bengal that came to power in the name of poor and dispossessed, raises some serious questions about representation of Dalits in every sphere, the constitution of civil society and the hegemony of a few privileged castes over the political power in Independent India. The novel is a wonderful example to understand that human rights is useful and beneficial for people when the government wants to regulate it in such a way, or else it becomes an useless tool handicapped in the hands of a
tyrannous government. The novel is a tribute to those lost lives of the refugees in Morichjhapi and is a satire directed to the callous malevolent government who use and misuse human rights according to their needs.

The plots of the novels discussed above clearly focus human rights violation of characters from all respects and thus, stand as fitting documents for studying the human rights concerns in them. In its analyses, this work delves deep in the working of the narratives in bringing forth the violation, causes and solutions (if any) given by the writers and thereby finds the politics and problematics lying underneath.

Indian Fiction in English calls for a complexity of awareness and an awareness of complexities in framing an interpretive paradigm especially through human rights perspectives. Viewing it from the human rights standpoint amounts to a broadening up of the myriad nuances present in the novels’ out view. As such an attempt is made to approach the works from various human rights angles to facilitate an understanding of the merits and significance of the works as placed in time and space. This study gives primacy not to any theoretical/critical canon, but to the narratives closely read with all their distinctive subtleties. Most importantly, it intends to underline the human rights activism, in these novels, which are not merely a rhetorical outpour or a political verbiage but social limelight and appeals wrapped in beautiful aesthetic fervours. In its conclusion, this work compares and contrasts the novels and the authorial standpoints in problematizing the novels as successful human rights documents.
Notes & References

1. Every person is entitled to certain rights simply by the fact that they are human beings. They are ‘rights’ because one is allowed to be, to do or to have them. These rights are there for one’s protection against people who might want to harm or hurt one. They are also there to help us get along with each other and live in peace. There are thirty rights and they are contained in a document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was created in 1948 by the United Nations.


3. The Code of Hammurabi is a well-preserved Babylonian code of law, dating to ca. 1780 BC, which is one of the oldest deciphered writings of significant length in the world. The sixth Babylonian king, Hammurabi, enacted the code, and partial copies exist on a human-sized stone stele and various clay tablets. The Code consists of 282 laws, with scaled punishments, adjusting "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" graded depending on social status, of slave versus free man. Nearly one half of the code deals with matters of contract, establishing for example the wages to be paid to an ox driver or a surgeon. Other provisions set the terms of a transaction, establishing the liability of a builder for a house that collapses, for example, or property that is damaged while left in the care of another. One third of the code addresses issues concerning household and family relationships such as inheritance, divorce, paternity and sexual behaviour. Only one provision appears to impose obligations on an official; this provision establishes that a judge who reaches an incorrect decision is to be fined and removed from the bench.
permanently. A handful of provisions address issues related to military service. The Code of Hammurabi is significant because its creation allowed men, women, slaves, and all others to read and understand the laws that governed their lives in Babylon. It is unique in that laws of other civilizations were not written down, and thus could be manipulated to suite the rulers that dictated them. The Code is particularly just for its time. Although it follows the practice of "an eye for an eye", it does not allow for vigilante justice, but rather demands a trial by judges. It also glorifies acts of peace and justice done during Hammurabi’s rule. It symbolizes not only the emergence of justice in the minds of men, but also man’s rise above ignorance and barbarism toward the peaceful and just societies still pursued today. In the words of Hammurabi as carved on the stone, "Let any oppressed man who has a cause come into the presence of my statue as king of justice, and have the inscription on my stele read out, and hear my precious words, that my stele may make the case clear to him; may he understand his cause, and may his heart be set at ease!" Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi and http://library.thinkquest.org/20176/hammurabis_code.htm

4. Magna Carta is an English charter, originally issued in the year 1215 and reissued later in the 13th century in modified versions, which included the most direct challenges to the monarch's authority to date. The charter was first passed into law in 1225. The 1297 version, with the long title (originally in Latin) The Great Charter of the Liberties of England, and of the Liberties of the Forest, still remains on the statue books of England and Wales. The 1215 Charter required King John of England to proclaim certain liberties, and accept that his will was not arbitrary, for example by explicitly accepting that no "freeman" (in the sense of non-serf) could be punished except through the law of the
land, a right which is still in existence today. Magna Carta was the first document forced onto an English King by a group of his subjects, the feudal barons, in an attempt to limit his powers by law and protect their privileges. It was preceded and directly influenced by the Charter of Liberties in 1100, in which King Henry I had specified particular areas wherein his powers would be limited. Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta

5. The Peace of Westphalia was a series of peace treaties signed between May and October of 1648 in Osnabrück and Münster. These treaties ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in the Holy Roman Empire, and the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) between Spain and the Dutch Republic, with Spain formally recognizing the independence of the Dutch Republic. Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia

6. The Bill of Rights was passed by the English Parliament on 16 December 1689. It was a re-statement in statutory form of the Declaration of Right presented by the Convention Parliament to William and Mary in March 1689 (or 1688 by Old Style dating), inviting them to become joint sovereigns of England. It lays down limits on the powers of sovereign and sets out the rights of Parliament and rules for freedom of speech in Parliament, the requirement to regular elections to Parliament and the right to petition the monarch without fear of retribution. It re-established the liberty of Protestants to have arms for their defense within the rule of law, and condemned James II of England for "causing several good subjects being Protestants to be disarmed at the same time when papists were both armed and employed contrary to law". These ideas about rights reflected those of the political thinker John Locke and they quickly became popular in England. It also sets out—or, in the view of its drafters, restates—certain constitutional

7. The Declaration of Independence was a statement adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, which announced that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain regarded themselves as independent states, and no longer a part of the British Empire. John Adams put forth a resolution earlier in the year which made a formal declaration inevitable. A committee was assembled to draft the formal declaration, which was to be ready when congress voted on independence. Adams persuaded the committee to select Thomas Jefferson to compose the original draft of the document,[2] which congress would edit to produce the final version. The Declaration was ultimately a formal explanation of why congress had voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. The Declaration justified the independence of the United States by listing colonial grievances against King George III, and by asserting certain natural and legal rights, including a right of revolution. Having served its original purpose in announcing independence, the text of the Declaration was initially ignored after the American Revolution. Its stature grew over the years, particularly the second sentence, a sweeping statement of human rights: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence

8. Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, French Declaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen, one of the basic charters of human liberties, containing the
principles that inspired the French Revolution. Its seventeen articles, adopted between August 20 and August 26, 1789, by France’s National Assembly, served as the preamble to the Constitution of 1791. Similar documents served as the preamble to the Constitution of 1793 (re-titled simply Declaration of the Rights of Man) and to the Constitution of 1795 (re-titled Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the Citizen). The basic principle of the Declaration was that all “men are born and remain free and equal in rights” (Article 1), which were specified as the rights of liberty, private property, the inviolability of the person, and resistance to oppression (Article 2). All citizens were equal before the law and were to have the right to participate in legislation directly or indirectly (Article 6); no one was to be arrested without a judicial order (Article 7). Freedom of religion (Article 10) and freedom of speech (Article 11) were safeguarded within the bounds of public “order” and “law.” The document reflects the interests of the elites who wrote it: property was given the status of an inviolable right, which could be taken by the state only if an indemnity were given (Article 17); offices and position were opened to all citizens (Article 6).


9. The Bill of Rights is the collective name for the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution, which limit the power of the U.S. federal government. These limitations serve to protect the natural rights of liberty and property including freedoms of religion, speech, a free press, free assembly, and free association, as well as the right to keep and bear arms. Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Bill_of_Rights.


17. Article 13 (3) (a), Indian Constitution. Print.


21. The term ‘human’ means having human form or attributes as opposed to those of animals or divine beings; "human beings"; "the human body"; "human kindness"; "human frailty". See wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn


24. Baxi, Upendra. 2008: 22 Print


Chapter 2

Children as Narrative Props and the Problematics of Human Rights

The expression ‘children’ has varied connotations both legally and biologically. Biologically, a child is generally a human between the stages of birth and puberty. The legal definition of "child" generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority. Section B, Article 1 of the Child Rights Convention, USA, describes the holder of rights under the Child Rights Convention as ‘every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.’ The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most endorsed human rights treaty in the world, ratified by all but two countries, the United States and Somalia. This document has marked a milestone in human rights terms, because it is the first legally binding code of child rights in history, and acknowledges that children are holders of rights, rather than passive recipients of benefits. It brings together in one treaty all the relevant child rights issues, rather than having them scattered among a number of
international treaties. It acknowledges that children are entitled to special protection of their rights, because of their vulnerability. It also sets basic standards for children’s well-being at different stages of their development.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on the principles of non-discrimination in the best interest of the child along with the common standards for the various rights of children. It takes into account the different cultural, social, economic and political realities in which children live in. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989, it celebrates childhood and codifies in international law the rights due in every child.²

Children have similar rights that of an adult only that they are meant to be more protected because of their vulnerability of the age and tenderness. Children have the right to life, liberty, equality, health, love and care, education, religion, cultural rights, right of thoughts and expression, rights against exploitation and violence, right to recreation, right to a name and a nationality, right to protection from neglect and right to nutrition. According to the Child Rights Convention:

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. The child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society… in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.³

India is a party to the UN Declaration on Child Rights and has adopted the National Policy on children in 1974. India has ratified the Convention on 11th of December 1992 and has agreed to conform to the protocols mentioned in the Convention. The policy reaffirmed the constitutional
provisions for adequate services to children, both before and after birth and through the period of
growth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. Accordingly, the
government is taking action to review the national and state legislation and bring it in line with
the provisions of the Convention. It has also developed appropriate monitoring procedures to
assess progress in implementing the Convention-involving various stakeholders in the society.

India is also a signatory to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development
of Children. In pursuance of the commitment made at the World Summit, the Department of
Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development has
formulated a National Plan of Action for Children. Most of the recommendations of the World
Summit Action Plan are reflected in India's National Plan of Action- keeping in mind the needs,
rights and aspirations of 300 million children in the country. The priority areas in the plan are
health, nutrition, education, water, sanitation and environment. The Plan gives special
consideration to children in difficult circumstances and aims at providing a framework, for
actualization of the objectives of the Convention in the Indian context. In order to ensure child
rights practices and in response to India’s commitment to a UN Declaration to this effect, the
Government of India has set up a National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.  

clearly mentions:

    the State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing .... that the health
    and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not
    abused, and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations
    unsuited to their age or strength, that children are given opportunities and
facilities to develop in a healthy manner, and in conditions of freedom and
dignity, and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation, and
against moral and material abandonment.\(^5\)

Children are not a homogeneous category. Like adults, they are divided into different
categories based on social and economic status, physical and mental ability, geographical
location etc. These differences determine the difference in the degree of their vulnerability.
While gender discrimination exists almost all over the world, it is much greater in some
countries - and India is definitely one of them. Especially girls are in a vulnerable situation as
they are exposed to extreme conditions like poverty, disability, homelessness etc. and find
themselves doubly disadvantaged, for their gender and the physical, economic, political, social
situation that they find themselves into. It is therefore imperative to take a gender perspective
into account in examining the situation of children.

While viewing the plights of children from child rights perspectives, it is wise to mention that
exploitation of children is not central or coterie to the poor, marginalised and backward children
in the society. They happen in middle class and elite homes too, albeit in different forms and in
different degrees. One of the major causes of exploitation that go unnoticed or is purposely
talked in low resonance is the adults themselves. A child must experience the playfulness and
joyful aspects of life that help in the fullest development of his/her personality and thus love,
care, joyful existence is a human right of a child, which if denied can lead to perversion,
subversion, crippledness and immature growth in a child’s personality both physically and
mentally. Any type of struggle or pressure on the physic and psychic level of a child can be
termed as child exploitation. A child is variously duped, hurt, kept away from truth and
exploited both physically and mentally at various times not because of any mischief but because of some vested interests of the adults. Time and again the children are taken as advantageous props by the adults for some interest or the other defying the aspect of freedom and other human rights of children. Children when put in such cases, undergo a tremendous dilemma and experiences pressure on their psyche, thereby giving birth to an ample number of negative feelings like hatred, anger, demotivation and even loss of vigour for life. The incidents, which look insignificant and small in the eyes of the adults, play havoc in the minds of the children thereby leading to several negative consequences. They not only subvert their innocent outlook of life but the bitter imprints in their memories haunt them throughout their lives gate keeping the natural impulse that a human being especially a child must exhibit or enjoy.

This Chapter analyses the plight of children trapped in the vicious circle of exploitation and tries to decipher the psychosomatic agonies as represented in certain novels, which will be in turn examined under the critical framework of the issues discussed as child rights. Through Anand’s *Untouchable*, Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* (1997), Bama’s *Karukku* (2000), Gopinath Mohanty’s *Paraja* (1945), Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea* (1982), and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) the study would specifically focus on the mechanization of the exploitative system in which the children are trapped in and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness.

The major child rights issues in the novels mentioned above can be grossly categorized into: conflict with the adult world, psychological exploitation, physical abuse, maltreatment and loss of dignity, sexual abuse, education problems, poverty and malnutrition, improper living, no right of expression, inequality, caste issues, victim of adult rate, fear and pressure, health problems,
lack of love and care of elders, child labour and discrimination. It is worthwhile to mention that children too are victims of caste and gender discrimination. A girl child is doubly marginalised and their plight can sometimes outmatch the plight of the women lot when gender/sexual assaults are taken into consideration. The work strives to delve in the issues one by one. The issue of poverty which is not only a social evil but also a gross factor responsible for human rights violation in a country like India, approaches the general concern first. The legal definition of poverty explains that state of living which cannot even procure the bare necessities of food clothing and shelter because of the inability to afford them. This is called absolute destitution. Poverty is additionally seen as a state of mind and a lifestyle- more than just lack of materials. It is a state of deprivation and insecurity of existence of the whole.\textsuperscript{6} The novels taken for study describe the poverty-stricken existence of the children marked by scarcity of basic needs and the abundance of malnutrition, ill-health and lack of identity. It is not only the need for the bare necessities, but also the lack of their socio-psychological security that leads the protagonists to the abyss of poverty-stricken existence. For the low class Dalits the problem of untouchability adds to this problem giving it a very bad shape. From Mulk Raj Anand’s \textit{Untouchable} to Arundhati Roy’s \textit{The God of Small Things}\textsuperscript{7} very little has changed if the poverty-stricken state of the people is compared. Though the word poverty seems to affect the adult world, yet it is pathetic to note that poverty is unavoidable in children as they are very much a part of the poverty affected community. Children are ruthlessly denied of their rights because of their parents’ inabilities to get them proper food, clothes, shelter, education and even the dignity of a child that is due on them for being born as human beings. If we analyse gravely, we can easily find that all problems in the novels converge to one major socio-economic problem and that is poverty. Poverty has taken away their land, freedom, has forced them to work as
bonded labourers and become prostitutes; it denies them voice and gives rise to negative feelings like anguish, hatred, revenge and fear. They grow up crippled and their personalities are not exposed. Poverty, on the whole, hinders in their physical and psychological growth which in turn ruins their hopes for better future.

In case of a Dalit child its rights even to move, eat, drink etc. stand paralysed except under constrained formalities dictated by the high class know-alls. It is stamped as an untouchable and can in no way get rid of it until its death. Untouchable, Joothan: A Dalit’s Life and Karukku clarifies this situation all the more. The condition of the untouchables in the light of rights and justice becomes all the more prominent when we approach Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It says in its first clause that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.  

The characters taken for study lack all the parameters of standard living like the food, clothing, shelter, health and hygiene and above all security. The characters like Bakha and his friends, Om and his fellow people in northern India, Bama and her lot in South India, Mandia, Tikra, Jili, Bili in the east, and Hari, Lila, Kamal, Bela, in the western India, all are victims of child right violation.

If one deeply scrutinizes the novels Untouchable, and Joothan: A Dalit’s Life, one can easily empathize with the stings of pain in the lives of the protagonists. None of the novels are tragedy
in proper but are the vivid delineation of excruciating pain. The demonstration of the trauma that the characters in the novels endure with is an easy premise to conclude that there is a major child rights abuse in the Dalit society like the free play of child labour, practice of untouchability, poverty, insult of human dignity etc. as depicted in the novels. Both the novels in their respective spheres depict the life of child/children around whom the entire plot revolves. Bakha and his friends in Untouchable, and Omprakash and his friends in Joothan: A Dalit's Life are representatives of Dalit children who not only are deprived of love, affection, right to proper education, playfulness and care but are heaped with curses, insults and hatred from the world they live in. Their lives are burdened with the burden of caste that they have inherited from their forefathers and would have to carry on till death.

Bakha is a scavenger who despite his eagerness to the lighter and brighter side of life is forced to the toilets of the high caste people with a bucket and broom. Om, a talented aspirant finds himself crushed when he is rejected in school, negated in repute, beaten at the point of death and is insulted at every step in his life for being born as a Chuhra or in a low-sweeper caste family.

Both Anand and Valmiki prominently projects cases in their lives that are touching and macabre in approach. Om describes how he has been mistreated for belonging to a low cast at every step of his life, in school, college and even at his workplace. As a child he is tortured in school so that he quits studying and gets back to sweeping in the end, the original occupation of his family. Bakha too is traumatized in the market when he is thrashed, abused, gravely insulted for no fault of his own. He has been treated as an animal ruthlessly and his emotions are crushed to dust. He is so very insulted and beaten that he feels only death can save him from such a situation.
In *Untouchable*, Anand very well depicts the hardships of a boy, Bakha, from morning till evening, who becomes tired and frustrated with life because of the maltreatment he receives out of the rich, for whom he and his parents serve for a meager meal. Though Bakha has reached just eighteen yet we see in him all the qualities of a child. His friends are younger to him, and his thoughts are like a child, innocent, confused in the oddities of an adult world, and his utter desire to grow up like an adult ‘Sahib’ brings him in the category of a child. In fact, his reaching of the adult age is very much a contrast and confusion of his own self as the world demands from him more than what he can actually think and do. Anand purposely sketches his age as eighteen years so as to build in the confusion and contradiction of his outlook all the more. Here, Bakha is considered as an adolescent and is studied in the light of children’s rights. His character as a marginalised Dalit is also scrutinized in the Fourth Chapter.

To delineate the types of child rights violation and their causes represented in the novels, this Chapter cites instances from the novels to show the points at which a child is being violated and then analyses them accordingly.

Both Valmiki and Anand bring out the picture of the locale of their protagonists and their state of living in the very first Chapters of their works. This directly highlights their living condition, proving that the foremost basic right to a proper living condition is violated because of their caste. Bakha of *Untouchable* and Om of *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* are sons of low cast sweepers; so their houses are strained away from the main stream of life. Anand records,

> The outcasts colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows…outside their town and cantonment boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather workers, the washermen, the
barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutters and other outcasts from the Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, near the lane… now soiled by the dirt and filth of public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcass left to dry on its banks the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes, and the biting, choking, pungent fumes that oozed from its sides. The absence of drainage system had, through rains of various seasons, made the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive stink…. the ugliness, the squalour and the misery which lay within it, made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in (1).

This not only makes one’s attitude sick towards life but also makes him feel exhausted, shameful and gives rise to a feeling of escapism from the daily squalour in which one is forced to live in.

Bakha thought of uncongeniality of his home as he lay… covered by a worn out, greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor in a corner of the twelve feet by five dank, dingy, one-roomed mud house. His sister slept on a cot next to him and his father and brother snored from under a patched ochre-coloured quilt, on a broken string bed further up… during winter and summer he slept with his day clothes on the sharp bitter wind that blew from the brook at dawn had penetrated to his skin, past the inadequate blanket… (2).

In *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, Omprakash gives an account of his house and neighbourhood:

Our family lived in this Chuhra *basti*. Five brothers, one sister, two chachas, one tau and his family…There was muck strewn everywhere. The stench was so
overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood…. Everyone in the family did some or other work. Even then we didn’t manage to get two decent meals a day. We did all sorts of work for the Tagas, including cleaning, agricultural work and general labour. We would often have to work without pay. Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got neither money nor grain. Instead, we got sworn at and abused (1-2).

In the days of monsoon Om describes the miseries they faced were intolerable:

the days of the rainy season was hellish… the mud was full of pigs’ excretement, which will begin to stink after the rain stopped. Flies and mosquitoes thrive like a cloud of locust…. Our arms and legs would get smeared in dirt. The feet became mangy. The space between the toes filled up with reddish sores… there was no other way to get to school except through crossing these mud-filled lanes… we had no other alternative than to drink that water. We did not have right to take water from the well of the Tagas (19-20).

Anand describes the condition of the people in the sweeper streets,

There was no provision for lights in the sweeper streets so most of the inhabitants compensated themselves for the nights spent in utter darkness amid the smoke of smouldering hearth fires in their small congested houses, by spending most of their time in the open air. In the summer, of course, this was difficult even though they made awnings of the string beds on which they slept at night, by covering
them with coarse, unwanted rags of jute cloth and sat under them all day. During the winter, however, they came out of their homes as soon as the sun was up and lived out in it till the evening fell and it was too cold (66).

In *Paraja* Sukru’s girls suffer from poverty. We find how Jili and Bili strive to exist through grinding poverty.

As Jili stared at her empty stores of grain, a hundred forgotten incidents came back to her – little insults and humiliations from those who had been her friends, and neglect and indifference. She was filled with a sense of shame. For the first time in her life, she understood poverty. She wanted to hide herself and her misery, melt away into some dark corners, away from the pitiless glare of a hundred inquisitive eyes which pried into the privacy of her hut, turning up pots and pans racking up her racks, looking into the attic where the grain had once been, searching among the few stick they possessed. And those eyes pierced through the mud bowls and straw thatch, exposing all her disgrace; they scorched her dry leaving her stark and leafless, like the bare trees on the hill side in summer (118).

Mohanty again, aptly reproduces the utmost feelings of a girl when her dignity is lost for lack of clothes. Girls are the most vulnerable victims of voyeurism; even though not touched they can get raped through the eyes of the men. Gopinath beautifully describes how the girls lose their dignity wrapped under their scanty clothing slowly in pieces with time.
Jili and Bili sat in the darkness outside the hut, cocooned in self-pity. Unshared, their store of misery had grown and grown. The food had all gone… their clothes had turned to rags… the torn clothes do not become whole again. The many patches on their clothes were witness to the brave attempts they had made to repair their dignity, but the fabric had grown immune to any needle and the rains appeared again… The bits of torn appeared each day dropping away by the wayside were like pieces of one’s own existence being corroded and trampled under foot. Nothing could mend the injury to one’s pride (206-207).

In such conditions it is hard to talk about any rights, may it be for children or adults. But children who are intended to be kept out of the life’s squalour, is forced to experience all the bitter blows of life from the very morning each day until night when they are agonized and frustrated and are forced to question certain fundamental questions like why they cannot get a square meal when they are working so hard, or why are they called untouchables or why they are so poor despite their toils? The humility of being an untouchable poor child, where not only he but the entire family, bears the same curse without any outlet, worsens the situation all the more. In fact the issue of being identified as an untouchable mean fellow, puts a huge bother on each child. They become shattered unable to find a way out of the curse. The irony heightens with their realization that things that are done to them are wrong and yet it is impossible to move out of what is happening as they are destined to remain in the muck and this is what the civil system dictates. It is indeed very ironic to think that the civil system that one would immediately approach to for a refuge against certain wrongs done to them, is itself a party and source of crime that dictates inequality and encourages child rights violation.
We see how Om reports his case of being abused for being a Dalit child.

Untouchability was so rampant that while it was considered all right to touch dogs and cats or cows or buffaloes, if one happened to touch a Chuhra, one got contaminated or polluted. The Chuhras were not seen as human. They were simply things for use. Their utility lasted until their work was done. Use them and then throw them away… (2).

In Intermediate School once Om had to get his Scout Uniform ironed. When he had approached the laundry man he said,

‘We don’t wash the clothes of the Chuhra Chamars. Nor do we iron them. If we iron your clothes then the Tagas won’t get their clothes washed by us. We will lose our roti.’…His reply crushed me. I came back without a word. My heart was heavy. I had lost faith in God. One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation, but it is impossible to get past caste (17-18).

It is a traumatic realisation that how the system of caste has torn in the unity between people. The dhobis who are also considered as low in caste, but higher than the sweepers, also reject ironing Om’s clothes not because they are lower in caste than the dhobis, but because serving the lower would deprive any business from the rich, which is the major source of income for the poor. The irony of caste domination is such interrelated and relative at every section of life that it has created a divide, handicapped the usual values of brotherhood between human beings and paralysed the social system. It is ironic that one has to respect the caste divide to save his job and family from starvation.
In the market or a public place, in *Untouchable*, we see, the untouchable had to carry a stick in hand and continually warn people of his presence: “Posh keep away, posh, sweeper coming!”

One day in the market Bakha by mistake touches a Hindu merchant, the latter retorts angrily, “This dirty dog bumped right into me! So unmindfully do these sons of bitches walk in the streets! He was walking along without the slightest effort at announcing his approach, the swine!” (39) This was a usual scene in the contemporary scenario where a low caste is being brutally ravaged by abuses and it is expected to digest everything in calm acceptance. While it is a matter of great misfortune and insult to announce oneself low, it is even more tormentous to warn people of one’s approach as one’s touch could destroy another’s caste or identity. Bakha had to call loud and warn that a sweeper is approaching as if he was a monster or an alien from another planet whose presence would destroy the world. It is very ironical to note that touching accidentally a low caste would be a heinous crime but beating one low caste fellow intentionally and touching him for punishment would be of no crime. The economic and religious system of the society had imbibed in people this logic so very deeply that caste was impossible to be overlooked. People were customized by the contemporary system, running down from the ages, to feel degraded and be prejudiced with the low. It seemed impossible for the high caste to endorse rights for the poor untouchables accepting them as human beings.

This incident hurts Bakha not only physically but creates a deep scar in him. In adolescence the sense of prestige is very high and the loss of esteem before public makes him feel miserable. He feels like running away to a utopia which he dreams where there is no divide between caste and class in society.
Om in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, focuses this problem of untouchability as so very much deep rooted in society that there is even discrimination in children according to their castes. Discrimination has been made so relative in society that the divide widens unconditionally and a low caste feels all the more low, diffident, fearful and contrastively, the high feels more uppish, confident, and tyrannous. In school, Om relaters,

> The children of Tyagis would tease me by calling me ‘Chuhre ka’. Sometimes they would beat me without any reason. This was an absurd tormented life that made me introverted and irritable. If I got thirsty in school, then I had to stand near the hand pump. The boys would beat me in any case but the teachers also punished me. All sorts of stratagems were tried so that I would run away from the school and take up the kind of work for which I was born (3).

In a situation like this when from childhood itself one is trained to follow and practice caste banalities rigorously on whosoever the person may be, then rights education stands as most needed.

Barla village also had some Muslim Tyagis… The behaviour of these Muslim Tagas were just like that of the Hindu Tyagas. If we ever went out wearing neat and clean clothes, we had to hear their taunts that pierced deep inside like poisoned arrows. If we went to the school in neat and clean clothes, then our class fellows said ‘Abey Chuhre ka, he has come dressed in new clothes’. If one went wearing old and shabby clothes, then they said, ‘Abey Chuhre ki, get away from me, you stink. This was our no-win situation. We were humiliated whichever way we dressed (3).
Article 2 of the Child Rights Convention Guiding Principles asserts:

The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn’t matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.\(^8\)

This above statement is very encouraging for children of all nationalities as it guarantees equal rights and status of a child irrespective of its origin, parents’ occupation or race, caste etc. But this does not happen everywhere. Deep rooted cultural customs segregate children from other children on the basis of class and caste. As customized psychologically by the elders, the children of the high caste humiliate the low caste children deliberately to show their superiority over them. It had become a kind of right for the high caste to humiliate the low. The irony is pitiful as caste stood over humanity in all sections and all ages in the contemporary Indian scenario.

If we now study the related Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights one by one, we can easily relate the poignancy of suffering in the children protagonists. The first two Articles of the Declaration testifies that the fundamental rights and freedoms that a human being must possess by virtue of his right to be born as a human being is to be guaranteed by every individual nation and its citizens irrespective of all differences. According to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

The novels taken for discussion do voice for the fact that all individuals are born free with equal dignity and rights. This is made all the more clear when the authors project their painful existence at every point of life exploited and demeaned for their caste, poverty and powerlessness. The words freedom, dignity and rights lose meaning as soon as they become conscious of their selves—when it is time to develop the personality. They become crippled and introvert pressed against the high caste consciousness. The Universal Declaration insists that as human beings are endowed with “reason and consciousness”, they should act in the “spirit of brotherhood”. The problem lies in the fact that high caste consciousness and ability to reason are the basic parameters that prevent the high-caste from acting in a spirit of brotherhood with the low caste. The abuse of the human rights concept is tattered socio-psychologically from the root of Hindu cultural system and it becomes very difficult to erase it completely bringing human rights concepts as scaffolds when post-independent India was educated, unaware of rights, culturally very authentic and poverty-stricken.

According to Article 6, everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. Part III, Article 14 to 17, of the Indian Constitution deals with the subject of equality in the eyes of the law. According to the law all persons irrespective of colour, caste, creed, sex, religion, etc. are equal in the eyes of law and will be similarly treated by law. This stands strong when considered in the eyes of the law but in reality, the Dalits are sometimes not even considered as human beings in society. They are untouchables; even at the slightest intervention can spoil or contaminate a high caste. They are seen as ‘dogs’ or ‘pigs’ polluting a Brahmanic
fervour, scoundrels and idiots, Bhangis (sweepers), Chamars (cobblers), Chuhras (servant) who do not deserve a proper position in society.

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights determines that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This if studied through the texts concerned, will reveal how the protagonists are subject to cruel torture, degradation, insult and exploitation from economic, social, physical and mental spheres. The Dalits are considered as untouchables, are beaten for a slightest cause, morally and physically insulted by recurrent cursing and abusing, thereby depriving them of the basic facilities of public places and fundamental rights. Om’s Dalit classmate arouses goosebumps in the readers as he describes a dreadful incident of his class:

Sukkhan Singh had developed a boil in his belly, just below his ribs. While in class he used to keep his shirt folded up so as to keep the boil uncovered.....One day while thrashing Sukkhan Singh, the teacher’s fist hit the boil. Sukkhan screamed with pain. The boil had burst. Seeing him flailing with pain I too began to cry. While we cried, the teacher was showering abuse on us non-stop (4).

Om is confounded as, “The teachers of the Tyagi Inter-College, Barla thrashed the boys with kicks and fists. These kicks and fists were not those of a teacher but of a goonda. How a teacher could beat his pupil so heartlessly. This incident in Muzzafarnagar has remained in mind, like a question mark. This experience at the age of twelve or thirteen has been painful for me” (55).
This kind of corporeal treatment is not only against the law but also is against humanity. Om tells later in the book that he can never respect his teachers as they were not guides but master of the slaves. A teacher in Indian society is highly held because of his noble profession. He is to pose as a role model for others. But the teachers that Om is exposed to are ruthless, heart-less and mean minded. They themselves are not civilized in the literal sense and do not pay care for the treatment that they pay to others. It is surprising that children are sexually exploited by the soldiers and teachers. They are beaten, abused and molested at the point of death. Valmiki admits, “The ideal image of the teachers that I saw in my childhood had remained indelibly imprinted on my memory. Whenever someone starts talking about a great guru, I remember all those teachers who used to swear about mothers and sisters. They used to fondle good-looking boys and invite them to their homes and sexually abuse them.” (4)

The concept of divide has deepened the crisis so much that personal grudges, vent of anger, personal interest fulfillment, all pass in the name of punishing a low caste fellow. This is easily possible as the Dalits do not have the rights consciousness and are silenced by the age long fear, inferiority complex as a custom that the high caste always has an upper hand on the low. The consequences of such incidents remain deep in the victims’ mind and they psychologically develop anger for the high caste and the entire fraternity of people who are taught to be respected by our value system, i.e. the Brahmins. As a result the entire society becomes vindictive to each another- the high for the low and low for the high for which the fraternal feeling gets irreparable and venomous on the whole.

Article 12 has something similar to it as it candidly declares that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to attacks upon his
honour and reputation. Here the Dalits in fact have no privacy and honour rather their domestic happiness and peace is always subject to the interference of the greed and lust of the rich and high-caste. They are given the left over scraps of food of the rich and high caste as meals. They are always treated as the downtrodden and object of insult as they are considered in a way similar to trash or debris in the society; but the pathetic as the upper-class is paralysed without their favours and never hesitate to use them as baits for self-interest. The irony reaches its climax when we find that Bakha in *Untouchable*, who is considered as an untouchable, a polluting factor to the Brahmins, but his sister, Sohini on the other hand, is very much touchable to the village priest for his sexual satisfaction. Jili in *Paraja* is a lustful bait for the Sahukar and the Contractor, but her brothers and father are all bonded slaves and untouchables.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is very important as its first clause dictates that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.” India too makes this right to education as fundamental and necessary. But the novels we are deciphering depict the condition of the people before such endeavours were taken. Mandya Tikra, Jili and Bili could never think of education. Despite Bakha’s dream of becoming a Sahib he could not become literate as no schools were there to welcome him. The Dalits are educated through a tremendous crisis despite all rules laid by the government and they face an identity crisis when they grow up despite being educated at every step of their life. Even though Om’s father in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* and Bama’s brother in *Karukku* had been insisting them to be educated as education, they believed, would free the low caste from caste prejudice, yet at every step of their journey they were grounded by inexplicable torture to realise that only education is not enough to become casteless.
The amount of mental and physical pain that they had to bear to become educated is beyond imagination. They were schemed and beaten to death with a slightest fault and means were imposed on them to force them off studies. According to the Child Rights Convention Part I Article 28, clause 3, school discipline should be administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity, which means that school should maintain discipline not at the cost of a child’s physical and mental dignity. Corporeal punishment by the teachers is a crime but here in the novels we see free play of torture on students at a slightest mistake and if the student is a Dalit then the beating increases by ten folds.

Om relates his painful experiences in the primary and Intermediate School and describes how he has been mistreated in school, college and even at his workplace. He shares his experience in school when he is asked to sweep the entire school and ground for three days staying away from class and studies by the headmaster.

Obeying Headmaster’s order I cleaned all the rooms and the verandas [of the school]. Just as I was about to finish, he came to me and said, ‘After you have swept the rooms go and sweep the playground’. The playground was way larger than my small physique could handle and in cleaning it my back began to ache. My face was covered with dust. Dust had gone inside my mouth. The other children in my class were studying but I was sweeping…. I was not even allowed to get a drink of water…. I started to sweep the compound while tears fell…. Each pore of my body was submerged in an abyss of anguish (4-5).
Later on when his father had approached different people for help, they all stood against him advising him not to send his son to school but to keep him in their family profession as it was not destined for a sweeper boy to study but sweep instead. He is advised and warned that education in low caste would bring doom and failure as they thought Om to be dumb and incapable of learning. Nobody criticizes the teacher who tortures him but Om in turn is jeered again and again for his endeavour to study.

Bama in *Karukku* explains the similar treatment that the Dalit Christians used to receive in school. The low caste students in the Convent were beaten for a slightest cause. When the children were a bit grown up, the Sisters would “give us a sharp pinch. That hurt even more.” Bama explains how she is physically punished for dozing off. “Once when I was dozing off like this and the Sister slapped me, I was so startled that I wet myself. She gave me a few extra blows for that. I screamed out so loudly that my mother came and cleaned me up and carried me away.” (75)

In the Tyagi Inter-College the physical education teacher Phool Singh was a mortal terror for the students in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*. “He was hot-tempered and vulgar-tongued. All the students were in mortal fear of him. Our fear of him pursued us like our shadow. He terrorised the students the moment he entered the class.” He would make students squat in the painfully contorted position of a rooster for hours. “Slaps and kicks were very common. One was afraid even to stand near him.” (47) In such a situation no child can open out or imbibe proper knowledge on a subject as because his mind is filled with fear and alertness of every move of himself and the teacher as he is always battling with the feelings of escaping a thrash and receiving one at any moment at a slightest move.
Again, Bama in *Karukku* cites an event in the convent:

One day when I was repeating the prayers, Sister turned up suddenly. I was so startled by this, and became so nervous that I made a mistake and changed a line that I as saying out loud…. She came right inside to give me a knock on my forehead…. And I nearly died of the pain. My forehead began to swell up where she struck it. But she wouldn’t let me off even after that. I continued to repeat the prayers, weeping as I did so. On that day, I thought to myself secretly, that when I grew up I would pick up a stone and fling it at this Sister.” (75-76)

Such type of mistreatment is hypocritical for Nuns and Sisters who champion the cause of love and non-violence. Such behaviour rouses in the mind of the child a sense of vindictiveness which can be reflected in her life later on in a negative form. When Bama was in her second standard he remembers her painful mornings in the winter when she was forced to go to the Church for prayers. All had to be present in the meeting or else everyone would get severe beatings from the Priest or the teacher. “Nor were these ordinary blows. The cane fell on us with the sharpness of a whip. It left great weal.” (71) The fear of these blows, not love for the prayer, made all reach Church on time. One important point comes up in this that religion was thrust upon them like a responsibility which the children coming to the order had to follow or they would be thrashed or punished. It is shameful that the preachers of love and peace themselves do not follow the things they preach and on the contrary, torture children who they call are ‘the children of God’.

In *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, Om tells about an incident that took place with one of his Dalit classmates that had stayed ever imprinted on him as a nightmare. Because of some
Phool Singh had started calling names to a Dalit classmate. When all laughed, Phool Singh was caught in a prestige issue and he hit the Dalit so badly that he turned blue black.

Phool Singh had got tired of beating Surjan Singh, who was lying on the ground. His face had puffed up, and his body had become blue all over. All the students were standing dazed. The teachers were watching the spectacle quietly. The principal, Jasbir Singh Tyagi, stood quiet as well. No one protested or retaliated. Every follicle on my body was trembling with fear. My heart was filled with terror. It seemed like all my blood had been drained out. After this incident, I used to have nightmares often. I constantly felt scared. I became introspective and did not feel like talking to anybody....Surjan Singh had done nothing and yet he was beaten up. If laughing was a crime, we had all laughed. Then why was only Surjan Singh punished? (48).

It is a misfortune that for a slightest budge the Datit was beaten to death and the others stood quiet watching them being thrashed happily without protest. Even if it was a misconception on the part of the teacher or his ego clash with some petty thing it was the Dalit who got the beating. This was so because it was considered right to beat or punish a Dalit naturally with or without reason; they are as if born to be mistreated. This incident, Om records in his memory for years and we find him confess of becoming crippled from the inside out of fear, anguish, hatred and developing an attitude of introversion and silence. He says, “This was an absurd tormented life that made me introverted and irritable” (3).
*Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* presents several terrible instances in the life of Omprakash as a child related to his education and relationship with his teachers at various levels of school and college. We find how Casteism affects the upper-class psyche and hate politics play vital roles in ruining the lives of the Dalit children who are aspirant and intelligent. Om loses credibility for this hate politics of his Science teacher who deliberately gives him fail marks in the practical exam despite answering right things in the exam. He was stamped ‘Inter-fail’. This affected Valmiki terribly. He could not get admission anywhere and his confidence had been terribly shaken. It is because of this teacher that he had to leave his village and shift to Dehradun for getting admission in a different school. “Running around for my admission, I went through bouts of total hopelessness. Many a times I felt that I wouldn’t be able to complete my education. My self-confidence had been badly shaken by my failure. I felt that life had nothing left for me.” (67-68)

This kind of attitude and act that ruins a child’s future is certainly a gross child rights violation. This adolescent age of fourteen or fifteen is very important for the overall development of one’s mental character. A big jolt like this can demotivate a child and make his life unbearable.

Anand in *Untouchable* depicts a situation that brings shame on the high caste people. He describes the fate of a girl child, Sohini, sister of Bakha, born in a local sweeper family having delicate features and a radiant look. We see how Sohini is purposely punished, insulted by the high class people when she goes to fetch water from the well. The irony is stinging when we know that Sohini is poked by the high class ladies, waiting to fetch water from the well. Gulabo, the wife of a well-to-do Hindu family hated the very sight of the innocent honest face as she was jealous of the sweeper girl. She would try her best shower all sorts of abuse and insult on the poor girl without any reason, trying to stop her from getting water from the well. She even
attempted to gather people’s attention by shouting curses on the girl so as to form a general opinion about not letting the girl take water from the well. This kind of a treatment with a child is an inhumane act and readers wonder the nature of the adult indulged in it.

“Ari, you bitch!... Aren’t you ashamed of showing your teeth to me in the presence of men, you prostitute”. “Please don’t abuse me”, the girl said, “I haven’t said anything to you…” “you eater of dung and drinker of urine! You bitch of sweeper women! I will show you how to insult one old enough to be your mother”. And she rose with upraised arm and rushed at Sohini (17).

It is the curse of untouchability that an untouchable cannot drink water from a public well or enter a temple. One had to wait for a long time till someone after persistence emphatic begging would pour some water from the well to once pitcher from a considerable height so that the high class pitcher does not touch the low. One has to go through this daily abuse only because she has to take water for survival. The basic rights to food, water are vividly negated.

Driven by curiosity, Bakha on the same day enters the temple spellbound to hear the melodious chanting of the Arti. He happens to step above his limits though with a heart full of reverence, he is disturbed by a voice:

“Polluted, Polluted, Polluted…Get off the steps, you scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our temple! Now we will have pay for purificatory ceremony. Get down, get away, you dog!” The priest further shouts, “You people have been polluted from a distance… I have been defiled by contact. The distance, the distance!” The worshipers from the top of the steps were shouting. “A temple can be
polluted according to the holy books by a low caste man coming within sixty nine yards of it, and here he was actually on the steps, at the door. We are ruined. We will need to have a sacrificial fire in order to purify ourselves and our shrine” (53).

The crowd on the steps had seen the scene of a boy crossing the limits and polluting the temple and sympathized most terribly but they did not know the story that Shohini had told her brother in cries and sobs pointing towards the lanky priest who made such a hue and cry. “That man that man”, Shohini said, “That man made a suggestion to me when I was cleaning the lavatory of his house there. And when I screamed, he came out shouting that he had been defiled” (54).

Bakha’s eyes flared wild and red and his teeth ground between them the challenge to prove what the Brahmin wanted to do to his sister. It was not him and his sister who has defiled him but it was he who wanted to violate his sister. Furious with the idea that Shohini had been insulted, he forces her to say what had happened. Sohini crying in shame and disgust stammers in shame, “He-e-e just teased me…. And then when I was bending down to work he came and held me by my breasts.” (54)

The hypocrisy of the Brahmin class is very candidly depicted in the above incident where the boundary between touchability and untouchability becomes very narrow depending on the context. Here the priest, who is taken to be the most pious of classes, is the most hypocritical of all. The strict norms of caste division which were formed by the educated Brahmin sect with a particular notion are later modulated for their advantages according to their own ways and so Sohini who is an untouchable in public is very much touchable in private. This when one realises finds the utter subversion of values and the opportunist notion behind all caste divides. This incident that has happened with Sohini is a pure case of girl child molestation and sexual abuse
and in addition a case of untattered lie on the case of the priest as he starts calling ‘defiled defiled!’ as soon as Sohini starts aback. Both the brother and sister will forever keep in mind this incident and will have deterrent feelings towards the upper section. They are haplessness is all the more highlighted as they know their voices would not be heard by the high caste and they would be punished for the wrong reasons illogically. That is why Shohini calms her brother and tells him to come home and avoid creating a scene as nothing was destined to be in their favour despite no faults of their own. Such is the pity of a low caste existence that a girl has to digest all types of insults dumb folded.

Later when Bakha goes to collect his food after the strenuous work of sweeping the public streets, he is not only insulted, abused by a lady but treated less than an animal for asking his due of two pieces of bread. When the lady of the house finds Bakha sitting on the steps of her house she shouts:

“You eater of your masters”, she shouted. “May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you perish and die! You have defiled my house! Go! Get up, get up! You eater of your masters. Why didn’t you shout if you wanted food? Is this your father’s house that you come and rest here……. But you eater of your masters! Why did you sit down on my doorstep, if you had to sit down at all. You have defiled my religion. You should have sat there in the gulley! Now I will have to sprinkle holy water all over the house! You spoiler of my salt! Oh, how terrible! You sweepers have lifted your heads to the sky, nowadays! This bad luck on a Tuesday morning too! And after I had been to the temple!….This eater of his masters has even burnt the bread by detaining me here…. May you die!... What
have you done to earn your food today, you or your sister? She never cleaned the lane this morning and you have defiled my home. Come, clean the drain a bit and then you can have this bread… Come, do a bit of work now that you have defiled my home” (64).

The situation is so pathetic and macabre that one feels dingy after reading it. Anand very well brings out the contrast between the treatments that one gives to a Brahmin Saint and to a sweeper even though both have come to the same notion of begging. The reaction of the lady of the house can be taken as the standard measurement on the point of view of the common people towards the Dalits and the saints. The contrast in attitude is veritably found from every angle. Bakha’s several calls for food and his subsequent sleep is contrasted with the Sadhu’s call “Alakh Alakh” which is immediately answered to. The tone of talking immediately changes when the lady finds a sweeper boy sitting on the pavement of her house. She showers non-stop abuse on the boy trying to show the massacre of defilement that Bakha has caused to her house. She will have to take an additional effort of sprinkling holy water on her house to save her house from getting adulterated. The lady claims her piety by announcing that she has visited the temple and had already bathed. Her piety and hygiene consciousness becomes very clear when we hear the piety of the world she is speaking for Bakha. After showering curses on Bakha, she cows down a bit noticing the saint at her door. It is ridiculous and hypocritical to note on her part that even though she is aware of the taboo of not using slangs for decency’s sake, yet she is doing it and that too in the presence of a saintly person. She cows down for a while but goes on cursing taking refuge of the issue that ‘this eater of his masters’ has defiled her house and so she has lost her mind out of rage. She provides rice and steaming vegetables to the Sadhu but nothing such to Bakha. Her behaviour with the Sadhu is soft and one of reverence while with Bakha it is
inexplicably rough. It is ironic and hypocritical of the Sadhu who principally should be preaching the values of humanity but does not say anything to the lady for her behaviour or about the insanity of caste differentiation. He too selfishly takes away his share without caring what the boy had in his share. He is humbly received by the lady with a handful of rice and vegetables not because of love but of the fear of religion and the supernatural power of the Sadhu lest something bad happens. She asks the Sadhu to bring her some herbs for her son’s fever. It is again by one way that the lady is taking help of the Sadhu in lieu of the rice that she is giving him but Bakha’s work seems of no credit.

She scolds Bakha of not doing his work properly and takes advantage of the fact that he has now defiled the house. She forces her to clean the drain and allows her son to excrete in the drain as Bakha was there to clean it. Then after a long tenure of chagrin she throws two pieces of dry bread from upstairs which flies in the wind like paper bits and falls on the pavement of the drain where the son was excreting. It is such a misfortune that Bakha though deeply anguish had to accept that dirt-clad bread as this was the only food for the day he would get. It is again important to note how he feels fearful and exhausted to answer the questions of his father for his failure to bring food for his entire family. It is because of the events of the whole day Bakha feels shattered experiencing an existential crisis for carrying the huge burden of caste on him.

In Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea* we find the real picture of a village, Thul, in the western part of India set at the dawn of urbanization and expansion. Desai through this novel has approached difficult issues like poverty, child labour, industrialization and environmental problems all at the same time but in a story telling manner. All the opinions positive and negative about these issues are highlighted through different characters. The plot of the novel
revolves around Hari and his family, their miseries and hardships in life. The story speaks about the families of the village, Thul, near Bombay, struggling to exist in the transition from being a rural area to an industrial one. The novel is particularly important in studying the state of children in the contemporary era as it shows a contrast between the comforts of the rich and the plight of the poor. The novel is basically a portrayal of the plight of the children sandwiched between poverty and incessant desires of the childhood. The major problems that the novel discusses are child oriented but not all of them are particularly conditioned for a child.

Thul, with its vast exposure to the sea, is a land of fishermen and farmers who live in a state of poverty and haplessness due to lack of money and awareness of a big town. Another problem that leads the people to their misery is the population problem. The poor families, living in thatches are overly populated with children who neither have food, education nor any well-being. Desai discusses Hari’s family as exemplary to Thul having a lazy drunken father, who beats his wife at night, a sickly mother, who can provide her children with no love and care not because she is careless but as she is too weak to care. The elder sister Lila, who is thirteen years old, acts as the mother of the house sacrificing her childhood in the struggle to raise her siblings. She has left her studies along with Hari, the twelve year old, only male child of the family, for the sake of running the daily chores of the house. Hari, the intelligent and hard working child is forced to grow beyond his age as he is the only one who can earn a living for the entire family. He is a guardian of his ailing mother and his sisters who have been compelled to sacrifice his imaginary world of dreams in lieu of earning a livelihood. Responsibility and poverty have put such mountainous loads on his shoulders as he has lost the essence of carefree living and fun. All his day goes in fabricating ways to earn a living contrasted against his constant fancy for the luxuries of childhood. He is too young to do any job and too ignorant find
any. Yet he manages to catch fish from the shallow waters of the sea, sometimes working as a
servant in the rich D’Souza’s house and sometimes selling some produce from their garden in a
town near Alibagh. Desai very well describes the poverty-stricken condition of this family
through Lila when she charges her brother of being lazy and not trying his luck in any profitable
work.

We don’t go to school any more you and I. Only Bela and Kamal go and next year
we won’t be able to buy them any new books. We hardly eat anything but this dry
bread, or dry rice, every day. There’s hardly ever any money to buy anything with
in the bazaar-only when we sell our coconuts in the Malabaris. The only time we
eat fish is when you go fishing. Father never does. And then how will mother get
well if she never gets any medicine? (15)

Here also as mentioned previously in this Chapter, poverty is the sole cause of problem and child
rights violation in Hari’s family. The secondary cause is their father who is unaware of his
family’s hardships and is happy to stay entranced in his world of toddy.

Another major problem very much attached to their living conditions is the factor of detoriating
health and increasing malnutrition in these slums because of lack of adequate nutrition and
money to buy food for the entire family. Death of children in these slums are very common and
we see how the doctors refuse treatment either because they are unable to pay a price for the
treatment or they are hesitant to serve the low-caste.

The state of nutrition that Om, Bakha and their lot get is nothing but the food scraps/wastes
thrown away by the rich after their lavish meals, very well described in the novels. Even though
Desai is writing about a situation two decades after Valmiki and six decades after Anand, yet the situation of the poor children has not changed much. Still they do not enjoy food, proper living condition, education, and other necessary child rights.

Their deteriorating health is hugely caused by malnutrition, ignorance and lack of proper medical facilities in the villages. The doctors and Vaids try to stay away from the poor as they cannot pay proper prices for the treatment and above all they avoid treating or entering the low caste people places as they are overweight with caste prejudices. Both Untouchable and Joothan: A Dalit’s Life describe the plight of the helpless patient when taken to the doctor. The negligence on the part of the society for not providing health care to the poor children is a huge violation of human rights that is left unregarded by the contemporary administration and mind set of the elite. It is not only a violation of fundamental right but also of the fundamental needs of having food and health facilities.

Valmiki records with great agony that how they relished the scraps in the days when there was a scarcity of food and how ‘mar’ or rice water was a pretty whole substitute for milk for the Dalit children. “Our stomachs would get bloated because of a constant diet of this drink. It killed our appetite. It was our cow’s milk and it was our gourmet meal. Scorched by this deprived life, the colour of my skin has altered” (23-24).

The pieces of poories that were collected from the pattals were dried in the sun. A cloth would be spread on a charpai to dry them. Often I would be placed on guard duty because the drying poories attracted crows, hens and dogs…These dried poories were very useful during the hard days of the rainy season. They would be soaked in water and then boiled. The boiled poories were delicious with finely
ground red chilli pepper salt. Sometimes they were mixed with gur or molasses, to make a gruel and this dish was eaten with great delight. After working hard day and night, the price of our sweat was just joohan …Looking at the food of the Tagas, I would wonder why we never got to eat food like that” (9-10).

The taking of the leftover scraps thrown away in the dustbin is not only cancerous for health and hygiene but it gives a sense of macabre while eating them for the dirt and stink attached. There is no respect shown for the boys by the rich even if they had invested their labour to serve the rich. They have to pick up scraps left for them with taunts and disgust. The feeling of utmost insult and hurt when Bakha is to sweep the street for the general good by announcing his presence every step he proceeds in the market. His earnest desire to buy the sweetmeat and jalebis in the market is exclusively childish which is inhumanely crushed by the blow of poverty and the realization that he is a Dalit. He manages to buy some sugar balls which are cheap but there also the shopkeeper cheats him by giving sweets less in number and insulting him for his greedy looks inside the shop. His vision is also taken as something heinous and polluting.

Another serious problem that these novels highlight is the problem of child labour. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986\textsuperscript{11} has tried enough to demotivate families from letting their children work. But the protagonists who are the stereotyped representatives of the Dalit people are so poor that they do not dare to waste their time in education. This is because education is a long drawn process while work is a day to day earning medium. Here Bakha, the son of a toilet cleaner could only dream of school as there was no provision for a low-caste to attend school. We find him sitting with the Christian Father listening to the scriptures and getting himself interested to the new thoughts.
A sepoy tells Bakha, seems too intelligent and dexterous for this job (toilet cleaning) - “not the kind of man who ought to be doing this.”(8) His baiting of the Babu’s sons for teaching him lessons reflects his immense desire to become literate. He is forced to suppress all his desires for food and games that a normal child desires. In Om’s story we find that a Christian Father teaches the poor Dalit children as a voluntary service without any official recognition as letting a Dalit being educated by the high caste society was a costly affair, they would better find ways to ostracize a Dalit boy than letting him education. This is because not only did they think that education is for the elite but also that for the fact that knowledge brings power and giving power to the Dalit could be dangerous. The politics of power game controlled by the Brahminical society becomes clear.

Labour is something that is intertwined with growing up and childhood in every Dalit house. The word labour literally means hard work, struggle which is very much un-needed when children are considered for they are to be carefree and joyful. The low caste is cornered for their caste, poverty, inabilities, lack of information; they are immersed in social fear and pressure. They are so very much dominated that they have to sell their labour for cheap price. Here we find in each novel how the children are forced to work for their families despite their desires to study or play. Earning is the only way for the survival of the family so parents too sent their children in different acts from where some earning could be got in cash or kind. It is seen that many a times the parents are unwilling to send a child for labour but circumstances forces them to submit because of the crisis of money and means. Moreover, their families are large and the population is unplanned. To take a share of food in a family, each one had to work.
Paraja gives a very vivid description of the children in the Kondh tribe of Orissa, where the boys and girls even before becoming adolescent is forced to work as bonded labours pitifully paying off their debts of their forfathers or fathers. Paraja raises this severe issue in its plot bringing out the poignancy of a child when he is mentally, physically and socially eliminated for becoming a labour. Becoming a labour means that one is so poor that one cannot pull his ends and so he misses social contacts unlike free people.

The problems of child labour in Orissa are many folds. These problems mostly relate to the nature of the work in which they are engaged as quantum and of wages that they are paid. In agricultural occupation they don’t have problems in regard to the nature of engagements but they are paid no wages or paid a negligible amount. The Debt Bondage Abolition Act, 1948 and the Bonded Labour Act of 1976, though came as a rescue station to the vagaries of bonded labourers in Orissa, yet, the tribal children are under the clutches of village land lords in different forms and garbs in the hill tracks of Koraput, Kalahandi, Phulbani and Ganjam and other hilly areas of the state. 

In Paraja, we see the free play of child labour and witness the terrific results in the end. Not only are Tikra, Mandia, Jili and Bili away from their healthy childhood, they are unaware of the feeling of pampered love and enjoyment as a child. Poverty makes them matured from their infancy and they know that they should not ask for a bellyful or nag for any ever-desired object. We feel the poignant yet unexpressed feelings of Jili and Bili when they are alone in their house striving for existence; they see the other tribal girls dressed in new clothes, looking fresh for the Spring Festival. The two sisters look at each other in silent understanding. Tikra and Mandia
become goti from their adolescence and have to work like bulls in the house of the Sahukar. They are deprived of proper food, clothing, shelter, education, love and care of a normal life. We feel the helplessness in Mandia and Tikra when they are unable to protect their land and sisters from the vulpine intruders on one hand, and their love for want of bride price, on the other. They grow introvert in mind and due to recurring torture on their minds and bodies, they become mentally introvert and short tempered; this object their proper growth of personality.

In *The Village by the Sea*, Desai’s portrayal of the characters are not new in the sense that they deal with the social problems of rural India as any other writer but her representation stands individual in the end as she puts forward different views about the problems and suggests ways out of them both directly and indirectly thereby saving the novel from becoming pessimistic and negative in nature. The problems are very urgently addressed and somehow solutions are also discussed in a manner to fit the circumstances of the characters. As this study revolves around discerning the problematics of child rights in this novel it will only focus the problems of the children in the novel.

It is very distinct in Desai’s portrayal that the elders in Thul are aware of the necessity of education in children. That is why we see that the children go to school eagerly and cherish love for education but it is poverty that keeps them from going to school. Hari is forced to think like an adult for his family’s livelihood and Lila like a matured woman is worried about the future of her family. Desai very well juxtaposes Hari’s inclination towards imagination and play on one hand, and his responsibility on the other. Desai brings this very contention in little day to day activities of the children. As Hari returns frustrated to his hut empty handed unable to get any fish or vegetable for food, he sees his sisters Bela and Kamal skipping and playing with
square pebbles. It is very astonishing to learn that in between their games they think of their scarcity and responsibility. The girls seeing Hari empty handed mocks him for not bringing anything. Hari accuses them for soiling their skirts in the mud. It is in their conversation that we realise that Lila had become the mother surrogate for them. “Lila will wash it.” Even though they realise that the work pressure of Lila was in excess and detergent is expensive, yet they try to keep to the fact that it’s everybody’s responsibility and Lila being a mother-like will do the most. As Hari is accused of not bringing anything, Hari retorts saying, “You took home some molluscs, didn’t you?” (23)

There are two things to be noted in this small conversation between the siblings. First, the children are conscious of their work while playing, which is a gross child right violation as children should have the free mind and time to play and leisure and second, we see Hari’s inability or frustration that he wants to make up with the issue that Bela had taken some molluscs at home for a meal. Here we see each other inexpressibly expressing two ideas- one, that they are a unit striving to keep up the family and second, all are noting each other’s strife to keep up though everyone at heart wants to lead a life of a child, laughing, playing, imagining, and not working hard to get some petty material for food after being abused and frustrated. We are also pained to see them feasting on some molluscs which are not considered as comfortable in the food list.

Another important thing that The Village by the Sea depicts is the tension and anguish of the children because of the parents and elders. Apart from the social pressures of poverty or caste issues that they face in their daily lives, the children heavily suffer because of the adults, their behaviour or acts that not only cause shame to them but also impact their psychology. We see
how Hari and his sisters are frustrated with their father who is a drunkard and an idle person. His debts affect the entire family as money lenders come to asking their dues at home and it is the poor children who have to face the cruelty of their demands. The debt collectors come home suddenly; terrify them with threats and abuses and loot the little money, kept as the last resort, which the children had earned some way. They also threat the children of killing and it had so happened that Pinto, their pet dog, was killed because of the vengeance of a payee who fed Pinto something to take revenge on Hari’s father. The frightened and shattered children shrieked in pain,

“I know who it was”…. “It was that-that horrible old man-that drunkard who lives over there.”…. “Yes, it was he who threatened us”, said Lila sadly….. ‘He said he would punish us,” Lila remembered, “because father had not paid him of some toddy…. father was in debt.”… “Debt, debt, debt” Hari gnashed his teeth. “Father is always in debt because of toddy.”…He would get away. He would to Rewas. To Bombay. And never come back to this sad house, his frightened sisters, his ill mother, his drunken father. He would leave them and run, run as far away as he could (66).

The above incident shows the pitiful morbidity of life that a child has to face because of the adult word. Hari wants to run away from the squalour in which he is stuck because of his family. He is frustrated, anguished, agitated by poverty, debt, illness and all the more severe hopelessness of his situation. Bakha, Om, Mandia, Tikra all feel the same after they deal with the seamy, rotten experiences in life. When the D’Souzas admit Hari-Lila’s mother to the
hospital for her continued illness, their father explodes on the very matter. It hurts his ego who feels that the children had no right to take their own decision in admitting her to the hospital.

“Don’t answer back, girl,” he shouted at Lila. “What do you know about anything? What makes you think you can manage things. You can’t.” He kicked over an earthen water pot in his rage so that it fell and broke with a crash, flooding the kitchens pieces of clay, smashing them to bits while he shouted, “How could you leave her alone?” …… “Make the food at once. I’m going to take it to her at Alibagh, he roared and began to crash around the house, hurling things about while Lila hastily began to roll out the chapatis and bake them, although tears ran from her eyes and blinded her” (100).

Though there was very little food in the house, yet Lila manages to hand something in a bundle and he takes cursing the girls, leaving them in the fearful world alone for several days. This shows the irresponsibility of such people who do not take any care for his children but unthinkably produces them without any care for his future and the family.

With a zeal for protest against urbanization, Hari goes to Bombay for petitioning against the act of industrialization together with a hundred other people. Though he was the only child to join the meeting, his zeal to protest against something which he feels is not right, shows his potential to do what he determines. Such a child, if given all his rights, can excel in everything. This we see exactly what the watch mender tells Hari. He not only teaches him to mend watches in Bombay but makes him understand the crux behind mingling in the flow of life. Hari learns to dream through his words of inspiration as Bakha in Untouchable does, when Gandhi speaks. He learns that only hard work does not bring success but tactful work in a planned business brings
success. He toils immensely at a cheap restaurant, Sri Krishna Eating House, in Bombay where he gets a rupee a day as his worth.

Sri Krishna Eating House, Desai describes, was the meanest and shabbiest restaurant Hari had ever seen, even in Thul. “Its ceiling was thick with cobwebs that trapped the soot and made a kind of furry blanket over one’s head. The floor and the wooden tables were all black, as they shared the soot from the open stoves that cooked all day lentils and chapattis the whole day.” He lived in the suffocating heat and dinge of the food stall serving hundreds of people from early morning till night and got bare sleep in the hot humid corner of the stall that was darkened by black soot and stink. Together with him there were two boys, from the South India, who too by some misfortune landed in Bombay and were equally serving the stall owner like Hari. With cheap rice, bread and lentils, Hari manages to build up his inner strength and saves his income for buying gifts for his sisters in Thul. His expectant eyes and fast learning ability pleases Mr. Panwallah who teaches him to mend watches for a part time income. What lies best in The Village by the Sea is that poor people help Hari settle in some manner or the other, of course by his labour and merit, but do not misguide or cheat him like Bakha or Mandia, Jili, or Om is cheated or mistreated.

In Thul also we see Lila and his family being supported by the D’Souzas who take the sick mother to the hospital in Alibagh and pay for her treatment. It is at least the children have a better outlook and respite in their hearts that their family is anyway being run. It is very enterprising to note that Lila alone manages to pull on her family when Hari leaves for Bombay unannounced. She works at the D’Souza’s place, sells coconuts of their tree and catches fish with unskilled hands for running the family. She keeps up Bela’s and Kamal’s schooling and
cares for her sick mother at home. She is the perfect homemaker who takes care of all tit-bits in the house.

Children in Thul are self made and do have the determination to carry on unbroken. We see Hari’s friends’ dream of getting a job in the Fertilizer Company and working in it to make their life successful. This element of dream is present in every child in every novel but it is the social circumstances that built and crush their dreams. Hari, Lila and the like do not get big chances to be educated nor can they lead a playful childhood but their will do not die. They dream of a bright future settled as an entrepreneur when Thul becomes an industrial town. Bakha in Untouchable thinks of the concrete sanitary systems and the greatness of the work that he is doing for the society, hoping that time would change and things would be right for their lot. Om wishes education and protest can change the dalit situation. He is appreciative of children following his footsteps but wants to installs in them the courage to face the crude society. Bama is happy in the end that children are getting educated and the Dalits have realised their identity finally.

One thing that hammers our consciousness is that because of the heavy challenges in life, the children see only the world tilted to one side where the poor are destined to work and struggle and the rich are destined to play, study and read. Hari and his family watch the D’Souza family’s richness and their children’s playfulness. The time they get to play and spent with their parents in fun are lavish and expensive for Hari’s family as they cannot afford to waste time for the care-freeness. Same is the case with Bakha when they see the Babu’s sons going to school or playing lavishly. He too wishes to play hockey and be a part of the team but for his caste he
is always treated as an outsider. Om calls this phenomenon of social castration as “standing outside doors”.

Valmiki reports, “I was kept out of extracurricular activities. On such occasions I stood on the margins like a spectator. During the annual function of the school, when rehearsals were on for the play, I too wished for a role. But I always had to stand outside the door. The so called ‘descendants of God’ cannot understand the anguish of standing outside the door” (16). This feeling of exclusion is intolerable as one realises the discrepancies faced is not only for caste division but people’s minds which do not allow them to provide opportunities or look for talents in dalit students who they know are capable of some art. It makes one feel paralysed, confidence less and the feeling of elimination is one of getting excommunicated.

In the cheap Sri Krishna Eating House, Desai describes, it was very difficult for Hari and the two boys to live and work the whole day. Desai sites a monsoon day experience when the entire city was washed clean by rains and it was not possible for the daily wages workers to get work on the day and they had gathered in Jagu’s shop for tea and hot meals. That day Hari and the boys had to work overtime without any break to meet the demands of the people. The coal and the wood had all gone damp and it was difficult to get a fire started. When they did, it did not burn but smoldered and smoked getting into their eyes, making them cough and rub their eyes with grimy hands. The customers brought mud into the eating room which had to be cleaned constantly with a rag and a pail that soon seemed filled with mud. Sometimes they were made to go out to fetch cigarettes and they were drenched and could not get dry and thus shivered miserably.
By evening Hari was more tired than he had ever been before….when Jagu put out the light and took out the key to lock up the place for the night, Hari knew he couldn’t go out into the rain and there was nothing to do but to stretch out on the bench in the suffocating room and try to sleep….. That night he felt like a prisoner on his first night in jail (114).

This can be taken as the acme of misery that Hari could have felt being a child labour. Firing the woods, actively taking part in the chapatti making, serving and cleaning all together without a break is unthinkable torture on a boy of twelve. We see Hari struggling to fight against his fate to earn money so that he can reach home to his sisters and mother to make up all the miseries of their lives. It is very pathetic to note a boy of twelve trying to play the role of a surrogate father and Lila fulfilling on the other side as the surrogate mother, trying pitifully hard to balance the equilibrium of existence. It is a jeer for our Indian society that cannot provide apt roles for children and adults because of poverty, lack of health facilities and no knowledge, as a result of which the roles someway get interchanged bringing more miseries and child rights violation.

It is very innovative for Desai to introduce the idea of training and vocational skill in the poor children who do not have money to study but have talents to learn the technical knowhow. Mr. Panwallah teaches Hari to mend watches and this gives him a better edge in life, he dreams to start his own business in Thul and thus hopes to secure his family economically. Lila, on the other hand, is helped by the D’Souzas which is a positive step in bridging the love-hate relationship between the rich and the poor. A little bit of humanity on the part of the D’Souzas saves Lila’s mother, encourages her father to quit drinking and become responsible and finally
relieves them off their suffocating haplessness. Desai’s portrayal in this aspect is sympathetic, and wishful which makes the novel enjoyable to read. The readers too are relieved of their tension in the end that Hari would definitely manage his family somehow in a better manner and their family would enjoy some basic rights even in the face of hardships and troubles.

After considering the plight of children in the north and western part of India, we develop a queer feeling inside us as we see how the children are exploited in spite of the concept of rights embedded in humanity. In southern India the picture is not very different. If we read the novels Kurukku by Bama and The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, we experience peculiar aspects of child rights violation which hurt a child not only physically but affect their psyche directly. Even though Bakha, Om, Mandya or Jili, Bili all are tremendously hurt because of their trajectories of fate, yet there is a distinct difference between the pains that Estha and Rahel or Bama experiences.

Bama in Karukku wonders her situation and forms a confounded belief about the sorry state of Dalit Christian in India and sees Christianity as a refuge or relief from it only to dis-cover in her adulthood the hypocritical gap between the vision and the reality. Bama visits school and grows up to be an educated lady full of positive dreams in her heart; she wants to work for the good of her lot, but where she gets the rebuff from the programmed concepts of welfare and welfare of the Dalit Christian sect. She can no more be calm but her disillusionment forces her to protest through her novel.

Karukku is an autobiographical journey of Bama from her childhood to her adulthood amidst various Dalit experiences in life and her understanding of the world in a better way. Karukku depicts the childhood of Bama in her village, in school and in college. Here experiences are
relatable to Om’s experiences in school and college for being a Dalit. Caste is what that haunts Bama at every step precedes and she is punished, called names, mistreated without fault only because of her pedigree. “Everyone seemed to think Harijan children were contemptible. But they didn’t hesitate to use us for cheap labour. So we carried water to the teacher’s house; we watered the plants. We did all the chores that were needed about the school”(16). Bama narrates an instance in her seventh standard in school when she is falsely condemned as a thief for accidentally hitting a coconut tree while playing with her friends and a raw coconut had fallen with her touch.

Next morning at assembly, the headmaster called out my name. “You have shown us your true nature as a Paraya,” he said. “You climbed the coconut tree yesterday after everybody else had gone home and you stole a coconut. We cannot allow you inside this school. Stand outside.” I was in agony because I had been shamed and insulted in front of all the children (16).

Later she had to go to the priest for confession and be humiliated to bring permission for being back in school.

The priest’s first response was to say, “After all, you are from the Cheri. You might have done it. You must have done it.” Tears started welling up in my eyes, and I wept…. When I took it [the permit] to the headmaster, he abused me roundly, using every bad word that came to his mouth, and then told me to go to my classroom. When I entered the classroom, the entire class turned around to look at me, and I wanted to shrink into myself as I went and sat on my bench, still weeping (16).
This kind of incident bruise the child psychology and sow seeds of anger in a child which is quite natural as one would not like to be called a thief which is not only derogatory but also something that denounces a human being unethical. Bama like Om in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* continuously understands at every step of her life that it is impossible to past caste whatever one may do.

Bama explains that until she reached class three she had not heard people openly talking about untouchability. But she had “already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by what it is.” (11) The reason could be this that she was underage and did not have the understanding of caste-divide or people had started realizing the need to change the system and thus were talking about untouchability openly. We find that old people had accepted the fact of casteism in their blood and now it is the young who had been talking about their miseries openly.

She relates an incident when a low caste servant brings vadai to a high caste Naicker without touching the packet and he bowed down in offering them to the high caste. Being a child it was funny for Bama to notice this type of act as she did not know the reason behind such a behaviour and the curse of untouchability. But her father explains her that a Parya was a low caste and a Naicker was high and so the Parya could not touch the Naicker as the latter would get polluted. Hearing this, the revolutionary heart of Bama protested high. She became very angry and questioned certain fundamental questions towards the evils of castesim.

I felt so provoked and angry that I wanted to touch those wretched vadais myself straight away. Why should we have to fetch and carry for these people… Such an important elder of ours goes off meekly to the shops to fetch snacks and hands them over reverently, bowing and shrinking, to this fellow who just sits there and
snuffs them into his mouth…. How was it that these fellows thought so much of themselves? Because they had scraped four coins together, did that mean they must lose all human feelings? What did it mean when they called us “Paraya”? Had the name become that obscene? But we too are human beings. We should never run these petty errands for those fellows (13).

Here Bama voices out the entire Dalit sentiment at her tender age which as an incident is quite significant as the development of herself and as a writer. The reference she makes of this humiliating incident with the Paraya is very significant to decipher. Bama objects not only to the part that untouchability is inhumane but also raises her voice against slavery and perpetual obedience of the low towards the high caste. She refuses to bend low before them and blatantly proclaims that money cannot be the criterion of dominating the poor. She wishes to overturn the hierarchy as she announces that the low should not work errands for the rich and that “we should work in their fields, take our wages and leave at that” (13-14) There is a simple equation which she wants to put forward: the high caste is depended on the low caste for their services and it is the service which matters. So the low caste should treat their service as a payable commodity and work according to its demand and prices. She is the first one in all the novels who raises her voice to question the strong indignation and tries to understand the relationship between the low caste and high caste commercially. She champions her lot by putting forward the human aspect that human dignity, sentiments and feelings cannot be bought or sold with money.

In Untouchable, Bakha too asks the questions like why should we have to clean their dirt and why should we have to be suffering even though we are working this hard for them but his
questions bear self pity and hopelessness. He cannot find any answer. But Bama like Omprakash, in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, is determined to change things amidst all odds.

Bama relates how at every step of her life caste has interfered in and caused her anguish and pain. Whenever she would be in a bus while coming home during the holidays from school, if there was a Naicker woman sitting beside her she would certainly ask which street Bama would go which automatically would give her the caste. “As soon as I said, the Cheri, she’d get up and move off to another seat. Or she’d tell me to move elsewhere” (18). If not they would stand the whole way rather than sitting as they would get polluted apparently. This happened to Bama several times and when she had reported this to her mother. Her mother advised her to tell a lie about her caste then the incident would not happen with her. But Bama was determined and did not take refuge to a lie. Like Om in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, she questions in this tender age, “But why should I pretend to these people that I’m from a different caste?” (18) This type of pain that keep delving deep in a child psyche can never give birth to healthy childhood feelings in the daily lives and thus adversely affects child rights.

Bama’s sentiments, as a child, have beenmiscellaneously hurt because of her caste. When she wants leave from her school for the First Communion of her younger brother, she is ruthlessly denied by the Warden and the Principal. She is furious to see children of the wealthy parents liberally allowed to leave for the same purpose while she was not. When asking about such disparity, she received a blunt humiliation: “What celebration can there be in your caste, for a First Communion?” (19) Being obstinate Bama replies there cannot be rules for different people for a same cause at a same place. She manages to snatch her right for the moment and gathers in her the power to fight for her and her people’s rights unflinchingly.
Another issue that Bama raises in her book is the issue of corporal punishment in school by the nuns and teachers just as Valmiki portrays in his book *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*. Children are variously tortured in school which is not only very degrading for a child but also a cause of fear and frustration. Education, the fundamental right of any child is based on the behaviour and culture of the teachers who teach the children. But if the teachers are torturous then students lose interest in school and studies. This is what the high caste teachers try to inflict in the low caste students so that they quit studies.

Bama notices that there is a distinct distinction in the treatment of the Nuns while dealing with the rich and the poor children. The rich enjoy a better quality of life and receive less beating but the poor deserves both. What agitates Bama the most is the attitude of the Priests and the nuns towards the Dalit which they promulgate in public and let the Savarna children follow too without care. They too think that the Dalits are incapable of anything good and no favour should be done to them as they would not change. The bitterness stings when they call the Dalits as ‘creatures’ and ‘cobras’ who are good for nothing and are harmful. “There is nothing we can do for these creatures. And we shouldn’t do anything for them. Because to do so would be like helping cobras.” (99) Experience had made things clear that who stings whom as cobras and poisons one’s human rights -the Dalits or the high castes. This kind of negative attitude towards the Dalit annoyed Bama profoundly.

The same is expressed by Valmiki in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* when he proves how caste would come in between any normal situation and children would be exploited unflinchingly. It is funny that the teacher who does not want a Dalit to study and proceed does not hesitate to take favour from the Dalit students. We see how Brajpal, the science teacher, harass Om and his friend for
being his Dalit students. At the age of twelve or thirteen Om and his friend, Bhikhuram, was sent to a far off village for bringing a big sack of harvest from Brajpal’s paternal home. For this incident Om had faced vicarious dangers and bizarre experiences that he could never forget. Not only this, Brajpal tactfully announces to help the students in his subject separately at home and when the student would come for help he would stay away from home forcing him to thrash the grain, load and pile things only to waste his time and energy. Such treatment on a child by a teacher not only sends respect away but also fills his mind with agitation and hatred.

A Dalit did not have right to ask questions and doubts about a subject, if he did so he would be punished and abused for a Dalit doesn’t have the right to read and even if he does he is being uppish by asking questions or leaning more than what is expected of him. “Whenever I dared to ask my school teachers to answer my doubts, I got punished. They beat me up, gave me lower marks in the examinations. The taunts of my teachers and fellow students pierced me deeply. “Look at this Chuhre ka, pretending to be a Brahmin.” (62)

In *Karukku*, Bama points out that Nuns and Priests never teach or tell children happy gleeful stories about Jesus and Christianity. Whatever moral stories they told were all God or Devil fearing. They would implant fear in the children for unnecessary reasons. They would be afraid of doing anything that is considered a sin in everyday life. The way they had imposed the concept of sin in the children, they were afraid of walking alone in the Church. The Church turned out to be a fearful police station kind of place that the children wanted to run away from rather than being a peaceful religious sanitorium where one would long to spend hours for. Because of this fear the children always felt some kind of hesitation, awe, before or while doing any act as they were reminded of the Devil and the punishments. The Priests also forced the
children to confess things that did not happen in reality. Bama tells her experience in her First Communion when she had to confess her sins in the confession box several times as a routine. “For many days I simply repeated what they taught me to confess. Every week I went to the confession box, knelt down and reeled off the formula I had learnt by heart.” (73) She had to confess something learnt by heart and not the truth. “… I have sinned… I lied four times; I stole five times; I have not obeyed my elders; I was daydreaming in the Church. I repent these and those sins that I have forgotten.” (73)

She relates another incident in the Church when the prayer was over and a small boy imitated the Father sprinkling holy water on the followers; he was hit badly by a Nun who mistook him sprinkling water in actuality. “The boy couldn’t stand the pain and screamed out whereupon his mother yelled,” It's New Year's Day, and he’s only a baby; should you hit him as if he has committed some kind of heinous sin?” (57)

Bama very rightly exposes the dark side of the Churches and Missionary life where the Dalits are treated as Dalits and not human beings equal in the eyes of the Lord. Bama stands up directly for the rights of the children. When she grows up to become a Nun, she is said to dominate and commandeer the children and not love or inculcate religiosity in them. She finds the same caste issues being repeated intergenerationally between a high and a low; a rich and a poor. The humiliation that she had faced for herself she sees them happening to children of later generations which is a sorry indicator that India has not past caste though years have passed by. Small children of the high and wealthy class would refuse to sit beside the low. They would humiliate the low caste children and order them to do things proudly. Once when Bama came to
the refuge of a low caste child she herself was also humiliated for being a help to the poor and was advised to keep her caste a secret.

*Karukku* being a vivid documentation of the Tamil Dalit Christian society in South India also portrays poverty and child labour in children. Bama describes the hardships of the Dalit Christian men, women and children throughout the day only to earn a square meal a day. Especially children need a commendable attention in this section as we find how inhumane they are worked out only for fulfilling their own hunger. When they are babies, they are tied at the back of their mother and are carried to work where they do not get food on time, a proper place to sit or play. As soon as the children grow up to be ten or twelve years of age they would go and find some way of making money. “Until that time, they’d go about carrying their younger siblings on their hips. They’d even gather a few twigs and sticks, and learn to boil a little gruel. It was always the girl children who had to look after all the chores at home…. If there were boys in the house, they would graze the sheep and the cattle. When they grew a bit older, they’d go off to work in the fields like older men”(45) Here Bama consciously or unconsciously while describing her childhood and other children do not forget to notice the differentiation of boundaries of work allotted to a boy child and a girl child. A girl has to do the household chores confined in the boundary of the house whereas the boys were free to go out places with sheep and cattle which were comparatively easier than the household chores. She sums in the end and rationalizes with the practical but bitter truth that a girl child is marginalised heavily and has to sacrifice her childhood more than a boy stuck in the kitchen and agricultural works. Bama criticizes the situation that,
In the face of such poverty, the girl children cannot see the sense of schooling, and stay at home, collecting firewood, looking after the house, caring for the babies, and doing household chores…. If you look at our streets, they are full of small children, their noses streaming, without even a scrap of clothing, rolling about and playing in the mud and mire indistinguishable from puppies and piglets” (68).

Such is the effect of poverty, illiteracy, lack of health care and lack of care for the humanity. “When we girls grew up, there was no more play. We went to work during the day, came home and saw to the household chores, that was it. There was nothing else. Now even the little ones don’t play anymore. Even the tiny ones wake up at cock-crow, go to the matchbox factory and work there till sunset” (50). Ruefully Bama reflects, “At an age when they should be going to school, studying like everyone else and playing about in the evenings, they are shut up inside the factories instead….How can they afford to study, when it is such a struggle even to fill their bellies?” (48) The deep rooted empathy and frustration sounds clear in Bama’s voice as she relates the childhood stories of a Tamil Dalit Christian society. The internal development, the journey within that Bama makes from the black holes of caste and religion to a state of being above caste and above religion from a child to an adult is the central holding field of the book. Through this Bama realises the problems of a Dalit child life and also understands that taking refuge of any religion or sect is not the answer to the human rights problems but standing up for the cause staying within such a society is of some importance.

In Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, on the other hand, we find a lot of difference in perspective when we talk about child rights. The journey that Arundhati takes in her novel is
purely internal which lead to peculiar tragic predicaments in the characters. *The God of Small Things* is related from the perspectives of two eight-year old twins Estha and Rahel. Here the exploitation that Rahel and Estha are subject to is not of poverty or lack of education but something which is elementarily mental. They suffer because of the lack of attachment and for unknowingly becoming the devil’s advocate. Both *The God of Small Things* and *Karukku* are set in South India where the former is set in Kerela and the latter is set in a Tamil village but both deals with the predicaments of the Dalit Christians. The novels apart from discussing several human rights issues highlight child rights violation as a major segment.

In *The God of Small Things*, we have two primary child characters named Estha and Rahel supported by their cousin Sophie Mol in the backdrop. The incidents that take place in their parents’ life play a major role in deciding their fate. This is where Estha and Rahel suffer, suffer not externally but internally so deeply that Estha loses his voice and Rahel loses credibility for life. There are certain gross child rights violations in the novel. Bakha, Om, Tikra, Bili and their friends all face child rights issues but it is something very common to their own lot for being Dalits. Dalit or caste issues have always affected the children and because of their economic and social backwardness, they always had to submit before the rich high caste whims. These had impacted on their lives heavily and slaughtered the steady growth of their personality due to the barriers they had faced in getting education, jobs, and proper healthy living conditions. But the predicaments that Rahel and Estha had to suffer were inexplicably poignant which had changed their course of life. It is quite a contrary state that despite violations, Bakha, Om, Mandya, Tikra, Hari, all kept on moving forward with a dream or hope of creating something positive in life but the case with Estha and Rahel was entirely different. It is as if they had stopped growing in life
and were striving to go back in the time line to find something, to regain their past, to revive back something rather than looking forward and dreaming for achieving something. The type of violation that they faced had in some way subverted their course and pulled them back to their start where as adults they simply tried to balance the mis-balanced equation to attain not material prosperity but inner enlightenment. This way, the novel is much ahead or more complex that the previous discussed novels raising certain vital questions that hammer the brains of the readers. It is not about something that acts as an appeal to the society but appeals directly to any mind that reads it.

Estha and Rahel are children of a Syrian Christian mother and a Bengali middle class father. They are not identical twins but they have identical souls. When the kids were born, Roy narrates, that their mother had checked whether both the twins had individual hands, legs, other body parts, and was satisfied about each other’s individuality but what she had not noticed was their unseparated heart. Roy tells us that "they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities." (2) Rahel shared experiences, dreams, and memories, unsaid, unseen with Estha. By keeping their hearts unseparated, Roy creates the androgynous existence or identity of the kids who when parts become empty of the other half. When Estha is separated from Rahel and sent to their father to live in Calcutta, Estha cries as though a part of her body is being ripped off.

There is a huge violation of human rights in the lives of the characters but the sarcasm lies in the fact that there is no one to stand beside them even though the law, commissions and state measures are not very far from reach. This is the line that Arundhati draws between the outside world and the inside world of a family where a person’s plea are suppressed to such an extent
variously, that they seem miles away from being heard. The domestic violence many a times becomes more severe than outside world violence and this is what *The God of Small Things* portrays.

The major child rights violation in the novel are lack of love and care from the elders, exploitation by the adults, child sexual abuse, insult and mistreatment, economic exploitation, victim of adult wrath, social fear and pressure, lack of information and expressional rights.

The story starts with Estha and Rahel in Ayemenem, a small village in Kerela where Rahel has returned knowing of Estha’s return. They were separated for strange reasons under strange circumstances in a secret manner within a very short time. The word ‘secret’ plays havoc in the minds of the twins as this very secret had tattered away their life and paralysed their voices in want of reasons. The secret that they could never know as children was revealed to them as adults when they had no voice to express their pain except through the language of their bodies. Strangely enough Estha and Rahel had one feeling, one sensation of right or wrong and same sense of being castrated from important things at important times. Their bonding for each other was not something very usual like all brothers and sisters not because they were twins, but they shared a same heart and joint identities. It was like one being unfulfilled without the other. “She remembers, for instance (though she hadn’t been there), what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had done to Estha in the Abhilasha Talkies. She remembers the taste of the tomato sandwiches- Estha’s sandwiches, that Estha ate-on Madras Mail to Madras” (2-3). These were the small things that bound them with the big things.
The Abhilasha Talkies incident is a prominent example of child molestation that Estha faces and Rahel understands. It was a moment of wrong, of fear of something that should be untold, something secret. Estha being lured for a free lemon drink is forced to help the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man masturbate. The staccato rhythm of the poem, “Fast Fast Faster…” is an indication of his rapid heartbeat and running adrenalin in fear and the rapid movement of the hand. After the incident, Estha vomits and suffers from fever. The dirty act which Estha cannot tell anyone is again conjured in his mind like a secret which only Rahel understands even not discussed.

Child molestation is one of the gravest problems with children which the child rights agencies are trying to fight but the problem arises as the children cannot always voice up the problem and it affects their lives badly. After the insult, Estha feels a sense of guilt deep set in the heart and in unable to place himself as a child of the Captain’s family in the movie, as the children in the film were chaste but he was not. He could enjoy the film no more nor could he sleep at night.

From the above interpretation of their characteristic traits, it is easy to conclude that these kinds of children do not face a regular predicament that any normal child could face. Their senses of smell, sight, taste and sound, makes them feel the essence of the thing which they are thinking or witnessing. It is by this synesthesia that Estha and Rahel in the end finds the untold secret, the crime that was done through them. They were about seven years when their parents got divorced and were brought back to Kerala, their mother’s place, where they had been welcomed like outsiders. The marginalisation gradually overshadows their lives at every step in which their childhood is not spared.
The image of death and violence conjures up the memories of the children experiencing death like sequences, some imaginary and some real. Sopie Mol’s death is a prelude to the subsequent death of Ammu and Velutha. Looking back in time, Rahel understands that their family had several classifications much deeper than the jam-jelly question. This classification was essentially between class, caste, Ammu and Chako, Estha and Rahel, Ammu and Velutha. It is quite strange to imagine children imagining deaths but here the circumstances and surroundings compel Estha and Rahel refer death very casually.

If scrutinized deeply, we see, what adult Estha and Rahel were experiencing was the result of the past, when they were kids. Estha stopped talking on the whole.

It has been a gradual winding down and closing shop. A barely noticeable quietening. As though he has simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say… it wasn’t an accusing, protesting silence as much as a sort of aestivation”(10).

When Estha was separated from Rahel and was send back to Calcutta, with his father, where he finished his school with mediocre results and refused to go to college, Estha had cuddled inside for want of expression and likeminded association. The forced separation with his sister is not only a forceful separation of parts of a united inner whole, but a veritable crime committed on the part of the elders that had deformed the characteristic traits of two children. Enthusiastic and jovial Estha now becomes a numb boy. With certain initial embarrassment of his father and his step mother, Estha began to do the housework leaving school. This unusual retreat is a sign that
neither the father nor the Kerela people try to understand. It is a kind of humble acceptance of
the wrong done by the elders on him and his sister without any protest. It is the insecurity that
Estha feels to face the outer world, which raises questions in his mind but fails any answer.

Article 3 of the Child Rights Convention tells that “The best interests of children must be the
primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for
children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect
children.” 13 But children fail to get the right attention, right decision and fail speak out what is
right for them in many domestic situations. They are ruthlessly subordinated by the elders for
fulfillment of their own interest.

Rahel, on the other hand, was first blacklisted in Nazareth Convent at the age of eleven when she
was caught outside her house mistress’s garden gate decorating a knob of fresh cow dung with
small flowers. This was seen as a perverted act and she was made to read the moral confession
from the Bible before sniggering school girl faces in front of her in the assembly. This act of
forced confession unheeding to her imaginative potential is a definite child right violation which
remains intact in her memory when she has grown up. She was forced to read “perverted quality:
Moral perversion; the innate corruption of human nature due to original sin…” Six months later
she was expelled from school for the sin of deliberately colliding with senior’s breasts. It
appeared to the authority like “a civil, solitary form of corruption”.

Rahel was very much opposite in her behaviour from Estha. It was as if Rahel had complimented
for Estha’s silence by her tom-boyish, un-grieving, uncaring and disorganised attitude towards
life. She got admitted in the school of architecture and did not finish the course but suddenly married Larry McCasling and went with him to Boston. The marriage did not last long because she did not find any similarity or interest with her husband and came back to Ayemenem with Estha’s return.

The incidences of the past commingle with the incidents of the present and bring out the unrevealed story of their past when they realise the wrong done to them but they have nothing to voice but deprogramme the love laws of the present to understand the deprogrammed love laws of the past. The crime of separating the children from their mother again is recorded nowhere but in the psyche of the children, Estha and Rahel, who grow up unusually crippled and lack in the fullest growth of personality. This mother-children separation is again a crime committed by the family on the victims, as it breaks the social code of a family bondage and denies the element of care, love, bondage and dependability in relationships. But this mother-children separation, and later on the act of separating the twins from each other thereby harassing their entire childhood psyche and future is another important violation committed from both the Child Rights perspectives and that of socio-ethical perspectives. This moral and ethical blunder is felt and seen but not brought up to the social courts. These violations that happen undercover in the houses as secret is something that human rights codes fail to categorize. The social torture that Bakha and their lot experience is an unhidden truth, but the violations caused on Estha and Rahel are not normally exposed. They are planned injustice done to fulfill the domestic interests of the elders of the family and to carry a cleat chit with the family names, immaculately clean where ever they go or whom the meet. It is for the false prestige and ego that the children and their mother had to pay the price. This is how crime and innocence change places which is very
different from the real laws of innocence and criminality discerned in actuality. It is the mingled
nature of this microcosmic layer of crime and innocence that changes hands according to the
cases and the winner takes it all who has the power-both social and economical keeping
himself/herself masked from the legal eyes. In such a case, life gives very thin scope and
minimal time to prove the right and show the wrong- and this veil of unclaimed truth is rarely
perforated. So, in the end the children are compelled to express their grief, not through voices but
through their bodies, only to each other, as the world was blind and deaf to witness realities.

Incidents that lay imprinted in Rahel and Estha are similar and reckoning. They remember
Ammu being called to the police station and the police calling her a prostitute; and then tapping
her breast with his stick “like mangoes. Tap tap”. This feeling of wrong which Rahel could not
express in the police station, nor ask her mother is exhibited in her school when she pushes in the
seniors’ bodice to feel whether they hurt. The scene of an unknown man tapping her mother’s
breast and insulting her to tears plays on her mind and comes out in a much subverted form. She
remembers Ammu crying continuously and telling ‘I have killed him’. The children do not
understand the meaning but when they grow up; they discover the secret that they themselves
had been very much a part of that death.

Estha’s outer fire dies while the inner fire keeps on smoldering in want of justice and tears which
he attains in the end through the like expressions of Rahel’s body which too was empty of the
love and care, voice and fulfillment. It was a void that was in them that they tried to fill up
through their incestuous quest very much waiting for, from the time of their forced separation, as
they were very well aware of the ‘big thing’ that was hovering largely in their minds because of
the “small things”, that they were forced to do and in turn, this had given birth to uncontrollable expressions after so many years of suppression and violation. The big thing that was evolved out of years of depression, frustration, answers of unuttered questions, alienation and wrongs done to them, were forced out as reaction in forms multiple trajectories that had borne the stains of poignancy and violations hidden in the root.

It is very amasing that Arundhati had sketched in multiple strokes the episodes of abuse, mistreatment and politics on children done by the adults. Though tender and not matured, yet the children understand the wrong and insult done to them and as a result either reacts openly or in a subverted manner, sooner or later. The problematics of child rights violation is not constricted only to the material benefits of the children in The God of Small Things but also their psychological effects. This is something very enlightening in Roy. Estha and Rahel do get all the happiness of education, lavish meals, good clothing, fashionable baggie dresses, puffed sleeves and goggles but where they lag is the care and love. It is Ammu who loves her children closely but her love for Velutha unbalances the equation for the entire family. She suffers badly for the insecurity of loving a low caste and their subsequent separation intrudes in the smooth flow of emotions for her children. She is agitated with a slightest childish prank because of her diffidence in her affair.

While going to watch the movie The Sound of Music, Rahel shouts in joy recognizing Velutha in the Marxist procession. The presence of Velutha disturbs the entire family’s poise momentarily. Each one in the car was calculating different things in mind, and it was the children who were victims of adult wrath. Ammu slaps Rahel for becoming excited and behaving unlike a
gentlewoman. Estha is scolded for making spit bubbles. Here we see, bigger problem which haunts the minds of the adults, find expression in small things related to the children. This is what children often become, toys of adult emotions, where it becomes easy to divert one’s emotion on a child to hide greater things. This unjust treatment for doing nothing wrings in the deepest chord of the children’s psyche.

In the Plymouth, ironically Chacko points Ammu, “it’s fascist, the way you deal with them…even children have some rights, for God’s sake”, when Ammu was very strict with them in the Plymouth car. Similar incidents repeat in the childrens’ lives as motifs. The children remember their father’s anger and Ammu’s disgust for some reason unknown and being pushed around a room once, ‘from Ammu to Baba to Ammu to Baba like Biliard balls. Ammu pushing Estha away. Here, you keep one of them. I can’t look after them both. Later, when Estha asked Ammu about that, she hugged him and said, “he mustn’t imagine things.” (84)

It is impossible for the children to stop imagining things as the adults impose on them similar occurrences giving out similar painful meanings. The same thing is repeated in the Plymouth when Chacko talks about rights of children and immediately announces that they are not his responsibility rather Ammu, Estha and Rahel are milestones around his neck. The children knew about the milestones which were tied around the copses and thrown in the sea so that they do not float. It is pitifully harsh for the children who are confused to calculate how many milestones to take around their neck when they would set off on their voyage. Estha puts his head in his lap in fear in imagination and introversion. His spoiled puff is the symbol of his spoiled spirits, his fear of exclusion. The sense of insult in Estha and Rahel becomes very clear as they refuse to sing
with Baby Kochamma just after this event and stay quiet in protest. These incidents are tormentous for kids who are mentally tender. The worlds that they depend on are their parents and elders. When they feel that their own parents and elders do not want them and they are milestones around their necks, they are exposed to the feeling of unwanted urchins who are not loved and cared for but hated for their existence.

It is because of the misbehaviour and insult that the three children, Rahel, Estha and Sophie Mol goes out of the house and plans to stay out until Ammu apologises and takes them back home. The twins weighed down by their mother’s words, “If it weren’t for you I would be free. I should have dumped you in an orphanage, the day you were born. You’re the milestones round my neck” (291) decide to leave home as they have no importance. The children now plans to row the boat from the History House and sail to some other place to punish the elders for insulting them. It is then the horrific incident takes place and the boat is overturned in the river claming Sophie Mol’s life.

The incidents occurring next lead to trememdous child rights violations, which can be termed as crime, which turns the lives of the children upside down. After Sophie Mol is drowned, the children are bewildered; they run around to search her through the night but fall exhausted only to lay asleep in the History House. They did not know that Velutha was also sleeping there and were only awakened by ruthless policemen kicking and beating Velutha to death. With Ammu’s admittance of her love for Velutha and children’s denial of Velutha being their abductor, the entire case takes a new turn in the police station which proves Velutha an acquit. But the paradox lies in the cunning schemes of the representative of the administration itself who gives Baby
Kochhamma a chance to prove her wrong story right. Baby Kochhamma now forces the children to lie by confusing them and pressurizing them to identify Velutha as their abductor. She coerces that if Estha does not say, ‘Yes’ then their mother will be in jail for ever and they cannot see their mother again. Such a terrific blackmail was too much for a child to take and understand. He is forced into the jail and forced to assert a lie. “The memory of a swollen face and a smashed upside down smile of a spreading pool of clear liquid with a bare bulb reflected in it of a bloodshot eye that had opened, wondered and then fixed his gauge on him. Estha. And what had Estha done? He had looked in that beloved face and said, ‘Yes’. ” (32) This very memory tears Estha in parts till he grows up to understand the real story and the violation that had come on him resulting in Velutha’s and Ammu’s death. Before any further investigation of the truth, Velutha is killed and Ammu is deported to a different town. It is true that the children never see their Ammu shortly after the incident as she is ousted from her home and then she dies of consumption. The children are blackmailed and threatened to become a party to the adult lie which is not only a child right violation but a crime and in the end of the novel we find how the children suffer throughout their lives because of the guilt and fraud. No human/ child rights machinery works in such deep secret matters that can save children from psychological exploitation, and social pressure.

The impact of the society on children is sometimes so devastating that it creates a deep gorge in the tender psyche that in turn initiates a psychosomatic problem in them. The tender minds are vicariously forced to face several painful emotional and physical engrams again and again which prevent them from many happy moments and analytical reasoning. Their reactive minds become paralysed to those memories which sting their mind forever even when they grow up and take
decisions for or against something. The Orangeman Lemon drink man gives Estha a somatic.\textsuperscript{14} He vomits and suffers a heavy fever. He not only fails to enjoy the film and be happy with others, he feels himself disgusting, guilty of some sin and looks upon him as impious. The sexual molestation on the part of the Orangedrink man is an engram for Estha which he remembers forever and the feeling of nausea overcomes him whenever he smells something ‘sweetsick’ in air, in death, in blood and later on also reminded when he is an adult standing amidst the bizarre sad memories of the Perigrine Pickles and Jams. This is definitely an aberration for him which cuts off his steady mental flow for something constructive and analytical. He is afeared, introverted and cornered.

Even Rahel has the same sensation of something wrong and fearful associated with the secrets that she never knew. In fact, ‘Pappachi’s Moth’ is the missing link that flaps its wings every time and binds fear, detachment, guilt, heavy heartedness all together in the children. When Baby Kochhamma coerces Estha and Rahel to confess Velutha as their abductor, not only was she blackmailing the most soft and emotional saviour engram in them, that is their mother, but also making them frightened with a lie that she would enforce that it is they who have killed Sophie Mol out of jealousy. Here adult pressure is creating a big combustion in the child psyche that causes on their somatic forever which only gets its vent in the somatic dilution in each other.

In \textit{Joothan: A Dalit’s Life} we see Omprakash as a serious victim of the psychosomatic. There are several incidents in the novel which tells us that he is discontendedness till the present day with certain things. The mistreatment of the Tyagis not only have cut his skin but literally cut his mind. He cannot forget and adjust when Chandrapaul Tyagi’s grandson comes to his house and
dines happily. He is reminded of his past when Chandrapaul Tyagi mistreated him so badly. As he is a well established person now the high caste came to take advantage of him but when he was in disadvantage, the Tyagis tried all types of obstructions in his path of progress. This gives him a somatic. Again in the Intermediate School he remembers Surjan Singh beaten to the point of death which makes him frozen. He is highly disturbed and pained when he is forced to kill a pig for sacrifice for the sake of getting some money; he cries for very long and cannot concentrate in his studies for many days.

Bama, in *Karukku*, remembers the corporeal punishments of the Convent School and acts as a somatic long after she has left school. Mandia and Tikra in *Paraja* take up arms against the Sahukar not only to finish off his villainy but as a reaction to the aberrations that they had in them as engrams. Their outburst in anger is nothing but a psychological vent that can turn their internal trauma into a perverted sadistic pleasure. Shohini will always remember her unlucky day and engrams will forever be generated as soon as she sees that priest. Bakha’s day long catastrophe of being physically and mentally severed will make him react in a different manner from the next day and the streets and houses would give him discomfort from hence and he will definitely try to avoid working in those streets where he had been harassed severely.

Children have been variously duped and their rights have been violated at every step of their lives as seen in the above cases. It is traumatic what they feel undergoing these violations but they too form a conception of the adult world which is wry and is a result of the rebuffs that they have received from them. Valmiki has a very negative vision of the high class and the people he interacts with. He gets a somatic every time when he meets a new person as he knows the latter’s
next question would enquire caste. As a child he has developed various perceptions about his own family members, teachers, friends and society people which are mostly negative. This is because the treatment he has received is hugely negative. He has understood that people do not want a Dalit to thrive well in society and it is due to the hate politics and retaliation that they cannot endure a low caste grow up educated and wealthy.

Valmiki describes an incident in life that makes attitude towards society and elders all the more pungent. Brajesh, the son of a Taga family, stops his way to school only to harass and have fun with him. “I turned to look at him. There was mischief writ large on his face.” (28) He poked Om’s stomach with a stick and started abusing him without cause. “Seeing me quite, he growled again: ‘You will remain Chuhra, however much you study’.” He pushed Om and his bag fell in the mire and all his clothes books got stained with mud and everything got soaked. When the poor child started crying, Brajesh laughed like a demon. “My heart had felt very heavy that day. It seemed that studying wasn’t possible for me.” (29) Here, the sight of Dalit advancement has roused such a brawl. In spite of being educated, the teachers behaved like savage beings with the Dalit children without heart and mind. They seemed to have only one goal and that is to torture a Dalit student out of class and finally make him quit studies. It is as if instead of giving right progressive and advanced education to the students, the teachers endorsed on imparting casteism and untouchability. It is because of their mistreatment with the Dalits the other high class classmates too behaved antagonistically with them. It is always a gate pass towards casteism and untouchability that the teachers would provide in place of gate-keeping them.
Om, Bakha, Bama, Tikra, Mandia, Hari, Jili Bili, Shohini, Lila, and all other Dalit children’s view of the adult world is funny and bizarre. Through their experiences they have come to know about the adults’ hopelessness and haplessness of a Dalit existence. They feel that their parents have similarly felt what they are facing now or even worse, but they have learnt to endure the poignancy. The children remain fearful every moment for getting undone because of the high caste scheme. They are even afraid of polluting a high caste as this would follow a severe punishment. They have seen adults accepting fate as it is and the struggle they do to exist in life. Through this they can easily dig out conclusions about the world and its atrocities. They also like their elders have learnt to curb their wants, feelings and hunger on the top but they cannot stop dreaming. Bakha dreams to become educated, wealthy like a Sahib and exceed caste. He also dreams of a casteless world. Hari dreams of poverty free life with his own business and smiles in his sisters’ and parent’s face. Bama dreams to face the high caste by building out a Dalit consensus and unmasking the hypocrisy of the Church. Mandia, Tikra, dreams of a free life where he can do his own work and lead a happy life with wife and children. Jili and Bili dreams of a life where there is no shame and happiness all around.

Bama is critical about the Dalit behaviour as sects. She has seen different Dalit sects fighting with each other on petty issues like ownership of a cemetery ground, stealing of bananas, entering one another’s periphery etc. She does not understand the logic behind wasting time and energy on such fight when such energy can be invested in an enterprise against the Savarnas. She is surprised how a child becomes a victim of the atrocities between the two Dalit sects and is killed. And this no one cares about but shouts over the petty issue that this child has stolen two bananas from the opponent’s cart. She finds the quarrels and stone throwing ridiculous and the
women-fight even more hilarious. She too dislikes the Savarnas and the Christians being hypocritical to the Dalit children and being oppressive for a minor cause. What all the children note about the adults is that the children lack voice of expression and they stand as objects of refuge and use for any kind of emotional vent and task that fetter an adult.

Om finds no logic in some Dalit beliefs like worshipping the pig and calling of bhagats when one is sick. He, like Bakha and Bama, is dead against collecting joothan and eating it. He is against the Salaam that a newlywed bride and groom have to go for. Salaam is nothing but begging all houses after marriage and getting heaps of curses and a few coins. On the whole, the adult world according to child perception is weird and nasty. But amidst this squalor they find love and care in some adults that they remember forever. Om remembers his Bhabi, who had pawned her only earrings for accumulating his school fees. He remembers Swarnlata Bhabi who had not only cooked him dishes but knit a sweater in his dire need. He remembers how his parents save him from killing a pig and selling cow skin for the second time. He remembers some friends and their parents who did not pay heed to caste and had the courage to invite him and feed him when he had brought good marks. Hari remembers Mr. Panwallah forever as because of him he has got inspiration and the knowhow of repairing watches. He also in someway liked his employer who despite being harsh provided him job and means of survival. Lila and her sisters will forever be indebted to the D’Souzas who paid all expenses for their mother’s treatment and also provided them work.

Estha and Rahel’s perception of the world is equally bitter but funny. They have found the adult world purely enigmatic and full of secrets that cannot be understood. Their perception of the
adults is comical and unpredictable. They fight on some petty causes; blame each other for funny reasons, cry-laugh at different times on a same thing. They are domineering and sometimes ruthless on children. They are unimaginative and uncreative. They forcefully thrust their vision, their will on children and never hesitate to beat them when their ideas come in conflict with the ideas of the children. They never feel sorry for children, never take part in their games or imaginations, but always boss them and make them sad. They threaten them by bringing a sudden decline of love and care for them and frighten them with the idea of separation. Adults do not support a child’s play and everything that they do is repulsive to the elders. But on the other hand, the children, Estha, Rahel and Sophie Mol know that the elders love them and they can punish them by being away. The going away of the children on the day of Sophie Mol’s death foretell the coming of the psycho-physical separation in the family leading to several other deaths.

Kofi A. Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, observed that:

“There is no trust more than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.”

In the novels discussed above, the children are in no way protected, their welfare is totally dependent on their ability to survive the odds and ends practiced in the society, they are heavily dominated by their elders, the teachers and even the elderly people of the community both from the high and low castes. They are always under social fear and pressure which hamper their personality development. The biggest challenge that most of the child characters in the novels undergo is the challenge of survival as they do not know how long they would have to be hungry
or naked under the open air, fighting against humiliation and physical torture from the adult world.

According to the recent Unicef report titled "Childhood under threat" over one billion children have been denied their childhood in the world. This report reveals startling facts about children in India. According to it, Indian children are deprived of their rights to survival, health, nutrition, education and safe drinking water. About sixty three per cent of them go without food and fifty three per cent suffer from chronic malnutrition. About one hundred forty seven million children live in kuchcha houses, seventy seven million do not have access to drinking water from a tap, eighty five million children do not get immunized, twenty seven million children are severely underweight and thirty three million have never been to school. India continues to have the highest number of malnourished children under the age of five in the world. Every third new born child in India is underweight having the risk of impaired health and brain development. Unicef's report ranks India forty ninth in child mortality. Poverty, unhygienic environment and malnutrition among women in the reproductive age group are the main contributing factors for India's high rate of misery. Around thirty million children in India spend their lives on the streets in a poisonous environment. Street children suffer neglect and are often abused and exploited. They suffer from ill-health and become victims of infectious diseases.16

In India, the divide between the rich and the poor is glaringly discomforting. Little children begging at traffic signals, large stretches of slums interspersed with swanky skyscrapers, and the lugubrious circumstances of farmers bring to light the villainies of skewed development. The inequality is even more stunning if the statistics are explored. While this third largest economy of
Asia has grown at ten percent in the last four years, fifty percent of the wealth is owned by only ten percent of the population. A striking contrast is offered by the fact that Bombay alone has more billionaires than all of Scandinavia, and yet about half the population of the megapolis lives in slums. India ranks sixty seventh out of one hundred twenty two nations in the Global Hunger Index.  

Justice V.R Krishna Iyer asserts, “The hallmark of culture and advance of civilization consists in the fulfillment of our obligation to the young generation by opening up all opportunities for every child to unfold its personality and rise to its full stature, physical, mental, moral and spiritual. It is the birth right of every child that cries for justice from the world as a whole”. It is a pity that the children of India still today are heavy sufferers from all aspects and a reference to the novels discussed above clarifies the point even better. They are far from the means of justice and because of the socio-cultural structure of the country, adult pressure, torture, child humiliation, exploitation are common factors in daily lives that do not care for voice or solution, rather children are beaten or neglected for adult spite which become domestic and private family matters shielded away from the eyes of the law. As children are immature, fearful, ignorant and unaware of their rights they are therefore trapped in the vicious circle of unrightful things in their everyday lives about which there are helpless. They are hegimonised by the elders and the society in such a manner that they are forced to accept their state.

This Chapter, by looking deep into the novels, has strived to examine the nook and corners of the child characters, both psychologically and physically, to understand the amount of rights enjoyed by them in society. From the above instances discussed, it is very clear that the children of pre or
post independent India are heavily taxed because of several socio-cultural and economic norms of the society. The problems related to children are basically a gift of poverty, casteism, illiteracy and adult pressure but there are certain other causative dimensions of the problems, including the social structure. The Indian scenario as represented by the authors equates with Prof. Myron Weiner’s words that India is the largest producer of illiterates and child labour.¹⁹

Literature brings out the intimate feelings and sentiments of a child when it undergoes a human right violation or fulfillment. Their outward and inward reactions as sketched by the authors are true to life and are self-explanatory of the emotions of pain, irritation or happiness in them. This is definitely a value-addition when talking about the rights of children as it is not papers that tell about the nature of children but children themselves. Literature by producing several instances through different novels exposes the inner reality of a child which if considered can specifically help in formation, investigation and future emancipation of the rights of children in a better manner.

If one studies a girl child from her infancy the system of rights, privileges, education and value system of a country becomes clear. This is because a girl is the carrier of all that a life can endow on her to the future generation. That is why it is often mentioned that if a girl is educated then the entire family gets education. A girl child is however, more vulnerable to human rights violation, even if she grows mature enough the probability factor for social, economic and sexual exploitation is more susceptible to her owing to her physical weakness and socio-cultural perception. The following Chapter extensively studies the state of Indian women represented in different novels and problematises their condition from women’s rights perspectives.
Notes & References

   See: http://wcd.nic.in/crcpdf/CRC-2.PDF

2. The Convention clearly specifies the upper age limit for childhood as 18 years, but recognizes that the majority may be obtained at an early age under laws applicable to the child. The article, thus, accommodates the concept of an advancement of majority at an earlier age, either according to the federal or state laws of a country, or personal laws within that country.


4. The Commission has the power to inquire into complaints and take *sue moto* notice of matters relating to deprivation of the child's rights and non-implementation of laws providing for the protection and development of children among other things. Aimed at examining and reviewing the safeguards provided by the law to protect child rights, the Commission will recommend measures for their effective implementation. It will suggest amendments, if needed, and look into complaints or take *suo motu* notice of cases of violation of the constitutional and legal rights of children. The Commission is to ensure proper enforcement of child rights and effective implementation of laws and programmes relating to children- enquiring into complaints and take *suo motu* cognizance of matters relating to deprivation of child rights; non-implementation of laws providing for protection and development of children and non-compliance of policy
decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at their welfare and announcing relief for children and issuing remedial measures to the state governments.

5. Article 39 of Part IV of Indian Constitution.

6. According to the World Bank, poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low income and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one’s life. The United Nations states that poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. Overall, poverty takes various forms, including "lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill-health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihood as a result of economic recession,

7. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. USA
   Refer: http://www.factmonster.com/t/hist/child-rights/
10. Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human rights, 1948. USA.

11. The Act prohibits employment of children in certain specified hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in others. The list of hazardous occupations and processes is progressively being expanded on the recommendation of Child Labour Technical Advisory Committee constituted under the Act over the years.

13. Article 3 of the Child Rights Convention, USA.
   Refer: http://www.gits4u.com/chlcare/chlcare4.htm
17. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a multidimensional statistical tool used to describe the state of countries’ hunger situation. The GHI measures progress and failures in the global fight against hunger. The GHI is updated once a year. Reflecting the severe impact of uncontrolled food price rise, India has slipped to 67th place in the Global Hunger Index 2010 rankings of 122 countries prepared by International Food Policy Research Institute. Despite achieving impressive economic growth, 410 million people living in poverty should be a wakeup call for government to probe and work for it. In recent times prices of necessary food items like rice, wheat, staple vegetables etc have soared by 25-50 per cent putting massive burden on the common man. Inflation has become the major barrier in fighting hunger and malnourishment in the country. To overcome the shortage of food, government should be more vigilant in the storage and distribution. Spoiling of grains and then a number of people dying due to hunger is a sheer case of poor governance. India has become a home to underweight children as 42 per cent of the undernourished children are from India. Low nutritional and health level of the generations to come should be an alarming call for a nation that aspires to meet millennium development goals.


Chapter 3

Issues of Women Rights in Indian Fiction in English

*This humanity is male and man defines women not in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being...... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential, he is the Subject, he is the Absolute— she is the other.*

Simone De Beauvoir. ¹

In 2001, the United Nations has adopted its Millenium Development Goals² that is to be achieved by 2015. One of its major goals highlighted is ‘Women’. Goal three of the Millennium Development Goals hopes to promote gender equality and empower women. Various participating states have formulated policies to promote gender equality and to bridge the gender divide, including India. From childhood to adulthood women are abused because of their gender. In many parts of India, women and girls are fed less than men and boys, have fewer opportunities to secure an economic livelihood not because they are less capable but the societal
structure permits so. They receive less education; have no access to proper healthcare which increases their vulnerability.

India shares a rich culture and reflects multiculturalism, intermingling of various religions and ethnicities. Yet, most of the states in India suffer from widespread gender inequalities and violence against women. These kinds of violence are multi-causal. Gender equality is a contentious issue of debate in India where culture and religion feature prominently as regulating factors in social conduct and sociological psychology of people. Culture and religion here represent the two important bases for social systems and rules. It is more disturbing that these structural elements have given rise to some of the worst forms of violence against women in the country. Traditional feudal and patriarchal social relations play pivotal role in most of the states in defining the relation between a man and a woman. “Within the Indian subcontinent there have been infinite variations on the status of women diverging according to cultural milieu, family structure, class, caste, property rights and morals.”³ Man is the centrifugal force through which all other forms of power are articulated. Individuality of a woman is either ignored or suppressed. The religious and ethnic identities are centrally constructed around the role of women in order to protect the power and privilege of men, particularly of the dominant castes and classes. Madhu Kishwar writes:

Half of the Indian population is women. Women have always been discriminated against and have suffered and are suffering discrimination in silence. Self-sacrifice and self-denial are their nobility and fortitude and yet they have been subjected to all inequities, indignities, inequality and discrimination.⁴
In different countries and disparate cultures, in diverse time and space it is common that women have been contempted. This unequal status of women being offensive to human dignity and human rights emerged as a fundamental crisis in human development, the world over. The full development of personality of fundamental freedom and equal participation by women in political, social, economic and cultural scenario are concomitants of national development, social and family stability. All forms of discrimination on grounds of gender breed unrest.5

Culturally in India, women are also dominated in the domestic spheres variously by men; even elderly women play power-politics with younger women in the house in matters of domesticity. Hate politics, personal grievance and jealousy add to the exploitation by one woman on another intergenerationally. This is again has bizarre reasons behind and has a silent backing from the male members of the family. This is prevalent in every home in the country among both the low and high class irrespectively albeit in different forms. The oppression which a Dalit woman faces is starkly different from the oppression experienced by an urbanized woman. It is patriarchy, along with class, culture and custom, which defines, determines, and enforces the relations between men and women, women and women in family and in society.

Various incidents and records show that Dalit and Tribal women fall greater prey to the society. Together with the violation of the civic rights and sexual rights, Dalit/Tribal women also suffer because of the violation of political, economic and educational rights. Unfortunately, enough studies are not available on the human rights violation of Dalit/Tribal women in the underdeveloped areas; nevertheless the limited evidences indicate that Dalit/Tribal women suffer from discrimination and unequal treatment in every aspect of existence. The lack of income
generating assets and heavy dependence on wage employment of the Dalit and Tribal women on the high caste landlords, provide an easy situation for the feudal lords to exploit them sexually and socially. Majorly thus, the economic condition of the Dalit/Tribal women compels them to surrender their civic, political and economic rights before the rich, feudal patriarchy.

It is interesting that Indian culture had originally paid great regard to women. The Rig Veda speaks of great prestige and liberty that a woman could have in society. The epics, Ramayan and Mahabharat both speaks of high position of women in society, their right to choose one’s own partner, their right of being educated, and even the right of working at par with men. But from the time of the Dharmashastras and Smritis, the position of women had started declining and they were considered as child bearing machines where their place was always destined to be under men. The origin of the Indian idea of appropriate female behaviour after the composition of the Shastras and Smritis can be traced back to the rules laid down by Manu in 200 B.C in Manusmiriti where Manu exclaims in his book, “by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her Lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.”6 This notion clearly sketches a customary stereotype about women following shackled roles- at whatever stage of being they are in- which not only tilts the social structure of Indian living to one side but also takes women as weak baits in the entire Indian cosmic psychology. It justifies the famous feminist quote of Simon de Beauvoir- “One is not born a woman, but becomes one” 7—when placed in the Indian context.

The term ‘Women's Rights’ refer to freedoms and entitlements of women and girls of all ages irrespective of territorial boundaries, caste, class, colour and creed. These rights may or may not
be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, local custom, and behaviour in a particular society. These liberties are grouped together and differentiated from broader notions of human rights because they often differ from the freedoms inherently possessed by or recognized for men and boys and because activists for this issue claim an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, enshrines "the equal rights of men and women", and addresses both equality and equity issues.

In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Described as an International Bill of Rights for women, it came into force on third September 1981. The Convention defines discrimination against women in the following terms:

> Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

It also establishes an agenda of action for putting an end to sex-based discrimination for which states ratifying the Convention are required to enshrine gender equality into their domestic legislation, repeal all discriminatory provisions in their laws, and enact new provisions to guard against discrimination against women. Tribunals and public institutions are established to
guarantee women effective protection against discrimination, and take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination practiced against women by individuals, organisations, and enterprises.

India’s concern over women’s rights and liberation stands much ahead than that of the West. Since medieval times and pre-independence, many famous feminist scholars and writers have inspired the idea of equal respect for women. The status to which women reached during the present era was not achieved due to the kindness of men or due to natural progress. It was rather achieved through a long struggle and sacrifice on woman's part and only when society needed her contribution and work, more especially; during the two world wars, nationalism and due to the escalation of technological change. The British rule is also somehow seen as a pioneer body working as a party to stop the Hindu social crimes against women. Colonial essentialism of "Indian culture" and reconstruction of Indian womanhood as the epitome of culture through social reform movements resulted in political theorization in the form of nationalism rather than as feminism alone. It was the Government of India, who having the advantage of being a new born Republic in 1947 and her creators highly exposed to the western ideologies and development; women were already taken into consideration while the constitution was being made.

When James Mill wrote in his *History of India* in 1817 that the condition of women in a society is an index of that society’s place in civilization, he wrote women into the project of modernity and modern history-writing in India. In one fell swoop, “women,” “modernity,” and ”nation” became essential and inseparable elements in a connected discourse of civilization. The “woman’s question” not only came to dominate public discourse for more than a century, it also became the touchstone of the colonial-nationalist encounter, inscribed with the trope of
modernity and the legitimation of political power. For colonial rulers, the atrocities practiced against Indian women became a confirmation of the rulers’ modernity and the moral ground on which their “civilizing” mission could be launched. As outsiders they could claim the role of protector of Indian women, interceding on their behalf against brutal patriarchal practices. And there were spectacular barbarities in the everyday customs of India, including sati (burning widows alive on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands), female infanticide (especially common in northwest and western India), enforcement of celibate and ascetic widowhood, and pre-pubertal marriages (especially in northern India). Colonial officialdom and Missionary rhetoric singled out such practices to characterize the status of Indian women as especially low and Indian men as exceptionally violent.

This was the mirror in which Indian men were invited to see themselves when colonial education began. The new urban elite, drawn mostly from the upper castes, imbibed the enlightenment philosophy of individualism and humanism. They perceived barbaric traditional practices against women as a civilizational lapse and as recognizable social evil. Thus emerged the social reform movement, an attempt on the part of the new elite to redress, sometimes with and sometimes without British help, the worst features of the old patriarchal order. Women were in the forefront of all the main items on the agenda of the social reform movement. For reformers, women’s emancipation was a prerequisite to national regeneration and an index of national achievement in the connected discourse of civilization, progress, modernity, and nationalism.

One strand in the movement concentrated on legislative remedy. A series of campaigns resulted in the abolition of Sati in 1829 and the enabling of widow remarriage in 1856. Another strand
was concerned with creating the female counterpart of the new male elite, “New Women”, who would share the sensibilities of the men in the family and be able to sustain their new class roles. The chief instrument was formal education but the issue became inextricably linked with the gender segregation and seclusion (purdah) practiced by the upper castes and classes and, by extension, with a reworking of public-private gender roles. Between the 1820’s and 1850’s reformers, who favoured both legislative interventions by the colonial state and a wider program of female emancipation, set up organizations like the Brahmo Samaj in eastern India, the Prarthana Samaj in western India, the Arya Samaj in northern India, and the Theosophical Society in southern India.16 Elite urban men led these movements and challenged many of the ritual and dismiss—women who struggled to gain an education and a place in India’s public life, neither of which flowed automatically or easily from their class or caste status. Women often earned “freedom” at the price of social ridicule, ostracism, and harassment. And while some women were aided by well-intentioned male relatives, others faced severe familial resistance.17

Despite everything, women have always been identified by stereotyped roles in Indian society. She is someone’s mother, sister, daughter, wife but not someone herself. These roles are designated to her eternally by the patriarchal society to mark her as a property of some male member. She has been colonized by the male world as a body, as an ideal image as forever sacrificing, soft, tender, desirable, usable and homebound. She is never idealized as an active worker, revolutionary, hard-spirited and intelligent person. She is expected to follow the fixed norms and codes led down by the society as suited to her age, and she is to religiously maintain these roles and responsibilities towards the members of the family. She is usable as a commodity and can be used as socio-economic baits. In Mahabharat, Draupadi was staked as a commodity
by her husbands in the game of chess. In the novels taken for discussion, we find how women are used as baits and are staked for the sake of fulfillment of some petty interest of the patriarchy.

The status of women in Indian society lies in the deep rooted misogynist ideology which have hegemonised women’s outlook also and as a result of it the women too seem to have taken their position as granted. It is surprising that women are sometimes not a friend to their own lot; they act against their fellow beings out of jealousy or out of the desire to get greater attention from the male folk. This is a major drawback in the Indian society that holds back the progress of women, paradoxically giving a greater chance to the patriarchy to rule over them. The novels in discussion also highlight this point through various incidents in the lives of the women characters.

This Chapter critically analyses the lives of some women characters prominent in the novels as case studies from women’s rights perspectives and further questions the socio-economic trajectories in their life despite the system of rights and duties present in the contemporary Indian subcontinent. It further purports the concept of women’s rights as a critical framework in deciphering Mahashweta Devi’s The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, Gopinath Mohanty’s Paraja, Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things and Kundalika Kapadia’s Seven Steps in the Sky as case studies to analyse critically the shape and the development of women in different locations of India. It also dissects the mechanization of exploitative system in which the women are trapped and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness.

Both Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution guarantee several rights to women in common. These are rights to equality, rights to education, rights to ancestral property, reproductive rights, right to information and expression, right to work and pay, right to
health and proper living, right against sexual exploitation, right to choose one’s own partner, religious, cultural and political rights. Indian Constitution in both Part III and Part IV guarantees the women, living under her territory, the rights mentioned above. It is interesting to note that most of the rights that the Constitution or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has formulated are veritably humane in nature; people should enjoy them from the time of their birth. But surprisingly the women do not enjoy all the rights but on the contrary; they miss most of them. The women of Bihar and the Kondh women of Orissa are in perpetual slavery. The women in Gujarat and the women in Kerela all do lack the rights that they should have for the fullest development of their personality from the very childhood.

One thing that is to be remembered is that exploitation of women’s rights is not only restricted to the poor or backward but to all sect of women belonging to all classes. This is important to understand as Indian culture has started supporting the degradation of women since centuries and this kind of mis-treatment has subjugated the status of women perennially, henceforth irrespective of their economic, cultural or educational background. But of course the exploitation of the women lot differs in degrees in different section of the society.

The various socio-economic-sexual issues that the women in the novels face are mainly of poverty, prostitution, maltreatment, patriarchal domination, exploitation, displacement, class-caste conflict, psychosomatic disorders, lack of self-expression, lack of education and awareness, lack of identity and health care. These issues make the judicial system prevailing in India all the more ironic. The demonstration of the trauma that the characters in the novels endure is an easy premise to conclude that there is a major women rights abuse in the Indian society.

The authors addressing the issue of women rights and exploitation take the matter seriously
thereby portraying each type of violation faced by women in detail. They depict women as symbols, metaphors, images, perceived from the view point of the society and themselves. They are vividly portrayed as a ‘body’ from the general socio-cultural-patriarchal point of view, as scapegoats of society, as instruments of patriarchal support, as easy victims of exploitation, as socio-economic baits, as potential yet dormant beings of protest and above all as models that represent the authorial view point. Each novel taken for study focuses the hapless state of women in various forms. There are women from the lower strata of the society-the Dalit, the middle class women, the rich and elite but all of them face exploitation in different forms. Their means of protest and levels of endurance are different and their perceptions widely vary in respect to the timeframe, socio-economic situation that they are placed in.

*Paraja,* originally written in 1945, depicts the tribal scenario of a village in Orissa where the Paraja women, the Dombs and the Kondhs live in bizarre existence, exploited by the moneylenders and the Zamindars. *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh,* on the other hand, is a portrayal of the state of Dalit/Tribal women in the village of Barha in north Bihar where there is a complete existence of the feudal structure in 1981. The authors’ intense personal involvements with the protagonist make each novel a socio-anthropological document of the then philosophical and moral concerns. *The God of Small Things* represent a unique case of inter-caste relationship between an upper middle class woman, Ammu and a Dalit, Velutha and the atrocious tale of languishment. *Seven Steps in the Sky,* on the other hand, is a manifesto of the plight of women existing in society especially in the middle caste. It relates the miserable state of Vasudha and her fellow-friends crushed between patriarchal dominance and exploitation of the in-laws.

The two novels *Paraja* and *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* portray the severe haplessness of women
from every possible corner. This adds to the novels a high degree of pathos and misery. The characters like Jili and Bili in *Paraja* and Lachhima, Rukmini, Gulal, Mori, Ganga, Putli in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, all face similar predicaments in their lives. They are ‘exploited, bruised, and maimed both physically and psychologically. Here the term ‘human rights’ stands meaningless to them in such a caged existence. The two novels mainly focus on two major points of women exploitation- sexual and economic. The other two very much interlinked and adjacent issues are of their underrated social status and their shattered human dignity.

The plot of *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* starts and continues with women subjugation; with Lachhima as its subjective portrayal. The novel is set in the remote rural village of Barha in Bihar which is mainly dominated by the Rajput Feudal Lords. The administration and government bodies of the area are unofficially controlled by the financial power of the Maliks and so any protest against them were hardly received with interest. The unofficial norm of the land was purely based on the whims of these Maliks as there was no one to control them. In such a situation the plight of women were inexplicably sorry as no right was ensured in their name. Their childhood, adolescence and maturity, all depend on the dictates of the Maliks. Their bodies are unvaluably used and tattered and their psyche is ruthlessly ravished so that no thoughts of protest can germinate in them. In this severe state of malevolence, consciousness for rights is trampled to dust.

The novel starts with Medininarayan’s wife Chotki in her labour room. The description of her physical and psychological state clearly portrays the violation of reproductive rights in women in villages. “Her anxiety was natural. Her husband Medini Narayan was pacing the courtyard in
brass studded nagra shoes... Another daughter and I turn you out. Terrified. No place to go if turned out (1). The domination is such that women become psychologically subject to the imperialism of male-patriarchy so much so that they find themselves locked and hegemonised, both socially and politically in the socio-domestic spheres. Chotki dies while delivering her child. But no sympathy or tears or peaceful words for the departing soul is uttered by Medininarayan. She is considered to be a child bearing machine and is hugely expected to deliver a male child and not a female one; which when she delivers, Medini rejoices in the gleams of fatherhood unworried about his wife’s death. His elated happiness of becoming a father of a male child acts as a sharp contrast to the previous experiences of his fatherhood which bore female children only. This very act of redundancy is pure humiliation to the entire women population both as mothers and children.

In situations of grinding poverty and vicious circle of patriarchal dominance where women have no economic, educational, civic rights of their own, women adapt themselves to face life from the male perspectives. They suffer heavily from a castration complex for being born as a girl. When Chotki is in the filthy ‘birthing room’, the other two co-wives of her husband, “Badki and Majhli, sat like vultures just outside the door. They were also mothers of daughters and if the youngest wife birthed a son, it would be bad for them’(1). This feeling of jealousy was natural in them but pitifully ironical because the women too do not recognize the power of women but like a patriarch encourages the idea that a male child is always a source of good luck and joy to the family. So, with Chotki’s delivery the other two wives are afeared of the increased degree of negligence they would receive from their husband as they were unable to bring a male child in this world.
When Mediniarayan’s son, Ganesh grows up to be a rogue, like his father or more, he too discards his wife and frantically hunts for a voluptuous body to satisfy his lust. It is a misfortune that women subjugated from time in memoriam take the male whims to be just. We see Putli, his wife, finds nothing unjustified in such behaviour. “Any wife who was unable to satisfy her hot-blooded, virile husband was a total failure as a women. In their family too men knew that women – that is, wedded wives were bound to fail in this task. So her grandfather Barkandaj used to go to Mori, Father Nathu to Lakhpatiya. In every Malik household, it was usual to keep a woman.”

(p.83) It is horrifying to understand that women were customized in the patriarchal code from childhood, generation wise, so that the wrongs would look like right and women would get hegemonised for generations and therefore, men could enjoy their sexual whims. It is also pitiful that women accept their fates as customized social norms which otherwise is only the result of lustful whims of the patriarchy on one hand, and the vicious circle of dependency on male, on the other.

Despite the psycho-social acceptance of this ‘kept keeping’ practice in the Maliks, both the wives and the kepts faced similar domestic violence by their lords. They were awfully chained to imbibe in them such practices where they could only realise and understand their helpless positions, suffer its writhing pain but have no way out. This is basically because women in the contemporary villages of Bihar were so much marginalised, that irrespective of their caste they were given no basic education or economic right and so they found no scope of escape from this infernal circle.

Ideologically speaking, the women were sized down to their existing condition as they knew they
were born as a curse and would have to lead life of a cursed.

Yes, men could do anything in their society. She [Nathu’s wife] hadn’t seen it with her own eyes, but she’d heard that in the days of her grandmother-in-law in the villages of Rajputana that girl children was so unwanted that they were packed into tight-leaded earthen pots and buried in the ground as soon as they were born.

Oh Ma! She remembers her daughter’s scared and pleading glances. If one gives birth to a daughter is it the mother’s fault? (101).

This compassionate cry on her part can be taken as the empathic cry of all women who are born as woman and are giving birth to a girl child. Female child infanticide is a crime that has been banned by various charters. But still several girl children are killed in India today. Five million girls were eliminated between 1986 and 2001 because of fetal sex determination done by unethical medical professionals. The rate of extermination continues to increase after Census 2001.

Mahashweta Devi candidly reports what women are to Ganesh and his fellow mates: ‘For the likes of Ganesh, women were only commodities for their use. At the time of independence, a unit from the mission came to Barha village to do drought relief work. Gajomoti abducted one of the girls, raped her and let her go. No one even recorded the unfortunate girl’s complaint’ (89). This shows the lack of administrative support from the government for a girl as because the local administrative people too are attuned with the wrong done to women and things like rape, kept keeping, domestic violence are taken as granted generation wise leading to the entire silencing of voices of protest. This kind of attitude is more than a violation. It is an organized crime on the
part of the people that strangles any scope of protest or existence of rights in women.

It was the rule of the day that a Rajput Malik would be unsatisfied with his wife and so he would need women as keep for the rest of their lives as ‘kharidi bandis’. They practiced polygamy against the legal norms. Medinininarayan had married thrice. There was no law to intervene. In addition, he had taken Lachhima as a keep. When Ganesh fails to find any interest in his wife Putli, his insatiable lust takes him towards his moral downfall.

Cutting the Bhangis down to size filled Ganesh with great glee, and suddenly his flesh too felt a different kind of hunger. That night he fertilized Nathu Singh’s daughter but even that didn’t satiate him. He roared in rage like a wild beast. You Mud-Doll! He kicked his wife aside yelling. ‘Get Out.’ Now he realised why Lachhima was indispensable to Medini Singh. He said in disgust, ‘Don’t you get enough to eat? Can a creature like you bring any man pleasure?’(83).

This kind of attitude is unbearable as a woman lives for her husband and dies for him in India. But no man ever asks what can give a girl pleasure. A woman is curbed from all sides; it is her effigy that carries on in life.

Mahashweta Devi ironically presents the fate of Rukmini, also, who is impregnated forcibly by Ganesh and shows that neither there is a scope for the girl’s wish fulfillment nor there is another alternative for a *kanin* girl (unmarried pregnant girl), but to die. We feel the pity when Rukmini pleads to her illegal father, Nathu and her mother, Mori not to send her to the demon, Ganesh but
to marry her off to Kamu; she is nullified on spot with the consolation that if she leaves the house then Ramrup, her father’s legal son, cannot play vulgar tricks to violate her. Such is the scene that a girl in this situation is a prey to the Maliks, father, step-brother, husband and the outer world. Here the expression, rights for women stands dejected.

The readers start to read Rukmini’s earnest appeal that “I don't want to be the mother of the Malik's *kaanin* son.” (P.113) The level of torture becomes highly vulnerable when Rukmini again cries to her mother the night before her death and says, "Ma, I've been in that house so many months now. They promised to give me five rupees a month. I haven't got a single paisa." (P.115). The bitterness of their situation is indiscernible in words. This further explains the women’s trajectory in Barha where women are used and ruthlessly cut off from the lives of the Maliks. Because of the grinding poverty, the women are forced to serve as kepts to the Maliks but the irony is that even after working for them for long hours and sleeping with them for nights, the women are paid nothing. They are duped and exploited both physically and economically without sympathy.

The women in-house or out-house are objects of pleasure and torture both at a time for the Maliks. Be it Putli or Nathu’s wife, wives of high class families or Rukmini, Lakhpatiya or Ganga, the kepts, all are subject to physical assault and torture. Medininarayan’s first two wives Badki and Majhli, who were unable to gift him sons, were threatened and sent off to their father’s house by falsely accusing that they would be experimenting black magic on his new born *devangshi* (part of the God) boy and will try to kill him. Here Medini accuses his wives as murderers and schemers whereas he himself is one more than what he describes them.
His own daughters, his prior produce, too were let off with their mothers and then were married to men found suitable. According to Medini, he has done his duties right, dispatched right people in the right place, like a responsible husband and father, and because there were chances of neglect and physical risks to his only heir, so he has kept a maid, Lachhima for his upkeep. This socially built lie was made for the society to make Medini carry a clean chit but inside we see how big an exploiter he is. He makes up a story and gets rid of his wives and enjoys his life with his son and Lachhima, washed off with old responsibilities.

Lachhimas and Rukminis were socially available ‘objects’ to the Maliks. Medini bought Lachhima for three bighas of land and a cow, ‘No gold no silver, ten rupees a month’. Lachhima was mortgaged to the Malik for sixteen - eighteen years with the vow that she would be released as soon Ganesh would come of age. ‘But it is the way that the Malik does.’ Lachhima is mercilessly betrayed when Medini strongly refuses to let her go to her fiancé Mohor Karan who had been waiting for Lachhima since many years. Medininarayan, who has been using Lachhima both as a very competent house maker, a nurse for his son and a sexual toy for his nights, felt his ego severely hurt to let such a perfect puppet go out of hand.

Lachhima kept pressing his feet. Her head bent lower and lower then she burst out sobbing… ‘If you’re getting rid of me anyway let me go now, Malik. Let me have someone to lean on… I’ve served you all these years shall I serve Chhota Malik for eight more years?’… Medini Singh pulled his feet back kicked out at Lachhima, shoving her aside, and sat up. Said, ‘Take the lower casts to bed and
they forget their place… you’ve have eaten my salt and now you’re biting the
hand that fed you? …You’re being kept in comfort for the sake of the
boy’…Lachhima swallowed her tears, wiped her eyes calmed herself and
said‘forget it Malik. I made a mistake. Forgive me’. The force of the kick had torn
off Lachhima’s earrings causing the ear to bleed (24-5).

This conversation between Medini and Lachhima focuses on the social perception of women in
the society in particular. The conversation highlights the fact how keeps are taken by their
Maliks. Medini feels by making the woman a keep, he is doing a lot of favour to the girl. He is
providing her with food, clothing and some other necessary items, above all he his taking her to
bed. This he thinks is a great luck of the woman as he estimates a poor woman’s status in her
house as useless and poverty-stricken, devoid of self-respect. He has saved her from starving to
death by only paying the price of bondage. Lachhima helplessly realises this and agrees with
Medini. Illiterate, poor women view men as supports to lean on. Lachhima is worried about her
growing age. She implores Medini to release her because if she crosses her youth then she will
find no man to lean upon. This is true in the Indian context as a woman is customarily viewed as
bodies meant to lean on men and bear children for them. And for this she would get a square
meal a social security, if not more. Moreover, we see how the Maliks mistreat their keeps.
Despite serving him with her life, Lachhima does not enjoy the right to speak or protest. She
immediately apologizes for being audacious enough to ask questions to her patron. She accepts
her fate unquestioned knowing clearly of Medini’s intentions. She refuses Mohor, her fiancé, and
asks him to marry Dhanpatiya.
It is a satire that Medini becomes the doyen of a perfect benevolent dictator in the eyes of the village folk as the Rajputs envy his position and the other kept women sigh at Lachhima’s fate. The sacrifice that Lachhima takes on her part is appreciated by all people of the village may it be the Rajputs or the Dalits. Lachhima becomes a symbol of sacrifice and devotion to the Malik that all Maliks had always demanded of their keeps. When the kept women are told by their Maliks to replicate Lachhima, to pay devotion to their Maliks as her, they retort that Medini has given Lachhima land which they have not. The Maliks used to defend ‘Does everyone who gets land work so hard?’ Mahashweta Devi here tells, “the women did not reply.” When they do not have the right to choose a right kind of life, it is impossible that they speak. It is expected that women should never speak. The Rajputs were the high caste in this region. The lower caste men and women had different roles to play at different time of the year as chosen by the Malik. When the rich spoke, the poor had to listen. This time also the women remained silent. Even without getting any land they were expected to donate unstinted service and companionship, which they did.” (28).

But Lachhima could not feel the happiness of being the owner of the three bighas of land as her life price. It was highly insulting and humiliating for her to bare the pains of being a kept woman; pitilessly valueless and uncared for. She spent sleepless nights traumatised in her own sorrow of being lost into someone else’s identity. Mahashweta Devi had been dexterous enough in portraying the existential self speaking out and then getting subdued unable to find any space. It is darkness, the symbol of something negative, that gives Lachhima some space and time to scan her. She can see her doomed state and realise herself better at this time of the day as this is the only time she is free from slavery. “The darkness gave Lachhima some relief, in the light she
was stark naked, Medini’s kept woman, Ganesh’s nurse, her nani’s (grandmother’s) mortgaged property. The darkness covered her shame in the depths of the night” (37-38). Lachhima’s remorseful existence questioned her of her identity, her shame, which she wanted to get rid of. Her inner strength and spirit which provoked her to run away from her state and do something to restore her honour was ruthlessly crushed until in the end when she rises up against Ganesh and reinstates her dignity.

The most surprising matter that the novel portrays is that all terms of negotiations that were made for Lachhima when she was bought as a kept, was done by a woman who herself is a victim of sexual, social and economic depression. Gulal, in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is the intermediate between Medini and Lachhima, who sold her granddaughter for three acres of land and a cow. She defends her point that a hut and land would feed her till the end of her life. Such is the infrastructure as a girl is to sell herself to get herself fed all through her life. Ganga too becomes money-minded and delays Rukmini’s marriage with Kamu and demands a sum of hundred rupees which Kamu is incapable of giving as a bride price and this results in Kamu’s departure to other land for income and in the meanwhile the disaster of Rukmini and her death happens.

It is very depressing that the guardians do not care for their daughters or granddaughters. But the reality behind their cruel attitude is not their wickedness but compulsion. Gulal and Ganga sacrifice their daughters for two reasons; one- both use their daughters as baits for income and future security and second, the custom of giving away their girls to the Maliks was not considered abnormal. It was rather an accepted fact that an unmarried girl in a house was a gift for the Maliks reared in each household and not something vitiating or scandalous. Moreover,
she was a source of income for her family but it is a pity that she gains nothing in life. The real scenario is so frustrating that old women who once were beloved keeps to their Maliks are now thrown away by them to starve and die on the streets as soon they lose their physical attraction. Now, these old women unable to get any source of income sell their daughters and granddaughters in lieu of a small sum of money or land which they think would serve them as their last resource in their old age. Poverty as an existing major evil encapsulates all other forms of evil in society. The situation in which Gulals and Lachhimas are trapped is pathetic and is a proof to the above fact that with poverty on one’s end no rights can be talked about. When hunger strikes, one sells all to keep oneself alive.

Unattended and uncared, Ganga with a devastated fortune now leaves Barha with Mori as a companion to beg on the streets of Tohri.

These two one-time mistresses of Barkandaj and Nathu, father and son, respectively, who had dedicated their lives and youth to the service of their Maliks, become the stereotype of all such low caste mistresses of all Malik-mahajans as they take to the streets. In rags, with bundles under their arms, stained aluminium bowls in their hands, Ganga with walking stick" went on towards beggary and death (126-127).

Here the crestfallen women await their freedom only in death and circumstances alike. “Freedom, freedom, Mori and Ganga felt free so free. Rukmani had gifted them freedom.” (127) The irony is bitter. With the death of Rukmani they are free of their responsibilities, tension, they
can now go on their own ways. A girl is a burden to the parents in Barha as she is to keep on giving troubles to her parents being terribly troubled by the Maliks. So death is a boon; death calms all. The old women who had served their entire lives for the Maliks are not only jilted, economically and socially violated, but also are ruined mentally because of the Maliks. Freedom is a heavily expensive concept for them. It is freedom to them when there is nothing left for them to lose: money, land, shelter, daughters, kinsmen, physic. Lachhima waits for freedom and gets when she has no more desire for it, Putli awaits for freedom, but it’s hard to get, Rukmini finds freedom in her death. Here we are reminded of Manu’s words about women being always dependent; the ideology that he had propounded thus has been transformed and transrooted in verbatim. Women can get their freedom only when they die.

Paraja, on the other hand, as a novel, very well depicts the suffering and struggle of women from every sphere-economic, social, sexual and psychological. First, we find how Jili and Bili strive to exist through grinding poverty.

As Jili stared at her empty stores of grain, a hundred forgotten incidents came back to her –little insults and humiliations from those who had been her friends, and neglect and indifference. She was filled with a sense of shame. For the first time in her life, she understood poverty. She wanted to hide herself and her misery, melt away into some dark corners, away from the pitiless glare of a hundred inquisitive eyes which pried into the privacy of her hut, turning up pots and pans racking up her racks, looking into the attic where the grain had once been, searching among the few stick they possessed. And those eyes pierced
through the mud bowls and straw thatch, exposing all her disgrace; they scorched her dry leaving her stark and leafless, like the bare trees on the hill side in summer”(118).

In *Paraja* we see how Jili and Bili are victimized by the government contractor where they go to work for the state and stretch out their helping hands in the construction of roads only to earn a meager meal for two. The Contractor uses Jili as a toy to satisfy his lust. The pity of the entire scene is that they are so poor that they sell their bodies for their fantasy of petty flavoured hair oil and saris. The irony stings when we find the girls are victims of such cheap pleasures and they happily relish their gifts from their patrons. Jili is pawned by a lady who works as an intermediate in between the girls and the contractor. But to justify the tribal girls’ such kind of behaviour, one must realise the situation gravely. What can one do when there is a dire need for the basic necessities and the resources available nil? When Jili and Bili fall apart, their father and brothers disposed off to far off lands as *gotis* (bonded labourers) and they have to continue their lives all alone without financial or social security, Jili and Bili’s act of submission to the crude ways of life, makes the novel more real and the characters made of flesh and blood. This shows that though they are susceptible to the winds of adversity but they retain the spirit of sustenance in life. Jili Bili’s act of submitting themselves for the sake of living here does not count as being licentious or low but heroic indeed. Their unfulfilled desires for a square meal, proper clothing and oil can only be fulfilled by submission.

Mohanty aptly reproduces the utmost feelings of a girl when her dignity is lost for lack of clothes. Women are the most vulnerable victims of voyeurism everywhere even if they are not
touched. They can get raped through the eyes of men. The author pertinently describes how the girls lose their dignity wrapped under their scanty clothing, slowly in pieces with time:

   Jili and Bili sat in the darkness outside the hut, cocooned in self pity. Unshared, their store of misery had grown and grown. The food had all gone….their clothes had turned to rags…the torn clothes do not become whole again. The many patches on their clothes were witness to the brave attempts they had made to repair their dignity, but the fabric had grown immune to any needle and the rains appeared again….The bits of torn appeared each day dropping away by the wayside were like pieces of one’s own existence being corroded and trampled underfoot. Nothing could mend the injury to one’s pride” (206-207)

Food and clothing are the two most essential elements of one’s survival. Losing any of them leads to a death like existence which is far from physical. Here poverty snatches away the right to privacy and clothing which is a real concern when human/women rights are talked about.

Both novels discussed so far, strikingly present the practice of male domination in the society irrespective of caste or class. The Putlis and Lachhimas and Jilis are victims of patriarchal torture and sexual domination everywhere. They are ruthlessly denied as a girl, fiancé, wife, mother, and as an old woman. Jili is ditched by Bagla and Lachhima by Mohor. The former is swayed away by the beauty and youth of another girl, Kajodi, and the latter finds no economic, physical, or mental strength to fight back. The second layer of betrayal is perhaps both social and sexual where the ladies lose their social dignity for their betrayal of their patrons. Lachhima is twice betrayed by her masters. Medini betrays her by not letting her marry Mohar thereby keeping her
freedom and identity at stake and Ganesh refuses to pay even respect to her as a wet nurse when he grows up and throws her away from the house without giving her any peace.

*Paraja* epitomizes the actual circumstances that a girl faces when socially ditched by a boy. When in the Spring Festival Bagla carries away Kajodi instead of Jili as a partner, both Mandia and Jili stand aback shattered. Mandia is mentally traumatised but as he is a goti and lives in a far off village serving the Sahukar, he suffers the internal pangs of being bonded and jilted. But being a boy, he doesn’t have to face the society pointing fingers at him. But Jili faces the real insults of the society when ditched by her boyfriend publicly. Wherever Jili goes, she now faces satiric smiles or mock invitations. Shiba Paraja says: “Why don’t you come and live with me now, since Bagla has left you?’ She let fly at him, but the words slid off his back. He swang his arm wide and ran after her in mock pursuit through the water shouting, ‘Come to me! Come to me!’ Jili was shivering as she returned home” (187)

In *Paraja* the girls are betrayed variously by their patrons. Jili and Bili find their greatest thrust from their father, trying to be independent. Sukru Jani, who is a great egoist and a patriarch, feels his ego hurt to send his daughters to work at a different place for money. He though understands the miserable situation that the girls are facing yet he is unable to provide any alternative means for their source of living. The news of the daughters going for work in a different place infuriates Sukru. The first thing that he does after releasing himself as a goti is to go and forcibly bring his daughters back to the village with him. He is least worried of the fact that their income would fall if the girls quit working. Sukru is deaf year to the contractor who requests Sukru to leave the girls and to the pleas of the other co-workers. He is satisfied to know that his daughters are under his control and would serve under his orders.
*Paraja* very fittingly explains a woman’s objective feeling about her marriage and thus explains the change from maidenhood to matrimony. Kajodi, Jili’s rival shivers to imagine,

The sheer drudgery of having to worry about others all the time, having to carry gruel into the fields of somebody, boil somebody’s clothes for the wash. And a husband who comes home drunk every night, foul-mouthed, abusive and violent. A household full of wants and difficulty. She had thought then that the only happiness lay in the freedom of the dormitory, when a girl received nothing but endearments and kindness and had no drunken husband or father-in-law to please”(112)

Jili, on the other hand, fancies the goodness of marriage and warns Bagla of her identity. She tells that she would work for him and make up the bride price that he would pay to her father. “But your money wouldn’t be wasted on me, I can tell you. I’m not like one of those lazy women from the plains who do not work and only eat and sit at home”(78). This gives an account of the unaccountable economic and physical labour and produce that a woman invests in the land or any other occupation together with men, but there remain no economic gains or credits for the women. It is always a man’s work that is counted.

Though Jili is trapped by the Sahukar and is given false hopes for marriage and money, yet she thinks:

At times his drunken maulderings became tedious, and she would ask herself
whether things might have been different if she had found herself a young man from her own tribe. And she is reminded herself that any young Paraja would have been penniless and would have expected her to work for him; at least Sahukar was rich and expected nothing more of her. Any Paraja youth would have courted her with the same words of love as the Sahukar, because these were the stock words that all men used. What was the difference?” (303).

It is empathetic to side with Jili’s logic that she puts up to make up her spoiled life as she sees the brighter side of her relation with the Sahukar. If everything in marriage is one sided and is added by tremendous service from the bride’s end, then she thinks it is better to be in her position which demands her body but not work unlike the usual relations. It is queer, how life makes one think so and justify one’s own situation. This introspection is a pungent satire on the institution of marriage where a man becomes the lord of everything and a woman is the slave.

The bride price or dowry again is something which brings too much sorrow in the lives of the Parajas. Because of the custom of paying dowry or bride price, couples are either united very late after a long waiting as poverty snatches their rights to marry or can never marry at all. We see Mohor, Haroa, Kamu, Bagla, Mandia, all victims of this custom, whose lives end without forming proper marital relationships because of the system of paying money. Though dowry in any form is a prohibition by law in India but it is difficult to say how much the concept of dowry have been eliminated from our society still today. This is where cultural relativism and human rights come into conflict. Though it is the bride who has to pay the groomprice in the main stream Hindus, yet in case of the Tribals and some backward classes, it is the groom who pays
the bride price. Whoever or whatever the custom may be, this is a major impediment in the nuptial processes in India. It is because of this dowry that thousands of women are killed or tortured. Yet this is a social evil followed as a custom since centuries. Human rights charters and Indian laws are strictly against such acts and once reported the offenders are heavily fined. But custom wise this is something that people do as a part of practice and this is where human rights should intervene to contradict wrong practices that take away people’s fundamental rights to marry and settle in life.

Paraja and *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* both present the miserable hard-hitting lives of the low castes but are not are exaggerations of the status of women in Orissa and Bihar; they are aesthetic constructs with a realistic foundation. Poverty and hunger are recurrent themes that both the novelists take into consideration in one way or the other. Each author has his/her own style of representation and we are served with different types of events which are devastating for the characters. One thing that is common in both is that it is due to poverty and hunger that all the characters face deadly predicaments. Prostitution becomes an easy outcome for the poverty stricken women as they fall prey to this mean profession and cling to it for food and survival. Jili is be fooled by the contractor for a better living and the Sahukar jilts her in marriage.

The women in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* have altogether a different appeal as the violations faced by them have been silently accepted since centuries when the grandmothers were daughters themselves. The custom of enjoying another woman as a kept has been seen as a socio-patriarchal tradition in the novel. Here the crimes against women discrimination is very badly deep rooted in the ideological set up and can only be cleansed by a heavy degree of
positive administrative interference; but the hope is all the more bleak as the idea of correction is marred by the illegality of corruption in India at every level.

The case of Pallavi, the daughter of a rich politician, who comes over to Barha from Mumbai, with the motto to serve the poor, goes off the target only because of corruption at different levels and the lustful nature of the feudal lords. This further proves to the fact that development and righteousness become sorry sights in the villages like Barha as they are trampled by both the corrupt people of the administration and the landlords. In case of Pallavi, the saviour herself becomes a prey to the patriarchal scheme and thus riddance seems impossible.

Food which is a primary element necessary for the proper development of human physic and character is well guarded by both our State and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 of the UDHR says, in its first clause that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. The texts taken into study lack all the parameters of standard living like the food, clothing, shelter, health and hygiene and above all security. In the novels discussed above, we see women sacrificing their bodies because of hunger. Where existence is at stake, the term human rights stands violated at its initiation. The need to de-coin the term human rights and reframe it as Rights for Existence is the need of the hour now, where the issues like rights to exist and right to identity as a human being should also be formulized apart from securing a person food, shelter and clothing. In such a case, we are forced to look
deep into the structuring and the bourgeoisie mind set of the setters of the doctrines of human rights who have only assumed that a human being is to have food, clothing and shelter as bare necessities only. The other rights to dignity, health, education and economic security are considered later.

The Maliks in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* impinge into everything and anything that the Dalit do. They even decide who a peasant daughter would marry and not. Lachhima is captivated forever by Medini, Rukmini by Ganesh, and women like Mori, Ganga- all face similar predicaments. *Paraja* too depicts this kind of situation but its representation makes it somewhat tolerable. If scrutinized deeply one is traumatized to realise Jili’s predicament but one shivers when one recognizes the lives of Putli, Rukmini, Ganga, Lachhima and the like women. The representations by two authors differ may be because one is an eccriture feminine and the other is a man’s writing. Mohanty doubtlessly outlines minutely the feelings, sentiments of tribal women- their state of happiness, sorrow, betrayal, repression, exploitation, torture, but Mahashewta triumphs in such depiction. It is a woman who can understand a woman’s pain and in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* the author attains her dexterity in representation of the sorrowful state of the women. One is shocked to imagine, had Mahashewta Devi been a Dalit to what degrees would the representation vary? Mahashweta in an interview comments her restlessness inside that takes shape as a storm after seeing the violation in the poor tribes. She says, “I had such a great asthirata in me, such a restlessness; an ubdeg, this anxiety; I have to write, somehow . . .”

In *The God of Small Things*, women are viewed as products, fit for use both sexually and domestically. She can be used both as an economic support and as social bait. Medini uses
Lachhima as a sexual toy. She is a symbol of pride to him, a priced possession that other Maliks look up to. She is a great domestic help, she is very good at housekeeping and child rearing and can easily fit as a mother surrogate for his son. She is good in bed and is numb when tortured. Medini satisfies his sadistic instincts by thrashing Lachhima when she wants leave. She is a meticulous accountant and a careful nurse who not only can keep his business up in hard times but also nurse him in his illness. She is a product that Medini has bought against a small price and he unjustly treats her as a slave. By portraying Lachhima’s resources, Mahashweta implicitly pronounces the immense resource present in her. Her overt presence of mind and inner strength had easily culminated in her the sense of leadership which she uses in the end to slay Ganesh. She rises up as a political entity in the end and refuses to compromise with Ganesh’s ploy. By locking up Ganesh in the room she easily subverts the hunter-hunted situation and leads the villagers safely towards Ganesh’s murder. The act of killing of Ganesh will definitely not bring feudalism or feudal exploitation to the end but the Maliks would be cautious of their acts from then. Lachhima arises as a political figure in the village which has brought about a revolution by putting an end to Ganesh, her master. She has done something that the administration people, the Gandhian Seva Samithi and NGO could never have done because of their weaknesses and corrupt interests. By ending the novel with Ganesh’s death, the author has opened doors for protests and revolts in the village of Barha and given its people a political break. This is something that Paraja fails to endorse. The killing of the Sahukar by the Paraja family is an individual activity, a revolutionary act of protest, but this may fail to gain public support being individualistic in nature and thus would have a weaker political statement compared to the former novel.
Mahashweta not only has represented women as a socio-economic product very much used by the feudal patriarchy for their own interests but also like a fireball full of potentials to over through an existing anarchy. Gopinath’s portrayal of women as soft and simple beings; as easily gullible and romantic in the perusal of life, with not much ambition and strength, is typically patriarchal in perception. But he is true enough to project the reality of a Paraja existence where poverty, rightlessness, exploitation have not killed in their hearts the hope of happiness and positive dreams.

Arundhati Roy’s activist nature, on the other hand, has been very prominent both in her fiction and non-fiction. Her language entwines social issues as a deadly python which travels through her plot; collates the real life resemblances and penetrates into readers’ brains thereby stinging continuously for solutions and upheaved awareness. Her questions directed to the world are very fundamental in nature, her portrayal very clear though complex, her protagonists are very true to life and their miseries very much similar to ours. The society she reflects is one in which we live and her portrayal of the State measures are those which every Indian State is governed by. In this context it becomes necessary and interesting to decipher the concept of happiness, crime and hyper-modernity through her characters and the trajectories of events that they pass through in their lives.

In *The God of Small Things*, we find that there is an inherent conflict between individual and the accepted conventional social norms. The struggle is continuous between the happy and the unhappy, the haves and the have not’s, the modern and the primitive. Each and every character is having his/her nostalgic bindings and is striving to overcome his/her past through the present.
The journey of the characters is from the past to the present and present to the past, sometimes overlapped with expressions, feelings, motifs and events. The plot is heavily burdened with the responsibility of each character to maintain the social equilibrium which at every step gets ruptured. Every character tries to attain happiness but ends in despair and frustration. Rather the negative forms of happiness like sadistic pleasure, satiric contentment, and ironical deliberations develop thereby motivating factors that encourage crime and human rights violation.

The novel portrays the story of a Keralite family, whose members are somehow tightly held to Kerala despite several trials to displace. There is a distinct gap between two sets of characters. The characters like Ammu, Velutha, Estha, Rahel try to emerge as individual selves defying the conventional code of love laws and the law of the land and on the other hand, we have the characters like Chako, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Colonel Pillai who try to freeze if not monopolize the right to control the former set of characters. The latter are the stereotypes or the representatives of the culture, societal norms and taboos, whereas the former characters are the representation of individualistic, happy, liberated selves, who want to reframe the codes of living afresh. The latter’s failure to arise as successful happy liberated beings are ironically interfered with the former’s aspiration to do so. Scrutinizing from this angle, we need to decipher as to what or how much do the latter set a thrust onto the former’s human rights and how far the latter does intervene upon the former as to make the actions ‘criminal’.

The plot of *The God of Small Things* relates an atmosphere of crime and unhappiness from the very beginning and ends with relating the reason of unhappiness, the pain of the main protagonists, Ammu and Velutha. The plot revolves around the love relationship between Ammu, an educated middle class Keralite woman and Velutha, an untouchable dalit and her
children’s realization of this truth in the end. There is a beautiful linear depiction of the incidents happening in the life of Estha and Rahel, the twin-children of Ammu; only that they are analysed from the eyes of the children when they have grown up as adults.

The story vividly describes the wrongs done to a man, a woman and her children in a democratized set up in Kerala. Roy satirizes the Communist Party working in Kerala eventually as the plot matures, and clearly deploys the future of the innocent Ammu and Velutha, pressed under the power-relations operating in society- caste-class, state-citizen and family-individual member. There is a huge violation of human rights in the lives of the characters but the irony lies in the fact the there is no one to stand beside them even though the law, commissions and state measures are not very far from them. This is the line that Arundhati draws between the outside world and the inside world of a family where a person’s pleas are suppressed to such an extent variously, that they seem miles away from being heard. The domestic violence many a times become severe than the legal violence and this is what The God of Small Things portrays.

In the very first Chapter we find that the police are against Ammu. The children recall their mother summoned to the police station for her statement, and the police officer tap tapping her breast with his stick, ‘like mangoes’, and abuses her by calling her a ‘prostitute’. The irony lies in the fact that Ammu in her early days of marriage had left her husband in Assam refusing to play the role of a prostitute-wife, satisfying the boss with her youth as a ransom for her husband’s job permanency. But still she is stamped as a prostitute.

The deprivation starts as soon as she returns home to Ayenmen in Kerela, her father’s place, where there is no father but her brother, mother, aunt and her maid to receive her. With the
homecoming Ammu immediately becomes an outsider. She has broken the social bond of marriage which outcasts her from the general stream of women and social people living in her community. The marginalization gradually overshadows her life at every step in which her children are not spared.

It is interesting that Ammu is a victim of socio-political violence, rather patriotic and familial. Her return upsets the family members; she becomes a cynosure of the society and is made a scape- goat, essentially exemplary to her cause. Not only is she un-welcomed at home but she is hacked off her paternal property rights and reduced to a refugee in her own house. She becomes a lay worker of her family pickle factory, stirring spoons in jelly pulps and jams. With every step of abuse and insult for her past life and voyeuristic repression of her elders, she tries to recognize the lost person in her life in someone who would fulfill the gap even for her children. In a sudden epiphanic vision among a lot of alien customs, she finds Velutha fitting her gap. Velutha, the one armed man of her dreams, who “could hold her close to his face but could not speak and if he spoke he couldn’t hold her” holds her mind for a secured emotional future. She meets him every night in the primitive darkness in the woods, on the banks of the river beside the History House, a place very contrastive to the real world in which they live in. This primitive place on the bank of the Meenanchal River is the representation of the natural self, id, the dark yet promising part of human nature very much opposed to the ego that correspond social rigid bindings. And so crimes of breaking traditional love laws are committed on the dark river bank, in the dark id, the primitive beauty where hypocritical sophistication is not allowed. The divide between this primitive calm and the civilized world ruptures with the intervention of the police in the end, in the History House, that destroys the possibility of any existence of primeval laws of happiness in the civilized world.
Ammu’s crying for loving a wrong man and breaking the love laws, jeopardizes the future of four lives – Velutha, Estha, Rahel and Ammu herself. She is the “mad woman in the attic” locked indoors lest the bourgeoisie planning of Chacko, Baby Kochamma and Mammachi goes useless. Velutha is arrested, brutally tortured and left almost dying on the jail floor of the police station where blood “flowed from his skull like a secret”. The word ‘secret’ links us with the entire plot of the story from the first to the last rounding up the events and filling up the unsaid gaps. This is the unknown secret that Estha and Rahel carries in their hearts till adulthood and their pains find expression in the language of their bodies. The secret which dictated the love laws and the break away from it, the love between a high class and an untouchable, the affection between two kids and their father surrogate, the lie that killed the most loving persons of their lives, Ammu and Velutha. This is the secret that separates the mother from her children, the lover from his beloved, the members of the family from the family and the credibility of a person from falsehood and morality. Ammu stays in her mother’s house as a non-aligned member since her return. She leads a life somewhat in a cast away manner in her own territory. After she is deported, Ammu dies in a far off lodge in the city out of consumption, helpless, moneyless, friendless, famililess, pitiless.

_The God of Small Things_ is woven with the theme of sex and violence which is found in every character, with a sense of unsatisfied fulfillment. Roy has very beautifully presented the gender differences in one generation and fused the differences in the next generation. Estha and Rahel are not identical twins but have identical minds. When the kids were born, Roy narrates, that their mother had checked whether both the twins had individual hands, legs, other body parts,
and was satisfied about each one’s individuality but what she had not noticed was their unseparated heart. Roy tells us that "they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities." Rahel used to share experiences, dreams, and memories with Estha. By keeping their hearts unseparated, Roy creates the androgynous existence or identity of the kids who when parts become empty of the other half. Their bonding for each other was not something very usual like all brothers and sisters not because they were twins, but they shared a same heart and joint identities. It was like one being unfulfilled without the other. “She remembers, for instance (though she hadn’t been there), what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had done to Estha in the Abhilasha Talkies. She remembers the taste of the tomato sandwiches—“Estha’s sandwiches, that Estha ate-on Madras Mail to Madras” (2-3). These were the small things that bound them with the big things. When Estha is separated from Rahel and sent to their father to live in Calcutta, Estha cries as though a part of her body is being ripped off.

The normative definition of crime speaks of a defiant behavior that violates the prevailing norms—the cultural and social—prescribed as standards in society. The task of weighing this definition is rather complex as the concept of crime seeks to understand the changing social, cultural, economic, psychological and political changes in the society and the person doing it. The role of the judiciary in a country is to appraise a guilty of his crime and bring his faults to books according to the legal procedure as laid down by the state. But before the judiciary and the legal realm there lies the moral and ethical codes of the society that are to be crossed by a guilty person before approaching to the court of law. The social institutions like the family, public organizations, administrative bodies, educational institution, and media all are decision makers against the delinquent. One has to pass across every person and take in each verdict before entering the legal belt in case of any disorder. The characters of this novel, as cultural beings are
penalized and castrated as soon they cross the cultural limits despite the existence of laws and privileges of a citizen in the country. Sometimes the culture and morale of social norms outweigh the blueprinted rights and laws, in practice and we see how Ammu and Velutha bear the cruel verdicts of the society before they are marked as the ‘others’ and killed in the end. They are misunderstood, distrusted and penalized even by the administrative system, as the administration is also run by the people of the same culture, who often refuse to probe deep into the victim’s psychology and circumstances and thus conform blindly to the norms of society and culture.

Ammu’s statement that she has voluntarily submitted into a relationship with Velutha, is dispensed with foul indications, letting her no scope to stand back, and Velutha is trapped, tortured by the police so badly that there remains no scope for him to voice back the truth. Here we see how crime outrights humanity, which otherwise should have been vice-versa.

The characters in the novel are highly deprived of their rights which are more than material in nature. The biggest violation of rights that ruins the lives of the protagonists is the right of privacy. It is because of the intervention of society and people in the privacy of the lives of Ammu and Velutha that they are led to their horrific predicaments. Not only do the characters die out of deprivation, disrepute, insult and assault, they are brutally suppressed, dominated to a particular conclusion, but also they are physically tortured. Both Ammu and Velutha are brought to the books arbitrarily without questioning or proper investigation; the former social, and the latter legal. It is as if that the society had dictated their murders and they had no voice or will to face it. Ammu is brutally excommunicated and ostracized from her family for the sake of family prestige and Velutha is beaten to death by the police because of a false allegation of kidnapping the kids.
Roy very subtly uses the expression ‘love laws’, which is very much a contrast to the existing laws in the books or in the minds of the people. The forbidden affair between a Paravan man and a bourgeoisie divorcee turns the love laws upside down as it is a matter of crime according to the cultural construct, however, in actuality it is not a crime spoken from a constitutional point of view. Ammu’s divorcee status, with her two children, and her love with an untouchable, Velutha, is no way an impediment in forming a social bonding or wedlock as far as the constitutional marriage laws or human rights related to love and marriage are concerned. In the case of Ammu-Velutha affair, the socio-economic codes of thinking and the barriers imposed by the moral/ethical taboos present in the contemporary society, pose as stumbling blocks. An adult man and an adult woman have every right to choose one’s own partner in marriage and according to the constitution all human beings are equal. But this relationship is violated by the society Convention which otherwise forms norms of wedlock and fertility.

The example of Ammu and Velutha’s castration by the society is a clear example of the relativity of social and ethical codes of culture and its power relation with the people. It is true that a person enjoys his/her rights only when he is accepted as a cultural being; again it is true that this very person becomes ostracized by those cultural codes and is termed as an ‘anti-social’ with a slight impulsiveness in behaviour or act. The denial of the acceptance of the relationship between Ammu and Velutha is a human right violation and the penalty that they pay as a result of this non-acceptance, is a crime committed on the part of the society or the people concerned with this foul game.

Ammu’s expulsion from her house, detachment from her children and her lonely uncared death are cases of serious women’s right and legal violations. She dies sick with consumption, without
food and medicine, alone in a far off place and her cremation is done without any ceremony like a secret. She is not even given a chance to see her children and is separated from them forever as a punishment for the crime that she supposedly had committed. The crime of separating the children from their mother is recorded nowhere but in the psyche of the children, Estha and Rahel, who grow up unusually crippled and lack in the fullest growth of personality. This mother-children separation is again a crime committed by the family on the victims, as it breaks the social code of a family bondage and denies the element of care, love, bondage and dependability in relationships. But this mother-children separation, and later on the crime of separating the twins from each other thereby harassing their entire childhood psyche and future is another crime when seen from both the Child Rights perspectives and that of socio-ethical perspectives. It is surprising that Ammu’s mother with her brother leads her to death and not the in-laws, this is a novel aspect shown by Roy very much contrastive to Kapadia in her novel, *Seven Steps in the Sky*, where she justifies the in-laws as villains. But this moral and ethical blunder is felt and seen but not brought up to the social courts. This is how crime and innocence change places which is very difficult from the real laws of innocence and criminality discerned in actuality. It is the mingled nature of this microcosmic layer of crime and innocence that changes hands according to the nature of the cases and the winner takes it all who has the power-both social and economical keeping himself/herself masked from the legal eyes. In such a case life gives very thin scope and minimal time to prove the right and show the wrong- and this veil of unclaimed truth is rarely perforated.

Velutha is a victim of false story that leads him to death. Chacko and Mammachi plan to lock up Ammu in the room and inform the police about the missing children. They accuse Velutha of being a kidnaper and ask the police to arrest him and torture him to death. Velutha is murdered in
secret, Ammu dies like a secret, the children are separated for reasons secret and the reason why they grow up with unusual uncommon traits in them also remains a secret. This gap in various layers makes human rights a conflicting and diverse subject that creates, recreates and uncreates gaps in between the microcosmic world of an individual and the macrocosmic world of socio-cultural-ethical-legality.

Human rights encompass the principles of morality, ethics together with culture, economic and social rights of people. Roy’s novel is an attempt to uphold the rights against the daily commonplace violations at domestic or supra-domestic level. Here the Ammu, Velutha, Estha, Rahel all are terribly deprived of their rights but the other characters like Mammachi, Velya Papen, Baby Kochamma are also not free from human rights violation, though of different kinds.

The human rights violations projected in the novel are primarily cultural, social, economical and political in nature. There are other violations like ethical and moral which are interesting and intriguing in nature and demands attention. Roy has very aptly fitted her plot into the setting of Kerala where poverty, living or education is not the main deficiency; here the lack is not only material but marjorly a mental construct, particular to this family. To critically analyse the points of human rights violation of children, women and dalit, we must go deep into the plot and root out of the causes of such violations that overshadow the novel. Here we find that there is a gross violation of the rights to equality, rights against exploitation, rights against torture and unfair detainment, rights to trial and judicial protection claims, right to marriage and family, rights of thoughts and expression, right to privacy, economic rights, rights to social security, and the greatest violation of all is: no one can take away one’s human rights.
One novel aspect that Roy portrays in *The God of Small Things* is the dilemma in comprehending the source of power which grants and rejects rights. The society gives and takes away rights at its own whims and there is none to stand against its measures. The family, which is the immediate most social institution for an individual, and the Communist Party, the local political governor of the State, decide in the fatalistic end of Ammu and Velutha. The politics of power to issue rights of marriage and equality, economy and privacy, all depend on these two institutions in the novel. The once given rights immediately turn into breach of rights and duties when things go against the formulated old cultural schemes and family/political taboos. Here the social and the political become one adding to the misery of the protagonists.

Both Velutha and Ammu are protected by the Ammu’s family and the Communist Party when in need. But as soon as the needs end, a little breach in cultural laws, make them alien members, Others—separated from the society and political shelter; they become arch-enemies of the society in a single moment. In fear of losing social prestige and economic vested interests, both the family members and the political party join hands against Ammu and Velutha. Here the meaning of the words daughter, sister, mother, brother, all stand meaningless for the accusers. Instead, they formulate quick ways that can save them from the immediate reactions, paradoxically trying to protect their own false prestige thus, gravening the situation all the more. In one word, Ammu and Velutha are murdered to save honour.

The decision to pose Velutha as a kidnapper of the children and deporting Ammu from the house, and eventually separating the children from each other and their mother, are heinous crimes and human rights violation which are done undercover, beneath the closed eyes of the
public and legal bodies. These decisions kill not only the honour of the protagonists but kill them both physically and psychologically. Here all crimes are done by the family members and the political party representative in a secretive way. The social institutions hegemonise the impacts of an action and produce a verdict as if to save the victims from their plight, but paradoxically kill them without providing them with rights and some relief. On the other way round, the institutions who want to save themselves from the scandal and not the victims. It is they who run around fabricating wrong excuses to save their social prestige and not the real protagonists and thus exchange the hunter-hunted positions. The social pressure and cunning ways of the society actually dictates the protagonists to death, rather suggesting ways to save them from the scandal, the loss of prestige. It is their false sense of ego and prestige that kills the ultimate truth. It is a shame for us, the way society works and forces us to question- who are the criminals- the victims or the hunters? While speaking about ‘honour killing’, Hina Jilani, laywer and human rights activist, says that the right to life is conditional only on obeying the social norms and traditions.20

The above statement is greatly true if we analyse The God of Small Things where the crimes committed by the family members against the protagonists, in saving their own social status, are perceived as excusable or understandable. This is why there were no importunities or legal questions from the legal-administrative end nor Velya Pappen nor the Communist Party; none comes in for an explanation. On the contrary, everything gets settled in a secretive way. Complicity by other members in the family and the community strengthens the perception that violence against family members is a family and not a judicial issue. The police officer investigating the case regarding the kidnapping of the children smells some fabrication in the story said by Baby Kochamma when he compares the story said by the children. He urges Baby
Kochamma to resettle her filed case for her good. With Ammu’s admittance of her relationship and denial of the children about Velutha being their abductor, the entire case should have been solved and Velutha was to be acquitted. But the irony lies in cunning schemes of the representative of the administration itself who forces Baby Kochhamma to prove her wrong story right. She now forces the children to lie by blackmailing them and pressurizing them to tell something that they are not certain of. Before the further investigation of the truth is done, Velutha is killed and Ammu is deported to a different town.

If discussed vividly then Velutha’s family members can be accused for honour killing for maintaining silence and hiding of the entire matter. Hina Jilani again quotes: “The problem with the cases of honour killings and their non-prosecution lies in the permission that the [society] grants to the family of the victim to compromise the offense, and that's why the person who actually pulls the trigger walks free... although in the case of honour killing it's mostly a conspiracy between more than one member of the family, and that's the major issue here.”^21 In case of Velutha’s family, it is a case of fear, disrepute, shame, audacity and breach of cultural taboo, so they keep silence. Being a marginal, Velya Pappen chooses to drink the poison of his son’s death than facing mere degradation, torture and economic loss from the upper castes. He prefers to be loyal to Mammachi rather to his son, Velutha. It is thus, sometimes strange to recognize how selfishly a man can act against one’s own and support the wrong side not realizing the extent of wrong, or crime or violation that he is causing to someone. This is where a significant question arise, while protecting one’s human rights does one impede forcefully on other’s human rights? The answer lies in the justification or unjustification of the relativity of
thought and action of a human being challenged against his culture, environment, and socio-political legality.

Again there is a prominent patriarchal thrust in the novel, *The God of Small Things*, if scrutinized properly but interestingly this thrust is paradoxically run by the ladies of the house which results in unhappiness in and among relationships. It is worth to mention here that woman causing pain to a woman is something basically gender oriented. In India, there has been a particular trend where woman exploit woman in various socio-domestic spheres. Kundalika Kapadia’s novel *Seven Steps to the Sky* go deep discussing this issue in detail but Arundhati has brought in the issue contextually. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma’s feeling of antagonism towards Ammu and her children and also towards Margaret Kochamma has a basic under toning of economic causes, apart from the feelings of jealousy and selfishness in the family.

The head of the family, Pappachi had died years back but his wife Mammachi takes over the control of the pickle factory, the only means of economic survival. This not only makes her the head member of the family, but also the matriarch who is not obsessed with the females of the house but her son, Chacko. Chacko gradually becomes the husband surrogate for Mammachi because of several day to day circumstances, replacing Pappachi, and so her blind love for Chacko could frame, reframe and unframe rules for Chacko in the house. Mammachi guarded her son’s every action and bestowed upon him love that was blind folded. She is unhappy when Chacko marries Margaret Kochamma and is happy when she divorces him. Though Mammachi and Baby Kochamma dislike Margaret Kochamma’s return to Ayemmenen, to Chacko, after her second husband dies, yet they accommodate her and her daughter, Sophie Mol, in the family. But Ammu, their own daughter is accommodated with difficulty. Chacko’s act of
divorce and his nocturnal trysts with the village untouchable girls were secretly supported by Mammachi because of her vested emotional reasons. They were the bold excuses for her boy’s unfulfilled desires and a way to forget his sorrow of getting divorced.

Mammachi’s sense of superiority and overt obsession for her son is explained when we realise her past life, dominated, bruised and strangled with Pappachi’s wrath. In Chapter Two of the novel, we find when Pappachi was alive; Mammachi started her pickle business without his help. He used to beat her every night with a brass vase. When Chacko was home in summer vacation once from Oxford, he threatened his father so that he never beats Mammachi again. To regain his pride, Pappachi bought the Plymouth and refused to let anyone else ride in it. Slowly Mammachi develops a space for her son who becomes an emotional refuge of her love, desires, feelings and sentiments.

But the same does not happen when her daughter comes back after her divorce and tries to come close with the Paravan, Velutha. Mammachi does not take sides with Ammu in matters of her paternal property rights. Nor does Chacko support her separation. These incidents pull our eyes to another set of ideas that encircle the plot. With a divorcee status Ammu is unwelcomely welcomed in the house. She is denied of her property rights and Chackho in the Plymouth while going to watch the movie, The Sound of Music, angrily exclaims that Ammu and the children are milestones around his neck and he is tired to bear their burden. This is very much an insult to Ammu and children who despite having the same rights in the family as Chacko are compelled to face the misery of parasitic existence accompanied by abuse and mockery at every step of life.
By deciding the future of the children and Ammu, Chacko, Mammachi and Baby Kochhamma capture their rights on their lives and even the power of individual decision making. Ammu is ruthlessly cut off from her children as Estha is unsparingly separated from Rahel after the fateful night. This not only saves any further conglomeration of problems arising up with their presence but also saves the family from giving any property rights to Ammu. An extra payment, in disguise for printing the posters, to Comrade Pillai makes up for the external enquiries. Velutha certainly becomes a stranger to the Comrade now; thus covering up all possibilities that can bring shame on the family.

Domestic violence as a theme is recurrent in the novels taken into consideration only that it differs in degree of happening and representation. The God of Small Things, as discussed, has focused hugely on the circumstances behind the honour killing of Ammu and laceration of all her socio-economic rights simultaneously. The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh though explores the misery of the village folk, yet highlights the issue of domestic violence both in the high and low castes. But among all these novels, Kapadia Kapadia in her Seven Steps to the Sky champions her representation of the issues of socio-economic-domestic exploitation of women in India. The novel soon after its publication had gained immense publicity among women and Kapadia explains in her foreword in her original Hindi version that readers had congratulated her all through either by writing letters to her or coming to her personally. The novel had become a milestone novel for women of all ages in Indian society depicting the dominated condition of women because of the conservative mind set of the society and of the patriarchy.

The novel depicts the life story of Vasudha, a middle class girl, who is married off in her tender age to Vyomesh, a hard-hearted patriarch, who tries to subjugate Vasudha’s aspirations towards
life and identity. Vasudha is the narrator herself describing her story along with different other stories of women trapped in the vicious circle of drugery and commitments. The novel is an excellent representation of the plight of women at their in-laws where they are pressed between their quest for establishing their identity and their duty towards the in-laws. Kapadia in the very first part of the novel poses several questions that shake the strong foundation of the patriarchal constructs of the society. She is very strong in her motive and clear about the realization of the difficulty in which almost all women are set after marriage. As its title suggests, the novel represents all women’s desire to walk in the clouds with all her dreams and aspirations fulfilled, which is definitely a utopia. The writer yearns to establish a world that is devoid of gender differences and inequality thus upholding the concept a rightful world for human beings. Kapadia is among the well known Gujarati feminist writers who vehemently protests against man-women unequal status in society and envisions ways to counteract the patriarchal concepts thereby building a humanistic society. In her quest to be emancipated, Vasudha finally leaves her husband and family and becomes a part of Anandagram, a place where there is a classless-genderless existence of human beings in harmony.

Kapadia in the very beginning of the novel’s original Hindi version clarifies, “most of the situations and the happenings in the novel are based upon real episodes of life.” The male and female dichotomy of polar opposites with the former oppressing the latter at all times exists co-laterally in the text. It is interesting that Kapadia presents the hierarchies in relationship working in the Indian social set up in which patriarchy is one of the primary hierarchies that are present among relations in India. But it is peculiarly noticed that relational hierarchies between women within the same family are more adverse, like the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, two sister-in-laws etc., than a patriarchal dominated relationship. Here women
are pitted against one another. In addition, caste-class-community identifies and intensifies the hierarchies in Indian scenario.

The widely used definition for feminism in Indian context according to Bhasin and Khan is "an awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation". Women’s stereotyped roles as a mother, wife, and sister, have been scrutinized by critics and scholars from all different angles and have found that the history of woman liberation is a very new event in India as compared to that of the West. Indian feminist scholars and activists have to struggle to carve a separate identity for feminism in India. Indian women negotiate survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures: age, ordinal status, and relationship with men through family of origin, marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes— dowry, siring sons etc. – kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state. Every culture has a different type of patriarchal more in which the roles of women are dutifully bounded and so it becomes very difficult for ‘an’ Indian concept of feminism to develop and make an individualistic space. In the West, the notion of "self" rests in competitive individualism where women are described as "born free yet everywhere in chains", by contrast in India the woman is usually considered to be just one part of the larger social collectiveness, dependent for its survival upon cooperation and self-denial for the greater good.

Indian society, is ideologically acceptant of male members negotiating roles for power and previleges in daily lives and also is agreed to the adverse women relationship in society. A woman if she has to transcend herself to liberation, she would like to invite a cordial, understanding relationship with the male and female members to fulfill her notions of liberalism
and not cutting herself off from the male world. This is what Kapadia in her novel also asserts in the end through creating an ideal place, Anandagram where a perfect co-ordination is found among the male members, the female members, and between the womenfolk residing there.

Kapadia has tried to show that life can be led with utmost harmony filled with joy, love, association, understanding and agreement. She cites Swaroop as an ideal figure, a symbol of what a human being is supposed to be: “a tree, having deep roots, full of life from top to bottom, who would give shelter even to a stranger.” (P.75) Thus, we see the ultimate stand point of a feminist writer like Kapadia is not to establish matriarchy but pacify the male power to match the soft, loving, caring, yet strong, creative self of a woman to bring a perfect match in relationship working in the society. Kapadia envisions “outsiders’ communities that reject hierarchaise gendered ideologies. These communities are created and sustained by men and women who embrace mutually interdependent andro-centric identities that render them complete and whole… Kapadia’s women characters, thus, find access to freedom not in an opposition to men but to the internalized patriarchal attitudes in both men and women. It is through the un-demanding male-female relations that do not force servitude on women, as a patriarchal society would, that they find fulfillment.” 25

Kapadia focuses on the revival of a reformed neo- womanhood that would accommodate self-expression, creativity, identity and harmony. Like many other women writers, she advocates education and economic freedom as essential most qualities needed in women to prosper in the society truthfully. What she means by being true to oneself is being strong enough for upholding one’s own identity amongst all odds of the society. She is repulsive of patriarchal domination but she is even more worried about the phenomenon of women dominating women. She aptly
delineates that neither misery nor freedom has brought women closer to each other, rather the old, customary tradition continues where mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws become agents of female oppression. Iila Pathak opines that: “this novel while describing the journey of such a woman, virtually describes the life of a great number of women.”

The novel is a great success since the author has “laid the foundation of changing values, inspired the woman to adopt revolutionary thoughts and suggested what could be in the future society after a revolution.” Kapadia in the Preface of the novel, candidly expresses the success of her novel: “The book touched the hearts of women and created awakening among them. It received as many as six awards and the selection committees mostly comprising men.” (V)

Seven Steps in the Sky is a novel that vehemently stands for women’s rights in particular and human rights of people on the whole. It exposes the hypocritical concepts of the society that calls women ‘angles of the house’ and thrusts on them the drudgery of household chores with no power in domestic decision making or economic spending. The author protests against the patriarchal traditional society that hinders a woman at every step of her growth. She is customized from her very childhood to think low about her lot and under-estimate herself in lieu of giving preference to the male members. There has been an unequal treatment towards women since their childhood. The bigger and better piece of the food is always served to the son and not the daughter; a son is endowed with gifts more than the daughter. Cultural practice that has traditionally made women inferior to men is what needs to be reformed, suggests the author. There should be equal rights and scopes for both members of the society. This is what human rights as a concept upholds. Human rights in opposition to cultural relativism try to maintain human value above cultural values. In positioning the novel from human rights angle, it excels in
its aesthetic appeal to bring together men and women and transcend them into a genderless-
classless world where humanism is the last word, the binding force between society and relationships.

By citing Anandagram as an ideal, Kapadia suggests that attaining happiness is not easy as it requires sacrifice of one’s ego, selfishness, negative feelings and fulfilling oneself with life, creativity, positive feelings, love for nature and above all truth. Kapadia’s version of equalizing the society is somewhat Gandhian which is again very close to the human rights concepts. Anandagram is an Ashram like Gandhi’s only with a difference that it is modern and less austere. Here the residents live in perfect harmony and rise up to situations that need protective measures. We see how the entire group stands against Ratna’s rape and Vasudha emerges out as a hero in the protest campaign. The protective measures that they undertake are also Gandhian and like thousands of peaceful petitioners in the time of national movement, they too bear the injuries of lathi charge of the police and some like Mitra die in the process.

The motive of Anandagram, the author quotes, is “to be aware of the wonder of the great outer world and to have reverence for its phenomenon; to resolve the disarray of our small selves and through this find a new inner world; to become whole and to live a richer life.” (p.2) This is what the author gives a ready solution to end the inequalities of the society by coming forth and uniting selves to form a greater whole devoid of subjectivity that can serve a greater cause, can create a better creativity.
The novel is essentially modern in concept as it puts forward a bundle of questions to the readers/society. Sometimes the questions are directed towards men, sometimes women and sometimes they are existential in nature. Kapadia’s characters are a misfit in the society as they ask questions. The novel starts in the Flower House with Vasudha’s question: “Can one live the way one wants to, especially if one is a woman?” (1). This question though is subjective in nature but is definitely existential as one finds oneself in chains as one’s desires to live like one’s wish and fail miserably. The question is of course rhetorical in nature hinting a negative answer instantly.

Through her own experiences and others lives, Vasudha has come to know that “All are unequal in the world but women are more unequal.” 27 This sentence gives a jolt to the readers not that it somehow oppositely echoes Animal Farm in its famous quote: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”, but here the author is speaking the bitter truth in a blatant manner thus, breaking all misconceptions of equality talked about in society. By ‘unequal’, the author tries to thrust on the imbalance in which people lead their lives but justifies through various events that women face the imbalance in much severe degrees. Thus, with Vasudha’s question, a contention is formed among the other members of the Flower House who suggest several answers but none stands up to Vasudha’s expectation.

To lead a life of her own will, a woman has to either tear the fabric of society, quarrel with her near ones, leave the association of her family, stay alone or be unhappy in life. A woman is never happy. Her happiness is subject to the happiness of others. Vasudha realises that her happiness had always centered on the happiness of her family members and not herself. Amidst the
pressure of daily up keep, a woman loses her definition of happiness. “I looked after it [happiness of the family] like a precious gem in the palm of my hand. Home, relations and social dealings- I did everything that was expected of me. I thought I was the ideal housewife; I was totally absorbed in it” (3). But in the end she finds herself alone, ungratulated, uncredited of all her efforts of bringing success to her family members. She finally realises that it is not for herself that she is living but for others. “I don’t want to live like this. I don’t want to die fulfilling other’s expectations. I want to lead a life that satisfies me. I want to live true to myself, my thoughts and feelings. I don’t want to be an ideal wife; I want to be a real woman.” The feminist thrust of the novel becomes clear.

Soon after her marriage, Vasudha is directed to the household duties and is left under the strict supervision of Faiba throughout the day. Vasudha is highly oppressed by Faiba, Vyomesh’s aunt, who allows her no relief but tortures her with piles of housework and rude behaviour. By citing several examples of Faiba’s strict surveillance, she hopes to pass on the message to mother-in-laws like Faiba that a woman should be a woman’s friend and not an antagonist. “Faiba had some strange ideas about this creature- this daughter-in-law- her blind fear and mistrust that this girl would grab her power, these guided Faiba’s actions…. to Faiba a daughter-in-law was a workhorse only. She must labour all day-no questions, no arguments” (12). “By tradition our relationship is that of mistrust and jealousy, authority and obedience. We’re both labeled and it is impossible to relate in any other way…” (14) She wants to break this traditional enmity between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law and develop the feeling of friendship thereby perforating the conventional programming and give shape to a newer programme of equality/power that can challenge the wrongs of the patriarchy.
Vasudha is heart broken when Faiba scolds her for reading a book or adding cream in her coffee. She forces her to keep an account of the daily expenses, which she is not mature at, and keep the estimation of household needs. She is not only dominated at work but also by its aspect of making it perfect. Faiba is rude in her orders and over possessive of her nephew. She has never allowed Vasudha any rest before and after child delivery. Under the strict supervision, “Vasudha felt that all women were in a castle with invisible walls. They were protected, but were also imprisoned. If some day all these women escaped, how colourful the roads would appear” (65)

Faiba would remonstrate if there was a slightest move from the daily routine. She clearly demarked the periphery for Vasudha in her house. She could not have her will nor could she have her likes and dislikes, she was to be following the orders only. “What you like and don’t like is of no-importance. You must do as we tell you” (12). She is expected to be a slave to her in-laws where there can be no will of her own, no riddance but strict obedience and sense of reproach. She in the end strives to assert a contrast through the example of Ana and Jaya that the relationship between women and women is of heart-to-heart very much synonymous to one another; one’s life is the continuation or mirroring of another’s life. The relationship between women and men also is not based on the subservience of one to another but is one where women enjoy same rights and privileges as men in an affirmation of human values. For this she appeals all women to break open the ideological walls of imprisonment located inside them and act with each other in harmony to build up a complete androgyny in society.
Vasudha is surprised to see how a woman’s world changes soon after her marriage. Customary education about marriage presides that all her wants, feelings, sentiments should only be directed towards the happiness of her family and nothing else. “‘To marry is to take the first step to divinity’, a poet said, but in reality, when a woman marries she steps into a land of restrictions. Vyomesh’s life hasn’t changed because he is married. But Vasudha’s life is entirely different, as if she hasn’t remained herself. Now she is his wife—nothing else, nothing more” (19). She has and is expected to lose her identity in Vyomesh and this is what makes her writhe. She is sad to find Faiba sacrificing her taste, desires for Vyomesh with pleasure. “Faiba has lived her life accommodating his wishes” (14) She had even contributed financially to the building of the house, which they lived in but yet it was Vyomesh who was the master of the house. She had sacrificed her taste for bitter gourd for years as Vyomesh dislikes it. It was always expected that a woman sacrifice something for the male but she questions this social expectation, “Did a man ever take a vow of only eating this or not eating that for his wife, mother or aunt?” (15). She fancies that if both the sexes had equal respect, equal sacrifices and equal status in life then life would be so beautiful. She vehemently protests against Vyomesh’s indifference at the news of Faiba’s death, Faiba who had dedicated all her life in bring him up, which Vyomesh thought was not necessary to be reactive about. Vasudha understands the worthlessness of a woman in a man’s life and decides to leave him. She foresees the day when she would die and Vyomesh would be busy partying indifferent to the thought of his life partner’s death.

She traces female development through its formative stages proving that women are not born “feminine” but shaped by a thousand external processes. She shows how, at each stage of her upbringing, a girl is conditioned into accepting passivity, dependence, repetition, and
inwardness. Every force in society conspires to deprive her of subjectivity and flatten her into an object. Denied the possibility of independent work or creative fulfillment, the woman must accept a dissatisfying life of housework, childbearing, and sexual slavishness.

Vasudha’s version of women emancipation or woman liberalism is not what one would call matriarchy or long talk on women’s rights. Her version of liberalism can be attained if the men become considerate, loving and helpful towards women rather dictating and domineering. “Again and again she says to herself, I don’t mind the work, I would do it gladly. If occasionally Vyomesh could come and sit in the kitchen after work; if he would say, I will chop the vegetables, or just stay there, I will get them for you. If only he said this much she would feel her husband was a companion as well. If sometimes he would say, you must be tired, I will make a cup of tea, then she would feel his love” (21).

Kapadia’s ideology behind women emancipation in India is not only directed towards their educational and economic rights, it equally upholds the theory of sharing and caring between the sexes. She stresses on this point variously that an Indian woman does not want separation or does not wish to boycott her husband/in-laws. But by adhering to the established culture, a woman can retain her identity, live life to the full and become enriched every way only if there is a psychological and physical motivation from the male members in society. She in a way accepts the fact that pertaining to the tender physic of a woman, a woman needs support to keep on performing. She justifies to the fact that the work done by a woman at home is more strenuous and time consuming than the work of a man in his office, and when a woman works outside her work doubles.
Research shows that in an average, a woman works hundred and sixty hours per week and is highly stressed by the monotony of its nature. The Sisyphean activities like cooking, dusting, washing is never ending and not-creditable. It is not a fairytale fancy that a woman enjoys in her household chores, except the feeling of compulsion and utilization. She is no ‘angel’ of the house that waves her magic wand to make the work done within seconds. The labour a woman invests for her family is neither credited by money nor praise but by more work. If a woman cooks well then in appreciation her husband calls his friends to taste the dishes. In this process the woman has to work double and entertain her husband’s guest alone when the husband would be chatting and passing time with his friends lazily. It’s a paradox that inviting guests is inviting problems, for a woman, in which the man refuses to take part. Vasudha rues, “Vyomesh needs Vasudha for himself, he has no time for her as a person in her own right” (21)

Realizing the pettiness of her existence, her helplessness, her compulsion of doing things with permission only and asking no questions, Vasudha questions the institution of marriage, its ideals lying beneath it. “What do the women get out of marriage? Love? A roof? Protection? Women want love- but what they get is mostly desire in the garb of love, not love itself” (22). She feels every tenet posed in marriage-love, happiness, power, freedom, fulfillment- is hypocritical. A woman gets love after marriage, but it is temporary and physical in nature. She gets a house, a protection but it is not hers. She gets gifts and ornaments from her husband but they are not hers. The novel in the end shows how Vasudha is ruthlessly denied of her rights to possess her gold ornaments and give them away to her loved ones as they were made with Vyomesh’s money. She is taught from childhood to adhere to whatever the in-laws say without asking questions; to
act as an ideal housewife, to bring ultimate happiness in the house. Vasudha when fed up of serving as an ideal wife wants to say aloud, “I am very weary. I am very tired” (23).

Rassundari Devi, in the early 19th Century, who was entirely self-taught and wrote the first autobiography by an Indian woman, said, “I was so immersed in a sea of housework that I was not conscious of what I was going through day and night. After some time, the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry with myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read… People used to despise women of learning… In fact, older women used to show a great deal of displeasure if they saw a piece of paper in the hands of a woman. But somehow I could not accept this.” The marriage system was the key to men’s control over women. The interests of the colonial state and (male) nationalist sentiment converged in the desire for a more draconian marriage regime. The promotion of marriage as the upper castes and middle classes understood it and the defining of the husband and father as the undisputed head of the family were important colonial and nationalist enterprises.

The author analyses the various “situations,” or roles, the adult woman inhabits. The bourgeois woman performs three major functions: wife, mother, and entertainer. No matter how illustrious the woman’s household may be these roles inevitably lead to immanence, incompleteness, and profound frustration. Even those who accept a less conventional place in society—as a prostitute or courtesan, for example—must submit to imperatives defined by the male. Women in society is seen as an affordable commodity that can be used as a body, a doyen of unquestioned obedience, a reliable source of income (produced by her parents), a diligent worker, a child bearing machine, an objective victim of violence and a social symbol of poise for a man. Her
mediocrity, complacency, lack of accomplishment, laziness, passivity—all these qualities are the consequences of her subordination, not the cause.

Vasudha through her bitter experiences and with the cases of various other friends shows that a man only uses a woman for his lust and temporary needs. He can never understand a woman. He views woman as a property, a commodity and a body to satisfy his sexual needs. He adorns her with his ideas and expects her to be/react in the same manner as he expects. He wants her to be street ready but yet not exposed to the streets, duty bound and obedient, always sexually appealing and ready to meet his demands, smiling but voiceless, working like a robot, and adding to the repute of his family. He considers himself as the master of the house, the earning source and thus, the cynosure of power. Vasanti, a friend of Vasudha angrily exclaims, “‘They earn money and think that-that’s the end of their duty’….It’s we who do the rest-keeping the relationship stable, seeing that the house is peaceful and happy. So, why are’nt we as important as they are?’ (97) She adds pointing to the uni-dimentional approach of the society in which women are taught to abide by the moods of the husbands. “From childhood we are taught that we mustn’t do anything important without asking our husbands, and mustn’t do if they say no. They have no such obligation. For centuries this rule has been ingrained in all women and we accept it as being right and don’t question its validity or its justice” (96) If a woman goes against this dictated norm then the problem starts. Then the home is no more a happy home, there are quarrels, insults directed towards the woman, it is pointed out that a woman is a parasite and should be grateful for being fed by her husband, they are beaten and even thrown out of doors.
Woman can never act as masters as they are not the economic and social masters of the society. Rather they have been a colonized commodity used for various purposes. Men fundamentally oppress women by characterizing them, on every level, as the Other, defined exclusively in opposition to men. Man occupies the role of the self, or subject; woman is the object, the Other. He is and considers himself as essential, absolute, and transcendent, whereas, a woman is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on her, whereas woman is doomed to immanence, or inwardness. He creates, acts, invents; she waits for him to save her. This distinction is very well pronounced and protested by Vasudha and all women characters in the novel as mouthpieces of the author and all women who face the eternal calamity called patriarchy.

Kapadia by citing various cases points to another vital exploitation that women have to endure every night and that is sexual torture and violence forced on them by the husbands. Simon De Bevoir in her seminal book *The Second Sex* tells that most of the women face domestic rapes by their husbands every night. Vasudha is an example of such a woman who is compelled to submit to her husband unwillingly nights after nights. The emotion of love is not known to Vyomesh. Vasudha tells, “Vyomesh’s love had only one colour- the intoxicated colour of desire” (17). Any kind of softness shown towards Vyomesh would have a single meaning. He did not have the emotion but only the ruthless passion that forced Vasudha to submit. “In total dejection she submitted, and knew that she was going to be hurt like this over and over again.” (16)

Many women describe men’s sexual violence as a form of terrorism, exerted upon all women including those who are not direct victims.  

Ironically enough, a common strategy among
women is to look to individual men for protection. As Hanmer notes, “The pervasive fear of violence, and violence itself, has the effect of driving women to seek protection from men, the very people who commit violence against them.” Sex is power and men strive to exhibit their power over the weaker sex by violating their rights. At this, there is a sadistic pleasure behind their motives and in this they can be very closely equated with a rapist irrespective of the fact that there is love between a relationship or not. Men indulge in domination which takes a variety of forms-social, sexual, ideological (29).

The author explains, sex has been a vulnerable factor in deciding a male-female relationship. Society never permits a woman to desire sex but permits a man for such an act. Moreover, there has been a dichotomy between understanding the demands of a male and succumbing to it and the moral standards of the society that objects physical union before marriage. The author shows the contrast of fate in two other characters Amala and Vanya who had to suffer in their love relation because of their partner’s demands. Amala’s engagement broke up as she did not conform to a sexual relationship with her fiancé before marriage. But Vanya, trusting her partner, had indulged in a sexual relationship before her marriage; yet her relationship did not last as the in-laws and the fiancé got a better girl to marry off. She had to repent for that. Both Amala and Vanya suffered notable losses thus giving no solution or conclusion regarding the constancy of a male-female relationship if related to the matter of decision making or love making. It is always a man’s decision that rules over a woman resulting in what so ever losses on the woman’s side.

Sumitra, who has a liberated mind set and is well educated, faces a thrustback from her lover, Animesh, who dupes her in love and leaves her dumbfold. After months of intimacy, Sumitra finds out that Animesh is married and is having a steadfast relationship with his wife in his
village. She is not only deserted and betrayed unexpectedly but she also receives a rebuff ideologically as she always searched for a partner worthy of trust, friendship and confidence and thought that Animesh was a doyen of it. She was not only astonished to have taken a wrong decision but was so deeply grieved that she changed her name from Sumitra to Mitra desperately trying to erase her past experiences. At this point the author describes about the need of love in a man and woman’s life as: “If he is good, the woman can live a satisfactory life, otherwise she lives, but without vitality” (118). The author enunciates Vasudha’s life as a contrast to support this statement, her life is ruined as she had a loveless relationship throughout her life; it is a relative utopia when we consider men to be good if not androgynous.

Despite the longstanding and vigorous women’s movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women’s movement are central to the constitution of the nation-state. The primary identity of an Indian, male or female, is citizenship whose basic definition offers a promise of equality and justice within the nation’s democratic constitutional framework. Repeatedly, however, this promise is undermined by the masculinity of nationalist ideology, the fiction of citizenship, and the malleability of law. Instead of offering an alternative space, the society often simply functions as an extension of family, caste, and community structures and defines women as belonging in the same way as their structures. This definition of belonging is contradictory, implying both “affiliated with” and “owned by.” The first interpretation connotes voluntary, participatory membership; the second a secondary, functionalist, and symbolic status.
And both are constantly overlooked because social and political order is defined through women’s ownership by and place in structures of family and community.²³

Kapadia’s idea of a man-women relationship is somewhat similar to the philosophic theory of ‘Sankhadarshana’, where the relationship between ‘Purusha’ and ‘Prakiti’ is of taking and giving. ‘Purusha’ is the soul or spirit and is the witness to anything and everything of this universe. ‘Purusha’ is the knower, the known and the object of knowledge. He is manly, omnipresent, omniscient, but does not get involved in any kind of action with regard to creation, sustenance and dissolution of this universe. Prakrti, on the other hand, is the doer of all actions, is feminine, and is involved in creation, sustenance and dissolution of this universe. Without Purusha, Prakrti becomes incapable of creation. When ‘Purusha’ and ‘Prakriti’ meets, ‘Avyakta’ (Quintessence) is formed. In ‘Sankhyadarshana’ it is said that the ‘Purusha’ is incabable of sustaining itself alone. It needs the support of ‘Prakriti’ to form a united whole. But ‘Purusha’ is not self sufficient and thus has to take the vital sap of life from Prakriti to get its fulfillment. When the sap is fulfilled, Purusha leaves Prakriti.

In reality also man considers himself to be the omnipotent, he is the leader. He does not take part in any action but is demanding of all. But man is unfulfilled without a woman. He needs a woman to fulfill the sap of his life. Kapadia presents it in a different version. She tries to delve into her counterpart and find the meaning of love in the lives of men.

Do men need love? They do, but it is only a small part of their lives. They need the wider world outside, they need position and prestige, and they need to be
ahead in achievement in competition. They want to satisfy their ego and need someone to look after them, to take care of ‘their house’, someone to produce an heir, to continue their lineage. With these preoccupations, there is very little place left for love” (p118).

With the fulfillment of his desires, pleasures and worldly needs, men segregate themselves from women. So there is little need for love in men after a specific stage of life.

Vashudha cites several examples of her acquaintances in discussing the fate of the middle class women which she poses as stereotype of all Indian women. Urmila is a promising lady who held painting classes and was a graduate. After her marriage she was severely dominated by her sister-in-law even in the matter of her dressing or being, of allowed going out with her husband. Her being an artist belonged to the matter of past. Nalini, another woman, had a job but as soon as she was married, her mother-in-law stopped working and bestowed the entire household chores on Nalini. So she had to cook the breakfast, clean the house, cook the lunch and then go to work. In the evening the housework recommenced and continued till midnight. She had been interested in learning languages, but there was no time. Lata was considered a strong woman. She dominated the household because she was quarrelsome and hard but she had no power of money. Soon after her husband died her brother in law’s appropriated all the property and she did not even get her own jewellery. She was sent away for the house and had to plead residence with her brother and his wife.
Kapadia, like Simon De Beavoir, discusses the various mythical representations of women and demonstrates how these myths have imprinted the human consciousness, often to the disservice of women. The characters like Vasudha, Sumitra and Ana hopes to debunk the persistent myth of the “eternal feminine” by showing that it arose from male discomfort with the fact of his own birth. Throughout history, maternity has been both worshipped and reviled: the mother both brings life and heralds death. These mysterious operations get projected onto the woman, who is transformed into a symbol of “life” and in the process is robbed of all individuality. To illustrate the prevalence of these myths, Vasudha examines her own life when she had given birth to three of her sons, Harsh at the age of twenty, Ashesh at twenty two, and Dipankar at twenty five. The unreality of these myths or the reality of myths being stories had been discussed on her individual experience. The “eternal feminine” fiction which is reinforced by biology, psychoanalysis, history, and literature, is not true because giving birth is neither a child’s play nor a fairy tale. She discusses the painful process of giving birth which is a sole psychosomatic exercise on the mother’s part and the father has practically no part in it.

She explains the loss of control on her body and mind with the process of the development of the child inside. Like Gita Hariharan in *When Dreams Travel* she too relates the saga of the development of a child in her body and the painful birth procedure. She rightfully relates that giving birth brings in a woman the joy and pride of creativity but this joy decreases with the subsequent produce. She is candid enough to state that the joy she had felt in giving birth to Harsh had decreased in degrees in case of Ashesh and declined more when Dipankar was born. It is the tremendous discomfort, pain and the ordeal of giving birth that hovers around the mind thus reducing the joy involved. Moreover, the bringing up and rearing of children is a very tough
matter which can only be experienced by a mother not a father as a father does not take care of
the child as a mother takes and in addition, a father is not expected to be over indulgent in the
process of a child’s growth except for the socio-financial part involved. She insists on the
impossibility of comparing the “character” of men and women without considering the immense
differences in their situation. She questions the acceptability and truth behind the myth of giving
birth when the situation changes a bit. The same myth subverts when the girl is pregnant without
marrying. She is not only denied in the society but is also doomed to death. This she explains
with the case of Aasha, who had no other way but to commit suicide as the society would never
accept her and her baby without the father.

The author very well depicts the hapless handicapped position of a woman in desperate need as
she gets no support socially and financially in moments of crisis. We see how Ranjana runs from
pillar to post begging money for her daughter’s abortion helplessly. The author questions the
deep rooted uni-centric male dominant attitude of the society towards a girl who has got herself
pregnant before marriage. The man who had a similar role in the pleasure-hunt of body and mind
does not share the pain and shame like the girl if she becomes pregnant. No one questions the
boy rather it is the girl who is doomed and directed towards deadly paths. She is not only
excommunicated, ostracized but also made fun of and negated by the society esp. by the men.

When Ranjana comes to ask Vasudha for some money Vasudha feels the lack of economic
power and decision making authority. Though she is to set up many things for the family
households and work incessantly for the family yet the family does not allow her any authority of
decision making. Not only is she rejected out rightly for some money by Vyomesh but also she is
enquired of the cause. If the cause was important enough in the husband’s court then only there
was a chance of getting money but a wife had no power of getting any money just like that. Because of lack of support and money, Aasha committed suicide. Aasha’s fate is somewhat similar to Rukmini’s in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* who too had to commit suicide unable to bear the jeers of the society for a *kanin* girl.

Vasudha reflects her own sate after giving birth to three children. She tells the tale of those days when they used to go for picnic or outing. She had to make everything ready before their departure- food, drinks, plates, rug etc. she even had to prepare the boys. Everyone was ready except Vashudha. Vyomesh was displeased. No consideration was paid for Vasudha’s efforts. After returning in the evening she would put the boys to sleep and go to kitchen to make the dinner. Vyomesh would sit into his easy chair and say I am ‘exhausted’ and then order for tea. “They had walked a long way during the day. She wasn’t used to walking such a distance and her legs were aching.” She covered the tea and on her way to attend Dipankar, her son who was crying, told Vyomesh to strain the tea. “He replied without looking up from his paper, ‘well strain it and give it to me. That does not take long’” (65-66). It wasn’t a matter of time. Vasudha wished a little fellowship for the sake of love and humanity. Vyomesh could strain the tea, wash the strainer and cup and ask Vasudha to take care of the boys. She yearned for his support at least the words of consolation, “You must be tired too with all that walking”. She sometimes considered herself a fool expecting love and cooperation from her husband. She wondered if Vyomesh loved her other than her role in the house; he never cared for her personal needs but she always had catered to every need of his and his family. “Because he earned, because he brings money home!... he can’t be expected to do anything else” (P. 66)
Vashudha criticizes the notion of the society that takes women as the proletariat class and men the bourgeoisie. Like Ricardo’s theory in economics, she places women in the labour class, always dominated, working and kept in the limited world so that they silently accept everything, remains satisfied with it, does not question and does not look for change, while the ‘rulers continue their reign.’ The situation directly reminds us of Manusmrati which dictates a woman to be a slave to her ‘lord’ and never be independent in her life. The women who work are also not independent as they have to be responsible for the household and are always answerable to their husbands/in-laws for their expenses. It is practically impossible for a woman to do whatever she likes. “Morality aside, a woman has to pay a high price for doing what she believes” (127)

Through different cases, the author case studies the plight of women, in their houses, of whatever class she belongs to. Magan is a peon, performs every work where he is serving but refuses to do any at home when his wife is sick. Leena, Ranjana, Lalita, Vasanti and some other female characters also face fateful ends in relationship as they grip to the fact that women are hopelessly suppressed by the patriarchy. Ranjana’s husband, Deepak engages himself in polygamy. He is found intriguing with their maid, Lakhsmi and also with another woman outdoor. He stares at Vasudha with his lustful looks. Lalita, a lady of usual composure, is beaten up by her husband mercilessly because he was wrongly suspicious. Sudhir, her husband was a manager in a company who earned a lot of money. But he was ruthlessly dominant and suspicious. He was so jealous that he would enquire about everything that happened in the house and everyone she had met after coming from work. He would unnecessarily keep sending peons at home only to confirm whether there was someone with his wife in the house. This was all because she had confessed that she had a crush on someone in her college in the past. Bela used to dance very well and started her career as a dancer before her marriage. But she fell in love with Nishant, an
artist who married her with an idea of leaving her independent to pursue her field. But soon after their marriage Nishat loads Bela with pounds of household responsibilities, relatives and keeps her busy with his fluctuating moods. He got irritated with the slightest of disarrangement and reacted inhumanly for the smallest faults. He kept Bela busy so that she could not pursue her dance, whenever she would practice he would get irritated by the sound of the music. But nothing of the sort could stop Nishant from painting. He kept his ego strong and tortured Bela using violence. He used to shout at her, “Enough of prancing around, just look after the house.” He began to drink with his arist friends and when Bela objected he became ill tempered and hit her intentionally. He used to assert himself by saying that men were aggressive by nature, and she should not feel aggrieved if he hits her once in a while. He cited the example of the Chinese author Han Suyin whose husband used to strike her often and so it was not unusual for a man.

Again, Anita was in love with her husband, Alok who was a doctor but this man fell in love with another woman and wanted a divorce from her. He threatened her that if she doesn’t release him then he would convert himself into a Muslim and marry the other woman. Anita had to divorce in spite of being faultless.

To describe the situation of elite educated Indian woman outside India, the author zooms her camera to a family in England where the scene is novel but not different. Ana and Vipul are well married and are very well off economically. Ana, is very popular and a lady of self esteem, who is a successful insurance agent and a poet and has a special repute among the foreigners too. Vipul too worked in the same insurance company but was less successful than Ana. Ana believed in the equality of the sexes and Vipul too consented to her ideas as they thought on the same lines and avoided discrimination between the sexes regarding, work, money, household
chores etc. But as time passed Ana stated to gain popularity and success; Vipul’s attitude started to change. He became jealous and egoistic. He lost temper and insulted Ana for small things. He became un-cooperative and blamed Ana of being self-centred and selfish. “She talked about this to a friend, who explained that men do not like their wives to earn more, to be brighter or more popular than themselves, they are pleased if they are better housewives and prettier. But money- that symbolizes power, authority, status, rank, these are the centre of power, and that must be under a man’s control”(138). Ana strongly believed that everyone should have an opportunity to choose their role according to their wish and inclination. So she felt cowardly to recede to the thing that she did not believe in. On a sudden quarrel Vipul had a heart attack and died. Jaya, the mother-in-law kept Ana blaming for his death.

Ana was a modern lady with progressive mind set. She treated her mother-in-law as a friend rather than the customized approach existing in Indian mind set. She understood the pangs of the mother who was displaced because of the son to another land and had to adjust herself to new environment. Jaya had been a teacher and was quite strong in her attitude. She believed in the equality of the sexes but Ana was a step further ahead of her. She refused to remove the vermilion bindi from her forehead and renounce the coloured saris after Vipul’s death as she felt that she looked good in them. She refused to believe in the fact that she had been the cause behind Vipul’s death. She did not like to conform to the idea of showing outward grief by wearing a certain type of colour and quitting food habits like Vasudha.

Surprisingly, in the West the Indian psycho-set did not change and soon after Vipul’s death people came to mourn at her situation and show sympathy. At its rejection, she found herself far
away from the old established friendship. Ana who was very popular among the Indian community in London was totally rejected for her ways. She seemed to understand that people love to see a woman dominated in grief and helplessness even after her husband dies. When she is free from responsibility she has to be responsible and accountable to the society. She began to lose her clients, became excommunicated in a way and got no offers for work. Jaya who now became more of a mother to her started interacting with her to learn the hypocrisies of the society that she overlooked. Anna pursued Jaya to put back the bright red bindi on her forehead which brought in her joy and rejuvenation. She was finally successful in changing at least one ‘woman’ who previously believed “A woman is a woman, there must be some limit to her thoughts about independence.” (p.134)

The author also projects the situation of the European women who are also insecure of their positions despite being economically affluent and progressive in mind set. In a certain party with the English, Ana is surprised to face the ultimate truth of a woman’s situation even in foreign society. “Here too the women were not independent. They felt the stress of outside work. They felt that home life constricted them. They didn’t feel secure in their relationship. Many of them were single or divorced. Their problems were different from the Indian women, but here also they were not on a level with men”(150) Here itself the author marks that only economic prosperity is not enough for women liberation. She thus suggests cooperation and harmony, in the end, between men and women which can keep up a happy relationship.

All the women characters in the novel like Vasudha, Ranjana, Aasha, Vasanti, Ana, Sumitra and all other women characters in other novels discussed are victims of severe violence. Men
conceive women as soft mud that can be moulded in different forms according to their whims with considerable investment of force from time to time. Violence is also an outlet, a safety valve for the men to give a vent of the forceful passion for nothing significant so that they can cope up with the world’s daily hassel. Violence can be done out of pleasure willfully.

Jayne Moony identifies violence as first, mental cruelty, which includes verbal abuse, depriving one of money, clothes, sleep, and stepping out of the house, second, threats of violence or force, third, physical violence like pushing, slapping, shaking etc. fourth, physical injuring with objects like cigarettes, knife, trying to bring about miscarriage etc. and fifth, rape, forceful sex without consent, actual harming of sensitive parts of the woman’s body. Violence is a tool, a resource for bridging men’s psychological and physical sense of power/powerlessness. Violence can be seen as a process that links social conditions and individual behavior. In other words, violence can be seen not as aberrant but as typical, predictable behavior in hegemonic masculinity and gendered relations of male dominance and female submission. It can also be concluded that it is not impulsive or a biological drive but pre-planned and thought prior to the action. Violence also shows the connection with the victims, perpetrators and society in general. Pro-feminist perspectives consider violence as “intentional behavior chosen by men as tactic or resource associated with attempts to dominate, control and punish women.” Sumitra finds from a lawyer friend that rarely there was a day when one or another kind of outrage committed against women did not come to light. ‘Dowry-death’, ‘bride burning’ and ‘wife-battering’ were the most common problems faced by women irrespective of class or status in society.
Vyomesh, Animesh, Agnivesh, Satish, Sudhir, Deepak, Shyam all the male characters in the novel invest violence on women in one form or the other. Vyomesh is strictly negative in attitude towards Vasudha. He shouts at her for little things, is non-cooperative, he is a bully, and when Vasudha stands up to say the truth, he outrightly rejects her presence in his life and home and asks her to quit. Sudhir is domineering, suspicious and beats his wife. Satish avoids his wife and develops an extra-marital affair with a singer, ruthlessly dominating the existing talent of his wife. He recedes from his love and care when she is sick, bed-ridden and blatantly announces his scheme for divorce and remarriage. Vipul, Ana’s husband, who believed in equality between man and woman becomes rude and humiliating when Ana scores over him in job and repute. He refuses to adjust and uses violence as refuge to express his emotions. Shyam denies help to his wife, Nalini at home and piles loads of work on her and is non-cooperative. Nalini tells Vasudha, “If I’m there he won’t even serve his own meal. We both have jobs, but all the housework is my responsibility, as though I am a power-house of energy…. People consider women to be weak, but throw so much work on, you’d think they had limitless strength” (81-82) Vasudha too is a victim of violence. Vyomesh threatens her, assaults her when she speaks out the truth. When she separates herself from him by moving her things in another room, he bangs on her with the proposal of divorce.

The author’s objective behind the novel is to bring to light the women who are veiled in the dark corners of their houses, under the strict eyes of the elderly in-laws or trampled under their husband’s whims, to come out and take an internal journey of development from the dark peripheries of soul and mind to a state of enlightened self that is full of confidence, truth and devoid of compromises. It is not for their family or society that they should live; they should live
for themselves and think for the greater good of the society. Above all they should assert
themselves, their existence in society and use their resources for the good of humanity. In all
relationships studied, the woman occupies the central stage and significantly the narration shifts
through her feminine/feminist consciousness. Searching for a solution to their private problems,
the female protagonists in her novels shift from their personal pains to the sufferings of the other
women around. The internal journey that Vasudha takes, and all members of Anandgram take
with them, from the abyss of the gender divide and conservativeness to a state of being above
gender and above the programmed social norms is the central message holding in the book. In
doing this, the author has a strong objective bent of mind and she is not afraid in exposing the
faults of the women or of any perception in women.

She inspires the women to face their husbands and not run away from them. Like Vasudha and
Ana women must be courageous to confront their husbands and talk the matter out in order to
arrive to a solution. The husbands accept their wives as working women but at the same time do
not recognize or encourage the ‘feminist self’ in them. The act of confrontation gives them the
courage to decide things for themselves and increasingly leads them to a positivistic detachment
from life. Vasudha’s step to separate herself from the worldly existence and move her things to a
separate room stirs the pot. This refuge in the self guides Vasudha towards a deeper awareness of
her predicament. Now understanding the reality of life, Vasudha does not blame only the
patriarchy or only certain external causes for her predicament. She realises that she was also to
be blamed for being weak and allowing the predicament to happen. She had always felt the
wrong she was exposed to and had also felt the need to answer back but she feared the
consequences. She begins explaining solutions with the feminist cliché against the patriarchal
modes of injustice done to women, and goes one step further to bring out the injustice caused by man. She rationalizes a characteristically Indian predicament and also experiments with a classical Indian feminist solution to it. What is evolved through her intense awareness of the Indian woman’s situation is a mode of narration, where the woman is at the centre, speculating and working out the problem positively.

Kapadia’s ideas about women emancipation are certainly not cynical or nihilistic. She analyses the universal significance of the woman’s problem, thereby conforming to the feminist perspective. She believes that feminism is very much an individual working one’s own problem in small bits to become liberated one day. She is quite down to earth in her feminist approach to the woman’s problem. Though she is aware of the seriousness of the Indian woman’s dilemma and the generation old struggles behind it, she also believes that a positive change in women’s social status cannot materialise without bringing about a change in the woman’s mindset first. So, the novelist holds that it is the heroines’ retreat in their selves rather than in any external crutches which injects a hope for the woman’s redemption from her predicament. The woman’s increasing involvement rather than detachment in her predicament as expressed in her novels reveals the positive, humanistic side of Kapadia.

She clarifies that liberation doesn’t have one aspect only. “Eventually women have to free themselves from the bondage of their femininity, and men from the bondage of their masculinity, and try to become whole beings” (174) Her idea is not to avoid men but shake their consciousness to make them know, understand and love women as human beings and realise their needs, resources, feelings and not to supersede men in establishing matriarchy. Again and
again through various ways she puts forward the fact that a woman’s fight is not against men, “this fight is against injustice.”

Through a social activist Salina, Kapadia explains her idea of humanity that she wants to preach to the world.

Men are our fathers, brothers or husbands, but they must also be our friends on an equal basis—they are not our lords or masters. We want to create a new system and run our daily affairs in cooperation with them… The relationship that is based on each other’s needs can develop only when it is based on equality. Then will the world be a happier and more just place” (247).

This is what Anandgram in the end strives to achieve. The equality of members is based on their “inequality in various degrees.” Anandgram assumes that some of the virtues and skills of one person are bound to be absent in the other. One’s relation to another is governed by the norm of complementary reciprocity where each is entitled to except and assume from the other forms of behaviour through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as an individual being with specific needs, talents and capacities, one’s differences in this sense, complement rather than exclude one another. The outsider’s society is thus, envisioned as a ‘microcosm’ of the ways in which the entire society might function, by bringing about a transformation in the consciousness of the members of the ‘macrocosm’ that is the patriarchal community. It hopes to create this change by functioning successfully as a small non-violent and egalitarian society within the shell of patriarchal society with the hope that it will keep growing larger.
The relationship between men and women was not a rose bush which had grown in the soil of equality and freedom. Kapadia studies the history between the relationship of success from historical perspective when men decided how and for whom women should live and the relationship has become one-sided that of an exploiter and exploited. This lineage had come down in their blood and become one with their sole. Ignorance is the major enemy for women as they do not know about the world around them and have distorted ideas of reality which make them think their problems are fatalistic or for divine will. Man’s basic perception is that of ownership. If they see their hold weakening they are frightened and try even harder to enforce their authority. Schematic behavior, violence and non-cooperation are the commonest weapons that men use against women for subjugation. In this process men humiliate themselves and degenerate themselves from the position of human being. Violence makes one animalistic and a violent man is no better than that. Sydney Brandon opines, “statistically it is safer to be on street after dark with a stranger than at home in the bosom of one’s family for it is there that accident, murder and violence are likely to occur”.\textsuperscript{41}

One of the central themes for the women’s movement all over the world has been domestic violence and violence outside the house. The term domestic violence implies the incidence of familiar or intimate battering having reference to man, idealize family unit functioning in a protected and secluded manner, appropriately shielded from the public.\textsuperscript{42} This idealized conception, the rhetoric of inviolability of family as an institution has shielded domestic violence behind an iron curtain as an unacknowledged phenomenon behind the “closed doors” of the family, a private matter between “inmates” which is neither a concern of public scrutiny nor of
interventions.” 43 Familiarity with the perpetrator and filial values deter resistance, “closed
doors” alienate the victim from remedies resulting in a convenient status quo where the victim
reconciles and society can connive. The reconciliation with subjugation in the wake of limiting
social circumstances violates the case of human rights, liberty and human dignity.44

The hopelessness of their situations harms the women more than the violence on their bodies as
it erodes their personality and faith in their own people. Ignoring the victim and not making any
attempt to provide any solace and restitution is a challenge to human rights. The victim’s
inability to access the law makes the legal remedy ineffective and the four walls of the so called
“homes” render the law incapable of reaching the victims which is even more tragic. Most of the
incidents go unreported as the women are frightened of further violence, lost residence and
reluctant to bring a complaint against a member of their own family.

The cases discussed by Kapadia, Mahashweta Devi and Roy are veritable examples of domestic
violence where women find no access to justice and perish psychosomatically in the end. Ammu
in The God of Small Things couldn’t come forward to save herself and her children because of
the schematic domestic violence on her and her children. She could accept her accusation of
adultery with Velutha in the police station but couldn’t complain against the schemes of her
family. The failure of Ammu to rise above the status of a cultural being and live according to the
status of a real human being is the greatest failure of her personality and the greatest reality of a
person existing within the four-walled conservative customs of the society. Lachhima’s victory
in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh over the patriarchal feudal structure through her presence of mind
and firmness of spirit while motivating people against Ganesh is the biggest triumph of the spirit
of womanhood. She finally submits to the dichotomy of the concept of Indian Hindu philosophy that praises women as fertile, benevolent, bestower of property on one hand, and malevolent aggressive and destructive on the other.

Surprising enough, there has not been any police complaints by the women characters against their male counterparts, except for Ratna’s case, in *Seven Steps in the Sky* even though the male had been monstrous in their behaviour towards women. The women of the houses stayed calm and silently drank in the incessant pain produced by their loved ones. Vasudha’s feeling of overthrow from within is nothing but is a representation of the conformation to the dichotomy mentioned above but in much moderate degrees. Only after coming to Anandgram could the women stand against the rape of Ratna. This is perhaps because the author wanted to convey the idea that mind too gets liberated and courageous with an escape from the bonded environment. Anandgram hence, acts as a signifying agent, naming experiences that were at the root of the female experiences and awaited their conversion or emergence in the feminist movements for a growing forefront in Indian society and politics.

With Sumitra, Anna, Salina and men like Swaroop, Agnivesh, Aditya, Vasudha in Anadgram tries to resolve the ideological split recurrent in Indians about women. The people of Anadgram believed in the creative restoration of harmony and equality in both sexes so that this dichotomy regarding a woman being meek and horrific in her extremes at two ends do not call to occur. By paying equal attention and providing equal scopes to men and women, there exists no scope of betrayal, domination of resources present in each being. Everyone has access to leisure, rest, fun and work in equal measures according to individual likings. This saves the drudgery of
monotony that a regular life commands. Because of the scheme of voluntary labour division among persons, life becomes automatically easier and happy in contrast to the routinised forced labour of daily existence.

By thinking in a better manner and in a different way, Anandgram members think and interact with the outer world in a way much refined in attitude and expression. This kind of arrangement first shows the characteristics of mutual friendship and sharing as humanly valuable and secondly, more importantly, personal freedom and social life are not meant to be mutually antagonistic, but interdependent and mutually supportive. In this way, the outside community becomes an extended family but this family is different from the usual family where the elders and male members take over the authority and women are forced to earn credit by sacrifice.

Here in Anandgram every individual is taken to be equal and age is revered with a fellow feeling and not seen as corrosive taking advantage over the younger lot. After a certain crisis in life, most of the women characters come to Anandgram, the place where human beings realise their new meaning of life, where freedom, equality, love, harmony, rights are the key powers of each human being, very much apart from the life they have lead once. Anandgram thus, “acts as a signifying agent, naming experiences that are at the root of feminist movements’ emergence as growing fore in Indian society and politics.

The sense of social responsibility and activism to save the world from social evils and violence is the second objective of Anandgram instigated by Vasudha and others present there. Through the protest of Ratna’s mishap they want not only to teach the men a lesson but also to the community
which has a very prominent role in denouncing and humiliating a woman. Even if the courts relieve a girl from the blemish, the society will not; it will stamp her as defiled and she will have to carry this brand with her for life. Ratna’s rape is not an incident but is a stereotype of the wild men’s outrage on innocent women that destroyed her individuality, her right to be happy. Like Gandhians they march in a big group with posters and torches before the minister’s house whose son was the main culprit behind the crime.

The movement is not only with the members of Anandgram. Awareness and a new scope to raise up their voices, pulled women out of their houses irrespective of caste, class, stature or education. There were women old and young, from rich and poor houses, educated and illiterate, who joined the force. This uniting of women beyond caste-class-status is the victory, echo of the women selves, channelized into a movement to stand as one, united against injustice. There they face police harassment, lathi charge, and tear gas attack. Despite being non-violent, the police tried to ruthlessly suppress the movement in which Sumitra died and some other women including Vasudha were injured. The members of feminist utopia “are not merely private individuals who have a collective as well as individual stake in the decency and humanness of …….. public arrangements.”47 Here Anandgram acts out to prove its conviction and responsibility towards society. Vasudha feels that she had started gaining what she had wanted for ever in life: to speak the truth and do something good for women. With Aditya, Vasudha leave for the Himalays where lots of social work was to be done.

With the new child born in Anandgram, the author wants to establish that a new life bred in an atmosphere like Anandgram will be immaculate and grow up to be an example of a perfect
human being in society who would believe in equality, brotherhood, liberty, and deprogramming the cultural, ideological mind set in the coming generation. Here Kapadia is talking about establishing human rights and nothing else. With the proper maintence of one another’s dignity, the world will not be far away from establishing the utopia that the author presumes and the human rights charters expect. This is the greatness of literature that combines the matter and essence of such important issues like human rights before socio-cultural norms and knocks the intellect of the readers to make them implement the right thing at the right time. Kapadia’s success of this novel and her prominent position in the feminist writers of India establishes the above mentioned fact.

In spite of posing Anandgram as a fit solution for the women’s problems, Anandgram has its own flaws. The phonetically similar Gandhian ashram, Anandgram though is a major solution point for the author to establish harmony, yet it is not practicality plausible. Though Annadgram is not like Gandhi’s Sevagram but the objective of Anandgram seems somewhat similar to so as to bring ‘Swaraj’ in its literal sense in people, that is, having control on oneself to lead a harmonious, rightful, non-violent life in society. It sounds similar to a clause in the Human Rights Declaration which is sweet to hear but hard to implement. Anandgram is the ideal that one would externally crave for but not have it.

Anandgram, as Kapadia describes it, is rigorous in its attitude which is practically impossible to continue for a long time. People staying there have to restrain their emotions by being sacrificing, calm and submissive towards each other and in some way which is very artificial. Though the ashram propagates freedom and lets its residents have full scope for work and
leisure, yet it has a veritable chance of breaking harmony as it is difficult to change human nature by spreading ideologies and bringing harmony in reality. Outside impositions which are not present instinctively in mind can lead to great riots in people.

The author talks of division of labour according to one’s will, this is again dangerous as there is a tendency of increasing work in piles for the increased number of people which would again require guidance, a leadership and ultimately a routine formation. The concept of work described, is not clear either. Moreover, there is a major flaw in Kapadia’s Anandgram as she does not disclose the source of revenue generation in the ashram. She tells that everyone is free to experiment with his/her talents and work as one likes. But she is silent about the economic prosperity of the residents which would not only bring improved living in the inmates but also of the people outside the house. She does not explain how the inmates had money to built concrete houses when they had come out of their wed-locks and family. Everything in Anandgram is like a fairytale and this is how the novel takes seven steps in the fantasy clouds. The solution that Kapadia suggests to bring androgynous harmony in society through attitudinal changes, love, education and economic independence in both the sexes is apt for bringing man and woman on a same plain but creating a model place like Anandgram with norms that are practically impossible to follow in long run is something that cannot be practically accepted. Kapadia is a master in depicting reality but not so while suggesting a concrete solution.

Despite everything, it is true as Kapadia suggests that there is an utmost necessity of bringing the women out of their ideological walls and motivating them into realising their selves, so that they can participate in the world outside. There is also an urgent need to redefine feminist political
agency—to allow for the possibility of secular political collectives to which women can belong not by ascription, but by voluntary participation. But the solution may not lie in a revitalised national women’s movement, human rights charters and literature particularly in the current context of economic fragility and political instability as human beings, irrespective of their gender, tend to vacillate in taking steps and things have become difficult due to the existing, emerging and ultra-modern mindset of women chiefly based on the divide of economic power.

Despite everything, there are already the contours of a women’s movement, actual or potential, in the impressive networking capacities of autonomous groups and the mobilising potential of left-led women’s groups. We need to recognize the importance of women’s associations at the local and regional levels without retreating into the irreducibly local. The developing and strengthening of local institutions is also necessary, and seems to dominate women’s movements in the late 1990s. The question is how to mobilise these institutions for a transformative feminist politics— that is, to ensure that these localized struggles face and accommodate the challenges posed by community and caste politics without allowing them to displace gender concerns.  

Despite the year 2001 being declared the Year for Empowerment of Women, the status of women in India causes concern, with socio-economic indicators showing a disturbing trend – a falling juvenile sex ratio, rising levels of poverty and unemployment, starvation deaths linked to the denial of right to life and livelihood and increased violence in all spheres. This trend cannot be viewed in isolation but needs to be seen in the light of globalization and rising caste and religious intolerance, which have given an impetus to increasing and varied forms of violence against women. The sorts of human rights concerns that women in India face are of course not limited only to extra-judicial executions, rape, but also through other forms of violence. For
example, the Indian government admits that “there are striking disparities in the health status of women and children, particularly girl children”, most dramatic within scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, and other tribal and rural communities.” The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reports that the leading cause of death for women in India is complications resulting from pregnancy and childbirth. In nearly half of India’s states, “the rate of safe deliveries of babies is less than twenty five percent”. Overall, the safe delivery rate is less than fifty percent.

India’s National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO) identifies education as “the key policy and programmatic concern of the Indian government”, yet a serious educational gender gap remains. Initiatives such as the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) and the Midday Meal Programme have witnessed some success, increasing girls’ primary enrollment from 40% in 1990-91 to almost sixty percent by 2003. Nevertheless, NAWO notes that girls’ enrollment drops sharply in the transition from the primary level to secondary schooling level. Enrollment rates for scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, rural, and Muslim girls are substantially lower. While India’s 86th Constitutional Amendment, passed in 2002, mandates free, compulsory education for all children ages six to fourteen, “the amendment is yet to be made operational.”

India has failed to take the extensive measures necessary to improve the conditions of women. They are forced to cope with violence and socio-economic marginalisation. The entire burden of this failure rests not only with the central government, but also with various State governments that have not acted to comply with the Centre’s policies on gender rights or even with Supreme Court orders. India’s subsequent periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee provides useful opportunities and data to improve the record of the state of women and demonstrate respect for,
and compliance with, international human rights norms and conventions but very little is achieved in practical.⁵¹ According to the Indian Confederation of Indigenous Tribal Peoples, more than forty thousand tribal women, mainly from Orissa and Bihar, have been forced into situations of economic and sexual exploitation; many come from tribes that were driven off the land by national park schemes. Special courts to hear complaints of atrocities committed against tribal people were to have been established under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, but this never was accomplished⁵².

Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote Women's Rights. The Commission's work has been instrumental in bringing to light all the areas in which women are denied equality with men. These efforts for the advancement of women have resulted in several declarations and conventions, of which the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the central and most comprehensive document.

Among the international human rights treaties, the Convention takes an important place in bringing the female half of humanity into the focus of human rights concerns. The spirit of the Convention is rooted in the goals of the United Nations: to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity, and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women. The present document spells out the meaning of equality and how it can be achieved. In doing so, the Convention establishes not only an international Bill of Rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights.
In its preamble, the Convention explicitly acknowledges that "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist", and emphasizes that such discrimination "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity". As defined in article 1, discrimination is understood as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field". The Convention gives positive affirmation to the principle of equality by requiring states parties to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men"(Article 3).

The agenda for equality is specified in fourteen subsequent articles. In its approach, the Convention covers three dimensions of the situation of women. Civil rights and the legal status of women are dealt with in great detail. In addition, and unlike other human rights treaties, the Convention is also concerned with the dimension of human reproduction as well as with the impact of cultural factors on gender relations.

Dalit women are among the poorest of the poor and often bear the brunt of violence both from members of the dominant castes who view their bodies as ‘available’ for their use despite considering their caste ‘unclean’ and from within their own communities, where entrenched patriarchy turns them into scapegoats upon whom frustrations can be vented.

The results of a detailed study presented before an international conference at Hague in 2006 by the Indian group Institute of Development Education, Action and Studies, revealed the true extent of this violent reality. The study, spanning five years and four Indian states and based on interviews with hundreds of Dalit women, found that twenty three per cent of the Dalit women
interviewed had been raped, forty three per cent had experienced domestic violence, forty seven per cent sexual assault, fifty five per cent physical assault and sixty two per cent verbal abuse. Of all the cases studied only 0.6 per cent ever made it to court, due to obstruction by the police (who often harbour caste prejudices themselves) or by the dominant castes. Indeed many women simply accept that no one is going to help them and don’t even attempt to seek justice.

The discrimination against Dalit women is an issue that has been brought in front of international bodies as early as 1995, culminating with the drafting of the Hague Declaration on the Human Rights and Dignity of Dalit Women which occurred at the Hague Conference on Dalit Women's Rights, in November 2006. Ruth Manorama, a Dalit human rights activist and recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, claims this international exposure crucial. She opines, ‘The world is now global; no issues are local. We are talking about violence and human rights violations with impunity against Dalits for 3,000 years. If people have to get justice, then the matter needs to be taken to the international level.’

An exhaustive dissection of the novels and research has produced a wealth of understanding on the meanings and consequences of men’s attitude towards women sex from different angles. The conceptualization made in this Chapter-especially those related to male supremacy, socially constructed gender and sexuality- constitutes an analytical infrastructure, a framework in and by which specific instances of women’s rights violation may be understood. It is unique to note the complex dynamics of women’s rights violation through the ages where ways of violence against women change patterns and tactics.

This Chapter has probed into the mode of violation that women undergo in society and has found that there is a presence of sexual motif behind the violation irrespective of its kind. It is
remarkable to understand that there is nothing inherent in men that make them violent against women. Men learnt to be violent through particular ways in which it is socially and culturally legitimate to direct that violence against women. Lachhima, Putli, Vasudha, Ratna, Sumitra, Ana, Jili, Ammu, Mammachi and the other characters discussed in the novels are definitely pressurized to follow the pattern of violence directed towards them by men pertaining to certain socio-cultural norms that are allowed silently in the contemporary society. Keeping a woman away from her basic needs, letting her no freedom, branding her as low apart from the sexual-physical violation are also violence exhibited by men to prove their supremacy which would not have any immediate impact of eruption from the society or the women folk. These patterns of violation are silently ignored by society and digested by women because of fear, shame, responsibility to hold on a relationship and children, lack of economic sufficiency and for unawareness of rights.

It is men who teach boys to be violent towards women by open attacks. Chacko’s protest against Pappachi’s attack on his mother is for courtesy but the graver attack that he bestows on Ammu is the reflection of the pattern of attack that he had seen in his childhood. Ganesh’s violent actions on women are nothing but the continuous lineage of Medininarayan’s treatment on his wives and Lachhima. Faiba’s sacrifice for Vyomesh goes uncomplimented or unrealised by him as it is taken as something usual and directed to women for the good of the men, so Vasudha’s sacrificial efforts are also unnoticed.

Kapadia’s idea that gender in not reified fixed by society and is mutable by social learning or change is very true. That is why she encourages men to be pro-feminist and women not anti-chauvinistic. Respect, dignity, courtesy, love and partnership can be taught to boys by men
through actions. We see Ana’s son Agnivesh grows up to be a perfect blend of androgyny because of the ideals taught by his parents. In fact when his father goes against his mother, he supports his mother against his father’s unjustified ego. So, to restore women’s rights in the world Kapadia brings forth a very logical idea that men should stop supporting men when one is using violence as a means to violate women rights and must speak out the problems; protest against any violation on women. Then only there can be a sea-change in the women’s lives. Anandgram is such a place as it has men like Swarup, Agnivesh, Aditya, A, Krishnan and so on and thus she thinks the world can change in thousands of Anandgrams can be formed in different parts of the world.

Women are the most vulnerable beings in society after the children that are open to extreme type of exploitation and human rights violation. By studying the women characters represented in the novels as stereotypes of the real society and the authorial poetics of depiction, it can be safely concluded that women rights are the essential most issues that a society should positively handle with a view to uplift women from the state they are stuck into. Change has been veritably noticed in the twenty first century especially in the metropolitan cities where women are socially and economically independent, highly educated and decision makers in their respective fields. But different issues have cropped up here also with the advancement of age and changed mind-set of the people. But the percentage of well-educated, economically independent women in India is about twenty percent only. This shows that there are miles enough to go.

It can be concluded from the above study that unless and until both the male folk and women folk comes forward with open minds to support the cause of women together with the
government, the pathetic condition of the women would not change. Ultimately it is men and women who would have to come forward to form a changed society with proper respect for rights and privileges irrespective of their caste, creed, sex and age.

The next Chapter elaborates on this issue thereby highlighting another crucial problem of inequality in Indian society and human rights violation functioning against the marginalised Dalit/Tribal men, women and children since ancient ages.
Notes & References


2. The MDGs are eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. They include eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, women empowerment, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development. The aim of the MDGs is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries.

   Refer to: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/


9. See Universal Declaration of Human Rights


16. There is a rich historical literature on the social reform movement in India. The movement’s focus on the condition of women has been widely noted and differently explained. There are
at least three main schools of thought. The “modernizing” school, which dominated until the
1970s, argued that these reforms helped draw women out of seclusion and gave them
opportunities for self-realization. Since the 1970s there has been a scathing critique of the
elite character of the movement and the limits of its vision with regard to women’s
emancipation. In recent feminist historiography it has been pointed out that the reforms led to
the formation of a new patriarchy. Refer Indian Feminism Report.

17. Karlekar, Malavika. *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women*,


20. Hina Jilani, an internationally recognized figure for her expertise in critical human rights
investigations, discusses the issue of honour killing where she justifies with examples, cases and
several official documents that the administration officials had backed such honour killings as they
to think that one should die if one cannot follow the cultural norms of a country. Refer:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hina_Jilani#p-search#p-search>

21. Interview with Hina Jilani by Jennifer Byrne on May 2, 2000. Here I have inserted a word ‘society’
in place of the word “law” quoted by Jilani. This is done to appropriate her view for India. Hina
Jilani while referring her opinion about Pakistan laws that support honour killing. Refer:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hina_Jilani#p-search#p-search>

Print.


Refer: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism_in_India#mw-head?>


33. Simon De Beavoir used this term in Book 1 “Facts and Myths” in *The Second Sex*. De Beavoir next discusses various mythical representations of women and demonstrates how these myths have imprinted human consciousness, often to the disservice of women. De Beavoir hopes to debunk the persistent myth of the “eternal feminine” by showing that it arose from male discomfort with the fact of his own birth. Throughout history, maternity has been both worshipped and reviled: the mother both brings life and heralds death. These mysterious operations get projected onto the woman, who is transformed into a symbol of “life” and in the process is robbed of all individuality. To illustrate the prevalence of these myths, de Beauvoir studies the portrayal of women by five modern writers. In the end of this section, de Beauvoir examines the impact of these myths on individual experience. She concludes that the “eternal feminine” fiction is reinforced by biology, psychoanalysis, history, and literature.

34. This is what I assess. A man who is meek in his workplace and has no power over his boss or colleagues, will vent out his frustration on his wife and children in any form.


38. Dobash et al. 2000:293


42. Brandon, Sydney. *Violence in Family*. (Ed.) M. Borland. 1976:1


44. AIR 1999. (JS) 145. Refer: Rao, Mamta. 2008:165


49. Sen, Samita: 62


Chapter 4

Problematizing Dalit/ Tribal Rights Issues in Indian Fiction in English

Indian society, which is a veritable product of Hindu culture, has in its deep structure the caste system based on the nature of the primary occupation of the people. India from time in memoriam has suffered heavily because of the ill-effects of caste system. One of the most confusing mysteries of India is this caste system which seems to have its root in the past three thousand years history. The Indian caste system is probably the longest surviving hierarchical system in existence in the world today where a section of the society is regarded by others to be so inherently inferior that it pollutes other human beings and thus are demarked as untouchables.

The Dalit, who make up one seventh of India’s population have been assigned the dirtiest, lowest paid jobs and are landless slave labourers, shunned socially by higher castes and neglected in social services and education even today.¹ The segmentation among the various castes is so rigid that no one can change from one caste to another caste and it is something in which one is born and remains until death. The total population of Dalits in India is given as two
hundred and fifty million, forming about twenty five percent of the population\(^2\) but this does not take into focus the large number of unaccounted Dalits those who have converted themselves into Buddhism or Christianity.

The Indian caste system which is etymologically divided into four *varnas*: Brahmins (the priest), Khatriyas (the warriors), Vaisyas (the merchant) and Shudras (the servant) are classified on the basis of their origin as they are said to have been born from Brahma’s various body parts: the mouth, arms, thighs and the feet respectively, as depicted in the Vedas. Beneath these four main castes there is a fifth group\(^3\), the Dalit who are the oppressed, downtrodden and the most exploited social group. Due to this discrimination, there has been a great divide in the Hindu society where a Dalit, who is lowly demarcated because of his occupation related to unhygienic conditions like the scavenging of human defecation or domestication of pigs or cobbling or sweeping etc., is vastly degraded in dignity when compared to the high class or religious sect, popularly known as the Brahmins.\(^4\)

The Dalit community of India is even denied a status in the traditional caste system of India. They are even considered lower than the Shudras. They have been called by various names such as ‘Untouchables’, ‘Harijans’, ‘Exterior Castes’, ‘Depressed Classes’, ‘Outcastes’, ‘Pariahs’, ‘Avarna’, ‘Ati-Shudra’ etc. The term ‘Scheduled Castes’ appeared for the first time in April 1935, when the British Government issued the Government of India Scheduled Caste Order in 1935, specifying certain castes, races and tribes as Scheduled Castes.

The term ‘Dalit’ is taken from Hebrew ‘dal,’ meaning crushed or broken men. This was first used in the journalistic writings in 1931 and then was taken up by Mahatma Jotirao Phule in Maharashtra when he led his anti-Dalit campaigns. It gained currency with the Dalit Panther
Movement in 1970’s. Dr. A.A. Carvall like Dr. Kly takes the traditional demographical view held by most scholars that the Dalit were a part of an ancient highly developed non-Aryan civilization living in what is now seen as South India. Generally referred to as Dravidians, Dyasas by most historians, these people have distinct African physical features and cultural characteristics, as V.T Rajshekar puts, relating to the fact that Africa and India was a common land mass until it was separated by the ocean. They have their different cultural identity, own food habits, own Gods and shrines, unique anthropological living patterns that are very different from the Hindus and as a result of it are called low, heathen or pagan. V.T Rajshekar further affirms that the Dalits are the descendants of the Indus Valley Civilization that was conquered by Aryans. They were first classified within Hinduism by the British government as Scheduled Castes for the purpose of consolidating Indian unity on the basis of Hindu dominance.

Research data on the various Dalit populations have proven to the fact that the Dalits are not simply poor and oppressed, but they are also a distinct ethnic group. They are a national, historical and involuntary minority who possess the right to international protection in the meaning of the international law. Though the Indian government has formulated and implemented various laws for the protection of the Dalits yet the question arises how much can the national and international law assist to evade the exploitation done to the sect which has been maligned and chided for thousands of years and has psycho-religious customary support from behind, dominant in the majority of the Hindu population still today.

Apart from the existence of the Dalits in India, there are several tribes which approximately mount up to seven crores today. In the Colonial India, the British Officials and others have generally characterized the Tribals as backwards and illiterates having no history. Edward
Thruton describes the rebellious Tribals as “barbarous” and “savage”. O’Malley, thought that they were possessed of some inherent tendencies to be marauders. The colonial rulers’ ethnocentric bias resulted into the spread of the certain stereotypes about Tribal community. They treated the aborigines as an impure caste of Hindu community and they were accepted as the remnants of the stubborn “Dasyus” who have been notorious for creating troubles.

The problem of the Dalits and the Tribals are not uni-facet. They are multi-dimensionally spread in every layer of the society and are humiliated in a similar pattern throughout the country. The Dalit and the Tribals severely face identity crisis in various forms and this is the major problem that they want a solution for.

If we look for the constitutional existence of different Tribal societies in India we are astonished to know that the Constitution of India does not define Scheduled Tribes as specific. Article 366(25) refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to Article 342 of the Constitution, the Scheduled Tribes are the tribes or Tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and Tribal communities which have been declared as such by the President through a public notification. As per the 1991 Census, the Scheduled Tribes account for 67.76 million representing 8.08 percent of the country’s population. Scheduled Tribes are spread across the country mainly in forest and hilly regions. The essential characteristics of these communities are their primitive traits, geographical isolation, distinct culture, shyness of contact with community at large, and economical backwardness.
There is another social category generally known as the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of India which cover a population of approximately six crores. Some of them are included in the list of Scheduled Castes, some others in the Schedule of Tribes, and quite a few in the category of Other Backward Classes. But there are many of these tribes, which find place in none of the above registers and are called as Denotified Tribes and are fatefully branded as ‘criminals’. These tribes are terribly poor and lack all amenities towards civilization. There has been a high indent of human rights violation in these sects since ages.

Despite the religio-cultural tint of discrimination with the Dalits and Tribals, the Government of India in no way is a party to this discrimination. Soon after independence the issue of Dalit discrimination has been taken up by our Constitution and dealt positively. In fact, it was B.R Ambedhkar, a representative of the Dalit people, who had drafted the entire Constitution and had kept equal provision for all kinds of rights for the Dalit sect in the country. It is commendable that the Indian government has sincerely attempted to bring about improvement in the status of the Dalits. Article 46 of the Indian Constitution reads: “the state shall promote with special care the equational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.” It is interesting to note that the Indian government defines the Dalit as the weaker section of the population, and not a minority group, very much similar to the manner in which U.S laws refer to the powerless when dealing with African-American problems, and attempts to grant them civil rights for the purpose of assimilation or integration. But it is indeed a very sorry fact that Indian government not only has not provided the Dalit with its right to international protection but neither has she been able to implement their civil rights in reality.
By Charter when we compare the Indian Constitution with the United Nations Covenants on human rights, we find that it seems to provide the Indians many of the same rights in the form of Fundamental Rights. The basic rights to equality, liberty, protection against arbitrary arrest, rights in the time of detention etc. are quite similar to the rights given in the Covenants. Right to life and security of person and right to equality before law are guaranteed in Articles 21 and 14 respectively. Article 14, 15 and 16 deal with the right to equality, prohibition of discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, and matters of public employment. Article 15 (2) of the Constitution has special mention about the prohibition of differentiation that:

No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and place of public entertainment; OR (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

Article 15 (4) tells: “Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.” Article 17 of the Constitution clearly mentions, “Untouchability” is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability rising out of “Untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law. It is queer that neither the Constitution nor the legislation defines “untouchability” rather it talks about the disabilities arising out of the practice of untouchability. Article 35 (a) (2) of the Constitution” confers upon Parliament exclusive power
to make laws prescribing punishment for those Acts which are declared to be offensive under Part III of the Constitution of India.”

Article 23 of the Constitution holds the “right to liberty of movement”, “freedom to choose residence”, “freedom to hold opinions”, “right to peaceful assembly” and “right to form association with others.” Article 46 of the Constitution says that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 330, 332 and 334 of the Indian Constitution deals with the reservation of seats of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabhas, Vidhan Sabha and clauses related to reservation in public services.

The Constitution of India, so right and so forth guarantees its citizens, in one form or the other, the rights related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual, embodied in the International Covenants, enforceable by courts in India and run more or less at par with the clauses as given in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the question lies whether these rights are properly enjoyed by the common people especially the marginal sect on not? Whether the victims of injustice and human rights violation are getting proper legal protection or not? And whether the uses of these rights in any manner are impinging on other’s human rights? The answer lies in the case study of the novels taken for study in this Chapter.

Before discussing the novels taken for study in this Chapter, it is worth mentioning that the human rights issues related to the Dalits have been somewhat discussed in the previous Chapters
related to children and women. Since the problems are overlapping for each Dalit person, may he/she be a child, a woman or a man, it is difficult to segregate issues out of another and so the problems seem overlapping and repeatedly discussed. But this is to keep in mind that the human rights crisis that the Dalit face at various stages and levels are bizarre and their remedy scarcely done. Here the problems discussed are absolutely concentrated to a Dalit person irrespective of gender or age criteria.

This Chapter apart from discussing the fundamental human rights of the Dalit, discusses the nature of exploitation that they are vulnerable to. The administrators, police, high class, high caste and even by the Dalit fellowmen who has attained some economic prosperity scheme ways for Dalit oppression. This Chapter draws a line between the heterogeneous Dalit existence among Dalit sects themselves and their acceptance in society based on the economic interest and well being. It addresses Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand, Karukku by Bama, The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh by Mahashweta Devi, Paraja by Gopinath Mohanty, The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh, Joothan: A Dalit’s Life by Omprakash Valmiki, and The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy and puts forward the argument of human rights violation against the Dalit thereby problematizing and politicizing certain concepts that ply in society; highlighting the wretched conditions of Dalits who are lying deep into murky waters.

Before directly addressing the plight of characters in each novel, let us first categorize the human rights issues present in the novels one by one. Untouchable and Joothan: A Dalit’s Life deals with the fundamental problems of poverty, lack of health and proper living conditions and of course, the critical issue of identity crisis in the Dalits. The novels sketch the psychological
turmoil in the characters through an entire life span intergeneration wise that lead to certain problems in personality development and ideological framework. Both these novels try to give out solutions respectively, but things seem to be politically tilted if perceived from the Dalit perspectives. *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, The Hungry Tide* and *Paraja* are sets of novels that deal with the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa and explore their plight at different points of time and at different contexts. The novels show how human rights can become a tool of power or bankruptcy depending on the hands that regulate them. *The God of Small Things* and *Karukku* are representations of South Indian villages where Dalit exploitation is in form of socio-economic prevalence. *The God of Small Things* portray the predicament of a Dalit carpenter who is stuck between a love relationship and the politics of the land and finally is beaten to death by the Police for false accusation. *Karukku*, on the other hand, brings out the hypocrisy of the Church, its treatment with the converted Dalits and also looks within the Dalit Christian sects to find some inherent ideological problems that make easy ways for exploitation.

As the human rights issues like poverty, malnutrition and lack of health prevail in all novels when the Dalits are concerned this Chapter will discuss these elemental issues altogether first. The second section of this Chapter will deal with exploitation, alienation and identity crisis of the Dalit—this section will deal in detail the exploitation design drawn by the police, government officials, religious people and the peer Dalit on the hopeless lot in each novel. The third section will deal in the problematics and politics of Dalit identity as featured in the novels. Further, this Chapter will focus on the writers’ stance on human rights violation on the Dalits in the novels.
Joothan: A Dalit’s Life brings forward a very contentious yet righteous proposition of Dalit caste and identity. Omprakash Valmiki rightly comments, “As long as people don’t know that you are a Dalit, things are fine. The moment they find out your caste, everything changes…. Poverty, illiteracy, broken lives, the pain of standing outside the door….“ (134). The last sentence is what that lingers as a potential trait in the life of the Dalit and lead them towards an infernal existence. The fundamental problem of Dalit survival in India is social exclusion, as Valmiki calls, ‘standing outside doors’. This problem is accompanied by poverty, malnutrition, lack of proper living facilities, ill-health, illiteracy and mistreatment. Each of the novels taken for study highlight these human rights concerns prominently and circles off the Dalit situation countrywide.

Poverty in Dalits is the central pivot that enriches their miseries. Because of the economic backwardness, men, women and children are dragged to such a front that they have to submit to the squalor of life. Existence of poverty in lives, which itself is a human rights violation, forces the poor to succumb to the insatiable demands of the rich. The rich high caste people who are smeared with the ideological bias of casteism take the fullest advantage of the poverty of the Dalit and make them work like bonded labourers against very low pay or no pay at all. Despite the abolition of Bonded Labour\textsuperscript{12} after independence and enforcement of Daily Wages Act\textsuperscript{13}, there are several cases till today where a Dalit is used for labour without wages.
The toil and hardships of a Dalit life is unimaginable. It is full of thorns and pebbles that cut and pierce not only their skin but their hearts. Labour is extracted ruthlessly, illogically and coercively. The tone or behaviour of the high caste in dealing with them is always dominating, enslaving, rough, unsympathetic and corporeal.

Bama in *Karukku* describes the daily ordeal of the men and women of the village: “I saw people working hard; I grew up amongst such people. At home, my mother and my grandmother laboured from sunrise to sunset without rest. And to this day, in my village, both men and women can survive only through hard work” (41). Valmiki describes,

> Everyone in the family did some or other work. Even then we didn’t manage to get two decent meals a day. We did all sorts of work for the Tagas, including cleaning, agricultural work and general labour. We would often have to work without pay. Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got neither money nor grain. Instead, we got sworn at and abused (1-2).

The women and children in the Dalit are the worst sufferers as they are already considered gullible and meek. Women because of poverty are forced to submit physically to the rich and they die when scrapped out by the rich and their own men. Children lack all rights of childhood and suffer perennially for the cause of being born in a poor, low cast, debt-full family. Bama describes how they as children helped their parents in gathering wood for fuel from the forests where their legs and skin would repeatedly get bruised by the palmyra leaves but they had no time to care. “I’d go and collect such things as thorns, used for fences, or palmyra and coconut-
Valmiki in *Joothan* aptly defines and sums up the poverty-stricken, untouchable, sub-human situation of the Dalits in the society. “Untouchability was so rampant that while it was considered all right to touch dogs and cats or cows and buffaloes, if one happened to touch a Chuhra, one got contaminated or polluted. The Chuhras were not seen as human. They were simply things for use. Their utility lasted until the work was done. Use them and then throw them away” (2)

*Paraja* and *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* reproduce the torments in the lives of the male and female Dalit/Tribes pressed below the ruthless domination of their Maliks. It is due to their grinding poverty that the Dalits/Tribes lose their voice, identity, confidence and the power to revolt. What lies before them as the ultimate reality is that they are the bonded labourers or *gotis* of the Zamindars to whom they owe their lives and labour for borrowing a meager sum of money for some dire cause. Both the novels plea for the space and free play of human rights in the lives of the downtrodden and thus satirizes the concept on the whole both nationally and internationally. Mahashweta Devi in her interview in 2002 angrily exclaims,

> I have been going through the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and questioning myself, which article is really true for India from Articles 1-30? None. In India, the society is caste and class divided. Casteism is not the only curse. Indian society is thoroughly indifferent to the word "tribe." Then comes the ultimate truth as it exists. For India's millions of deprived ones living either below the poverty line, or on the fringe of it, the word "human rights" is non-existent.
Right to have a living, proper housing, drinking water, education, electricity, health facilities, communication, right over the land, they are denied everything. And they are the people whose poverty is really a big capital for the country's ruling powers. Their poverty, depravity of their lives, the non-development of their areas form this capital. Showing this, the ruling powers make big projects and get money. Whatever I say here, is born of three decades of day to day experience of India's poor. And, amongst them, India's Tribals share a worse fate. Their’s is a faceless existence. They are in India from ancient times, for thousands of years, yet the mainstream India has continually refused to recognize them. In the tribal society there is no caste division, no dowry system, divorce and widow remarriage is socially sanctioned. They are, after centuries of oppression and neglect, still so civilized! 

It is apt on her part to angrily comment on the state of the Tribes and Dalits in India who are still in dark, far away from the light of development. For the tribal people poverty works in killing measures and we see the case of Sukru Jani in Paraja how he and his family leads a poverty-stricken life:

Sukru Jani’s hut has a single room divided into three compartments. Inside, it is pitch dark….In the corner of this room there is a heap of mango seeds, to be crushed into powder, boiled and eaten. In another corner of the room, seeds of wild hedge-plant bai-gaba have been piled: these are crushed for oil. The store of food grains in the room consists of about ten measures of mandia; a portion of this is kept in containers made of leaves sewn together, and the rest is scattered on the
mud floor. The room contains three or four empty earthen pots. Hanging from the thatch are strips of loincloth which the men wear, and the cotton saris of the two girls, as well as dozens of empty shells of dried bottle-gourd, which are used as flasks for carrying mandia gruel to the fields. Rough umbrellas, made of dried palm leaves, are scattered around the hut. This is all that Sukru Jani’s home contains; there is nothing more (3).

Bama, in *Karukku*, describes how difficult it was to pull a square meal everyday in the house. It was only on the Sunday that they could afford full meal. When in the rainy season the lake would be full of fishes then only they could have fish and rice. “But there were times when there was nothing at all at home. My mother would somehow manage to relieve our hunger with a little left over rice or kuuzh…. Sometimes we boiled and ate drumstick leaves…. On occasion we children would finish off whatever gruel or porridge there was. Then it was my mother who had to go hungry” (62).

Om too describes how difficult it was to survive in Dehradun when he had no money to fill his stomach but he had to continue his education: “My pockets went empty. I left for college early in the morning on an empty stomach. I would light a stove and scramble something together on my return from college in the afternoon…. Mama would return in the afternoon with rotis from the homes he served. But I never felt like eating them. I would lose my appetite by just looking at them” (75).

In Chapter 2 the definition of poverty has been discussed. Poverty is not only economical but
also psychological. Poverty brings people to such dregs of life that one has give up his/her honour for collecting food. We see that the Dalits have to collect food from the rich as they had no money to purchase food of their own. Sometimes hard work was paid off by giving ‘jootan’ or left over scrapped food to the poor that too the Dalits had to beg for hours and receive it with curses and insults. Valmiki records how his mother and he were insulted by Sukhdev Singh Tyagi for asking food in his daughter’s marriage after she had done all the chores asked for. Waiting for several hours outside the house when Sukhdev Singh was begged, “Please put something on the pattal for my children.” Sukhdev Singh pointed at the basket full of Joothan and said, “You are taking a basketful of joothan. And on top of that you want food for your children. Don’t forget your place, Chuhri. Pick up the basket and get going” (11). This kind of insult she could not take in and out of rage threw the waste back and answered with protest, “Pick it up and put it into your house. Feed it to the baratis tomorrow morning” (11) This act of protest can be considered as a protest against the violation of dignity of the inner self which ultimately contains the germ of human rights within. This kind of age long mistreatment with the Dalit has lead to protests in several places and today they stand as a unique forum bearing a political statement.

In Untouchable Bakha hates the way he has to gather a square meal. His protest though mild yet is significant in his temporal space. His brother Lakha brings a basket full of scraps from the canteen dust bin of the army people which would serve as their meal.

They all ate from the same basket and the same bowl, not apportioning the food in different plates as the Hindus do, for the original Hindu instinct for cleanliness has disappeared long ago…But his hand touched a piece of sticky, wet bread. He
shrank back from the basket. The picture of a sepoy washing his hands in his round brass tray, over the leavings of bread and salad, and then throwing them in Rakha’s basket appeared before him…He felt sick. (76)

He abstains himself from the rest of the meal. The pain and insult that Bakha’s sensitive mind was going through is the general feeling of the Dalits from centuries past only that they had found no other alternative but to ingest the darkness of the abyss that they are born into. Both the novels project the lives of the Dalit children in their individual artistic fervour which paints the painful picture all the more horrifying and project the human rights violations more outstanding.

What Bakha in Untouchable could not do, Om’s mother had done in Joothan: A Dalit’s Life. Bakha could only avoid the slimy food collected from the Sepoys but could not say no as he knew it was the only source of food when they had nothing to eat. He digests the grinding humiliation that the lady showers on him while begging food as he had grown cowed and helpless with the world which has created such unjust norms and thus, had accepted his state as unchangeable.

Bama in Karukku also mentions this act of collecting leftover food from the rich in south India. Once when she had gone with her grandmother to help her with some domestic chores, she found it very humiliating to beg food from the rich at the end of the day as a meager price for the work. She describes how reverently the Dalit pray for food and keep his plate beside the drain lest it should touch a better place, and the high cast would through some leftover food in that. When Bama asks her grandma the reason behind such humiliation, she tells that this is the rule of the world; this is right as they are the Savarnas or high caste people and it is for serving them that the
Dalit survive. Bama being a small girl neither could not digest it nor find the logic behind granny’s speech. But later on she too had to follow the same norm of standing away from the touchable while working as they would get polluted by her touch.

All the time I went to work for the Naickers, I knew I should never come close to where they were. I should always stand away to one side. These were their rules. I often felt pained and ashamed. But there was nothing that I could do….However furious or resentful I felt in my heart, I have stepped aside for them along with the other women of my community (46).

Here we see how age long hegemony and deep rooted prejudice have tainted the Dalit minds deeply about the disparity between the Dalit and the non-Dalit, that even if one is angry or frustrated one has to follow the age long code of conduct in order to survive. The tussle between human rights concepts that forbids untouchability and cultural sanction for practicing untouchability lies in the main fact that human minds had turned a deaf ear to the concept of humanity even though the laws had dictated them to embrace equality. Here comes the challenge of human rights or laws as they can proclaim orders but cannot guaranty their fullest implementation. It is ultimately human who is to understand the value of human rights and pay respect to them and not dominate others in the name of caste and religion.

Apart from the scarcity of food, there is lack of clothing, shelter and health care in the Dalits. Valmiki is tormented to be teased by the Tyaga children for wearing old and torn clothes in school.

If we ever went out wearing neat and clean clothes, we had to hear their taunts
that pierced deep inside like poisoned arrows. If we went to school in neat and clean clothes, then our class fellows said ‘Abey Chuhre ka, he has come dressed in new clothes’. If one went wearing old and shabby clothes, then they said, ‘Abey Chuhre ki, get away from me, you stink. This was our no-win situation. We were humiliated whichever way we dressed (3).

It is tormentful to imagine that when one is not getting the minimum necessity of having proper clothes, his failure to get it is the cause of being teased. In Dehradun too students used to laugh at him for wearing old clothes. In college Om relates how cold it was in Dehradun and he had no money to buy woolen clothing. He somehow manages to buy a cheap used sweater from the military and get dyed as this kind of sweater was easily recognizable by people and meant to be jeered at. It was only the poor and sick who used to take such clothing. Om then had to skip his meals to save some money to buy some cheap wool and give it to his sister-in-law who knit him a sweater. And this way he could combust the piercing chill of Dhehradun. Gopinath Mohanty in Paraja describes how Jili and Bili have to undergo the flood shame when they do not have sufficient clothes to cover their growing bodies. If such is the condition when man uses all his energy, emotion and time in getting his basic needs fulfilled then there remains no scope of developing other faculties.

Bama in Karukku feels ashamed to go to school without proper clothes.

I felt very shy and almost fearful….The children living in the hostel who were of the same age as me wore smart clothes and possessed all sorts of finery like jewels and wrist-watches. I thought to myself that they were, in all probability,
from the upper-class (17).

They looked at her derogatorily. The above quote has a significant psycho-tranquillizing element in it. Bama does not feel jealous or greedy by looking at the rich students. What she realises is a clichéd reference that has been used by her lot whenever they feel inferior. The expression, “they were from the upper-class” is the psycho-tranquillizing agent that has already been programmed in the minds through generations and whenever one is exposed to something that is not reachable to the Dalits, the expression automatically fits in to give relief. This kind of psycho-tranquillizer is provided by the Hindu custom itself which dictates a high class as haves and the Dalits as have not’s. Personalities like Om and Bama saw, understood and felt the pangs of swallowing this expression and thus their voice of protest was heard through their writings.

Castesim is the most heinous human rights violation that keeps on poisoning the lives of the Dalits making their world deadly for survival. No person can enjoy his rights and freedom when one is always threatened by the fact that his/her movement or action would cause pollution. The very fact that they are unclean, dirty, polluting factors crushes human dignity and confidence. One takes a negative attitude of life and is always irritated. The Dalits in the novels are kept far from using any public amenity and are treated as animals. The Dalit quarters are always situated far away from the main stream village. The Dalits are cornered according to the hierarchy and are doomed to live in murk and stink. Each novel gives the demonstration of the pariah community as the filthiest and dirtiest place on earth with muck and dung strewn all over, stink of garbage, rotten waste and free play of swines and dogs in the locality. *Untouchable* describes the Dalit locality:
The outcastes’ colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows...outside their [town and cantonment] boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes, and the biting choking, pungent fumes that oozed from its sides. The absence of drainage system had, through rains of various seasons, made the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive stink.... the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in” (1).

Joothan gives a similar description:

Our house was adjacent to Chandrabhan Taga’s gher or cowshed. Next to it lived the Muslim weavers. Right in front of Chandrabhan Taga’s gher was a little johri, a pond, which had created a sort of partition between the Chuhras’ dwellings and the village... All the women of the village, young girls, older women, even the newly married brides, would sit in the open space behind these homes at the edge of the pond to take a shit... There was muck strewn everywhere. The stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood” (1).
Velutha in *The God of Small Things* live opposite to the river where people do not live. In *Karukku* Bama relates that they live according to the hierarchy of Dalits; there are different communities depending on different occupations.

Just at the entrance to the village there is a small bus stand… Beyond that, there is a stream. If it rains, it runs full of water. If not, it is nothing but a stinking shit-field. To the left there is a small settlement of ten to twenty houses, known as Odapatti. It is full of Nadars who climb palmyra palms for a living. To the right there are the Koravar who sweep streets, and then the leather-working Chakkiliyar. Some distance away there are the Kusavar who make the earthenware pots. Next to that comes the Palla settlement. Then immediately adjacent to that is where we live, the Paraya settlement. To the east of the village lies the cemetery. We live just next to that” (6).

Here we see how the Dalits are cornered towards the dead end of the village next to the cemetery, another metaphor for making the meaning of Dalit existence clear. Living such a life of pauperism is like living like a dead in a cemetery. In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* the Dombs and the Bhangis live in a community far from the Maliks and the tribals are pushed in the forests. This kind of separation is itself a human rights violation as it divides the dignity of the communities into have and have not’s. It develops an age long attitude automatically that the Dalits are dirty, stinky, and unhygienic and are to be kept away. Moreover, the equal status of the people in the eyes of law and God both are sanctioned by the Constitution and religion but it is poo-phooed in the name of caste.
The staunch and murk that Dalit people stay in is unimaginable. Such a polluting environment is very much suffocating for any human being and it is the responsibility of the administrative authority to check for the cleanliness of the place which does never take place as it is the colony of the Dalits. It is quite ironical that the persons who clean other’s dirt and are cleaners by occupation are forced to stay in the dingiest of places. There is no right to privacy and toilets. We see how women and men defecate in public not only polluting the area but also sacrificing their shame because of the lack of infrastructural facilities and poverty present in them. Though human rights charters and Indian Constitution has enforced laws for well being and good living conditions yet there are places where still today people experience the same crisis in housing and sanitation.

The scope of studying a society and its parameters of administration through the status of its citizens is quite common. If scrutinized deeply, it becomes very clear that the concept of public administration is very much akin to the concept of human rights as both the disciplines deal with human beings. Public administration and human rights are both macrocosmic concepts plying in a microcosmic plane in individual societies. Talking from a wider perspective both concepts simultaneously strive for achieving social good and try to produce maximum benefits to the people. But if public administration contradicts human rights at any particular level the real sense of public administration loses its meaning and the whole country starts declining. Arundhati Roy opines in this context that the government who does not realise the relationship between power and knowledge is harming its people the most. The biggest problem, she states, is that, the distance between power and powerlessness between those who take decisions and those who have to suffer those decisions, has increased enormously. It’s a perilous journey for the poor—it’s a pitfall filled to overflowing with lies, brutality and injustice. And this is where
lies the pity of such big establishments and irony of social systems working on the whole. The victims of power and corruption are always the poor backward and downtrodden who are compelled to survive within such living conditions. Human rights in this context is to be put up as an awareness package in each human being so that he/she can stand up for his/her rights individually and in groups and create a consensus so as to influence the government in attending the problem.

Valmiki illustrates the hypocritical attitude of the high caste in his novel to pin point the injustice that the Dalit had to endure. In the day light the high caste people would act as saints, clean and clear of what they called as sins, and at night they would do the same thing what they had portrayed as sins in the morning. He relates how people degraded them in public for eating pork and keeping pigs in their house but and at night these same people or the like would ask them to bring cooked pork to them as bribes for granting some petty favours. Their relishing of the pork would be similar to the relishing of their vegetarian dish. Bama in Karukku relates that in the New Year and Feast day everyone used to eat beef but it was only the low castes that were demeaned for consuming beef.

Despite the government fixation of the minimum wages through the Minimum Wages Act yet there are unaccountable cases found where a man is over exploited economically for his caste. Bakha’s, Bama’s and Valmiki’s families in their respective spheres are victims of low wages who barely get a full stomach at the end of the day after the strenuous work. As a result of it they lead a life marked by grinding poverty and terrible consequences. They have to feed themselves on the ‘joothan’ or scraps thrown away by the Babus. Valmiki describes how cruel the high class people had been to them:
Every Taga would have ten to fifteen animals in his cowshed. Their dung had to be picked up and brought to the place where uplas or cow dung cakes were made. There would be five to six baskets of dung to be taken out from every cowshed. During the winter months it was a very painful job….To search for dung in the stinking cowsheds was extremely unpleasant. The stink made one feel faint. To compensate us for all this work, we got five seers of grain per two animals; that is about two and a half kilos of grains. Each Taga household with ten animals gave twenty five seers of grain a year-about twelve to fifteen kilos, a leftover roti at noon everyday specially made by mixing the flour with husks since it was for the Chuhras. Sometimes the joothan, scraps, would also be put in the basket with the rotis for us (9).

The exploitation of the Dalits represented in the novels is unbearable. The basic necessities which are needed for bare survival are not available to them. The next section analyses the scheme of exploitation of the high caste/class that the Dalit additionally undergo in their daily lives thereby proving the concepts of rights as totally farcical elements in their contexts. It also analyses the psychological repercussions that the Dalit undergo in such circumstances.

III

In India the problem of exploitation is so vast and so very much different at different levels of the society that it is difficult to keep track and understand the human motives playing underneath. Exploitation, which is a single expression, explores possibilities of becoming both
physical and mental. It can also be economic, social, cultural, and political in nature. The phenomenon of exploitation is relative and occurs in relative degrees at different levels of the society. Exploitation is an easy means of getting something for personal/group interest depriving an individual or a group.

The novels taken for study are replete with the problems of exploitation. This exploitation is relative and occurs in diverse forms in each novel. It is interesting to note that this kind of act is not only done by the rich on the poor but the disadvantaged on another disadvantaged too for fulfilling petty interests. Sometimes exploitation can be done out of some emotional outburst, hatred, politics, or by practice. Exploitation-in any form- is a huge human rights violation. Charters and Laws are already formulated for the protection of the victims against such crimes. But a law comes in when the act already has taken place and the human rights violation has already been taken place. Most of the cases go unreported and the disadvantaged remain exploited intergenerationally; even if some cases are reported we see how the corrupt officials unjustly exploits the weak and doubly violate their rights. This section explores the exploitation scheme used on the Dalits one by one.

*Paraja*, originally written in 1945, depicts the tribal scenario of a village in Orissa where the Paraja tribe, the Dombs and the Kondhs live in bizarre existence, exploited by the moneylenders and the *Zamindars*. *Paraja* deals with the problems in the lives of the Dalit indigenous/ Tribals in the independence era. Mohanty’s intense personal involvement with the Koraput Tribes makes *Paraja* all the more a socio-anthropological document of the then philosophical and moral concerns.
The Kondhs and the Parajas are two colorful and proud tribal communities, living in tiny clusters of helmets in the southern parts of Orissa, who have been exploited by moneylenders and petty government officials for many years. They have felt in their body and blood that exploitation is as old as the hills and forest surrounding them. Yet they celebrate the joys of life; they drink and dance and sing; they find joy in nature, in buds and flowers, in green leaves, in the chirping of birds, in the swift-flowing streams and in the mist covered hills. They find life constantly renewing itself in the quick-fading and slow-blooming buds of the forest. Sitakant Mohapatra describes the novel as “the story of shattered dreams”.\(^{16}\)

Thematically, the novel reflects Tribal/Dalit indigenous life of independent India, in her infancy, marked by vicarious social evils like the poverty, caste discrimination, untouchability, slavery, illiteracy, women exploitation, feudal exploitation and so on. *Paraja* reproduces the torments in the lives of the male and female Dalit indigenous/Tribes pressed below the ruthless domination of their Maliks. It is due to their grinding poverty that the Dalit indigenous/Tribes lose their voice, identity, confidence and the power to revolt. What lies before them as the ultimate reality is that they are the bonded labourers or *gotis* of the Zamindars to whom they owe their lives and labour for borrowing a meager sum of money for some dire cause. The novel pleas for the space and free play of human rights in the lives of the downtrodden and satirizes the system that acknowledges the concept of human rights but never tests the of indices of probability in people. The story of *Paraja* depicts the tribal lives of Paraja and Kondh tribes. The entire credit of representation goes to Mohanty for his life like sketches directly from the house of the Paraja and the Kondh culture, customs and mores.\(^{17}\)
Gopinath Mohanty in his essay “A Kondh View of Good Life and Development” writes that according to an Adivasi, ‘good life’ means if he has plenty and he feels his needs are satisfied and he can spare enough, lives in a state of perfect physical and mental well being and enjoy all his rights as a human being according to his taste and inclination, with a feeling of belongingness to his home, society and his environment, has works pleasure and enjoyment without fear and worry and is at peace with himself and everybody else. He has a character and integrity and harms nor offends no one but is useful to society. According to this definition of a good Kondh life, we see that Paraja stands out to be a supreme measure-stick for delineating their happiness, sadness and rights of the Tribal’s of Orissa, may it be Paraja or Kondh. Here no conditions for a happy life are genuinely fulfilled and Paraja thus, becomes a curious manifesto for evaluating the rights of the Tribals in India.

In Paraja, we see that Sukru Jani, the main protagonist, shares all the attributes of a Paraja. He is very much fond of nature, despite his pains and poverty; he is happy with his fields and mountains. The landscapes bring to him the memory of his youthful days and his dead wife.

He shares, with all other people of his tribe the belief that all this [beauty of nature] has been created by invisible spirits; and now in his peace and contentment he sits wondering who those magical spirits might be and which of them created the sky, the forest, the evening and the night; which spirit confers happiness and good fortune on man, and which brings storm and miseries and evil days… he feels happy with his life. It has been as he wanted it to be and some kind benevolent spirit has made everything right and beautiful for him (4-5).
Sukru is happy in the beginning of the novel when he has his land, square meal a day and a peaceful life. But everything changes as soon as the lawmen interfere and prohibit him from using his land and the moneylender traps him to debt.

Mohanty projects the drastic change in Sukru’s life and brings a contrast by projecting the confident Sukru Jani in the beginning and a shattered old man in the end. “Sukru Jani knows how strong and sturdy his limbs are. He has faith in them and he depends on nothing else...his body is a mass of bulging muscles; his calves are as hard as rock and his bare skin is proof against all weather. He has never known sickness and lassitude” (6).

But in the end Mohanty reports, “Mandia looked at his father; and father and sons put arms around each other and wept, there mingling with the blood” (373)

Like any simpleton tribesmen, Sukru Jani has a small land on the hill which he himself cleared and cultivated by his own hands but could not understand why the government is after his land and a Forest Guard comes after anyone who had cleared a patch of jungle, and fines or prosecute him. The dexterity of Mohanty’s presentation lies in this vivid description of a real Paraja self confused in the dealings of the civilized people. A Paraja always claims himself as the master of the soil as his tribal ethos and has a dilemma in understanding the modern laws of the land. He does not know the rules of the land and fantasises about his small plot of land which would reap him golden harvest and thus would settle all the hardships of his future. *Paraja* in this respect can be called as a just socio-cultural representation of a tribal family of Orissa who undergoes a comprehensive downscaling in his life exploited serially and subsequently by different layers of the state, administration, feudal lords and the local people.
The first rebuff that Sukru Jani faces in respect of his land is the sudden threat of the Forest Guard who charges him taxes and threatens him to annex his land which he claims as illegal. The Forest Act of 1927 and 1960 had given very little freedom to a tribe. They were not allotted space of their own living and cultivation and any use of the forest product was taken as illegal. Illiterate and ignorant people like Sukru had to face the trauma of losing their lands and falling wrongly in the hands of the corrupt administration officers and the Maliks. According to the tribal belief and Sukru, “why should there be forest, when they mean nothing to us and not crops? After all none can own the forest. Land can be owned by anyone and the owner can grow crops there. God created all this lands for human beings- what a shame that men prevents his fellowmen from putting them to their proper use” (23).

Sukru is duped by the Forest Officer when the latter allows him to sow crops on a patch of land and later denies him in public, in front of the Headman and thus, Sukru is trapped. Unable to control his sorrow as the Forest Guard denies blatantly that he had given himself permission to sow crops on his land; Sukru Jani breaks at the hypocrisy of the Headman and the forest official. Mohanty very well projects the anomaly and corruption lying inherent in the administrative scenario in the villages.

Duping Sukru Jani the Headman and his people ask him to pay a three score rupees as fine to the Forest Guard which they claim is an amount bargained and reduced for the sake of Sukru Jani’s honour and present economic condition. Sukuru Jani, who has the only option now to pay the money or spend the rest of his life in legal confinement, is now suggested by his well wisher friends to borrow some money from the moneylender, Ram Chandra Bisoi, and sacrifices his life as a goti or bonded labour. Finding no other alternative and judging the ‘just’ advice of his
Sukru Jani goes to Ram Chandra Bisoi and pleads an amount of fifty rupees and thereby pawns his happiness and freedom for ever. The Naika, the person next to the Headman, Dhepu Chalan, and Phaul Dome stands as witness to the transaction deed.

This agreement executed this day etc. etc. between Sahukar Ram Chandra Bisoi, son of etc. etc. the First Party and Sukru Jani, son of etc. etc. and Tikra Jani, son of etc. etc. as the Second Party, doth hereby specify as follows: The First Party having given a loan of Rupees Fifty only to the Second Party to this day etc. etc. in the presence of the witness to this deed named below the members of the Second Party do hereby bind themselves jointly and severally to serve the First Party as his gotis during the tenure of the loan and thereby to be the whole time servants and laborers of the First Party for the purpose of doing all jobs for him as he may direct at all hours of the night and the day and at any place he may require them to work and the First Party hereby binds himself to deliver unto each member of the Second Party half a putti of mandia once a month for his food and one blanket worth One Rupee once a year in winter and the First Party further undertakes to set off against the loan of which compound interest at fifty percent per annum shall accrue an amount of Rupee Five only for every year of service counted from this date, rendered by every member of the Second Party as a goti under the First Party. Under the First Party according to the terms of this deed, in witness whereof etc. etc. (50).

Sukru Jani buys one virtual freedom by selling the literal one. The language of the deed agreement in quite interesting. Tikra the younger son of Sukru who is a mere child is pushed
into this evil without any future. He is now a bonded slave and has to burn his childhood and youth working for the money lender. The time of work is not fixed it can be in day, in night, twenty four hours long. And the pay that they would receive can never suffice the needs of the family. Moreover, the time for this bondage is not mentioned in the deed anywhere which means that they are pitifully under the whims of the money lender and the fifty percent compound interest is something that they can never pay off and free themselves. The socio-economic exploitation that the tribals undergo is beyond imagination.

Naika and Barik and his well wisher friends go to the Forest Guard and give him a concessional amount of fifteen rupees as fine and the left over amount is divided among them. Mohanty very well highlights the layers of exploitation that the poor ignorant Tribals face. Sukru is thrice exploited. First, by the Forest Guard who first permits verbally to Sukru that he can cultivate on the land but denies in front of the Headman as witness, and then he is betrayed by both his fellowmen who dupe him only for money unheeding the consequences Sukru would have to face. Had not Jili, Sukru’s elder daughter turned a deaf ear to the Forest Guard’s sexual demands, he would not penalize Sukru. But he takes revenge on her father with the help of the local tribal administration, who dupe and deceive Sukru in this shameless manner. It is a pity that the tribesmen, who convince him to borrow money from the Sahukar and pawn his life as a goti forever in turn, dupe him by paying only fifteen rupees to the Guard and divide among themselves the other part of money. It is surprising that the people who are a bit well off compared to Sukru change roles as exploiters only for a petty sum of money. Though poverty and starvation are rampant among the tribes yet duping one’s own men is something that goes beyond pardon that too when the circumstances are not in favour of the victim and his freedom is at stake. Here people are so selfish that they care a damn about other’s human rights. We find
none of the tribesmen protesting this theft which shows a downfall of the entire value system in the men.

*Paraja*, as mentioned earlier, largely underscores the human rights problems both social and economic. The major issues that *Paraja* as representations of society mainly highlights are social, political, economic and ethical in nature. The prominent and dominant concerns that the novel explores are the social evils of poverty, castesim, class division and economic inequality, illiteracy, child labour, pitiful living conditions, abuse of human dignity, exploitation of women and the repression of the fundamental and human rights by the high-class society and its establishments, including the government machinery.

Gopinath is very sensitive in denoting the contrast of the past and present existence of these tribesmen as gotis.

Yet these huts would have told their own tale too. The wretches who huddled in them had once been hard working peasants, living lives of dignity. Their ancestors had owned all the land…. When they had no money to pay, which was often, he [Sahukar] would insist on their drinking; payment could wait. And many days later he would stop and one of the man in the fields and tell him: ‘Look here, you owe me three scrore of rupees for the liquor. Are you going to pay up or give me your land?’ They had watched the moneylender’s power grow and new houses grow up on the land which was now his. And the huts had stared mutely at these strange events, until they had grown bleary-eyed and haggard, and their mouths had gaped open in astonishment (122).
It is to be felt how these gotis were treated and tried by schemes thus annexing their lands and property making them turn a pauper. Because of the corrupt minds of the rich the poor are repeatedly exploited. Being simpletons and illiterates they are far from understanding the corrupt ways of the moneylender and their rights against his ploys. They stand with wonder eyes seeing the Sahukar being richer day by day with their money and land but do not have the power, voice to retort for fear and ignorance.

Mohanty describes how the gotis were afraid of the Maliks:

The occupants of the huts lived in perpetual terror of the Sahukar, of his being annoyed with them and setting the police on them. For the Sahukar had many friends in officialdom; all the great lords’ and ‘masters’ camped in his house when they went on tour. The police had innumerable ways of harassing the tribesmen; if no other charge came to hand, they could always be hauled up for fouling the public thoroughfare. (120-21).

The misery of a goti-life becomes all the more profound when we come to know that, the tribesmen have a natural horror of the law; he is afraid of doing anything which might be unlawful. To this is an added awe of the mighty Sahukar.

He is caught between two fires. The poor goti has no idea of the terms of contract between the Sahukar and himself. He has his own rough-and-ready system of accounting- a length of rope in which he ties a knot for every year of goti-hood completed by him. By counting the knots, he is able to tell how many years have passed, and how many years still remains before he can regain his freedom. But
the Sahukar does not recognize these crude accounts. He has his own ledgers, filled with strange scribbling in red and blue ink, the mysteries of which the bewildered goti can never reveal. And the magic figures in the ledgers grow and grow, and the goti’s debts increase from year by year, and his bondage never ends... Some brought their wives’ ornaments to the Sahukar, wrapped in bits of rag. Others brought the produce from their fields. Others again had nothing to pledge but their own bodies. And the Sahukar’s house swallowed everything up, and nothing that entered never came out again; and the hose grew bulged (123).

No human rights charter can describe the miseries in such a manner as can be done by literature. This is where literature triumphs in bringing out the pain of human beings and makes emotions churn so that people understands the degree of exploitation done on man much more than the dry words like the bonded labours are exploited. Pain is something that is not measurable and human rights charter fails to explain this. Thus, if the two interdisciplinary subjects are concerned then numerous clauses can be enforced as one can experiences the hardships in picturesque form thereby making the problem easier to comprehend and the measures easily coinable.

Sukru Jani loses his land of the Sahukar who fools him creating a number of hoaxes. The exploitation of labourers that is manifested in Orissa is not only for the low wages they are paid, but also in the harsh discipline that governed their work. The landowners were obsessed with the desire to extract as much work as possible from their labourers, and thus maximize their returns. The rigorous use of labour time was a critical element in the process of profit generation. This objective was achieved by subjecting all agricultural operations to intense
surveillance. The task of supervision was performed by the landlords themselves, or by employees designated as ‘sipahis’. The typical working day began a couple of hours after dawn and stretched on till dusk.

Each night the Sahukar would call his gotis together and give them their orders for the next day. He loved to shout and nag. And the more they argued with him the more happier he was. ‘Listen to me you idiot’, he would shout at Sukru Jani, ‘for heavens sake can’t you do anything right?’….. ‘How much longer are you going to be over that barn you are building?’ Sukru replies: ‘Is it my fault if you keep on moving me from one job to another, you never give me time to finish anything. One day its ‘Sukru Jani, clear the weeds from the paddy fields’; the next day it is ‘Sukru Jani, go to bring firewood from the jungle or go and plough the fields’. I have to attend to everything; and on top of that, I must build the new barn…..’ ‘No arguing, you lazy old ox,’ the Shahukar shouted back. The barn must be completed this month and Tikra, you go and work there too ….. And didn’t I ask you to repair my trope bed, Sukru? But you just can’t remember a thing and you should have put up the thorn fencing round the plot of land where I’m going to plant sugarcane this year. What am I to do with such a useless old man? All he can do is sit and chew the cud like a bullock and growl like a dog

(107-108)

The repetitive and severe hammering on the bodies and minds of the labourers obviously brought frustration, anxiety and indifferent feeling towards life. They have lost the meaning of existence and have become introvert and internally complexed gradually and steadily. There is a
severe loss of human dignity as they were treated as mere animal or slaves having no identity and reasoning power. They were the landowners’ kharidi properties who could use them as they liked. “As Sukru Jani and Tikra continued to work as gotis, their nerves became dead to all sense of pain. They never complained.” (65) Hard labour has made their nerves numb and their senses pale. This is not only psycho-physical torture but also crushing of physical and mental potentialities which has no exoneration in moral and ethical sense. This is where the human rights concepts turn insipid as they define a person to be as ‘human’ by his dint of having emotion, freedom, equality, bare necessities of food, shelter, clothing, equality, good human relationships, conduct with others, moral and ethical prestige. Here where existence is a mere question, and people are treated as load bearing animals, the term human rights become questionable altogether as human beings do not know its meaning and work according to their interests exploiting the weak.

In Paraja, Gopinath narrates how a goti is born. The poor Kondh or Praja has to inform three other persons besides the Sahukar himself, that he is borrowing a putti of mandia, at fifty percent interest. And each time an entry is made.

Next year the borrower returns with a putti and a half of mandia which should clear him of the debt. ‘Is that all?’ The Sahukar asks, looking at the pile of grain.’ Why yes, Sahukar. I took one putti from you and the interest is half a putti.’ ‘One putti! Are you mad? You took one putti from me, one putti from my clerk, one putti from my wife, and one putti from my servant. How many putties is that? There count: one and one and one and one makes four. And the interest on four putties? Two putties. So you should have brought six putties in all; instead of
which you have brought only one and a half. Why, even the interest is more than that! Do you understand?’ ‘No Sahukar’, the bewildered tribesmen says, ‘But you must be right’. And the poor man is hooked. A goti is born (122).

The real cause behind the miseries of these tribesmen is finally exposed. They are illiterate, ignorant, fearful people who can be easily duped. The light of education as a human right is thus so very important. After becoming a goti, Mandia, the elder son of Sukru who was a vibrant youth full of potentials, thinks “how much of his life was really his own?” (163). The poverty of the people and their unbearable state of exploitation turns all laws and human rights concepts vacant of credibility. A man is not even provided with a two square meal and a cloth to protect him against rains and winter. But they are ceaselessly tortured by thrusting piles of work irrespective of any unwanted situation. Here there needs to be a revision in the term human rights and be coined as existential rights as people barely exists in such dire situations.

They were not even free in times of incessant rains. Mohanty describes their hapless plight in the rainy season when they were allowed no respite.

Even in weather like this the gotis were given no rest. Working in groups on the sodden earth they had become one with the splashing mud. Their skins were smeared with the oils of herbs and fruits which they believed would protect them from cold; their bodies cloaked with dried palm leaves knitted together to form a kind of water proof covering. But none of these was of any use against the torrential rain. Their hands and feet moved blindly, their minds had grown muddy
and clammy. But sometimes a lingering tendril of pain would clutch at them (227).

Apart from this,

The Sahukar hired every variety of labour for a hundred odd jobs: some of the men were promised food in payment of their wages; others were paid in cash….These men also had to perform all kinds of duties for the officials when they came on tour: carrying their baggage to the next camping place, chopping firewood, setting up camp and so on. Sometimes they were paid a few coppers by some generous official; but this was not expected…. When the Sahukar was bored and could find no other diversion, he would ask his servants to fetch a few tribal girls from one of the two villages ‘to dance for him’ (125).

The above excerpt not only brings out the vicarious ways that a labourer could be exploited under a tyrant Sahukar but introduces another aspect of the Sahukar, the lecherous fervour in his character. Later in the novel we see how the Sahukar manages to lure Jili towards him and use her as sexual bait; this brings his doom nearer.

Article 4 of the Charter dictates that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude in all forms. The novels taken into consideration, deal greatly with the problem of slavery. The most alarming truth lies in the fact that the low caste is automatically or indisputably considered as a slave to the high caste because of their profession inherited from their forefathers. Once a bonded labour is always a bonded labour; a slave to the landlord or moneylender. Once a toilet cleaner is always a toilet cleaner, whatever he does or wherever he goes. The problem of the untouchable lies in
the deep rooted exploiting zeal of the rich and high-caste that suck out the sap of human essence from an untouchable and leave him a perennial slave forever. The poor victim remains not only as an untouchable but also gets trapped in the vicious circle of poverty trapped by servitude and socio-economic circumstances. In Untouchable and Joothan: A Dalit’s Life: A Dalit’s Life the rights violation becomes so very much interrelated to each other that one kind of exploitation leads to or can be interpreted as other forms of exploitation at every step of their existence. For example, lack of admitting education rights by the high caste to the low, is veritably interrelated to physical exploitation and mental torture.

Again, one day when Omprakash had to prepare for his maths paper for the final exam next day, he was called on by a Tyagi, named Fauza, and was forced to his field for free labour. When Om retorts with his genuine cause, Fauza warns,

“Study at night… Come with me. I have to sow cane.” I told him repeatedly that I have to study for my paper tomorrow, but he was adamant. He had me the elbow and dragged me to his field. He threatened me to do work or else. My mind was set of flame by his swearing. A fire has engulfed my innards that day. The memories of these crimes of Tyagis continued to smoulder deep inside me, emitting red hot heat…. I spent the whole morning sowing cane. Like me there were about eight or ten others who had been brought under duress to work for free…. The unwaged had sat down in the sun. There was no shade left for them. They were being given two rotis and a piece of pickle in a manner people don’t use even with a beggar. I was watching all this, standing far away. I refused to take the the proffered rotis. Fauza was shouting and swearing: ‘Abey Chuhre ke…Just because he has learnt to read a little he has got an above himself… Abey, don’t forget who you are.’ I remained standing where I was. Revolt had taken
birth inside me. Each word of Fauza’s was like a thousand stings on my body…… When Fauza’s mother called, I had come near her. She dropped the rotis into my hand from way above, lest her hand touched mine. This gesture was insulting to me. I threw those rotis in front of her and ran towards my home. Fauza ran after me to beat me up but I managed to elude him.” (57-58)

Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Charter which is a continuation of Article 1 tells us that all individuals are entitled to enjoy all kinds of rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, i.e., all economic, cultural, political, social rights, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, dialect, religion, etc. This is again a hoax when studied from Dalit perspectives as the main root of discrimination lies in the distinction between race, colour, occupation of the Dalit, very much different and unclean than that of the Bhramins and the Khatriyas the traditional high castes. The Valmikies are demeaned for keeping pigs as pets, but what they fail to realise that pigs are very much a part of their culture. The Bakhas, the Mandyas and the Tikras are usually darker in complexion than the Brahmins, they have their own dialects, they are not educated and exposed to the standard language or Sanskrit, the language of the erudite, they worship their respective local Gods, very much dissimilar to the popular Gods of the Hindus and thus are heathen, they lack any political unity (political consciousness in Dalits is a recent phenomenon after (1980), and moreover, they are bound to be low as Vedic customs dictate. They are untouchable and not allowed a free public entity. It is just as the British who had treated the Indians as dogs unable to sit, eat, drink, use the same premises as theirs, here the high caste treat them in the same way. It is a pity that we point the West for acting as racists but it is a bewilderment to realise that the treatment that the members of the high caste give to the law is equally one of discrimination and elimination.
As a potent instrument of agrarian reform, for breaching the close relation between caste and land control, land reform program in Orissa has failed dismally. Though Zamindari was statutorily abolished in 1952; the program did not significantly undermine the traditional social base of land control which remained in the grip of the dominant caste. The explanation of the violence especially in Orissa, since the late nineteen seventies, have swung between underscoring the significance of class on one hand and caste on the other. The violence, according to various analysts, symbolizes the instances of caste struggles between dominant castes and subordinate castes, principally Dalit indigenous or they are symptomatic of ‘class war’ between landlords and the landless. The uprising of the tenants in Sahukar by Sukru Jani and his sons in Paraja, represent the conflict between underclass and dominant caste who constitute the dominant class also, in regard to several socio-economic issues and demands for human rights. It includes also the resistance against low working wages and working conditions and sexual assaults by men of dominant castes on women of depressed scheduled groups and a voice for proper distribution of land rights and status in society.

Sukru Jani’s land which was one of the most fertile lands of the village, is taken by the Sahukar when he finds it to be the most fertile land of the village. Sukru proposed his terms: the Shahukar should take his land on mortgage and farm it; he should release one of them and write off ten rupees from the debt each year. The balance would be paid off through the labours of the two remaining gotis…The land could be redeemed if Sukru Jani paid twenty five rupees to the Sahukar, but until then it was his” (232-233). The first thing that the Sahukar does after taking over the land is to plant orange trees instead of rice in order to destroy the fertility of the soil. Later, when Sukru Jani comes to return his money and take back his land the Sahukar makes
stories that Sukru Jani had leased his land for thirty years to him in lieu of reducing a portion of
his debt each year. The hope of any redemption by the land turns into a complete deception.

Despite the exploitation in their lives, the Paraja attempts at being panoramic. Gopinath is very
lively in describing the tribal life. In spite of their hardships and sadness, the people know to
live through their customs and culture, celebrate and enjoy certain moments of their tribal lives.
The girls become happy with the colorful saris and hail oil, think about their dance and festivals
amongst all misery. The men wish for marriage, dream of a good life, and are courageously true
to their instincts. The tribes have their own dignity and they relish their culture and mores,
however barbaric they may be, despite all adversities. The novel shows a feudal structure,
dominated by high class landowners or Maliks and the peasants dying of hunger poverty and
suppression. Paraja surprisingly has a revolt in the end. Paraja ends by killing the Sahukar and
letting a family free from slavery thereby representing a microcosmic effort to overthrow
through the rebel of a single family which spreads among all people thereby inspiring one and
all against the central power structure.

Paraja ends with a falling action where after Sahukar’s death we have least hope for Sukru Jani
and his family. They are now pushed from one dark periphery into another-from bonded
labourers to jailed convicts where their lives would be one of a tribal criminal’s- that is, they
will be beaten and tortured ruthlessly, probably more than any non-tribal criminal; as this is the
general mindset that the Indians have towards the tribes. Paradoxically, Sukru and his family
seem to find themselves in the Chinese box of sadness where one big box of sadness is
impregnated by another box of sadness inside. They only change states, the emotion, the torture,
the wretchedness continues. Lost and defeated, their emotions bruised to blood, they discover
Jili being used by the Sahukar as his kept. Unable to takeover the pain, Sukru and his sons attack the Sahukar with their axe and end the entire story. Their reaction needs no great explanation. It is the triumph of vengeance over evil. The predicament that Sukru Jani and his family face is thoroughly tragic as they are trapped as victims to the Sahukar, administration and ignorance over all. When the Sahukar takes his land, Suku appeals the court for revival. Being as simpletons they could not even guess the right day of hearing. They were heavily exploited by the lawyers and clerks in the court. Money changes hands and the Sahukar buys Sukru’s lawyer with some pennies and misguides him easily. They miss the trial dates and lose their land, freedom, dignity and may be lives in near future.

Another issue which the novel explores is the problem of land alienation as faced by the Dalit indigenous/Tribals. Under certain circumstances, or under certain societies, the conditions imposed on men are such that he becomes a stranger to himself if he no longer recognizes himself in his activities or in his productions. Here too in the novel we see how the poor landholders are duped and in such circumstances, their lands are annexed by the moneylender or Maliks. Not only is the case restricted to this, here the Maliks tactfully wipe out the existence of an entire colony by sheer cunningness thus, displacing the entire group of people and taking over their lands.

In Paraja we see how land is valuable to Sukru. It is not only Sukru or the main characters that are attached to the land so. It is the general tendency of a Paraja to be close to land as they worship the land and feel the earth as their own. It is their refuge, happiness, source of earning, and cultural symbol of strength. It is the soul of his existence. Losing it is his loss of soul. But
the Government does not understand this, and thus has not recognized their rights to hold property.

To Sukru Jani those two rice fields were like the ribs in his chest. Four pieces of barren land were all that his father had left him but by the sheer hard work, he had crabbed out two more pieces of land for himself from the bank of Gadbajholla stream… Those two pieces of ‘wet’ land were his family’s pride; on it they grew the finest of fragrant rice, which was known as the ‘food of the Gods’; and if the rains failed they could still grow coarser varieties of rice, together with olsi and caster-seed (191).

For Sukru Jani the land to him was not merely a patch of earth-it was part of his body. He knew every counter end depression in the land; every thorn, every ant-hill had a history. He had bartered the land with his sweat and nursed the seedlings with the warmth of his own body. But now, “They felt their land was slipping away from them and there was nothing they could do” (338). Now, when he loses the land ultimately to the Sahukar, he loses his hold on the life. He finds no meaning in existence anymore and thus we see Sukru Jani and his sons surrendering themselves to the police. Their misery had overpowered their civilized poise but could not overshadow their honesty and ethical values. This is where they prove to be more civilized than the non-tribals. The irony of a tribal existence finds expression in the Forest Act 1927 and also in 1960 which have not let the Adivasis get their own lands. The British administration had poo-phooed their existence and the national government did not do much to differentiate a forest land from a tribal land property. As a result, no legal right has been bestowed to them and
as they are illiterate and unaware of the laws, so they are unable to register anything in their name. The administration is paralysed while the Sahukars take advantage of this fact and convert the lands into their names.

Under a given topicality of some literary productions in human rights violations and struggles, this work explores Paraja in the light of humanity and humanism. Paraja as a creative expression tends to have an immediate relation to contemporary human rights crisis. Here the content becomes concrete only by virtue of aesthetic form, and the relationship between the form and content becomes true for cultural works as they attempt to picture social conflict and crisis.

Professor N.K Bose is of the view that relations between cast and occupation constitute the basic design of the Pre-British Hindu society. Thus, a person’s chances in the economy were determined to a large extent by birth into a particular cast. Bose is of the view that this design remains in force till the colonization of India after which, the character of traditional Indian society changed drastically. The typical connection between cast and occupation was eroded by factors such as the expansion of a cash economy, industrialization, the spread of western education and the growth of occupations based on impersonal qualifications rather than hereditary caste status. Mahashweta Devi aptly sketches the picture of Barha village in north Bihar where the socio-economic demography is quite similar to the contemporary socio-political economic scenario of the then agrarian Bihar. Before understanding the caste – class relationship as projected in the novel, The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, we must analyse the inherent complexities embedded in the contemporary agrarian setup.
According to Ashok Rudra, class relations are relations of productions but not all relations of production define classes; they define various ‘social groups’. But only such social groups constitute classes as are subject to contradictions of interest arising from the way they are related to the means of production. The term ‘agrarian class structure’ means the arrangement of groups or classes determined by access, or denial of access, to land, the principal means of production. The differential access to land- which governs how one class relates to another is the basis of relations of production, or in general terms, of class relations. Anand Chakravarti argues that agrarian class relations in Bihar are embedded in caste because whether a person controls land or not is conditioned by that person’s caste status.

An overwhelming proportion of the population in Bihar, still today, continues to depend on agriculture for livelihood. As a person’s class position would be the decisive factor conditioning his point of dependence that whether a person can exploit the labor of others or is subject to exploitation, will depend on access, or lack of access, to land. To the extent that caste and land control are closely connected, the material life chances of the landless in a predominant agrarian economy would inevitably be controlled by dominant castes. This oppressive scenario is compounded for the landless as the character of economy does not offer much scope for employment outside agriculture- be it industry or service sector. Thus, one’s birth into a landless caste would be a major determinant for being at the receiving end of relationship of exploitation. It is interesting to note that the present pattern of land control or of landlessness, is in a way, a legacy of the colonial period or may be earlier.

The determining pattern of agrarian exploitation in Bihar mainly rests on the Zamindars and
tenure holders who were the upper castes, the majority of whom were Brahims, Bhumihar and Rajputs. The upper layers of the tenantry constituted mainly by the raiyates, where also drawn from the same groups and to some extent from the upper layers of those classified today as Other Backward Classes. The subordinate tenantry comprised the under-tenants recorded or unrecorded, who cultivates the land on shared cropping basis, known as bataidars, were taken from middle castes and Dalits. Generally speaking the bataiars were required to provide all the inputs and undertake the actual task of cultivations. In principle, they were entitled to half the produce but numerous arbitrary levies imposed upon them leading to a quantum reduction in their share of produce. They were therefore in a continuous state of abject dependency. At the lowest rung of the agrarian economic pattern were the landless labourers, who belonged primarily to the depressed social groups. They are mainly indebted to their employers and are bonded labourers throughout their lives.

Mahashweta Devi in her novel, The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, explains the demographics of Barha village thus:

the schedule caste was both marginal and necessary. The mainstream was the Rajputs. They were necessary they did all the work that the people of the mainstream needed. Because the village was very much a creation of Rajputs like Medini Singh, nine tenths of the land in the village was under their control. The rest, the majority, farmed the lands of the minority. The conditions governing this farming were also of various types. Generally, most of the cultiactors were ‘purchased’ or kharidi ryots. Almost all the Maliks had once been in the private armies of the local Rajas who often made the kharidi subjects farm their land....
No one had descendants of these slaves whether bonded labour was abolished. So the present day owners benefited. These people cultivated the land and were paid in grains. Even a good year would not yield enough for them to eat. In years of drought- poor harvest-flood, the rule of debt repayment was a thumb impression in the Malik’s ledger. They had to give him the lion share of the crop plus, if necessary, free labour. In this manner they were mortgaged, caught in the snare of the all powerful ledger in the Malik’s katcheri. They where kharidi banda, ‘Bought subjects’…..In places like Barha village the head were former sipahis of the former raja’s, the prevailing laws were those created by their one-time masters…. One village, nine malik families, the rest kharidi subjects. The Bhangis, hajams, dhobis and other such indispensable groups did the jobs assigned to their casts … the malik didn’t mind giving out land for share cropping. Because when these share croppers have nothing left to eat after they have paid the malik his share, they take a loan. And get bonded. Repaying the interest on loans, almost every one of them has lost his own piece of land, and they had learnt that in order to survive to stay alive it was best to share crop or serve the malik (39-40).

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* we find a new situation when the land labourers pass through a crisis period every year. As they are employed for six months only and the other six months unemployed and are in dire need of a second profession, Ganesh retorts:

The sharecroppers and the kharidi subjects have always tilled their land, and also given free labour. They’ve always borrowed money by mortgaging their land and
they still do. When the debts piled up and we see that even free labour or crops were not enough to pay off the loans, then we Maliks took over their land we still do. He had nothing when he lost the land, but he remained the malik’s field labourer. Why? Why does he still stay on? For us. Otherwise we’d have to get migrant labourers to work the fields. That’s why we didn’t let them out of our grasp. Or else we’d have to take the Adivasis or low caste *acchuts* from other villages. The Adivasis used to live here once. We evicted them and took control. And even then, we never loosened our hold on the landless labourers. They will starve for six months? They’ve always done that. It’s nothing new. Why should I worry about it this year? Look, among my subjects there are four ganju families’ field labourers now. And this year I shall be forced to evict twelve to fourteen ganju families. I’m supposed to be the worst man in the village. So during the years of Baba’s illness, I didn’t deduct anything towards repayment of loans. Gave them their share of the crop. Now I have checked the accounts and found that taking interest and principal together, two hundred, two fifty, three hundred rupees are outstanding against each fellow’s name. Think of that. Twelve to fourteen families do not own even four acres of land but if I take they will become my field labourers. I shan’t let them go and I’m not going to allow them to take permits and collect firewood either (130)

The above speech of Ganesh reminds us of Shylock who too stands out as a heartless being in the matter of extortion of money. It also brings out several critical issues present in the economy of Bihar in many folds. First, it becomes clear that the Rajputs like Ganesh extorts labour and land
cunningly from their subjects. Second, they buy them as commodities through guiles and unfair means. Third, they take advantage of their poverty and helplessness. They take their land as mortgage in lieu of a small sum of money and then add compound interests on the principal amount which they cannot pay and the result of which the land gets automatically annexed and then they serve him as bonded labourers or kharidi subjects or field labourers for the entire cropping season. His stone-hearted nature prevents the Maliks from feeling a minimum sympathy for them and he rejoices in the idea that with the lack of occupation and cropping for the latter half of the year, the labourers will be bonded to him and this will give him another opportunity for exploitation and another round of credit which will again be the source of their perennial slavery. The forth point is even more critical. It depicts the different layers of imperialism imbedded in Indian villages. Here in the matter of exploitation and shrewdness Ganesh seems to take the top position. He boldly asserts his power and astute sense. He is proud and defiant in declaring that his Rajput forefathers have evicted the Adivasis or the tribal people of the area forcefully and illegally and captured their entire area thereby having a total control over the land resources and the people by coercive means.

The Adivasis are the victims of three-fold marginalisation. They are first marginalised because they belonged to the backward sect; the Government has not done much for them. They are the victims of the State and local administration who do not allow their natural rights to live in the forest and use forest products and then the Rajput Maliks who easily deceive them. The Adivasis were the original dwellers of north Bihar whom the Aryans have evicted by dint of economic and muscle power. They have now retreated to the inner forest areas where their freedom and existence are at stake. Ganesh as a cunning feudal lord now claims his rights on their land and
also is hopeful that if the Dalits refuse to work for him then he will bring the Adivasis back and make them work on this land thereby getting another chance to buy the Adivasis. He boldly affirms that he has never let a goti go and will not let in future by seizing over their lands slyly. Power makes him so blind that he fails to see the future that everyone is going far from him and is inviting future rebels.

As a potent instrument of agrarian reform, for breaching the close relation between caste and land control, land reform programme in Bihar has failed dismally. Though zamindari was statutorily abolished in 1952; the programme did not significantly undermine the traditional social base of land control which remained in the grip of the dominant caste. The explanation of the violence especially in central Bihar since the late nineteen seventies have swung between underscoring the significance of class on one hand and caste on the other. The violence, according to various analysts, symbolizes the instances of caste struggles between dominant castes and subordinate castes, principally Dalits or they are symptomatic of ‘class war’ between landlords and the landless. The uprising of the tenants in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh against Ganesh and Sahukar by Sukru Jani and his sons in Paraja, represent the conflict between underclass and dominant caste who constitute the dominant class also, in regard to several socio-economic issues and demands for human rights. It includes also the resistance against low working wages and working conditions and sexual assaults by men of dominant castes on women of depressed scheduled groups and a voice for proper distribution of land rights and status in society.

It is interesting that Mahashewta Devi in her novel The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, uses the title as
an interesting and ironic misnomer. The title apparently gives us an idea that we are to read an account of the glory of Lord Ganesha who is the management guru and intelligent harbinger of wealth in Hindu mythology, the elder son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. But as soon as we start reading the novel our illusions fade. Mahashewta Devi very aptly crafts a hoax in the name Ganesh. Lord Ganesh is said to be a very benevolent and business minded God who works his supreme brain for the good of mankind. But here we find our main character Ganesh, very much a subverted parody of the almighty God mentioned above. Ganesh was born with a tooth in his mouth and this made him a *devangshi*, a part of the Lord. Soon after his birth, he kills his mother who was terrified to see his sharp teeth teething out of his mouth. The author writes: “Had she lived, she would have seen more and more things unusual in her son”(2). With terrific happiness his father Medini declares special care and nursling for him which results into immediate banishment of his two co-wives and daughters and the unassuming arrival of Lachhima and her taking over of the house.

This *devangshi* hoax keeps on being perforated with every single work that Ganesh does. He is merciless, stone-hearted, shrewd, lustful and an egoist scoundrel who keeps up his inhumane oppression over the low caste. Yet he is feared by all, after all he is a *devangshi* and a high class Malik, one of the chief rulers of the rural community. But gradually the hoax that Ganesh is a benevolent ruler gets punctured with his activities and every one comes to identify him as the inverted Ganesha.

From his childhood Ganesh loves beating people and killing animals. He is charged with a feeling of satisfaction to see a pig mercilessly slaughtered, someone tortured and to squeeze out
the blood from a poor labourer, burn and destroy living localities, see families ruined and exploit women to fulfill his insatiable lust. Ganesh’s cunning ploys slowly and steadily destroy the demographics of the Barha village thereby germinating in the minds of the Dalits the germs of rebel and revolt. Ganesh very tactfully first stops the low castes’ festivity in Holi and the composition of songs by the Dalits about their Maliks and then sweeps away the Bhangi toil but setting it alight for a lady of the town with particularly no fault of the Bhangis. Then he impregnates Rukmini, lets her die, kills Haroa and schemes to ban the poor labourers from getting permits for collecting firewood in the jungle by lighting fire and destroying the forest resources.

A further additional issue that both novels Paraja and The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh highlight is the merged existence of the local administration and the feudal lords in the villages. India from its time of independence and before has been corrupted heavily from every layer of administration. Mahashewta Devi and Gopinath Mohanty both prove through different events that the establishment agencies of the Government, the Panchayat, the police, the forest Department, lawyers, the SDO and other representatives of the bureaucracy are influenced by the Maliks and the dominant class Zamindars. The effects of red-tapism and corruption pay hard on the poor and the powerless, Indian administration is no exception in this respect.

In both novels, Paraja and The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, we see how not only the rich but own kinsmen exploit the poor and suck out their money and labour. Chakravarti explains that in 1979, just two years before the publication of the novel The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, the Maliks were the dominant class in Bihar, controlling about seventy nine percent of the land. They wielded
three, interrelated or overlapping, forms of power in the community, which was a consequence of the blending of class and caste dominance: social, economic and coercive. These elements of power together may be called as “the culture of exploitation”-the complex norms upheld by maliks, which governed the relationship between them and the subordinate population. The term ‘social power’ is used to define the capacity of Maliks to assert their common interests as a collective measure. These interests were both material such as exercising economic control over the labours employed- material as well as non-material, such as maintaining the ‘honour’ of the caste, which is inextricably bound up ensuring the perpetuation of Bhumihar dominance in the community. The social power wielded by the Maliks was reinforced by instrumental links with officials holding key positions in the executive arm of the state, including the police, revenue, labour and development administration, through whose connivance or active support they ensured that their interests were upheld. Indeed, there was a close connection between the social power of Maliks and state power. In other words, state power in Bihar by being appropriated by village based elites, is actually embodied in structures of power at the grassroots. The exercise of economic power, the second element underlying their class position was derived from their pre-eminent control over land which gave them the capacity to exploit hired labourers and perpetuate relation of dependence with pliant tenants.

Ranka tells Abhay Mahato that,

Our land, the dusad’s land, was grabbled by Chandrabhan Singh and Gajomoti Singh…We leveled it, with great difficulty, bought some kerosene, swept up all the dry leaves in the village and for four days lit large fires. Only then did the ants die. Medini Singh took twenty rupees from us. Now, when the maliks seized the
land, we knew that it was taken from us illegally. And Medini too said, ‘You leave’ (152).

The dusads now get hold of the clerk of the katcheri and put in a petition and run from pillar to post. The lawyers demand from them large sum of money which they could not pay. Yet they manage to pay hundred rupees but the maliks went and talked with the officers and then records were being searched. The clerk said, “Look here, the malik seizes land by ousting his kharidi subjects and peasants. The court has never resolved the issue, never will.” (152) Abhay explains the Sub-divisional Officer (SDO) how the maliks burn down the Dalit huts, murder the subjects and get away with it. The law cannot touch them. He adds that whenever there is a breach of peace, law and order in the village, it is the poor peasants and villagers who are arrested and not the Maliks. Maliks in turn are given protection. When Ganesh is threatened that the SDO may arrest him for blighting the forest to fire and putting an end to the Dusads and Bhangis, he shouts in anger:

What will the SDO do? The court? Won’t they need money for the elections? Sure, we’ll give money…Tell me who is more important to them-Ganesh Singh, who owns lakhs, or that Harijan, Abhay Mahato? I’ll see that he dies first. Who’ll protest? The acchuts? I burn the Bhangi toli, ousted them, got Rukmini pregnant, she died what could any of them do? Ramrup you don’t just inherit land, you hang on to it-through power (137).

The above premises show that people are aware that humiliation and exploitation are crimes that
Ganesh is committing on them. The repeatedly complain about him to the police and the SDO through educated people of their clan. It’s a pity that even then the administration officials would be silent to all this for money and self benefits. The novel satirizes the Sangh or the Gandhi mission and the rich NGOs who come to help the downtrodden only to bring more harm to them. They cannot do any good to them, only preach the development policies but in reality they do not contribute to their well being. Actually, Mahashweta ironically points out that these poor people are good source of income to different NGOs and the Missions who claim that they are doing good to the poor lot but in the ground level no work is done rather their interference creates problem and the Maliks take revenge on the poor for mingling with these social workers.

The author has genuinely presented the case of Pallavi, the daughter of some powerful politician in Mumbai, who with an unadulterated zeal for doing social good to the downtrodden, comes to Barha. Inexperienced and egoist by nature, Pallavi comes to Barha to save the Bhangis and the Dusad. Educated in a foreign University, belonging to an exquisitely rich family, Pallavi stays as a member of the Dusad, despite all warnings from the SDO and the local administration. According to the local administration, no one comes to upgrade the backward class in such villages as it is impossible to do any good to the people firstly because of the Maliks who play as the kings of the land and second, for their ignorance, superstition and no urge for development in the poor people. He insists her desperately not to go to the Barha slums as no one comes to work there, not even the Mission people. This projects the hypocrisy of the social organizations who vow so much to do but does nothing fruitful for the needy and hapless. They ultimately become agents of the establishment and slowly puncture the Dalits hope of revival. Pallavi, when falls victim to Ganesh’s lust, is saved by the Dusads and she flees with them to Tohri, when the entire
Dusad *toli* is set on fire by Ganesh. Pallavi not only falls prey to the bestiality of Ganesh and the helplessness of a Dalit situation but also is ashamed by a guilt feeling that it is for her that the entire Dusad slum is destroyed by Ganesh. She is surprised to know that how the Dalits had gave up their land and dwellings for humanity only for setting her safely back to her place. She then selfishly submits in the end that it was her silly decision to work for the people in Barha village, it was better to work in the local slums of Mumbai which were at least modern. Later, when she gives Abhay the money for their rehabilitation, the people understands that it is her contribution as the Sangh has never donated them anything either in cash or in kind but they always aroused hopes in the mind of the people.

In *Paraja* we find how the moneylenders harass their gotis by fearing them about laws and administration. *Paraja* also rightly delineates the fear of the simpletons related to law and order. Besides being naturally horrified by the name of the police and court, the villagers feel it highly disgraceful to be imprisoned. For the ignorant tribesman, there is no terror greater than the terror of the prison: it is altogether beyond his comprehension, for it belongs to a system in which he has no part, though he lives on its fringes. It injures their dignity. They like better being a goti. The irony is stinking when we can understand that there is virtually no difference between a goti and a legal captive. Both are captured and are subject to beating and rigorous imprisonment. Practically speaking, being imprisoned provides a square meal in the least, being a goti even does not promise that. Yet it is a general ideology of being stamped as a criminal that the Paraja is frightened of jail

We see why Mandia becomes a goti: “Labour he understands, even unpaid labor under tyrannical moneylender, for this he is born into; but anyone who goes to jail is forever stamped
as a criminal and ostracized. It cripples him socially and economically….It is far better to become a goti and raise a loan from the money-lender” (104).

It is paradoxical that the dignity that they are striving to preserve, crumbles to dust whatever their designation it is-a goti or criminal, which they do not understand. What they easily understand and accept is the fact that they are bound to be doomed and are born to be such. This ideological or psychological slavery to the money lenders before they have become trapped into such a situation makes them easily fall as a goti. It is a pity that the age long idea to submit oneself as a goti exists as a form of social hegemony where the common villagers are psychologically a slave to the system. As the Paraja have their main occupation as agriculture they are not skilled in anything else. So protesting and finding other alternatives as an occupation becomes impossible for them and illiteracy, unawareness and fear push them towards one predicament that is to turn oneself as a goti. Mohanty gives an instance in the life of a Paraja who becomes the hapless victim of the Sahukar and is doomed.

Sometimes the tribesmen whom the Sahukar had in his clutches grew restive, driven by hunger to acts of defiance. But the Sahukar knew how to put them in their place. That year, the Sahukar’s wrath has fallen on Sania Paraja. There was a patch of land from which the Sahukar has dispossessed one of the tribesmen, on the fraudulent grounds that it had been mortgaged to him. He had put up a fence around it and posted a watchman, the maize crop had been excellent. Sania Paraja had nothing to eat for two whole days, and he was going to the river for the second time that night to fill up his empty stomach with water. The ears of maize were too tempting; he thrust his hand through the fence and plucked a couple. A
neighbour saw his eating one of the ears, while the other was still in his hand. Sania confessed that he had plucked them from the Sahukar’s field. Inevitably, the Sahukar heard of the theft. Sania was caught, tied to a tree and mercilessly beaten. And that was not all. The Sahukar lodged a complaint with the police; an assistant Inspector arrived with some constables, and an enquiry was started. Many witnesses deposed on behalf of the Sahukar…..it was alleged that Sania Paraja had broken into the Sahukar’s field at night and filled the sack with ears of maize; he had been filling up the basket when the sound of snapping maize-stalks alerted the watchman, who caught the thief red-handed. Further Sania Paraja had pulled down a part of the fence to make his entry….Sania was charged, tried, convicted and sentenced to four months’ rigorous imprisonment. And the villagers learnt their lesson (123-124).

Just as Ganesh wipes out the Bhangi toli cunningly and makes them stop their song-making habit in their festival, to show his power and prowess over the people, in the same way the Sahukar creates a false plea against any unfortunate goti andpunishes him to severe punishment only to show his prowess over the village. It is a pity that there remains no redeeming factor for the villagers but to get united and rebel.

It is attention-grabbing that only 16 percent of the Dalit or Adivasi live in the urban areas. The remaining 48 percent live in rural India. They are the people who are confronted by seemingly intractable problems brought on by millennia of exploitation, enforced poverty and deprivation. Decades after the abolition of untouchability, the actual extent of its prevalence would surprise us who believe it belongs to the past. Such is the situation with them when a Dalit deals with law
and order. No other groups are systematically criminalized by the police as are the Dalit Adivasis. The ruling class has simply found this a way to deal with this section and anyway brand them as criminals. Almost any action can lead a Dalit or Adivasi to jail. Their own legal access is the worst thing for any sections in this country. Atrocities against the Dalit are rising every year and Dalit women are the worst sufferers. Though the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 is in its place, yet protection of Dalits in custody is a sorry matter. Dalits have to bear a good deal of extra blows from the police only for the fact that they are Dalit and they can be savage-like.

From the time of the British, the forest tribes are seen as criminals and the British Government had imposed a Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 as because of their tribal instinct to fight and hunt. Under this act the police could easily capture any tribal under this Act found suspicious without any trials. The Indian government after independence changed the nomenclature of this Act to Habitual Offenders Act but brought very little change to its practice and implementation. Both go against the human rights that “all human beings are born free and equal”. The tribesmen if caught were ruthlessly tortured to death by the police. Arundahti Roy in *The God of Small Things* exactly presents this connotation where Velutha is beaten to death without trial only because he is a Dalit and a complaint is lodged by the upper class. This case will be discussed in details in the later part of the Chapter when right to freedom will be discussed.

Several cases are seen to have proved that the guilty were merely innocents but because of being a tribe they were killed by the police for mere suspicion. The Paraja thus feared the police. This was well known by the Sahukar and so it was easy for him and the like to take
advantage of the term ‘police’ and the administration in vogue. When Mandia was caught for brewing liquor illegally and was set on trial, Gopinath describes Mandia’s fear:

From the moment of his arrest, he had lain in a trauma. There was no sorrow, no pain- no time to reflect on the experience that had overtaken him. And now, as he retreated to his hut he imagined he was a young barking-deer, pursued by hunters at the Spring Festival running for its life. And still the sounds pursued him: ‘Kill! Kill! Don’t let get away! Fifty rupees or you go to jail! Shoot! Kill! (103).

The United Nation’s anti-discrimination body Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination asked India to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act (1952) and effectively rehabilitate the denotified and nomadic tribes on March 9, 2007. Though the Government has abolished the Habitual Offenders Act in the late 1990’s, the residual effects of 1871 Criminal Tribes Act are manifested in the wide range of atrocities perpetrated on members of these so called “criminal” tribes by those whose prejudice has not subsided. Deep-seated discrimination has led to various types of horrific treatment to many of these tribes in different parts of the country till date. Many tribes booked under this Act are without the knowledge or awareness that the destruction of their lives and the situation they are in is due to the State and the non-tribal people.

Later also in the novel we see how Sukru and his family are duped by the laywers, cheated by the administrative staffs and defeated by Sahukar by dint of his socio-economic power. At this point there is nothing left in the hands of the poor tribes but either to take up arms against injustice- which Mandia does- or else they had to die in starvation, poverty, alienation, grief and acceptance of fate.
The proportion of tribal population to the total population of the state of Orissa is 22.22% which is much above the national average of 7.76%. In terms of concentration of population, undivided district of Koraput has a tribal population of 52.22% people. The constitution of India makes comprehensive provision for the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes and the prevention of their exploitation by other groups of society. Article 46 of the constitution requires the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections and in particular of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Up to the end of Forth Five Year Plan period, development of Scheduled Tribes was accepted as the general rule in Orissa and programmes were implemented through Community Development Blocks, Special Multipurpose Blocks, and Tribal Development Blocks. No special appreciation was made in the formulation of the schemes keeping in view the needs of these communities and their respective core cultures. The Indian Forest Act of 1927, has recognized concessions and privileges of the forest-dwelling tribal people and peasants in respect of cultivation, including shifting cultivation, grazing of animals collection of fuel wood, collection of timber for construction of houses, collection of raw materials for crafts, mining and quarrying of stone, hunting fishing and collection of minor forest produce, besides those in respect of employment and other services. The concession actually conceded varied from state to state, even within the same state, from the region to region. The peasant and hill men enjoyed certain rights freely, others because they paid nistar or license fee, plough tax or communication fees. But they were not allowed to sell the forest products beyond their own use, except in case of some minor forest products.
The implementation of this above law and the Orissa Forest Act in 1972 is paradoxical as this leads has to a comical situation in Orissa, as the village forest under Indian Forest Act is state property, which is placed at the disposal of village community by the state in the interest of the village, whereas village forest under Orissa Forest Act is preliminarily communal property, which is deemed to be under the disposal of the state, for the benefit of community. The net result is actually tragic, for, the provisions of both these acts combine to raise a development barrier. Under the Orissa Forest Act though communal ownership is recognized, as the right of management is taken over ownership is recognized, as the right of management is taken over by the state, the village community cannot initiate development. Thus, in this situation hardly any development is possible.

The term ‘indigenous people’ (used for tribal population around the world) as used very frequently both at the International and National levels by the Government and NGOs, has been recognized “as a political and sociological term to denote in general terms, a range of groups who shared interests and concerns, have been recognized internationally as warranting particular and distinct investigation and action”.

With the view to improve the downtrodden situations and make things better for such peoples, the General Assembly resolution on the year 1993 thus called for a ‘new partnership’ to be created among indigenous people, governments and United Nations and it was expected that this will help address their needs, promote on understanding of their cultures and incorporate indigenous communities into the decision making process. Currently there are two international instruments as exclusively related to the tribal and analogous peoples: the ILO Convention 107 of 1957 concerning the protection and integration of indigenous and other tribal and semi-tribal populations in independent countries and the ILO Convention 169 of 1989 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in tribal
countries. Another International Instrument, namely the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a recent finalized charter aiming to provide the protection to the indigenous groups of peoples in the matters of social, civic, economic, spheres.\textsuperscript{27}

It is ultimately a lost world whenever we attempt at tribal development. The tribal of India is so very backward and wrapped in their own superstitions and cultural taboos that it is very difficult to bring them out of their present state. Different Tribal Development Schemes have been implemented by the government but no big change is yet noticed. The corrupt environment and the administrative knots all the more paralyse any facility that try to reach the tribals. Some NGOs are coming up to do some good to them but most of them are again backed by self interests. The UNICEF, WHO and Budhan under Mahashweta Devi and Ganesh Devy are trying to intervene the tribal periphery and bring them out of the darkness.

The denotified tribes are distinguished in relation to their ancestry, their race – this discrimination prejudices their benefit of many human rights – the right to life, liberty and security, the right to equality before law, and the right not to be discriminated against. It is also important that the specific human rights violations made by state authorities, including police, against these tribes are accounted for by the State and international organisations concerned. Even if the denotified tribes have criminal tendencies, are illiterate, not modern, they are not to be used as scapegoats, they should not be denied of justice and human rights that they have. There is also the need for adopting policy measures and ending the existing racial laws in India.\textsuperscript{28}

The representation of the events in the novels and the characters are true to Indian history only that the authors have given artistic fervor in the narration of the stories. Such incidents of
uprising against the Maliks and Sahukars were common in the end of 1950’s in the villages of Orissa and Bihar for citing protests against the existing feudal exploitation even after the abolishing of the Bonded Labour and Zamindari System. The narratives of the novels are sincere representations of the sub-alters that strive to uphold cases for human rights reinstallation. It is true that human rights charters were not formed when Paraja is written originally or laws have not been active when Mahashewta is writing, yet we are to understand the essence of the human rights concept that is not charter bound and awaits legalization, but as inner concepts lying in people for respecting human beings as human beings and not for fighting for the survival of the fittest. Human rights concepts were forever present in Indian cultural-psychology and must be respected. The novels taken for study go against this cultural ethos and again forms fit examples to be deciphered as human rights documents.

Mahashweta Devi’s writing articulates the erased oral history of tribal leaders/heroes/women revolutionaries and thus makes an attempt to return to the sub-alters. It aims to counterpoise the personal histories of the individual subaltern with the broader socio-political-economic historical context. Gayatri Spivak characterizes Mahashweta’s fiction as ‘history imagined in fiction’ as legitimised by the writer’s claim that she researches thoroughly everything she researches in fiction. The socio-economic history has always fascinated Mahashweta and she seeks to resurrect history in their immediate physicality making them almost contemporary. She by doing this actually deprogrammes the existing history constructed by the elite and resurrects voices of the low that was dominated lying unvoiced since centuries, thereby crafting her novel as documents of subaltern factuality. Her text counters the mainstream hegemonic presentation of the power structure that operates by subduing Dalit human/women rights. Mahashweta
participates in the process of a historical ‘correction’ through her novel which functions as a human rights detector and a counter-cultural consciousness constructor whereby the disadvantaged emerge as heroes and certain mythico-historical narratives get liberated from their conventional epistemological binds.

Mohanty’s writing too is a document that testimonises the actual facets of the tribal socio-economic-cultural world that is in clash with the corrupt socio-political-economic world of the non-tribals. The author safely carries the responsibility of dis-covering the multi-layered nuances of exploitation plying on the subaltern while narrating and problematizing the history of human rights in the villages. This is why both authors after validating their crucial findings through their respective novels try to give out solutions in their own way.

It is remarkable that both Mahashweta and Gopinath show revenge and bloodshed as solutions or outcomes for repressed suffering and human rights violation. The act of taking up violence as a means to end the feudal exploitation though is the natural most way, yet this goes against the natural law of peace and brotherhood. To restore one’s human rights, the sub-alters impinge on the rights of the feudal lords and kill them for revenge. This though leads to the germination of a movement of the powerless against the powerful thereby counterpoising the existing power structure, yet violence is never a favourable solution to end anarchy. This contention is not acceptable from human rights perspectives. The State, administration, judiciary are to rise up against the exploitative agents present within the established system and protect the Dalit/Tribals from being exploited. The public administration should be active enough to act against its own people who are causing a deadlock in the restoration process. The failure of the NGO to do
anything against the Maliks because of lack of money and support and the procrastinated efforts of the police in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, prove the callousness of the welfare intent of the government agencies which serve as a major drawback in carrying out a proper human rights rehabilitation in the Dalit/Tribals.

The corruption portrayed in *Paraja* at the end of the novel when Sukru is beguiled by the lawyers, breaks all hopes for redemption as it becomes impossible for an illiterate, penniless, shattered Tribal to get rid of exploitation alone amidst the herd of fraudulent exploiters. Unable to get any shift from their status, the protagonists take arms in their hands which are against the human rights criterion. This is what both the writers fail to suggest and both the novels fail to satisfy the human rights utopia. The novels are the projections of the practical world far from this utopia and thus the authors have assigned similar endings in the novels.

If we compare both the novels *Paraja* and *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the latter seems to start where the former ends. There is not only a chronological difference but also a difference between the perspectives of representation though both project more or less similar themes like exploitation of the downtrodden Dalits/Tribes and their claim for human rights. However bizarre the manifestation may look like, yet *Paraja* is uniquely different from *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* in its style of writing. It is important to note that both the writings are voices of non-Dalit writers. They represent the pains and the anguish of the landless against rich landowners, the low caste/class against the high caste/class and are in way empathetic representations, produced out of eye witness and frustration. For Mahashweta, the main cause of misery in the Tribals and Dalit is for the lack of education and income generating means in them. She takes economic reform as the main reform that can improve the state of these people on the whole. She
is not ready to compromise with the notion of being uncivilized and poverty stricken to upkeep a tradition or heritage. She gives no scope for romanticizing poverty or rightlessness. This is why, in a way, *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* has a one-dimensional approach whereas *Paraja* attempts at being panoramic. *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is a story of hard core exploitation and unjustness done to the low class by the rich; here the tone of the novel is highly one of mockery and anger. Mahashweta Devi focuses on the cases of torture and penalty in the lives of the Dalit women, their agonies and agitation yet somewhere stays away from describing the mores and customs of the Bhangis, Dusads and culture of the existing casts. The people of Barha in one way or another seem to have no personal existence altogether. They are solely submerged in the wretchedness of exploitation. The lack of economic resources has sealed their fates and the women are only to depend on the patriarchy for their existence.

Gopinath Mohanty, on other hand, is much livelier in describing the tribal life. Despite their hardships and sadness the people know to live through their customs and culture, celebrate and enjoy certain moments of their tribal self which somehow we miss in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*. Here the carnival of the Bhangi toli is ransacked by Ganesh and the Maliks which adds to the anger and agitation of the low caste. They are in this way even held from enjoying their customs and mores. But the Shahukar, in *Paraja*, despite being cruel to the Tribals, leave them for the Spring Festival which serves as a safety valve. The girls become happy with the colourful saris and hair oil, they think about their dance and festivals amongst all miseries. The men wish for marriage, dream of a good life, and are courageously true to their instincts.

*The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* being more dominating in its narration of practicality of misery and tolerance of the Dalit, fail to highlight the shadows of happiness still present in their lives. In
other words, the author has not intervened in the day to day activities of a Dalit family in Barha where some interludes must have been present. The difference between the two novels lies in the degree of detailing where a tribal life is much colorful and flamboyant than that of the Dalits as depicted in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh. The tribes have their own dignity and they relish their culture and mores, however barbaric they may be, despite all adversities. The Dalits, on the other hand, find no relief and thus leads a death like existence. Perhaps this is the reason that the author holds on when she portrays the lives of the villagers; the Dalits cannot afford to be hypocritically happy lying in the abyss of desperation.

Arundhati in The God of Small Things problematises the inhuman treatment of a Dalit convict in jail. According to the UDHR, a person (who is essentially equal in the eyes of law when compared with a normal person) until proved as a criminal, will not be treated as a criminal and in no way be harassed in the lock up. Article 20 and 21 lays laws for a person under arrest and guarantees right to liberty unless proved convicted by court. He has the right against exploitation and torture unless ordained by law. Article 9 of Universal Declaration of Human rights dictates, “No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.” Article 9 of International Covenant on political and civil rights clearly states, “Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.” Again, the third principle of the same charter says, “Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in
custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgement." 30

In Indian Constitution also the same thing is mentioned under the right to liberty under Article 22 Section A and B. No one can be tortured in custody without being proved guilty. Without evidence also no one is allowed to remain in custody more than twenty four hours and would be provided a lawyer for the concerned person’s defense. Here Velutha is brutally beaten by the police as soon as the complaint was lodged against him without investigating its reality. Principle 6 of Universal Declaration of Human rights very importantly states, “No person under any form of detention or imprisonment shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No circumstance whatever may be invoked as a justification for torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” But in the novel we see Velutha is awakened by kicks and lathi charges of the police. He has got no chance to say the reality or express his love for the kids and Ammu. The fact that Velutha was a Dalit, made the situation all the more worse.

Records show and as explained earlier, the Dalits are the most exploited lot even in the police custody. In fact they are beaten and treated like animals in a circus. They are tortured to the point of death without even investigating their cause. They are not provided with a defense lawyer neither allowed for bail. They all die like Velutha in ‘secret’. The caste system in India is a demarked area for the easy play of human rights violation in Indian society. A man has to bear the curse of existence if he is born as a low caste. He is treated as an untouchable publicly and treated as an animal. It is as if his birth in the low caste is a crime. One born as a Dalit is bound
to face the seamier side of life all through and it is a wonder that despite laws plying in the country, crimes and exploitation on the Dalits are unofficially rampant still today.

Here in the novel, Velutha’s case gets closed with his death. Neither his family member nor the communist party leaders, for whom Velutha had worked a lot in protest of the class system and the wrongs done to the low caste by the high class people, come to bail him or enquire about him. Even Ammu’s acceptance of him could also not save him. This way Ammu too in a way becomes untouchable and a Dalit- strangely cut off from the mainstream. And Velutha had to pay the price of being a Dalit. Again the question arises about the credibility of the existence of rights and laws in a country.

The Dalit are fearful of the name of the police and court as they are acquainted with the fact that the police are doubly dangerous as they are empowered by the government to beat and torture. In *Untouchable*, when Bakha, irritated and frustrated by his Dalit existence, comes back to his house and complains to his father about their wretched state and deliberates the hypocrisy of the Brahmin priest, his father warns him not to strike back despite all humiliations as he convinces Bakha that “we can’t do that. They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient to over balance all that we might say before the police” (71).

Valmiki, in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, relates a general instance of his village how the government officials exploited them paying them no wages for any work. “As always, it [cleaning] would be unwaged labour. For days on end, hungry and thirsty people would work away to clean the Kothi [Bunglow]. In return they would be sworn at. Police constables would forcibly take away poultry from the basti. There was no place to make complaint; instead some Tagas would cooperate with
the police in this robbery.” He relates an incident when the Dalit raised their voiced against exploitation:

This time around, the basti folk had refused to work without being paid. We will go if you pay us daily wages, they had said, and that had led to a row. The man who had come to call them was an employee of the lowest rank of the district government, but his manner was no less domineering than that of a high ranking officer, swearing at us in every sentence. When everybody refused to go he had resorted to arm-twisting…..Before leaving he had made threats. Fifteen days after the event, two constables had come to the basti and taken people with them. They caught whoever happened to fall in their way… I learnt that the police had taken away Baru, Dhannu, Mamchand and some others….Ilias was sitting in the garden on a charpai [cot] smoking a hookah. There was a ruler in his hand, which he was constantly flourishing. Eight or ten policemen were standing around batons in hands, guns on their shoulders. Those who had been captured from the basti were being made to stand like a rooster, a very painful crouched up position. Moreover they were being beaten with batons. The policeman who was beating them was getting tired….People watched quietly, without a word. There was no protest from anyside…We found out afterwords that the Pradhan [head of village] had left for the city on the pretext of some important work just when the police raided our basti. No one in the basti had the courage to ask the head constable why he was being beaten. What crime has been committed? (38-39).
The hollowness of the entire society stands naked. The above instance again asks the time and again over-raised question, ‘Can the Sub-alterns Speak?’ The question that stands unanswered time and again from the time of Anand, finds a deconstructive programming in today’s society where the angry young men like Valmiki like the American Blacks are proud to call themselves ‘Dalit’ and fight back for their rights and identity which have been long trampled under the high caste Hindu machinery and corrupt administration.

*Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* also shows the truce between corruption and law/police. When Inspector Khureshi, a friend of Valmiki takes him out for a raid overnight, he sees how Khureshi is disloyal to his profession as he takes bribes and beats an innocent child on the street without even trying to know his problem. He could not believe his ears when Khureshi told him that he has been forced to take bribe because it is impossible to get promotion without submitting oneself to bribery. When Khureshi harasses a boy out of no reason, Valmiki protests, “Khureshi, in your eyes this boy is a liar, a thief or a dacoit, or God knows what….And you are assaulting him…..Can you policemen find a law to help the boy? To help him collect his pay owning to him? Or does your Penal Code consist only of beating him up? (119) He also satires at the policemen on duty who do nothing in the name of Special Vigilance but pass time enjoying about wasting the government money.

Bama in *Karukku* similarly criticizes the police in her village for exploiting all the Dalit Christians for no particular reason. She even criticizes her own lot for being insensitive and quarrelsome as petty issues between two Dalit sects lead to unnecessary fights and police complaints. Bama is candid enough to call spade a spade and thus unhesitatingly exposes the hullaballo in her village because of the inter-class Dalit fight. Bama portrays the irony of a Dalit
existence which itself is categorised variously depending on the socio-economic supremacy. The Chaaliyar caste, which is the most powerful caste among the low castes, had always ployed against the other low castes because of its economic supremacy. The Pallar caste comes next in ecomomical preeminence and the least privileged of the lot is the Parayar caste, to which Bama belongs. Bama describes in details the mischiefs of caste-spirit in the Dalit for fulfillment of petty interests. The Chaaliyar caste wanted to mess and frighten away the weaker castes as they were in the notion to annex a cremation ground and add it to their school grounds, which now belonged to the Parayar. The Parayar, on the other hand, would not give the land. For this the Chaaliyar were always cross with the Parayar and they threw stones at the Parayar whenever they saw them in the cremation ground. The Chaaliyar had first killed a Parayar man over which a big fight took place. After a few days the Parayar boys caught hold of a Chaaliyar and beat him. This led to a big fight between the two castes and a complaint was lodged by the Chaaliyar. The name of the police itself made the entire community shiver. The general idea about the police was very bitter: “They’ll [police] take them [Parayar] and they’ll whip them like animals until they can neither see nor breathe, and then they’ll clap them in jail, just barely alive” (31).

As thought, the Police came and started to beat and lathi charge, men women, whoever they had found on the Parayar streets and arrested them immediately. They broke open the houses and pulled out the hidden men. The women and children shouted and wailed unable to stop the police from torturing their husbands and fathers. The entire community had turned into a ghetto where the Police roamed about and terrorized the women and children left alone in the houses. Bama describes: “That night nobody could sleep. All through the night the Police prowled round and round our streets. There was no sound at all, except for the sound of the policemen’s
boots...Each step felt as if the boot was treading on my chest and pressing down” (32). The imagery of the boot pressing down on the chest is a wonderful representation of the violent domination of the police on the Dalit. A child too could feel the pangs of the torture. The stories of violence in the jail had given such a negative opinion of the police that the general people could feel the blows of the policemen even in imagination. They insulted the women, poked their bodies with their weapons and cracked dirty jokes. The police beat up a certain Alphonse very severely that he had started vomiting blood. “They say it is unlikely he’ll survive”.

This particular description and the nature of police torture is squealed in *The God of Small Things* when we see the police mercilessly beating Velutha to death. Bama describes how old women are also not spared. “It seems his [victim] mother stooped to pick it [five rupee note] up, weeping all the time. At once a policeman put his boot against her stomach, kicked her aside and took the money” (32). Amongst all these, the police were corrupt enough to take bribe from the people and let them hide inside. They would attend cases if called with bribe and gifts. But for the others they thrashed them hard. The police not even cared to enquire the people or find the original sinner. Whoever they had found they arrested and tortured like animals. If the police become such ruthless, then there remains no hope for the Dalit for revival. In this case the saviour becomes the killer. In all the novels we see Dalit are ill-treated and beaten more than any high cast person irrespective of his being guilty or not. They have forcefully entered the author’s house and broke the door of the storeroom and vandalized their pots and grains. They pulled out the hiding Headman of Parayar caste from behind and tortured him inexplicably. Bama confesses her fear when seeing a man being thrashed and kicked by the policemen. Such a scene in itself is
enough to rouse fear in a child lifelong which again is obstructive to the fullest development of her personality.

Bama vehemently criticizes these fights and rivalry among the low castes as it give leverage to the high class to keep on subjugating them as they are aware that the low castes would never unite to form one. Bama is angry about the pointless fights between the Parayar and the Pallar which had started on the issue of eating a couple of bananas. She feels the satire pointed towards them by the high class and police who think them immature and listless as they could have used their time and energy in uniting themselves against the injustice done to them by society.

*Karruku* uniquely highlights the double edged problem of the Dalit Chirstians who are accepted in Church neither as a Christian and nor as a respectful being. To get rid of the evils of casteism, a huge population of Dalit men and women had converted themselves into Christianity. According to the Bible all men are equal in the eyes of God and love for human beings is what Christianity preaches. Accordingly, the preachers of Chistianity too should follow the norms laid by the religion but we see a very different picture in the Churches and the Missionary Institutions. Bama, had experienced a very bitter treatment by the Savarnas regarding casteism. She wanted to join the Christian order and become a Nun to relive the society from the evils of casteism. What she did not know is the hypocrisy lying behind. As soon as she joins the Missionary school she experiences the same extended form of casteism in the institution. She finds that here caste is accompanied by class to give a child extra privilege. The wealthy and rich had got special privileges and the poor Dalits were cornered as usual. The high caste rich was treated well by the teachers and Sisters and it was the Dalit who was always left with insult and
torture. It is because of the exploitation and point of view followed by the nuns and priests in such institutions that Bama lost her faith on religion. “… I realise that the Bhakti and belief I had in God has changed in a curious way” (70). Bama vehemently protests the occurrence of a high class conspiracy against the Dalit in society regarding keeping the miserable situation of the Dalits status quo.

The Missionary institutions and the rich see that the Dalits stay in the dark forever and built up consensus unofficially spreading negative ideologies about the Dalit by word of mouth everywhere. Dalits were disgusting to talk about according to the Nuns.

“How can we allow these people to come into our houses? In any case, even if we were to allow them, they would not enter our homes. They themselves know their place.” “There is nothing we can do for these creatures. And we shouldn’t do anything for them. Because to do so would be like helping cobras.” “Even if we were to do something for them, they will never make progress. There natures are like that.” “These days these people go about reasonably dressed. So you can’t even make out who they are, sometimes.” “The government goes and gives these people all sorts of privileges. Why do illiterate people need all these things?” (99-100)

Anything mean, low or unwanted is called ‘Harijan’ by the people. This kind of thinking is gravely demeaning and is against humanity, against a person’s dignity, against one’s human rights. Bama immediately takes up the issue of discrimination in Churches and presents the hardships of a Dalit child in a Missionary institution.
Even today, the present situation of Dalits in India is complex and confusing. There are no obvious, agreed upon solutions to the problems which the Dalit face and the way forward in the Dalit struggle is by no means smooth. However, there are a few trends visible among Christian Dalits which are quite important for the discussion of the awareness and implementation of human rights in Dalits. Bama through *Karukku* had tried to form this contention which now is being executed by the south Indian Dalit Christians. First and foremost development that has been noticed is a growing acknowledgement that they are Dalits and that conversion to Christianity has not really changed that significant fact of their lives, despite hopes and promises given by Christianity. Christian Dalits thus have a dual social and psychological identity—Christian as well as Dalit, and have to live with the tensions built into that dual identity. The second trend is an increasing assertion of Dalit identity as a positive thing, a source of pride rather than of shame. In this they rightly challenge pervasive cultural norms. One expression of this assertiveness is Dalit theology; another is a harsh critique of those Missionary and Indian Church leaders who, in their efforts to “Indianize” the Church, have equated “Indian” culture with Brahmanic instead of Dalit culture. One reason why Dalit Christians have resisted a lot of efforts to “Indianize” the theology and liturgy of the Church is because they are fed up with the Brahmanic culture to which they converted to get away from. Perhaps most obvious of all are the persistent efforts to “raise the caste issue” and exorcise the demon of caste discrimination within the Churches themselves.29 This is what again Bama suggests at every step of her novel proclaiming the hypocrisy of the Church which claims to establish equality, love and brotherhood but in reality demeans the low and is a major source point to spread inequality.
Bama records the attitude of the Church towards the Dalit; they call them ‘dirty’, ‘cobras’, ‘low’ ‘uncivilized’, very much like the attitude held by the Hindu high caste. Being a part of the Church, she criticizes the Missionary members who, in the name of serving God and undergoing severe penance, only enjoy a lavish existence. They do not teach anything new or follow what is written in the Bible but cherish the Hindu ideology against the Dalit and poor. They have converted the holy house to a house of dictated mannerisms where repetitively work is done according to the customs laid by the priests for easy survival and smooth socio-economic progress of the Church. Bama points out that the Church hides away the truth about Jesus who had advocated love and care for the poor and needy but on the contrary only spreads messages that fear away the people from the Church. From childhood Bama realises that the Sisters and the Fathers had always told stories to fear away the children and keep them in a kind of psychological phobia. They force children and adults to follow the rituals of Mass and prayer in the Church every week, month and year according to respective dates and customs. It was always a general routine to be followed religiously irrespective of the fact that one has any faith in the religion, God, or Church. Avoiding a ceremony could lead to sin. This type of customization of the religion by the Church is nothing but a way to establish fear in the illiterate and secure economic gains every week, month and year.

Bama delineates cases where the Father or the Sister loot and torture poor Dalits for petty things. The poor who had never eaten a fruit was to buy fruits on the days of Easter and Christmas for offering them to the Church. The Church in return would give nothing but blessings for show. A lady complains about a Father being rude to her for not giving him the money for prayer. Bama is furious of two things that the Church as the establishment of the government practices against
humanity: inequality and forceful customization of the religion. Frustrated and irritated by the Church’s hypocritical attitude, Bama leaves the Convent and takes up the life of hardship in the end, making herself one with her lot.

When Bama comes back quitting nunship; she is denied a job for being a Dalit. She is happy to be independent again having the freedom to speak and think what she feels like. She accepts the miserable life with glee in contradiction to the jailed yet comfortable existence of the Church. She describes her stay with the Missionary as ‘fish out of water’ and curses her decision for having joined the order. She confesses her listless ideas of serving the poor from within the Church following their order; she could not assess the reality from outside until being a part of it. She strongly questions the existing order of the Church which claims to serve people but without humanity.

Apart from explaining her current status, which she beautifully relates by comparing herself with a bird with broken wings, Bama exposes the reality of a Dalit solitary woman’s survival in society. She is now past her youth, friendless and supportless. She cannot pursue her will anyways as a woman is not safe alone in the man’s world. She is let aside by the society where she has no other alternative but to stand by herself in serving the community and protesting the rightlessness going on in the world. She is happy in spite of facing all adversities and challenges of leading a lonely woman’s life as it gives her the freedom to execute her mind and serve her lot independently.
Bama had spoken her mind through her writings which have itself become palmyara leaves for the society, cutting through the evils that it nourishes. She is happy to see the Dalit rising up for their rights and revolting against people who had dominated them since decades. She appreciates the groups working for the uplift of the low castes and voluntarily participates in such activities. *Karukku*, thus arises as an internal development, a journey within, that Bama takes from the black holes of caste and religion to a state of being above caste and above religion. In this she displays a strong objective bent of mind and she is not afraid to expose the faults of the Dalits and of the others. She is death struck post publication of *Karukku* because it was her own lot, for whom she had championed the cause that had gone against her. *Karukku* was accepted lately by the Dalits when they finally realised that Bama’s pen is not a critique but is a testimonio to their Dalit existence. They have started to voice the truth, call themselves ‘Dalit’ with pride, recognize their traditions gleefully, and ultimately establish their identity against inhumanity; this is where *Karukku* as a novel and its author finally triumph in achieving the ‘goal’ that she had talked about in the ‘Afterword’ of the novel.

The novels discussed so far in this Chapter are representations of the rightless world of the Dalit and their assay to fight against the rightlessness thereby trying to ascertain their space and identity in the mainstream universe, in which sometimes they perish and sometimes they find some way out. This includes the authors’ sincere attempts to justify the cause of the marginalised and portray way-outs according to their respective perceptions. Valmiki, Mahashweta Devi, Bama and Gopinath (up to some extent) seek to offer revolution and protest as ways that could confirm grounds for the Dalit identity /voice in the macrocosmic world. Their writings further act in subverting and unmasking the inevitable Indianized programme laid down by the upper
caste elites against the low caste thus rewriting history for and about the ‘Unlouchables’. In this way their writings actually become extended cameras of Dalit realism.

The above mentioned writers suggest economic upgradation and literacy as primary needs for Dalit uplift which would definitely bring them prosperity and rights. But this would remain unsuccessful till the corrupt nature of the bureaucrats and the common people stand as unyielding blocks in the path of improvement. This issue of State politics and uncompromising stand of the bureaucrats against the Dalit Scheduled Caste can very well be discerned in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* that relates candidly the real incident of ruthless refugee eviction in the Sunderbans by the Left Government in West Bengal in 1979 uncaring for any human rights and humanity.

It is very unique of Amitav Gosh as a writer as he not merely fictionalizes reality but provides the untold history with minute details thereby questioning some elementary truth behind incidents. He is a marvelous writer who plays with history and myth that automatically give vent to some underlying truth. He is sometimes a journalist reporting exact details, sometimes a scholar, researching the very base of the happenings and sometimes a historian digging out the untold history from within the glorified established history laid out for the common. In *The Hungry Tide* he puts forward a serious Dalit issue of West Bengal in 1976 when a herd of refugees after the war with Pakistan from Bangladesh had come to settle in Morichjhapi. This settlement issue was very much unlike the issue of the settlement of the refugees coming from Pakistan in 1947 after the partition. The course of events that Ghosh sketches is an actual representation of the happenings in Morichjhyanpi which again has a long historical background.
some of which are well explained in the novel and some of which are left for the readers to find out. Ghosh captures the time phase when the settlers were in a struggle to establish their identity against the malicious ploy of the Left Government which would not only bring them trouble but also make their stay in India impossible.

_The Hungry Tide_ very subtly brings out the duality of the government in handling the refugee issue; in fact it tells about the special strategies that the government had taken to evict the settlers on the ground of projecting the primacy of ecology, tigers against the settlement policy of the refugee which the Communists once had admitted. The use of force in Morichjhanpi that saw hundreds of refugees dying, only to sideline a promise given by the Left before coming to power, was seen by the Sundarban islanders as a betrayal not only of refugees and of the poor and marginalised in general, but also, of the Bengali ‘nimnobarno’ identity.\(^{31}\) In fact, the Morichjhanpi massacre was considered a double betrayal by the Sundarbans islanders. They argued that it was because they were considered as lesser mortals situated at the periphery and marginalised due to their social inferiority by the ‘Bhadralok’\(^{32}\) – by which is meant the anglicised, well-connected, educated, moneyed, essentially Hindu upper caste, and mainly urban, Bengalis – that tigers, taking the cue, had started feeding on them.\(^{33}\)

As developed by Ross Mallick, the reasons leading to the Morichjhanpi massacre have to be understood in relation to the long history which led to the partition of Bengal and the intricacies of caste, class and communal differences.\(^{34}\) In the colonial period, the East Bengal Namasudra movement\(^{35}\) had been one of the most powerful and politically mobilised Dalit movements in India which with the alliance with the Muslim League would definitely come to power if Bengal
was not partitioned in 1947. This movement, run by the lower class and minorities, was opposed to the Bhadralok community which now became unsecured of their position and requested the partition of Bengal into East and West Bengal from the British. So there had always been a class-caste conflict between the Namasudras and the ‘Bhadrolok’ over power and resources. The low caste in the East Bengal, tortured and ill-treated by the Muslim, migrated to India in 1976 before the Communist Party came to the centre. A certain lot was sent to some parts of West Bengal and the other was sent to Dandakaranya, now in Chattisgarh. The Communists alleged, if they would support the Left in the elections then they would be given a piece of land in Morichjhapi in Sundarban to settle. After the Communitists had come to power, the refugees came overnight from Central India to Morichjhapi in multitude and started settling down in Morichjhapi as was said by the Left. The Left fearing the refugees to be a matter of extra expenses on the state, tried to pursue them go back to Dandakaranya. It was of the opinion that the refugees, who by the 1960’s constituted a third of the population of the state, were a burden to be shared jointly among the federal government and those of the neighbouring states.\textsuperscript{36} The refugees on the other hand, after settling in Morchjhapi found their kith and kin in Sunderban, an area previously filled with East Bengalees, brought by the British for development in the colonial age, who supported their stay for various personal and cultural reasons. When the government failed to subdue the refugees with several warnings, the Left Government, without any prior notice started the ruthless eviction where no person-man, women or children were spared.

As Prafulla Chakrabarti demonstrates, there was a symbiotic relationship between the refugee movement and Left Politics in West Bengal in the early years of independence.\textsuperscript{37} In fact, the political ascendancy of the left in West Bengal owes a great deal to the refugees and their struggles for rehabilitation in the 1950’s. Chakrabarti argues that the Communists provided the
refugees with leadership in their struggle for rehabilitation, and in return, the refugees became the striking arm of the Communists, providing them with the mass support which enabled them to entrench themselves in the city of Calcutta, and later, catapulted them to power. But in 1979, in a most ironic and tragic turn of events, the Left Front Government in West Bengal was turning against the very cause which it had championed for over two decades and which had been key in bringing it to power.\(^{38}\)

*The Hungry Tide* proudly asserts to dis-cover the past history by deciphering the real picture behind the government reports and wrings out the cases of human rights violation of the Dalit refugees in particular. His description is an enlightening document that amazes us with data about the potential of human beings in creating a civilization and destroying another. The refugees had a difficult time to locate themselves from Bangladesh to India. Then they were moved to Madhya Pradesh without their assent. Dandakaranya was conceived as a long-lasting solution to their problem by the government. But ironically enough, it increasingly turned out to be ‘a land of banishment rather than the haven of hope it had been made out to be by the rehabilitation administrators’.\(^{39}\) The refugees felt alienated because of the unaccustomed food, language, culture of Madhya Pradesh and between 1965 and 1978 more than 12,000 families deserted the settlement. In mid-1978, there was a new wave of desertions under the leadership of an organisation called the *Udavastu Unnayansheel Samiti* which the West Bengal government managed to send a lot of these refugees back, but about 25,000 managed to return to West Bengal and build a settlement on the island of Marichjhanpi.

Ghosh describes the story of the settlers and their journey back to Bengal through Kusum, a girl who had been a part of the refugee gang.
When the war broke out, our village was burned to ash; we crossed the border, there was nowhere else to go. We were met by the police and taken away; in buses they drove us, to a settlement camp. We’d never seen such a place, such a dry emptiness;….But no matter how we tried, we couldn’t settle there: rivers ran in our heads, tides were in our blood…For months we prepared, we sold everything we owned. But the police fell on us the moment we moved: they swarmed on trains, they put blocks on road—but we still would not go back; we began to walk (165)

The West Bengal government was averse to the idea of old refugees returning back to the state and was deeply unhappy with this development. It wanted a solution, once and for all, to the vexed refugee problem that the state had been facing for more than three decades. It declared the Morichjhapi settlement an illegal encroachment by ‘desertsers’ on forest land in an area marked for the protection of endangered tigers. The refugees were given an ultimatum to evacuate the island by 31st March, 1979. When this proved futile, the government started an ‘economic blockade’ that severely affected the refugees; and the state police finally cracked down in mid-May 1979. Official estimates claimed that only thirty six refugees were killed in this action, the actual number, however, ran into several thousands.40

In The Hungry Tide, the Morichjapi Massacre is reported by Nirmal in a notebook that is passed on to his nephew, Kanai decades after the incident. From his description we come to know that he had volunteered himself to be a part of the entire chaos with a motive to save a woman, Kusum and her son, Fokir from getting lost. The background of the incident and Nirmal’s involvement in the refugees are well defined by Nirmal’s Aunt, Nilima who runs a NGO for the
poor Dalit and is known as Mashima. She tells her nephew Kanai of the events leading up to the massacre and of her husband’s involvement in it. She describes the settlement of the refugees in details:

…In this place where there had been no inhabitants before there were now thousands, almost overnight. Within a matter of weeks they had cleared the mangroves, built badhs and put up huts. It happened so quickly that in the beginning no one even knew who these people were. But in time it came to be learnt that they were refugees, originally from Bangladesh. Some had come to India after partition, while others had trickled over later. In Bangladesh they had been among the poorest of rural people, oppressed and exploited both by Muslim communalists and by Hindus of the upper castes (118).

We are given a clear picture of the refugees and their whereabouts by the author through Nilima in a sympathetic yet objectified manner. Morichjhapi was markedly different from other refugee settlements. The people were somewhat educated- vocationally, if not academically- and were superior in activities than the East Bengalees residing in the Sunderbans. There was insecurity among these East Bengalees that the government may stand for their eviction as well as they too had come from Bangladesh as refugees. In the political protest against the Left, these local East Bengalees stood as support behind the refugees. They were of the notion that they would get some benefit out of the refugee settlement as these people were some way superior to them in experience.
The refugees at Morichjhapi showed initiative and organisation in their attempt to build a new set up. Nirmal writes of the refugee initiatives in his diary:

Saltpans had been created, tubewells had been planted, water had been dammed for the rearing of fish, a bakery had started up, boat-builders had set up workshops, a pottery had been founded as well as an ironsmith’s shop; there were people making boats while others were fashioning nets and crablines; little marketplaces, where all kinds of goods were being sold, had sprung up. All this in the space of a few months! It was an astonishing spectacle – as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud (192).

There were things that the government could not provide as infrastructure to the common villagers but Morichjhapi had them. The refugees had been very organized and able in putting up their cause which afeared the government initially. The establishment that they had created within a few weeks proclaimed their ability and adept nature which paradoxically stood as an identity builder in it highlighting their ideology behind their cause as well. It was this idea of self-sufficiency that made the Left Government shiver. But on the other hand, their endeavour to form a perfect community without the government help was in a way a mockery of the subversion of ideology that the government believed in.

But even though they had settled in Morichjhapi, they were aware that the government has deceived them; they could no longer trust the Left and thus kept on planning and implementing strong socio-political steps towards establishing firm grounds both for the land and their self-identity. They tried, as far as possible, to be self-reliant, but at the same time they were conscious
of the need to garner social and political support for their work. They had tried various ways to pursue the government by sending messages to it but felt no urge from the latter.

To gain some mutual confidence and bring the urban intelligentsia to their side, the refugees held a feast, and invited some learned dignitaries to the island to see their enterprises. Big banners were put; a platform was raised for cultural program and speeches. Such a union of the high and the low, the Bhadra Samaj with the Dalit, is a veritable proof of the diplomatic intelligence in the settlers apart from their occupational potency. Poems were cited and lengthy speeches were ranted in favour of the refugees’; everyone looked up in hope; but in actuality it was a hoax played by the Bhadrolok Samaj for the refugees’ cause.

On face, the academic/artist group actively sought support of the establishment through their speeches but they were heavily beguiling the settlers. The big shots, who had come from Calcutta and enjoyed the sumptuous feast of a variety of fish, despite their lofty speeches, actually knew that these settlers would eventually be evicted. In fact, they never supported the Dalit cause in the town. One of the poets present in the group, happened to be a friend of Nirmal. When Nirmal suggested that evicting these refugees would mean bloodshed, the writer sulkily comments: ‘You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs” (192). The town people not only posed themselves as imposters but brutally played with the settlers’ trust and hope.

But the settlers at Morichjhapi, trebly displaced as they were, proved to be a defiant lot. Till their last breath, they fought against the injustice of the government and the drama of the Bhadra Samaj. And in the very last phase of their struggle, when they were being forcibly evicted by a policeforce, their battle-cry became: ‘Amra kara? Bastuhara. Morichjhapi chharbona’ ‘Who are
we? We are the dispossessed. We’ll not leave Morichjhapi, do what you may.’ Hearing this, Nirmal remarks, “Standing on the deck of the bhotbhoti, I was struck by the beauty of this. Where else could you belong, except in the place you refused to leave” (254). The cry of the settlers, Nirmal interprets, was not the cry of defiance, “but rather a question being thrown to the heavens not just themselves, but rather on behalf of bewildered humankind. (254)

Nirmal was right in understanding the emotional vein of the refugees who had accepted Morichapi as their ‘promised land’ and their cry of denial was not only physical but existential, ideological and political in nature. When a man is denied his right to nationality, the bewildered citizen has no other option but to probe deep in his esteem and ask who he is and where does he belong to. He does not have his roots strong, the mother land on which he was born and had forever respected, now has become foreign and unprotected for him. When he has approached some help from the people of their similar culture, he had been misled. In such a situation the meaning of existence, life and happiness become mythical. The spirit of protest and unity that the settlers had shown by clinging to the soil when the police had tortured them to vacate the island, had created a new voice of the marginalised in West Bengal, a new voice to crib to one’s basic rights of life and nationality.

The settlers by holding the feast, putting up their cause of settlement to the government time and again, establishing their own community and keeping strong the feeling of solidarity and ideological unity among themselves had put forward a political stand against the West Bengal Left Government and the Bhadra Samaj which was not acceptable to the latter. So the struggle over the refugee situation in Morichjhapi was a political war of establishment and destruction at
the same time perceived differently by either party. The scandal of Morichjhapi evacuation even though was ruthlessly suppressed by the government yet it gave a new light to the marginal sect to protest the inhuman self-centered mal-political intentions of the ruling party. The Morichjhapi cause had opened up a new dimension within a Marxian state that was posing a political challenge to the rule of the government, its potencies and its way of working. Their united protest had given the appearance of a marginalised political body challenging as opposition to the Bhadra Left political urban coterie.

*The Hungry Tide* takes up an additional problem that the other novels taken for discussion do not imply, the Rights of the Refugees, apart from the issue of ill-treatment of Police on Dalit. Enshrined in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the right “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”. It is clearly mentioned that the victims of human rights abuses must be able to leave their country freely and to seek refuge elsewhere. Moreover, the asylum seeker has a right to review if the case is first rejected. Countries may also not forcibly return refugees to a territory where they face danger. This is the point that Ghosh problematises when scaling the fate of the refugees that came to Sunderbans. They were of course not sent back to Bangladesh by the government but were also not taken care of at the least. They were forced to relocate in Madhya Pradesh, without caring for the viability of their survival in a foreign land. Staying in an alien culture, unknown area, very much different from that of their habitat, had given the refugees a sense of protectionlessness, which the government never tried to think about. Like everyone else, refugees have right to physical safety and basic human rights such as freedom of thought, of movement and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Refugees, especially the elderly, women and children, are often vulnerable to
violence. Rape is a common element of persecution and a common reason driving families from their homes. Governments should work to protect refugees from further human rights violations. In the hosting country refugees have also the right to education, medical care and work. Refugees have an obligation to abide to the laws of the hosting country. 41

It becomes mimicry of human rights principles when Morijhapi Massacre is considered from the Rights of the Refugees perspectives. Here the government itself is the demolisher of Refugee Rights. It is not that the Central Government had not known of the matter or there was any anomaly in the decision to let the settlers settle in India, yet such human rights violation had taken place. The Central Government which was backed by the Communists in keeping up the Government, feared to meddle with the issue for loss of support and withdrawal. The press was ruthlessly censored, only some local news papers gave out the news, that too not in detail. There was a total anarchy played by the government against the refugees. They were violated on all physical, mental, social, economic and political grounds. They were not only beaten, killed but women were brutally raped by the police. We witness the fate of Kusum who was raped and killed in the end. We see Nirmal beaten to death even though he was not a refugee.

Ghosh in the novel reports that the government had started taking strong measures. It banned all movements in Morichjhapi under the Provisions of the Forest Prevention Act. Section 144 was imposed on the whole area which was used to quell civil disturbances, even though there was none. “This meant it was a criminal offence for five people or more to gather in one place… it was said that dozens of police boats had encircled the island, tear gas and rubber bullets had been used, the settlers had been forcibly prevented from bringing rice or water to Morichjhapi, boats
had been sunk, people had been killed….it was as if war had broken out in the quiet recesses of the tide country”(252) The government had tried to deal it like an emergency situation very much similar to the emergency situation dealt by Indira Gandhi and the torture very much reminds us of Rohinton Mistry’s description of slum evacuation of Dalit people by the Congress Party under the Prime Minister’s advice and the Police for the purpose of city beautification.

Annu Jalais reports: “Unrepentant, and despite this display of self-help and cooperative spirit, the government persisted in its effort to clear Morichjhanpi of the settlers. On the January 31, 1979 the police opened fire killing thirty six persons. The media started to underscore the plight of the refugees of Morichjhanpi and wrote in positive terms about the progress they were making in their rehabilitation efforts. Photographs were published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika of the February 8, 1979 and the opposition members in the state assembly staged a walkout in protest of the government’s methods of treating them. Fearing more backlash, and seeing the public growing warm towards the refugees’ cause, the chief minister declared Morichjhanpi out of bounds for journalists and condemned their reports saying that these contributed to the refugees’ militancy and self-importance and instead suggested that the press should support their eviction on the grounds of national interest.” (Jalais. 1759) Thus, we can safely infer that the government in its attempt to uphold its own political hypocrisy had choaked another fundamental right from the people and media that is right to express one’s feelings and thoughts.

When the government had found that the refugees were becoming obstinate and uncontrollable, supplies of food, transport, drinking water and other necessary items were cut from Morichjhapi. This was done to compel the refugees to leave the island or die there. This economic blockade
was declared on 26 January on Republic Day which was highly ironic. This kind of tyranny by a
democratic government, which had forced people to die in want of food and water in the name of
a Republic act, is actually a criminal act. Annu Jalais describes the actual incident thus:

After the failure of the economic blockade … in May the same year, the
government started forcible evacuation. Thirty police launches encircled the
island thereby depriving the settlers of food and water; they were also tear-gassed,
their huts razed, their boats sunk, their fisheries and tubewells destroyed, and
those who tried to cross the river were shot at. To fetch water, the settlers had now
to venture after dark and deep into the forested portion of the island and forced to
eat wild grass. Several hundred men, women and children were believed to have
died during that time and their bodies thrown in the river. The Calcutta High
Court ordered a two-week lifting of the ban but this was not properly
implemented…… estimates that in all 4,128 families who had come from
Dandakaranya to find a place in West Bengal perished of cholera, starvation,
disease, exhaustion, in transit while sent back to their camps, by drowning when
their boats were scuttled by the police or shot to death in Kashipur, Kumirmari,
and Morichjhanpi by police firings (Jalais: 1759).

The actual number of death has never been exposed or accounted for but there was no official
enquiry or charge against the officials dealing with the case. According to many of the islanders
only 25 per cent of those who had come to Morichjhanpi left the island alive.42

In The Hungry Tide, Ghosh narrates the brutal eviction exactly as Jalais reports through Nirmal’s
diary and Horen. “The siege went on for many days and we were powerless to affect the
outcome. All we heard were; rumours: that despite careful rationing, food had run out and the settlers had been reduced to eating grass. The police had destroyed the tubewells and there was no portable water left; the settlers were drinking from puddles and ponds and an epidemic of cholera had broken out” (260) This is the beauty of Ghosh’s representation that represents a real situation, life like and exact but through a narrative that is soothing and artistic all through.

The conflict between the Bhadralok and the Dalit is clearly depicted in the novel in the denial of the Refugee leader to accept Nirmal in their group as a social worker. When Nirmal visits Morichjhapi with Horen hoping to do some favour, the refugee leader of the ward asks him, “Do you have contacts with the press in Kolkata?” When Nirmal showed his ignorance, he replied peevishly, “Then what can you do for us? …. Of what use could you be” (173). This rejection is not simple. Nirmal being a representative of the Bhadra Samaj is negated at the very start. If he was a man of contacts whom the government would heed, then he would have much importance to the settlers. The statement of the leader is a veritable proof of the political stand that the refugees were building internally to uphold their cause. The leader candidly tells “What’s most important to us at this time is to mobilise public opinion, to bring pressure on the government to get them to leave us alone. They are putting it out that we’re destroying this place, they want people to think we’re gangsters who’ve occupied this place by force. We need to let people know what we’re doing and why we’re here. We have to tell the world about all we’ve done and all we’ve achieved” (172).

This conflict between the Dalit and the Bhadralok is again mirrored in Mashima, Nirmal’s wife who refuses to help the settlers. Mashima who is a social worker and has done a lot for the Dalit
living in Sunderbans through her NGO but she has a different take on the Morichjhapi issue. It is interesting to note how Ghosh problematises issues with human thinking and behaviour. For Mashima there is a divide between the Dalits already residing in Sunderbans and the Dalit refugees, while for Nirmal it is just the other way round. The settlers had attracted Nirmal’s attention on the ground that they were bringing some revolution, some change but for his wife they were breaking rules. Nirmal had a romantic bent of mind who loved to romanticize struggle and revolution all the more by being an active part of it but Nilima had a very practical mindset which dictated any work as successful or feasible if they produced lawful results. For her, helping the settlers would not be of any good because the government was not backing them. She had her own interest to consider. The NGO she was running was backed by some government associated fund and the little social work that she could do to uplift the Dalit fishermen, farmers, honey-collectors and common people would stop if the funds were not coming. Nilima’s point was right if considered from her point of view. She was sympathetic towards the settlers but had not the courage to directly get involved in their activities as she was well aware of the government strategies. She tried to keep Nirmal out of the mess but had failed to keep him in control and in the end we see Nirmal dying for the cause of the settlers even though he was neither adopted nor excluded by the refugee lot.

When Kusum had come to her for help on behalf of all the settlers, Nilima tells her that “she would have liked to help, but it was impossible. The government had made it known that they would stop at nothing to evict the settlers: anyone suspected of helping them was sure to get into trouble. Nilima had the hospital, and the union to think of: she could not afford to alienate the government. She has to consider the greater good. Nilima is not wrong in her point of view. She had taken all the trouble to set up her NGO and has done a lot of good things for the Dalit in her
locality and the common people had been immensely supported by her. That is why she is loved and respected by all in the village. Nilima is cautious of the point of not impinging on the rights of some to provide rights to others. She could not sacrifice her cause for the cause of the settlers.

There is a distinct drift between Nirmal and Nilima on the issue of helping the settlers in Morichjhapi. The drift became so strong between them that they often quarreled on the issue. Nirmal used to avoid Nilima and take a tryst to Morichjhapi for the sake of the settlers, particularly Kusum, the Dalit woman for whom he felt a certain kind of attraction. Though both Nirmal and Nilima belonged to the Bhadra Samaj, yet there were differences in ideological set up between the two. Nilima came of an elite, erudite family but Nirmal was a middle class by birth. The zeal in Nirmal to revolutionize the existing system was embedded since the days of Naxals and his association with the Naxalites had led him to some mess and police custody where he was brutally treated. It was due to the interference of Nilima’s family that he was released and they moved to Lusibari, an island in Sunderban. There Nirmal had taken a job of a school teacher. But a feeling of being an escapist hid in his heart and he always had tried to do something against the mainstream, to revolutionize the accepted conventions of society. He was not much interested in Nilima’s NGO as it was run on government funds and did not give much importance to the conventional ‘social work’ that she was doing. He would say Nilima, “You’ve joined the rulers; you’ve begun to think like them. That’s what comes of doing the sort of ‘social work’ you’ve been doing all these years. You’ve lost sight of important things” (120) He was waiting for a cause to rebel against all impediments and quench his thirst for doing something outrageous; Morichjhapi gave him the chance. If we consider Nirmal’s view then he is also right upto a great extent. It is always the need of the hour to help the persons who are very needy
rather being selfish. Nilima did not want to lose her secured frame of work, resources and the fame that the NGO had given her. She did not want to indulge in the settlers as there was risk of being devasted and losing her position once and forever. She kept herself in the rational block very much contradictory to her husband who preferred to stand by people irrespective any danger and loss. Even when the leader of the Ward in Morichjhapi did not find him of any help, he forwarded himself to teach the children of the settlement—“teach them how to dream.” Here Nirmal’s dream is the utopia that the settlers were also dreaming of.

The urgency with which the government suddenly declared Morichjhapi a place for tigers was indeed fishy. The government had placed primacy on ecology to legitimise their ejection from Morichjhani in the eyes of the Kolkata Bhadralok. The argument that this might be a precedent for an unmanageable refugee influx from Bangladesh was also heatedly argued as baseless. (Jalais:1759) But in reality, Morichjhapi was neither frequented by tigers nor was the place endangered by it. In fact, the tigers did not infiltrate in these parts as the population was high and the tigers felt insecure among people. The sudden hype on tiger preservation was to threaten the islanders and provide a solid cause for eviction. It is ironic that when the tigers had constantly attacked upon the people, the government had not done any good. No measures were taken to stop the wild interference in common people. Ghosh’s description of the Bon Bibi myth is the representation of the day to day happenings of the people of Sunderbans and their will power to fight against the fear of Dokhini Rai, the tiger. Ghosh describes how women were uncertain about their husbands’ lives as they went to collect honey, wax or fish from the inner forest. They used to dress themselves in white and remove all stains of vermilion from their forehead and wait for their husbands’ death toll. In the evening if the husbands returned home then they would renounce their widow costume and dress like a married woman. Death had become so common
in Sunderban that life would not be much hampered by it. Pathetically enough, the residents became companions with fear and death accepting the uncertainty of life as something usual. In such a scenario the government had never taken steps to save the people from such miseries or never paid them any package because of such unavoidability. Though there are modern devices that might be used to protect the islanders, the state allowed the deaths to continue. This type of negligence by the state is a severe human rights negation and a criminal offence on the part of the government as it is indirectly forcing people to die rather than protecting them.

In Sunderban, Ghosh argues, human lives are valued less than those of the Tigers. Kusum laments, “The worst part was… to sit here, helpless, with hunger gnawing at our bellies and listen to the policemen say…‘This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals… it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers…’ Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? (pp.262-63) The police not only frightened them, tortured them, forced them to stay in their huts, saw that no one gets to bring food or water in their houses, but also kept on insulting them over microphones. It is a pity that human lives were of no value to the state but the tigers were. Jalais explains that the symbol of the Royal Bengal Tiger was super-imposed by the Bhadralok and the State in contrast to the meek, poor human beings living there. The number of tigers were not as less as the state had projected the then. To increase the importance of the tiger, the importance of the people were minimized. The act of betrayal by the government serves as the proof that for the Kolkata Bhadralok the marginalised Dalit were just ‘tiger-food’ – disposable people who could be shot and killed because they wanted the homestead they had been promised. This also points to the magnitude of marginalization brought about by the elite class on the Dalit. The ease and brutality with which the government wiped off all signs of the bustling life which had been built
there in eighteen months were proof for the villagers that they were considered completely irrelevant to the more influential urban Bengali community, especially when weighed against tigers. In two weeks’ time all the plots had been destroyed and the refugees ‘packed’ off. (Jalais: 1761)

*The Hungry Tide* is a novel of ideas, none of them found to have an easy answer. In the Sundarbans where the tide changes the environment daily, nothing is certain and everything in life is a shade of gray. It's a place where tigers kill hundreds of people a year, but since they're a protected species, killing a tiger that has been preying on a village brings in the government authorities to mete out punishment. In an environment where life is fragile, the essence of any person is broken down to its core. Amitav Ghosh lets the tide country break down the barriers of both society and his characters. Through its beautiful topography and demographical references, Ghosh aptly delineates the uncertainty of life in Sunderban all at three levels- tigers, human beings and aquatic dolphins. We see how Piya strives to save the extinction of the Gangetic Dolphis, a rare species of the marine world. We also see how the tigers are unsafe in the people’s world as they are burnt alive if caught in human settlements. And human beings are endangered by the establishment. There is subsequent arrest and penalty for killing a tiger but none penalizes the government who kills hundreds with force and guile. Moreover, the tides and the storms keep hovering around the place proclaiming doom and destruction. In the end of the novel we witness the calamity disaster very close to the one like Tsunami in Sunderban where many were killed including Fokir, one of the main characters of the novel. Ghosh's postcolonial uncanny is essentially about home and homelessness. Versions of this theme--which folds into related themes of knowledge and belonging--are scattered throughout the text, each cathetered via the
figure of the feeling of an Other. Alok Rai in his review aptly lables *The Hungry Tide* as “A sultry landscape in fascinating detail, where dreams rise and die to the rhythm of the tide.”43

To sum up, the Morichjhapi incident will be ever imprinted in the Dalit atrocities list in India with a special reference to the Government ploy behind it. It was highly necessary for the people and the state to rise up against the wrongs done to these refugees and pronounce a verdict in favour of human rights rehabilitation, which has not been probed in still today. By remembering the organized crime done on human beings by human beings, it tries to reinstate the fact that human rights is a matter that is to be understood and implemented from within and not by chartering lofty sentences in law. When the State and its measures are against the human rights policies then the State is compelled to accept the tyranny of the government poo-phooing the concepts of human rights. The violated people know in their lived and embodied experience, the way in which the reality of their sufferings remains unnamable. The limits of human rights language lie in the limits of their world. The people know that even the improbable feat of translating all human violations into human rights violations will not transport the unnamable into the namable sphere. There are every day sufferings which cannot be related to the Human rights text and thus the gap forms in-between the concrete and abstract. The organic/experimental knowledge of pain and suffering of the violated does not always find articulation in erudite knowledge formations concerning human rights law and jurisprudence. The meta-languages of human rights thus remain problematic on the plane of representation and mediation of human sufferings. Yet Amitav Ghosh as a researcher/writer had tried to feature through the gaps in his narrative that through numerous struggles and movement throughout the world, human rights has become the area of transformed political practice that disorients, destabilizes, and at time even helps destroy deeply unjust concentration of political, social,
economic and technological power but this is totally concentrated on the hands of the power residing behind any act of human rights destruction or rehabilitation. Allen Ginsberg in his famous poem on Morichjhapi massacre writes:

    Millions of babies in pain
    Millions of mothers in rain
    Millions of brothers in woe
    Millions of children nowhere to go

The excerpt proves how a foreigner had been touched about the incident and was inspired to write a poem on it. It is amazing that human rights violation draws attention off the whole world but little can be done when the government is a party to it.

IV

This Chapter has attempted to portray the living and psychological conditions of the Dalit as represented by the authors. The Dalits who have been bearing the torture from time in memoriam has now found their voice through these novels and many more such writings where they express their agonies, grudges, complaints against the society, ask certain fundamental questions about their life and well being and finally fights for their lost human rights. Their writings have become the mouthpiece for their lot and their texts have become grounds for raising their voice and demanding their identity. And here lies the crux behind the poetics and politics of Dalit writing. There is a significant notifying difference in the Dalit and non-Dalit writers taken for study, though their themes and points of representation are mostly similar. Even though the Dalits claim that a Dalit writer only can bring out the true experiences of a Dalit without any satire, sympathy or empathy hidden behind it, yet the incidents represented by a non-Dalit writer
are similarly true and altruist in motive. As this study do not focus on the stylistic devices used by the writers, our focus would stick to the rights issue as highlighted by the authors only differing in respective measures. It is exciting to refer that the feeling of pain remains the same for all characters whether they are created by a Dalit writer or a non-Dalit writer and this is what we need to understand. The poetics of representation of the Dalit realism by writers gain tempo when the readers smell the sense of politics behind the writing. The agenda of this political mission gets intensified if the writing comes of a Dalit pen. Valmiki’s and Bama’s writings contain a political flavour more than the writings of other non-Dalit writers but it should not be missed that more or less every non-Dalit writer speaks of a unifying, voice, interest conglomerating in the end against injustice and this is what brings the novels ring in a similar tune.

Mahashweta Devi, Gopinath Mohanty, Amitav Ghosh rise up to the situation bringing their characters to fight against the rightlessness of their state. Mahashweta and Gopinath give arms to the poor in the end signifying a revolution that can break the pandemonium of the feudal lords. Amitav Ghosh by believing the pen mightier than the sword invests the responsibility on an author, Nirmal and then Kanai to uphold the chord of the refugees before the world thus exposing out the refugees’ motive, dream, aspirations and dexterity. Like Valmiki and Bama, Ghosh too insists Kanai taking up his pen for the cause of the Dalit refugees which is not very dissimilar to the motive of Valmiki or Bama. The only difference between the purpose of the former set of writings and the latter set of writings is that the former is fighting for one’s own cause, while the latter is fighting for the cause of the others. But both are fighting for the human rights.
Valmiki’s bitterness for calling a Dalit low is similar to Anand’s Bakha who is equally irritated to be called polluted. Valmiki through his writings have clearly called for a political rise for the Dalit’s interest. Bama too tells in the end that Dalits are to unite among themselves in achieving liberation from the age-old prejudice of caste system. Both the novelists in the end of their novels tell of some positive change in the Dalits which is a positive fact. Valmiki and Bama both being influenced by their own thoughts cannot be happy even though from their explanation we find the situation is changing. They are happy and skeptics about the matter of Dalit liberation as they believe the Dalits themselves are not united and are escapists. They fight among themselves and avoid the main point of being united for a sole cause rather they change their surnames or religion to get a sugar-coating on their bitter existence. They are afraid to accept themselves as a Dalit and be proud of their identity. This is where both the writers criticize and try to motivate the Dalits for a fight for identity.

All said and done, it is impossible to change this age long prejudice against the Dalit in the Hindus unless and until human beings care about human beings as a friend and companion and not on the basis of caste or creed. Creating awareness about the international instruments on human rights and their implications and about the constitutional provisions, national laws and government’s affirmative actions can be taken as the major solution point that Indian government and Indian citizens should understand and spread among one another. Creation of an upsurge by the ST/SC themselves through education and peaceful means so as to dismantle the pernicious caste system based on archaic values is something that will bring Dalits to limelight.
The major thrust that the authors put is that the Dalit themselves have to come out of the vicious circle of psychological slavery and unite to utilize the facilities given by the government to help their own lot. This would not only make people aware, confident, self-sufficient but also make people realise their identity and rights in society. Moreover, enhancement of work participation by the SC/ST though human capital development and not looking upon reservation in public service as a panacea for unemployment would be greatest help for Dalit uplift. This would help them to learn self-occupation, technical skills, vocational jobs and not make them lazy, empty-minded that would lead to politicization of their interests and acting as opportunists. Competing for securing employment opportunities by availing themselves of benefits under the various developmental programmes of the government and insisting on and participation in monitoring mechanisms to prevent leakage of governmental resources deployed for benefits to the SC/ST are ways to combat dilution of Dalit resources. In addition, insisting on convergence of governmental resources deployed for benefits to the ST/SC and securing the future of the children by pro-active, non-participation in child labour practices the government in turn should try to protect the cause of the Dalit in the country. And through all these means they can hope of getting access to power as political and governmental decision makers for greater general good. And today we see the Dalit are considerably prominent in Indian politics. They enforce their views and entire India respects their decisions. But too much of everything leads to something bad and so now twenty first century India finds corruption, nepotism and other vices in Dalit power which impinge on the rights of fellow Dalits and the non-dalits. Several questions contradicting the Dalit political ideology arise but they can be worked along in a separate thesis altogether. The following Chapter concludes the analysis of this Chapter and the previous Chapters thus concluding the thesis.
Notes & References

3. The fifth group is not mentioned in the Rig Veda but with passage of time with the writing of *Manusmriti* and the Yaganavakyasmriti, the Brahminical authority points sects like *Chamars* and the *chandals* who have either been born out of illegal relationships between a Brahman and a Shudra or is an illegitimate child born out of inter-caste physical reunion or are people dealing in corpses. Researches also prove that the Dalits were the Dravidians: the original decedents of the Mohenjodaro Harappa Civilization whom the Aryans defeated and out-casted as ‘Others’. See: Sadangi, Himansu Charan. 2008:50, 62-63. Print.
5. Thyagraj, Henry. 2007:40 Print
8. The 1991 Census figures reveal that 42.02 percent of the Scheduled Tribes populations were main workers of whom 54.50 percent were cultivators and 32.69 per cent agricultural laborers. Thus, about 87 percent of the main workers from these communities were engaged in primary sector activities. The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes is around 29.60 percent, as against the national average of 52 percent. More than three-quarters of Scheduled Tribes women are illiterate. These disparities are compounded by higher dropout rates in formal
education resulting in disproportionately low representation in higher education. Not surprisingly, the cumulative effect has been that the proportion of Scheduled Tribes below the poverty line is substantially higher than the national average. The estimate of poverty made by Planning Commission for the year 1993-94 shows that 51.92 percent rural and 41.4 percent urban Scheduled Tribes were still living below the poverty line.

9. Today, there are 313 Nomadic Tribes and 198 Denotified tribes of India, (Rathod, ‘Denotified and Nomadic Tribes in Maharashtra.’ Budhan The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group Newsletter. Varodra:2000 Print) yet the legacy of the Act (Criminal Tribes Act) continues to haunt the majority of 60 million people belonging to these tribes, especially as their notification over a century ago has meant not just alienation and stereotyping by the police and the media, but also economic hardships. A large number of them can still only subscribe to a slightly altered label, "Vimukta jaatis" or the Ex-Criminal Tribes. Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criminal_Tribes_Act

10. According to the figures released by the Home Minister for 1982, given by Dr. Kly in his essay ‘International Law and Dalits in Asia’, “on an average, two women belonging to the scheduled caste are raped, two men are murdered and three members of the community suffer grievous injury everyday in the country.” In 1978-79, as reported by Harijan Sevak Sangh, untouchability is practiced in 1.155 villages from districts throughout India. In 613 villages, Dalits have no access in using public wells. In 821 villages, Dalits are denied access to the public temples. In 496 and 473 villages respectively, Dalits were turned away from local cafes and barbers shops. In 603 villages, the washermen denied services to Dalits. It is also a pity that the 20% to 30 % estimation of Dalit population, as found in government records, entitled to enjoy reservation facilities, are only that section of people who are considered to be Hindu and Sikh and not the
converted Dalit Christian, Dalit Buddhist, or the Dalit Muslim. However, if we examine India’s actual implementation process of the Rights mentioned in the Universal Declaration Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, we find that the laws are reinterpreted in a way to suit the Indian Constitution. Refer: Dr. Kly, Y.N. “Introduction to the book: International Law and Dalits in India”. Human rights from the Dalit Perspective. Ed. Thiagraj, Henry. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2007:36 Print.

11. The Supreme Court also can intervene in such matters and take up a case directly related to the violation of the fundamental rights mentioned in the Part III of the constitution.

12. The system of debt bondage in India is an outcome of certain categories of indebtedness, which have been prevailing for a long time involving certain economically, exploited, helpless and weaker sections of society. This system originated from the uneven social structure characterised by feudal and semi-feudal conditions. Bonded Labourers constitute perhaps the weakest section of the rural poor. “Bonded labour system” means the system of forced, or partly forced, labour under which a debtor enters, or has, or is presumed to have, entered, into an agreement with the creditor to the effect that he would – (i) render, by himself or through any member of his family, or any person dependent on him, labour or service to the creditor, or for the benefit of the creditor, for a specified period or for any unspecified period, either without wages or for nominal wages, or (ii) for the freedom of employment or other means of livelihood for a specified period or for an unspecified period, or (iii) forfeit the right to move freely throughout the territory of India, or (iv) forfeit the right to appropriate or sell at market value any of his property or product of his labour or the labour of a member of his family or any person dependent on him; and includes the system of forced, or partly forced, labour under which a surety for a debtor enters, or has, or is
presumed to have, entered, into an agreement with the creditor to the effect that in the event
of the failure of the debtor to repay the debt, he would render the bonded labour on behalf of
the debtor. The Bonded Labour Abolition Act (1976) provides for the abolition of the system
of bonded labour. It freed unilaterally all the bonded labourers from bondage with
simultaneous liquidation of their debts.

13. Daily Wages Act Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (Central Act XI of 1948) defines that the
minimum rates of wages for the employment in occupation were fixed under the provisions

14. Devi, Mahashewta. ‘Year of Birth-1871, Mahashewta Devi on India’s Denotified Tribes.’
   IndiaTogether. Interview by Mahashewta Devi on March 2002. Refer to:
   http://www.indiatogether.org/bhasha/budhan/birth1871.htm/


17. The Paraja tribe also called the Parja, Porja or Poroja is concentrated in the Koraput district
of Orissa. The term Paroja or Poraja, as Thurston suggests in The Scheduled Tribes (1994)
New York: Oxford University Press, Anthropological Survey of India, has been derived from
the Oriya word ‘Po’ meaning ‘Son’ and ‘raja’ meaning king. They are the sons of the king.
The other interpretation is that they are the son of the soil. The Paraja are generally short in
stature long and narrow headed people having a fine physic, well built body, active, men of
average height. The women, however do not have good features, are short, square of built but
very robust and sturdy. Their dress is very simple as the men wear a long cloth, a few inches
wide passed round the waist and twice through between the legs. The ends of this cloth are
brightly colored and hangs down behind like a tail. The women wear a short petticoat reaching down up-to the knee; their upper part of the body is bare except for a string of beads originally, but now they wear saris as normal Hindu women. They are strictly agricultural people and the salient point of the religious belief has reference to the fertilization of the earth. They are good at hunting and can run down a bison or a wild boar by their sharp aim of only bow and axes. The village is governed by the headmen or the Malik, the office being hereditary in male line. A group of villages form a commune under a chief, Mutamalik, who settles social, disputes. They are shy, timid and hesitant to associate themselves with the people of the plain. They love their mountain and jungle and live freely and fearlessly in them. Sometimes, a Poraja or a Kondh family may clear a small patch of land in the forest and set fire to it and sow the seeds in the ashes, following the practice of ‘Jhum Cultivation’ which is prevalent among Assam Tribes. They grow few food crops but a lot them turn Eric which they sell. They regard themselves owners and proprietors of land which they cultivate. They mainly worship three gods – ‘Dharma Penu: The god of family and tribe, Saru Penu: God of Hills and Taru Pennu : God of Earth, who is the male counterpart of Tari Penu who whom human sacrifices were made in distant times. The priest who make offering to Taru Pennu is called ‘Jhankar’ and he is assisted by the ‘Jani’, the man who actually slaughters the animal before the God.


19. The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was largely based on previous Indian Forest Acts implemented under the British. The first and most famous was the Indian Forest Act of 1878. Both the
1878 act and the 1927 one sought to consolidate and reserve the areas having forest cover, or significant wildlife, to regulate movement and transit of forest produce, and duty leviable on timber and other forest produce. It also defines the procedure to be followed for declaring an area to be a Reserved Forest, a Protected Forest or a Village Forest. It defines a forest offence, what are the acts prohibited inside a Reserved Forest, and penalties leviable on violation of the provisions of the Act. Reserved Forest is an area or mass of land duly notified under section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 [Act 16 of 1927] or under the reservation provisions of the Forest acts of the State Governments of the Indian Union. The manner in which a Reserved Forest, shortly written as RF, has to be constituted is described in section 3 to 20 of the Act. It is within power of a State Government to issue a preliminary notification under section 4 of the Act declaring that it has been decided to constitute such land, as specified in a Schedule with details of its location, area and boundary description, into a Reserved Forest. Such a notification also appoints an officer of the State Government, normally the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district, as Forest Settlement Officer. The Forest Settlement Officer fixes a period not less than three months, to hear the claims and objections of every person having or claiming any rights over the land which is so notified to be reserved. He conducts inquiries into the claims of rights, and may reject or accept the same. He is empowered even to acquire land over which right is claimed. For rights other than that of right of way, right of pasture, right to forest produce, or right to a water course, the Forest Settlement Officer may exclude such land in whole or in part, or come to an agreement with the owner for surrender of his rights, or proceed to acquire such land in the manner prescribed under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 [Act 1 of 1894]. Once the Forest Settlement Officer settles all the rights either by admitting them or rejecting them,
as per the provisions of the Act, and has heard appeals, if any, and settled the same, all the rights with the said piece of land [boundaries of which might have been altered or modified during the settlement process] vest with the State Government. Thereafter, the State Government issues notification under section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 declaring that piece of land to be a Reserved Forest. Protected Forest is an area or mass of land, which is not a reserved forest, and over which the Government has property rights, declared to be so by a State Government under the provisions of the section 29 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. It does not require the long and tedious process of settlement, as in case of declaration of a reserved forest. However, if such a declaration infringes upon a person's rights, the Government may cause an inquiry into the same; but pending such inquiries, the declaration cannot abridge or affect such rights of persons or communities. Further, in a protected forest, the Government may issue notifications declaring certain trees to be reserved, or suspend private rights, if any, for a period not exceeding 30 years, or prohibit quarrying, removal of any forest produce, or breaking of land etc. Village Forest is constituted under section 28 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. The Government may assign to any village community the rights over a land which may be a part of a reserved forest for use of the community. Usually, forested community lands are constituted into Village Grazing Reserve [VGR]. Parcels of land so notified are marked on the settlement revenue maps of the villages.

Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Forest_Act,_1927

22. An Act to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, to provide for Special Courts for the trial of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. This Act gives a Dalit or Adivasi man or woman protection against any torture, human rights and human dignity violation, protection against forceful acquisition of land and property, forceful eviction, destruction of life or property etc. This Act also permits a public servant to be penalized because of some unlawful act against a Dalit. Refer: Agarwal, Girish and Gonsalves, Colin. *Dalits and the Law.* New Delhi: Human rights Law Network, 2005.

23. The term Criminal Tribes Act applies to various successive pieces of legislation enforced in India during British rule; the first enacted in 1871 as Criminal Tribes Act (Act XXVII of 1871) applied mostly in North India. The Act was extended to Bengal Presidency and other areas in 1876, and finally with the *Criminal Tribes Act 1911*, it was extended to Madras Presidency as well. The Act went through several amendments in the next decade and finally the Criminal Tribes Act (VI of 1924) incorporated all of them. Under the Act, ethnic or social communities in India which were defined as "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offenses" such as thefts, were systematically registered by the government. Since they were described as 'habitually criminal', restrictions on their movements were also imposed; adult male members of such groups were forced to report weekly to the local police. At the time of Indian independence in 1947, there were thirteen million people in 127 communities who faced constant surveillance, search and arrest without warrant if any member of the group was found outside the prescribed area. The Act was repealed in August
1949 and former "criminal tribes" were denotified in 1952, when the Act was replaced with the Habitual Offenders Act 1952 of Government of India, and in 1961 state governments started releasing lists of such tribes. Refer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criminal_Tribes_Act

A habitual offender, according to the colonial period records, is a person who has repeatedly committed the same crime. Various state and jurisdictions may have laws targeting habitual offenders, and specifically providing for enhanced or exemplary punishments or other sanctions. They are designed to counter criminal recidivism by physical incapacitation via imprisonment. The nature, scope and type of habitual offender statutes vary, but generally they apply when a person has been convicted a minimum of twice for various crimes. As because the Denotified and Notified Tribes had their own ways of life in the forest, the British stamped them as criminals and Adivasis were arrested without proper cause.

With the adopting of the Indian Constitution in 1950, a newly liberated India ‘denotified’ its criminal tribes through an act of Parliament in 1952. But far from delivering on the promise of equal rights and justice for all, the Indian government passed a ‘Habitual Offender’s Act’ in 1959. By defining a class of ‘habitual offenders who pose a threat to society’, the Act put the newly denotified tribes in a precarious position. Both the police and society had learnt to treat the notified tribals as criminals. Like the colonial police before them, the new Indian Police retained the Act as part of its syllabus and widespread abuse continued against the tribals. So far, the Indian government has paid no heed to calls by both the UN and India’s own National Human Rights Commission to repeal the law.

Refer: Garg, Vikram. ‘From Notified Criminals to Denotified Offenders: A Brief History of the Tribal Experience in the Colonial and Modern Era’. The South Asian Idea Weblog.


27. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 62nd session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007. While as a General Assembly Declaration it is not a legally binding instrument under international law, according to a UN press release, it does "represent the dynamic development of international legal norms and it reflects the commitment of the UN's member states to move in certain directions"; the UN describes it as setting "an important standard for the treatment of indigenous peoples that will undoubtedly be a significant tool towards eliminating human rights violations against the planet's 370 million indigenous people and assisting them in combating discrimination and marginalisation." Refer: Frequently Asked Questions: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/.../FAQsindigenousdeclaration.pdf


Refer to: http://www.hrschool.org/doc/mainfile.php/Lesson62/225/

31. ‘Nimnobarno’ literally means ‘inferior varna’ or caste. It denotes those belonging to occupational castes considered inferior such as leather workers, those who deal in liquor, boatmen, fishermen, i.e., those classified as ‘untouchables’ in British Bengal. Though Joya Chatterji (in her seminal book *Bengal Divided*, Cambridge University Press:1994) refers to them as ‘chhotolok’ – literally ‘small people’.

32. The term bhadralok (gentle-folk) is widely used and well understood in Bengal. It refers to the renter class who enjoyed tenurial rights to rents from land appropriated by the Permanent Settlement. This was a class that did not work its land but lived off the rental income generated. Shunning manual labour the ‘babu’ saw this as the essence of the social distance between himself and his social inferiors. The title ‘babu’ – a badge of bhadralok status – carried with it connotations of Hindu, frequently upper caste exclusiveness, of landed wealth, of being master (as opposed to servant), and latterly of possessing the goods of education, culture and anglicisation (Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994:5). Refer, Annu Jalais. ‘Dwelling on Morichjhanpi When Tigers became ‘Citizens’, Refugees ‘Tiger-Food’. Economic and political Weekly. April 23, 2005. Print.


35. Namasudra is the name of a Hindu community originally from certain regions of Bengal, India. They were traditionally engaged in cultivation and as boatmen. However, they lived outside the four-tier ritual *varna* system. The formed a group because of their own kith and kin interests and after the communal conflicts with the Muslims in Bangladesh, they migrated to India. The Namasudra Movement of East Bengal had been the most powerful and politically mobilized Dalit movement in India during the colonial period that had kept the Bengal Congress Party in opposition from the 1920s, in alliance with the Muslims. However, partition resulted in the loss of bargaining power of the Dalits because, being divided along religious lines of Hindus and Muslims, they became political minorities in both countries. Subsequently the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s saw the influx of Bengali Hindus from what had become East Pakistan (and later Bangladesh) to West Bengal, who came here with the hope of settling down. They were, however, sent to various uncongenial areas outside West Bengal with the assurance that they would eventually be relocated to West Bengal.

36. It was in this context that the Dandakaranya project in central India was conceived as a long-term solution to the problem of rehabilitation of Bengali refugees. Its genesis lay in the Rehabilitation Ministers’ Conference of 1956 where it was decided that government relief would be given only to those refugees who agreed to resettle outside West Bengal. Subsequently, the Dandakaranya Development Authority (DDA) was established in 1958. DDA was responsible for developing an area of 78,000 square miles, known as Dandakaranya, in the Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Orissa, and the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh.


40. Roy, Rituparna (9)


42. Jalais, Annu. 2005:1759


Chapter 5

A Way Forward and Beyond

This research work, by purporting the principles of human rights as evaluative framework and selected Indian fiction in English as case studies, has explored and analysed the interface between the two. Understanding Indian fiction in English through human rights perspectives has involved a critical dissection of the chosen literary texts which has highlighted and problematised certain human rights concepts embedded in them. The study has evolved as a sociological and critical reading of the literary texts chosen for the purpose. The study has forged an eclectic mix of close textual reading, discursive and contextual decoding as a methodic strategy to investigate and understand the corpus of human rights problems in literature. In other words, this has been an attempt to explore the interconnections between the textual and contextual in order to understand the discursive formations emanating out of the fictional reality and realist activism. In its problematization of human rights issues the study has specifically focused on the literary representation of children, women, Dalits/tribal people in Indian Fiction in English and English translation. The study is based on the details of the following novels:


12. *Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai (1985)


This research work at the beginning introduces the human rights concepts and explains its scope of work in our daily lives. It further discovers and establishes the relationship between literature and human rights which is complementary to each other. Reading literature from human rights perspectives rather serves as a value addition. Studying human rights considering literature as a manifesto of society and times not only raises questions on its premises formulating it but also lends us a scope to see through its politics and problematics working both universally and locally. Again, studying literature through the eyes of human rights not only increases the poignancy of understanding the characters and their circumstances, but also points to its fantastic attainability in real lives. Contemporary Indian fiction in English engaged with the human rights issues from pre-independence era to the 1980’s, either document human rights violations, articulate a human right claim or offer a critique of the limitations of human rights discourse. Some of the topics around which the discussion develops are:

- the realization of the issues of human rights in each novel taken for study,
• discussion of the importance and graveness of problems in the lives of the protagonist,
• analysis of the circumstances from literal and human rights perspectives,
• examining and critiquing the role of the existing law, cultural mores, socio-economic constructs in society and lives of protagonists,
• dissecting the mechanization of exploitative system in which the characters are trapped and the repercussions thereof on their lives and consciousness,
• finding the solutions provided by the authors, if any,
• decoding the poetics and politics of representation by the authors, their closeness to reality and
• finally, justifying the probability of the novels to stand out as human rights documents.

Findings

It has been observed during the study that there are certain common themes of human rights violation in all the novels. All authors have been religiously true in their representations of the predicaments of their characters thereby mirroring the reality of the society and time frame to which they belong. The treatment of the themes only differs in degrees of their experiences and expressions. Personal perception and feelings has only added to the intensity of the representation. Every author has tried to appeal for the free play and restoration of human rights in society irrespective of their beliefs. Some of them had tried to give some solutions to the problems in the end while some have left it for the readers to intervene and eke out a solution. Some of them had gone far enough to suggest political stands against the existing violations and tried to formulate a panacea through their depiction. Their style of narration and events depicted hold water for the colour that they promulgate and thus help this work find ground to justify their
accounts as human rights documents. Their narratives, both at thematic and structural levels-emerge as continuous interplay of creation, critique and conditioning. The problems commonly talked about in the novels are socio-cultural and economic in nature. The authors unanimously depict the problems of caste and class divide in the then society and their ill-effects on people. The violation of the basic human rights of having proper food, living, clothing, shelter, dignity, education, health facilities and economic sufficiency, are grossly missing in the lives of the protagonists represented. All the novels have distinctly rendered the existence of a high have class and a low have not class working in parallel proposition in society. The high have always dominated the low through various schemes as per the imbalance dictated by the Hindu cultural practices. The problems of untouchability, slavery, poverty, ill-treatment by the high caste/class on the low, are rampant. Further, the psychosomatic problems are represented through vicarious events in the lives of the protagonists. People are not given their due respect and the rich high caste has become the coterie of oppressing agents and concentration of power in society.

If scrutinized deeply, the novels seem to proceed in time and act as their time of representation advances. There has been a noticeable phase of development in the authorial representation from spreading or launching awareness to a conscious decisive stage to a stage of promulgating solutions. The authors at various stages have represented the progress of marginalised mindset from getting educated or aware of the problems to understanding them thus, trying for their resistance to finding solutions or way outs of the problems independently or in groups. This can be very well discerned as the discussion crops up and takes shape for all novels.

*Untouchable* is a story of awareness and can be called as a novel of human rights in its first stage. Through Bakha’s day out, Anand has very well projected the lives of the Bhangis, their
status in society, the discrimination and ill-treatment that they face in their lives. They are physically vulnerable and easy objects of torture. The novel stands up against the violation of the rights of equality, human dignity, and stands for equal work and pay, non-exploitation, rightfulness in society. It also suggests technical innovation and education as means to uproot the social problems of untouchability and inequality. Anand does not suggest any socio-econonomic solution or political stand for the issues of human rights but by exposing the predicaments of the low castes, he spreads awareness among the public and the low caste to realise the wrongs done to them. Through the exposure of certain tenets of Gandhism, Anand tries to generalize the goodness of equality and human rights in society. Anand sees the introduction of the sanitation system as a means to provide relief to the scavengers but does not guarantee human rights reinstatement. He seems to be sure that changing the cultural taboos would be very difficult even if professions change for the low castes and this is what we notice in the other novels of the later decades. Even if occupation changes caste discrimination or humiliation remains the same.

Anand keeps the novel open-ended letting Bakha decide his predicament. He is not assertive in suggesting ends, be it Gandhism or conversion to Christianity. He introduces means but is not strong enough to take a stand for it. He foresees the positivity of the flush sanitation system but does not discuss about the change that may dawn on the Bhangis socio-economically with its implementation. He therefore can be seen as a distant empathetic observer who wants to do good for the society but is not sure of the measures.

*Untouchable* can be termed as an awareness package where in the end Bakha too knows something about his rights and equality; he can now protest and understand things in the light of rights knowledge. Anand’s genuine effort to critique the lingering injustice by human beings on
human beings can be called as a first step in documenting human rightlessness and thus can be called as a human right document.

Looking forward in time ahead of *Untouchable*, the novels *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* and *Paraja* are stories of Dalit/Tribal oppression like that of *Untouchable* but these stories have something more than what Anand have suggested. The novels focus on the outcome of a long drawn oppression and torture on the Dalit/Tribals by the feudal system at a timeframe after independence. Both the authors have been eyewitnesses to the injustice done to the Dalit and tribal people of northern Bihar and Eastern Orissa. Mahashewta Devi, the social activist, who has been doing a lot of work for the denotified tribes, portrays the lives of the underdogs pressed between poverty and rightlessness. Gopinath Mohanty who had been staying for years among the Kondh and Paraja tribes of the forests of Orissa had empathically reproduced the miserable existence of the people when exploited by the landlords. These novels fall in the second category, as discussed above, suggesting some decisive factors in the end if not fool proof solutions to combat oppression.

Both the authors project the hapless condition of the Dalit men and women who are pointlessly exploited by the feudal lords for fun and are treated as purchased slaves/gotis. The women face even more terrible circumstances as they are exploited both mentally and sexually. The women lack in all perspectives the rights allotted to them. Kept keeping practices are common in the Barha village of Bihar and the wives of the feudal lords have no rights to protest, instead they have to bear the pangs of ill-treatment, indominatable rage and physical assaults of their husbands. Poverty, illiteracy, lack of income generating resources has kept the Dalits rooted to the ground where the feudal lords easily exploit them in all possible degrees.
The novels further project the corrupt administrative officials and police a part and party to encourage the Dalit exploitation as they take the feudal lords as their patrons for fulfillment of their interests. Both the novels are representations of the discrimination between the rich and the poor and the horrific result of this disparity. They reflect that unbearable state of torture and the state of the agitated marginals when they take up arms against the feudal lords to end all torments.

Unlike *Untouchable* these two novels reflect the state of consciousness of rights in people despite their dominated positions. Here we do not find the people accepting the misery as something destined for them forever. They neither rationalize with their pitiful state nor remain calm with the contention laid down by the feudal practices. The people, even though in a subjugated state, are found to talk about the injustice done on them in groups and craft means for survival. In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* we see the NGO and the Gandhi-workers regularly keeping in touch with the downtrodden to give them news of the outer world; they even try to gauge the extent of torture to which the people are subjected.

We also see people requesting the educated social workers to gather strength and stand against the feudal lords. We even find the police and administration being reported of the exploitation that the Dalits are exposed to. This explains that the people of Barha, however rustic they are, are aware of their rights but because of the lack of resources and fear of the feudal lords they could not rise. But the final blow is initiated by Lachhima who channelizes the entire Dalit consensus towards killing Ganesh. The novel in the end overthrows all pessimistic vibes when the new subdivisional officer tries to harass Ganesh for killing Haroa and Ganesh running for life comes to Lachhima for rescue. The hunter-hunted situation is immediately overturned as Lachhima
motivates all anguished Dalits to attack the helpless beast-like man trapped in the house. Lachhima we see has now learnt to manipulate the ways and thus hits the nail on its head. Like her Maliks, Ganesh and Medininarayan, she finds ways to lure her prey to an asylum which actually would orchestrate his death. With the death of Ganesh the audience is not sure of the overnight change of fate of the Barha village from darkness to light but is at least hopeful of the betterment of the situation. In the late seventies and early eighties, the villages of Bihar and Bengal had witnessed such Dalit/Naxal upheavals which were veritable proofs of the agonized state of the poor in the villages.

*Paraja* on the other hand, is also the projection of a similar kind of cataclysm between the Paraja and the Sahukar only that this is fought at an individual level. The Sahukar dupes Sukru Jani and his family, uses the girls for pleasure and exploits them both economically and socially. They are deprived of proper food, clothing, shelter, education, love and care of a normal life. They grow introvert in mind and due to recurring tortures on their minds and bodies, they become mentally agitated and short tempered; these object to their proper growth of personality. *Paraja* shows the decline of Sukru Jani’s complacent Paraja existence to a life of misery, wedged as a bonded labour and a pauper because of the different layers of exploitation present in the fabric of the society. He is not only duped by the feudal lords, by the administrative officials, lawyers, but also by the headman of his clan and some well-to-do dishonest fellowmen.

The final strikes in both the novels symbolize the instances of caste/class struggles between the dominant classes and the subordinate classes in regard to several socio-economic issues and demands for human rights. It includes also the resistance against low working wages, terrible working conditions, sexual assaults by men of dominant castes on women of depressed classes, a voice for proper distribution of land rights and status in society. The authors by showing the
cataclysm do not try to prove violence as solutions for the Dalit misery but portrays how deprivation can lead to violence and impinge upon other’s human rights. By killing Sahukar and Ganesh, the deprived revolt through unlawful means and destroy the oppressors’ human rights. This is nothing but a situation of right-fight which has no solution but destruction unless mitigated.

The distressed people jump into an immediate fatalistic measure to end tyranny which is not only against the victims’ human rights but also against what culture and ethics dictate. The novels present a right-starved crisis and their effects, making the plots more lifelike and realistic. This is where the authors triumph as documenters of the need and needlessness of human rights in society making the plots a satire on the real scenario and the role of state in protecting human rights. They further emphasize on the need of the human rights charter and concepts to be enriched with the knowledge of the probabilities that literature shows citing instances hidden in the corners of our daily lives.

In the third phase the novels that depict India in the seventies and eighties are Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea*, Bama’s *Karukku*, Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, Kundalika Kapadia’s *Seven Steps in the Sky*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. These novels not only tell and show the human rights issues in contemporary times, but also try to suggest some solutions to the problems in the end. The authors in most of these novels are somewhat autobiographical and they try to forward ways to fight win the situations.
Anita Desai’s *The Village by the Sea* is a saga of hardships of a family in Thul, near Bombay, that especially focuses on the plight of the children of the family. By describing Hari’s and Lila’s venture to keep their family up, Desai brings forth the issues of the violation of child rights and the free play of child labour even in big cities like Bombay. She describes the plight of Lila, the fourteen year old girl, miserably striving to keep up her sisters and her ailing mother forsaking all happiness of the childhood. Hari, the twelve year old romantic chap is forced out of the squalor of poverty-stricken existence to meet a new dudgeon existence in Bombay where he works as a child labour in the Sri Krishna Eating House amidst all discomforts. She very well delineates that poverty is the major reason that makes other rights inaccessible in children. They are forced to work for bare sustenance.

Desai’s portrayal of the plight of children is real though the plot has some fantasy element in it. Desai attempts to present the story from a child’s perspective that is awestruck and bewildered by the ways of the world. Everything seems new to him and he is willing to adjust at every step of his life, unaware of his rights, as because his aim is to earn some living for his family and see the family members happy. Though the world is ruthless to Hari, yet his inner spirit and dreams do not die as Desai too wishes to uphold the utopia where every child is growing up with adequate food, clothing, love, care education and eyes full of dreams.

It is very innovative of Desai to float the idea of training and vocational skill in the poor children who do not have money to study but have talents to learn the technical knowhow. This can provide them with income when they grow adult. Desai gives a practical solution to counter the child rights issues. Mr. Panwallah teaches Hari to mend watches and this gives him a better edge
in life; he dreams of starting his own business in Thul and thus hopes to secure his family economically. Lila, on the other hand, is helped by the D’Souzas which is a positive step in bridging the relationship between the rich and the poor. Though the D’Souzas were not just in using the labour of these children yet it came out as a boon to them. A little bit of humanity on the D’Souzas part saves Lila’s mother, encourages her father to quit drinking and become a responsible man. This is the fantastic element introduced by Desai together with the realistic scene, which makes the novel pleasant for its readers.

Desai’s portrayal in this aspect is sympathetic, and wishful which makes the novel enjoyable. The helpful attitude of the rich as portrayed in the novel is a clue forwarded by Desai to eradicate misery, poverty, unemployment and the right less state of the poor. Desai tries to invoice that it is not only the laws, administration, State and social bodies that have to rise for the cause of child rights and poverty but every human being must contribute one’s efforts for the good of the children on the whole. Here Desai is unique in giving this social message to enable some rights penetrate through the social fabric of the society for being available to every child.

Talking about child rights and their pitiful existence remains incomplete if Bama is not immediately talked about. Karukku is an autobiographical journey of Bama from her childhood to her adulthood amidst various Dalit experiences in life and her understanding of the world in a better way. Karukku depicts the author’s childhood spent in her village, in school and in college where experiences are relatable to Om’s experiences in Joothan: A Dalit’s Life for being a Dalit.
Caste and poverty are things that haunt Bama at every step and she is punished, called names, mistreated without her fault only because of her pedigree. Bama describes the hardships of Dalit Christian men, women and children throughout the day only for earning a square meal. She pays commendable attention in this section as she describes how inhumanely children are worked out only for fulfilling their hunger. The deep rooted empathy and frustration sounds clear in Bama’s voice as she relates her childhood stories. She protests against the issue of corporal punishment in school by the Nuns and teachers. The internal development, the journey within that Bama makes from the black holes of caste and religion to a state of being above caste and above religion from a child to an adult is the central holding field of the novel. Bama understands that taking refuge of any religion or sect is not the answer to the human rights problems but standing up for the cause by staying within such a society is of some importance.

She calls on her Dalit fellow mates to stand up and protest against the wrongs done towards them by the society, administration and the churches. She suggests the Dalit to unite to form a whole thus setting up their political stand.

Bama in the ‘Afterword’ of her book tells that in the early twentieth century some changes have been noticed in the Christian Dalits. First and foremost development that has been noticed is a growing acknowledgement that they are Dalits and that conversion to Christianity has not really changed that significant fact of their lives, despite hopes and promises given by Christianity. Christian Dalits thus, now have a dual social and psychological identity- Christian as well as Dalit, and have to live with the tensions built into this dual identity. The second trend is an increasing assertion of Dalit identity as a positive thing, a source of pride rather than of shame. In this they rightly challenge pervasive cultural norms. One expression of this assertiveness is
Dalit theology; another is a harsh critique of those missionary and Indian church leaders who, in their efforts to “Indianise” the Church, have equated “Indian” culture with Brahmanic instead of Dalit culture. Perhaps most obvious of all are the persistent efforts to “raise the caste issue” and exorcise the demon of caste discrimination within the churches themselves. This is what again Bama suggests at every step of her novel proclaiming the hypocrisy of the Church which acclaims to establish equality, love and brotherhood in people but in reality demeans the low and is a major source point to spread inequality and hatred.

Bama realises that after centuries of humiliation, Dalits have started to voice the truth, call themselves ‘Dalit’ with pride, recognize their traditions gleefully, and ultimately establish their identity against inhumanity. And this is where Karukku as a novel and Bama as its author finally triumph in achieving the ‘goal’ that she had talked about in the ‘Afterword’ of the novel. Forwarding a solution to accept oneself as a Dalit and recognizing the hypocrisies of the church are the major solutions that Bama provides in her novel. She moreover advocates education, economic independence and logical thinking as important factors for retaining human rights. Education, as her Anna says, can take one above caste. It is the doorway towards liberty; this is just similar to Om’s father’s advice in Joothan: A Dalit’s Life.

Karukku thus, is not only an account of the south Indian Dalits but also is a human right document in every aspect as it speaks, focuses and produces problems and solutions to confront the vices of the society and helps people know themselves and sieve out the crude elements that hamper the practice of human rights in society.
The fretful existence of the Dalit provides us with a clear explanation of the extent to which their human rights are violated. Omprakash Valmiki’s autobiography is one that makes the situation crystal clear and our concerns inevitable. If one deeply scrutinizes *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life*, one can easily empathize with the stings of pain in the lives of the Dalits. The novel is not a tragedy but is a vivid delineation of excruciating pain. The novel stands against the abundance of child labour practice, untouchability, poverty, insult to human dignity, socio-economic exploitation and the high-low divide in society. The novel is a representation of the contemporary Dalit children who not only are deprived of love, affection, right to proper education, playfulness and care but are heaped with curses, insults and hatred. Their lives are burdened with the burden of caste that they have inherited from their forefathers and would have to carry on till death. Om describes how his life had been a bed of thorns at every stage and even now when he is a famous writer he is still seen with contempt.

*Untouchable, Karukku* and *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* sketch the psychological turmoil in the characters because of the deprivation of socio-economic rights and dignity through an entire life span intergeneration wise that lead to certain problems in their personality development and ideological framework. Both Bama and Valmiki try to give out solutions or way outs to some elemental Dalit issues which are political in nature if perceived from the Dalit perspectives. They satirize the government, police, and the ideologies serving behind the Hindu culture in addition.

The inscrutable existence within and without society at the same time, the awful feeling of exclusion, the terrified steps at every corner of social life, the horror of ill-treatment and abuse,
the politics of socio-religious customs and so on, terrify Valmiki bringing him to the zenith of
the ultimate truth face to face that “One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation, but it is
impossible to get past caste”. *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* in this context brings forth the Dalit
ideology from an insider’s point of view where he wants a separate identity among the Indian
socio-cultural existence, an identity which does not make him and the millions like him feel
embarrassed to say that he belongs to a *Chuhra* or a *Bhangi* caste, where the stamp of a
‘Depressed Class’ does not go with him everywhere leading to some unwanted humiliation.
Here unlike *Untouchable*, *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* does not give us a glimpse of an ideal
existence that Bakha hopes to see in the coming future. Valmiki and Bama are certain on the
point that Dalits have been neglected so long and so forth and so they should not or are not to
undergo under any illusions about idyllic days in future. The point they insist through their anger
filled narrations is to take away or snatch the allotted rights on account of their being born as
human beings and not tolerate the taboos of exploitation and expulsion imposed on them by the
society. They have not a moderate view like that of Anand who questions but yet hopes for a
bright future.

*Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* shows Valmiki’s deprogramming of the programmed Dalit self by
making him successful as a writer, factory worker, responsible husband and a good son. He now
boasts himself for being a Chuhra and never wants to lose this Dalit identity though it is this
caste identity that has kept him in the abyss of torments. He demands rights but not at the cost of
identity. His identity, he feels, has turned into his ethnic dignity which he refuses to change
replacing his surname with other.
Bama and Valmiki’s presentations vary in appeal not in their contents when fighting for Dalit and child rights. Bama is short in her portrayal, informal and lucid in production. She is disorganized in her story telling and her story satires her own lot for many important aspects that are responsible for losing their rights. She is child like when expressing her school stories and retains a colourful balance in featuring the prettier side of life in the festivals, child’s play, feast and happy moments with her family. She criticizes her decisions in getting swayed away by the air of piousness led by Christianity but soon is disillusioned by the real picture of the Churches which entertains the rich, abuses the poor and teaches ill about the Dalits. She becomes subjective in the end and describes her situation as a hapless bird without wings. She zooms her camera to present a snapshot of her own future which is lonely, penniless and sad but she is happy to work for social good. She finally closes by fast forwarding her story leaving some gaps to say that the Dalits have after years understood the problems of the society and churches and thus are trying to assert their identity by various ways.

But Valmiki takes a different stand all through. He is stern, non-sparing, one-dimensional in approach and is strongly advocative of a political stand for Dalit identity. Till its last line, the novel questions the sanity of caste divide and discriminative approach of people towards Dalit. He does not give a colourful description or project any favourable instance of his life but is always skeptic in his approach. He admits that humiliation and deprivation has made him cynic, fearful and introvert where he is apprehensive of thinking positive about life. He like Bama is proud to be a Dalit and is satisfied to contend with casteism which he calls as a ‘disease’. He is straightforward in branding the educated, rich, privileged society as opportunist as they decide merit, respect only on the basis of caste. He questions the myths, epics and all paradigms that demeans Dalits and is venomous towards Hindu culture as he calls it “defeated social order”.
Like Bama he is reluctant to understand why situations change for a person when he/she reveals his/hers identity as Dalit. He fails to rise above the nastiness of his experiences and tries to politicize his poetics through his views. In this he seems sometimes biased and obsessed unlike Bama who keeps an objective approach keeping the contention similar. Both the novels are heavy documents of human rights violation and directly draw support from every individual. They do not talk about state agencies’ interference because they know that the agencies are run by people of high caste and laws are also framed by their majority, thus it is impossible that an equal treatment can be expected out of them. As Lakshmi Holmstrom puts it, “...Bama's work is among those that are exploring a changing Dalit identity.” Bama is not merely trying to politically influence the power structures but wants to communicate with the readers at a deeper level. As readers we are expected to travel into her reality and empathize with the condition of the Dalits. Karukku is indeed the "two-edged sword" but only mightier.”

The authors’ sincere attempt to justify the cause of the marginalised and to portray way outs according to their respective perceptions is that what makes the novels living. Valmiki, Mahashweta Devi, Bama and Gopinath Mohanty (up to some extent) seek to offer revolution and protest as ways that can confirm grounds for the Dalit identity/voice in the macrocosmic world. Their writings further act in subverting and unmasking the inevitable Indianised programme laid down by the upper caste elites against the low caste thus rewriting history for and about the ‘untouchables’. In this way their writings actually become extended cameras of Dalit realism.

Through numerous struggles and movement throughout the world, human rights have become the area of transformed political practice that disorients, destabilizes, at time even helps destroy
deeply unjust concentration of political, social, economic and technological power. And this is why our research should embody human rights to understand ways to destabilize the power structure in a society. But the terms ‘oppressors’ and ‘oppressed’ become difficult to understand when one thinks of violence by oppressed as humans for humans and violence by oppressors as humans for humans. The rich and messy nexus formed by political representation and the politics of representation that is at the center of happening is controlled by the power dominating the incident. The bitter fact at the end of all arguments remains that human rights is proliferated by a responsive government and brutalized by the face of its power. And this finds its ditto representation by Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Hungry Tide* where the Morichjanpi incident of West Bengal in 1976 is represented.

The debacle occurred when a herd of refugees after the war with Pakistan from Bangladesh had come to settle in Morichjhapi in Sunderbans and the Left government in power brutally had subjugated their human and refugee rights thereby killing thousands of Dalit men and women creating a black day in the history in Indian politics.

*The Hungry Tide* proudly asserts to dis-cover the past history by deciphering the real picture behind the government reports and wrings out the cases of human rights violation of the Dalit refugees in particular. His description is an enlightening document that amazes us with data about the potential of human beings in creating a civilization and destroying another. *The Hungry Tide* very subtly brings out the duality of the government in handling the refugee issue; in fact it tells about the special strategies that the government had taken to evict the settlers on the ground of projecting the primacy of ecology, against the settlement policy of the refugees
which the Communists once had admitted. The use of force in Morichjhanpi that saw hundreds of refugees dying, only to sideline a promise given by the Left before coming to power, was seen by the Sundarban islanders as a betrayal not only of refugees and of the poor and marginalised in general, but also, of the Bengali ‘nimnobarno’ identity. In 1979, the Left Front Government in West Bengal was turning against the very cause which it had championed for over two decades and which had been a key support in bringing it to power. This irresponsible attitude of the government is an example of heinous betrayal from the perspectives of both human rights and political ethics. It clearly proves to the fact that rights ultimately are the outcome of political decision and are at the mercy of the group in power.

In the novel, the Morichjapi Massacre is reported by Nirmal in a notebook that is passed on to his nephew, Kanai decades after the incident. From his description we come to know that he had volunteered himself to be a part of the entire chaos with a motive to save a woman, Kusum and her son, Fokir from getting lost. Nirmal’s notebook also reports that he had wanted to do some good to the refugees who proved themselves brilliant by establishing their own community with all amenities within weeks of their settlement. There were things that the government could not provide as infrastructure to the common villagers but Morichjhapi had them. The establishment that they had created within a few weeks proclaimed their ability and adept nature which paradoxically stood as an identity builder in highlighting their ideology behind their cause. To make their positions strong they had put up a feast to bridge the gap between the Bhadrosamaj and themselves which again turned out to become a hoax as the people who came to enjoy the delights of the feast in the disguise of being their well wishers, ultimately knew that the government would not let them stay. The settlers by holding the feast, putting up their cause of
settlement to the government, time and again, establishing their own community and keeping strong the feeling of solidarity and ideological unity among themselves had put forward a political stand against the West Bengal Left Government and the Bhadra Samaj which was not acceptable to the men in power.

So the struggle over the refugee situation in Morichjhapi was a political war of establishment and destruction at the same time perceived differently by either party. The refugees were given an ultimatum to evacuate the island by 31st March, 1979. When this proved futile, the government started an ‘economic blockade’ that severely affected the refugees; and the state police finally cracked down in mid-May 1979. Official estimates claimed that only 36 refugees were killed in this action, the actual number, however, ran into several thousands. By cutting off the supply of food, water and the basic amenities needed for life, the government tries to pap the refugees with the hatchet. This is a severe violation of the right to life which the government induces by making anarchy the only means. The media and political opposition were ruthlessly dominated and the entire matter was silenced. The fundamental rights of thoughts, expression, free movement, assembly all stood violated. This seemed as if Bengal was witnessing the second phase of emergency massacre in the ‘tide country’ after Indira Gandhi’s reign.

But the settlers at Morichjhapi, trebly displaced as they were, proved to be a defiant lot. In the very last phase of their struggle, when they were being forcibly evicted by a police, their battle-cry became: ‘Amra kara? Bastuhara. Morichjhapi chharbona.’ The cry of the settlers, Nirmal interprets, was not the cry of defiance, “but rather a question being thrown to the heavens not just themselves, but rather on behalf of bewildered humankind.” Nirmal was right in understanding
the emotional vein of the refugees who had accepted Moricjhapi as their ‘promised land’ and their cry of denial was not only physical but existential, ideological and political in nature. The spirit of protest and unity that the settlers had shown by clinging to the soil, had created a new voice of the marginalised in West Bengal, a new voice to crib to one’s basic rights of life and nationality. The Morichjhapi cause had posed a political challenge to the rule of the government, its potencies and its ways of working thereby pointing fingers at the hypocrisy lying beneath the imposters who run the government devoted to socialist communism which actually talks about protecting human rights. Their united protest had given the appearance of a marginalised political body challenging as opposition to the Bhadra Left political urban coterie.

The urgency with which the government suddenly declared Morichjhapi a place for tigers was indeed fishy. The government had placed primacy on ecology to legitimise their ejection from Morichjhanpi in the eyes of the Kolkata Bhadralok. It is ironic that when the tigers had constantly attacked upon the people, the government had not done any good. No measures were taken to stop the wild interference in common people. This type of negligence by the state is a severe human rights negation and a criminal offence on the part of the government as it is indirectly forcing people to die rather than protecting them. By letting the villagers unsecured for all times, the government had paradoxically invented ways for violating animal rights too as the angry villages kill the tigers that encroach in their territories to save themselves out of wrath. They do not wait for government interference as they know the government is for tigers and not human beings. Thus, by making the tigers prey of their wrath, the villagers try to shout out their protest to the government which is definitely malicious and against ecological rights. Here again we see that because of the lack of human rights and lack of acknowledgement of human dignity the tables turn introducing a negative right-fight situation which is of course unwanted.
By introducing the story so many decades after the Morichjhapi incident, the novel becomes a retrospective of the people who were killed. By making Kanai the sole successor of the note book, Nirmal had tried to spread not only the news of this human rights violation to the world but also write volumes about the dexterity of a generation, of defiant talented people whose political contentions as well as their self-assertions were destroyed ruthlessly. Writing has the power to bring revolution and this is what Nirmal wanted to do himself through Kanai to let the world know about the hypocrisy of the government that is in power even in the twentieth century, when Ghosh is writing the novel, hereafter, unmasking the truth once again. But the loss of the note book in the end contradicts his intention and Kanai’s work which he says he would do when he gets back to Delhi becomes a residual of the fervour that Nirmal wants to dedicate. Ghosh through his novel ultimately succeeds in restoring a lost cause in public, firmly standing for human rights and against the despotism of the political power by taking writing as a solvable means to spread the role and consciousness of human rights in people who ultimately run a government.

Human rights is the grammar of governance as it imposes the normative concept of good governance on its citizens; that serves them with integrity and conduct through the state apparatuses and legitimise the power to rule. The power relation between the governments and people make and unmake the language of human rights thick or thin, real or fake. They can either be a threat to public or can be assisting into national and/or international merits but through the brute face of power, public order and national or international security culminates into extra ordinary subversion of human rights (example: Morichjhapi massacre, Indian Emergency). Human rights in this concept become a double edged sword where the sovereign power constantly negotiates with the imperatives of the rule of law and the ‘reign of terror’ for
people who are violated. There is no assurance that rights- integrity governance structure, normatively blueprinted by the languages of human rights may anywhere fully translate into prospects of existing / existed human rights for all and this is where the limitation of ‘human rights’ as a term remains impenetrated.

When the study of exploitation and human rights violation in the novels are talked about the women class we find is the worst of all sufferers. They are triply marginalised and are vicariously constricted. The religious and ethnic identities are centrally constructed around the role of women in order to protect the power and privilege of men, particularly of the dominant castes and classes. Culturally again, women are dominated in the domestic spheres variously by men; even elderly women play power-politics with younger women in the house in matters of domesticity. Hate politics, personal grievance and jealousy add to the exploitation done by one woman on another intergenerationally. This has a silent backing from the male members of the family. This is prevalent in every home in the country among the low and high class irrespectively, only varying in different forms. The oppression which a Dalit woman faces is starkly different from the oppression experienced by an urbanized woman. It is patriarchy, along with class, culture, custom that defines, determines, and enforces the relations between men women and women-women in family and in society. And this is what the novels The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, Seven Steps in the Sky, and The God of Small Things describe.

In The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, the author has drawn the sorry state of Dalit women who are not only used as bodies but also as social and economic baits. They have no rights that a woman should have and are forced to the drudgery of serving the Maliks as kept women, wives or servants and when they grow old they are thrown out in the streets to beg and die. The authors
rightly argue that a woman’s position in society is customarily viewed as bodies meant to lean on men and bear children for them. And for this she would get a square meal, a shelter, and nothing more. Kundalika Kapadia champions in her description of the state of Indian women in her novel in *Seven Steps in the Sky*. She features the pitiful state of both working women and housewives in high, low and middle class society.

*Seven Steps in the Sky* is a novel of social eminence that talks of woman’s rights candidly. Domestic violence as a theme is recurrent in the novels taken for study only that it differs in degree of happening and representation. Kapadia is very barefaced is revealing the social condition of women dominated by patriarchy. She reveals the various angles where a woman is humiliated, tortured and her desires are strangled to death. The novel is an excellent representation of the plight of women at their in-laws where they are pressed between their quest for establishing their identity and their duty towards the in-laws.

Kapadia in the very first part of the novel poses several questions that shake the strong foundation of the patriarchal constructs of the society. She is very strong in her motive and clear about the realization of the difficulty in which almost all women are set after marriage. As its title suggests, the novel represents all women’s desire to walk in the clouds with all her dreams and aspirations fulfilled, which is definitely a utopia. The writer yearns to establish a world that is devoid of gender differences and inequality thus upholding the concept of a rightful world for human beings. In her quest to be emancipated, Vasudha, the protagonist, finally leaves her husband and family and becomes a part of Anandagram, a place where there is a classless-genderless existence of human beings in harmony.
Kapadia focuses through Vasudha the revival of a reformed neo-womanhood that would accommodate self-expression, creativity, identity and harmony. Like many other women writers, she advocates education and economic freedom as essential most qualities needed in women to prosper in the society truthfully. But uniquely warns that only economic prosperity cannot bring in woman the expected fulfillment. What she means by being true to oneself is being strong enough for upholding one’s own identity amongst all odds of the society. She is repulsive of patriarchal domination but she is even more worried about the phenomenon of women dominating women which lessens the degree of rights fulfillment in women after marriage. Vashudha criticizes the notion of the society that takes women as the proletariat class and men the bourgeoisie. Though she is to decide many things for the family and work incessantly for the family yet the family does not allow her any authority of decision making. They are variously vulnerable to domestic violence and physical abuse. The situation directly reminds us of Manusmriti which dictates a woman to be a slave to her ‘lord’ and never be independent in life.

In realizing the rights of women and giving out a proper solution to the women, Kapadia believes in individual working of one’s own problem in small bits to become liberated one day. She is quite down to earth in her feminist approach to solve the women’s problems. Though she is aware of the seriousness of the Indian woman’s dilemma and the generation old struggles behind it, she also believes that a positive change in women’s social status cannot materialize without bringing about a change in the woman’s mindset first. So, the novelist holds that it is the women’s’ retreat in their selves rather than in any external crutches which injects a hope for the woman’s redemption from her predicament. The woman’s increasing involvement rather than detachment in her predicament as expressed in her novel reveals the positive, humanistic side of
Kapadia’s feminism. She clarifies that liberation doesn’t have one aspect only. Eventually women have to free themselves from the bondage of their femininity, and men from the bondage of their masculinity, and try to become whole beings. She appeals women not to avoid men but shake their consciousness to make them know, understand and love women as human beings and realise their needs, resources, feelings and not to supersede men in establishing matriarchy.

Again and again through various ways she puts forward the fact that a woman’s fight is not against men, “this fight is against injustice.” Through her views and assertions, Kapadia is trying to give a solution to the world to establish women rights/human rights in society by establishing a perfect androgyny. She does not blame or appeal the government to come forward for implementation of the rights but directly appeals the citizens who ultimately make laws and break them. Her plea is towards human beings to be careful of their rights and duties towards one another so as to bring equality and harmony in the world. Her objective is to bring to light the women who are veiled in the dark corners of their houses, under the strict eyes of the elderly in-laws or trampled under their husband’s whims, to come out and take an internal journey of development from the dark peripheries of soul and mind to a state of enlightened self that is full of confidence, truth and devoid of compromises. It is not for their family or society that they should live; they should live for themselves and think for the greater good of the society.

With the new child born in Anandgram, the author wants to establish that a new life bred in an atmosphere like Anandgram will be immaculate and grow up to be an example of a perfect human being in society who would believe in equality, brotherhood, liberty, and deprogramme the cultural, ideological mind set in the coming generations. Here Kapadia is talking about
establishing human rights and nothing else. With the proper maintenance of one another’s dignity, the world will not be far away from establishing the utopia that the author presumes and the human rights charters preach.

But the phonetically similar Gandhian ashram, Anandgram though is a major solution point for the author to establish harmony, yet it is not practicality plausible. Though Annadgram is not like Gandhi’s Sevagram but the objective of Anandgram seems somewhat similar to so as to bring ‘Swaraj’ in its literal sense in people, that is, having control on oneself to lead a harmonious, rightful, non-violent life in society. It sounds similar to a clause in the Human Rights Declaration which is sweet to hear but hard to implement. Anandgram is the ideal that one would externally crave for but not have it. Anandgram, as Kapadia describes it, is rigorous in its attitude which is practically impossible to continue for a long time. People staying there have to restrain their emotions by being sacrificing, calm and submissive towards each other and in some way which is very artificial. Though the ashram propagates freedom and lets its residents have full scope for work and leisure, yet it has a veritable chance of breaking harmony as it is difficult to change human nature by spreading ideologies and bringing harmony in reality. Outside impositions which are not present instinctively in mind can lead to great riots in people.

The author talks of division of labour according to one’s will, this is again dangerous as there is a tendency of increasing work in piles for the increased number of people which would again require guidance, a leadership and ultimately a routine formation. The concept of work described, is not clear either. Moreover, there is a major flaw in Kapadia’s Anandgram as she does not disclose the source of revenue generation in the ashram. She tells that everyone is free
to experiment with his/her talents and work as one likes. But she is silent about the economic prosperity of the residents which would not only bring improved living in the inmates but also of the people outside the house. She does not explain how the inmates had money to built concrete houses when they had come out of their wed-locks and family. Everything in Anandgram is like a fairytale and this is how the novel takes seven steps in the fantasy clouds. The solution that Kapadia suggests to bring androgynous harmony in society through attitudinal changes, love, education and economic independence in both the sexes is apt for bringing man and woman on a same plain but creating a model place like Anandgram with norms that are practically impossible to follow in long run is something that cannot be practically accepted. Kapadia is a master in depicting reality but not so while suggesting a concrete solution.

Arundhati Roy’s representation in The God of Small Things is something very different from all other novels discussed above. It is a novel that journeys deep inside and creates several suggestions all of which are intrinsically human and rights related. The novel can be read as a novel championing for the cause of realization and implementation of the human rights concepts not only in the socio-economic field but also in the domestic affairs. It stands for the right to equality and dignity for all castes and classes, economic rights of women, equal wages rights for the Dalit, children’s rights, right to choose one’s partner and marriage, rights of thought and expression in a free society, rights against Dalit atrocities, against domestic violence and above all stands for right to life and freedom.

Ammu is a victim of socio-political domestic violence. Her return to her house in Ayemenen upsets the family members; she becomes a cynosure of the society and is made a scape- goat,
essentially exemplary to her cause. She has broken the social bond of marriage which outcasts her from the general stream of people living in her community. The marginalization gradually overshadows her life at every step in which her children are also not spared. Not only is she unwelcomed at home but she is hacked off her paternal property rights and is reduced to a refugee in her own house. She becomes a lay worker of her family pickle factory, stirring spoons in jelly pulps and jams. With every step of abuse and insult for her past life and voyeuristic repression of her elders, she tries to recognize the lost person in her life in someone who would fulfill the gap even for her children. In a sudden epiphanic vision among a lot of alien customs, she finds Velutha, the Dalit carpenter, fitting her gap.

Ammu’s crying for loving a wrong man and breaking the love laws, jeopardizes the future of four lives – Velutha, Estha, Rahel and Ammu herself. She is the “mad woman in the attic” locked indoors lest the planning of Chacko, Baby Kochamma and Mammachi goes useless. Velutha is arrested, brutally tortured and left almost dying on the jail floor of the police station where blood “flowed from his skull like a secret”. The word ‘secret’ links the entire plot of the story from the first to the last rounding up the events and filling up the unsaid gaps. This is the unknown secret that Estha and Rahel carries in their hearts till adulthood and their pains find expression in the language of their bodies. The secret is that which dictated the love laws and the break away from it, the love between a high class and an untouchable, the affection between two kids and their father surrogate, the lie that killed the most loving persons of their lives. This is the secret that separates the mother from her children, the lover from his beloved, the members of the family from the family and the credibility of a person from falsehood andmorality.
The characters in the novel are highly deprived of their rights which are more than material in nature. The human rights violations projected in the novel are primarily cultural, social, economical and political in nature. There are other violations like ethical and moral which are interesting and intriguing and demands attention. Roy has very aptly fitted her plot into the setting of Kerala where poverty, living or education is not the main deficiency; here the lack is not only material but mostly a mental construct, particular to this family. The biggest violation of right that ruins the lives of the protagonists is the right of privacy. It is because of the intervention of society and people in the privacy of the lives of Ammu and Velutha that they are led to their horrific predicaments. Not only do the characters die out of deprivation, disrepute, insult and assault but they are brutally suppressed, dominated to a particular conclusion. Both Ammu and Velutha are brought to the books arbitrarily without questioning or proper investigation; the former social, and the latter legal. Ammu is brutally excommunicated and ostracized from her family for the sake of family prestige and Velutha is beaten to death by the police because of a false allegation of kidnapping the kids.

Ammu and Velutha’s inability to cross this cultural barrier that forbids inter-caste marriage, forces them to take up an illicit relation every night. Velutha and Ammu fail to satisfy themselves as cultural beings and thus perish. Human rights are what that needs to interfere in such deep cores of the domestic surveillance where not only culture but rights to live with dignity should be restored. This though is a very difficult task as the task of restoration does not lie only with the law and administration guiding it, but human consciousness that is the guiding force behind realisation and activities.
Estha and Rahel’s incest is of course an outlet of their enclosed emotions but it is not a measure to fight back the rights lost. The means of protest that they take up is again a cultural violation very much opposed to the societal norms. This kind of act is also not supported in the human rights charters; rather it is a crime if studied from the legal aspect. The novel does not fulfill the expectations of its characters nor does the author suggest any way out of the violations present in their lives and society. But *The God of Small Things* is an excellent piece of work that satirizes the society and the actions done by the people to cope up with the socio-cultural norms. It clearly discerns the dual-edged concepts of crime and rights plying in society.

One novel aspect that Roy portrays in *The God of Small Things* is the dilemma in comprehending the source of power which grants and rejects rights. The society gives and takes away rights at its own whims and there is none to stand against its measures. The family, which is the immediate most social institution for an individual, and the Communist party, the local political governor of the State, decide in the fatalistic end of Ammu and Velutha. The politics of power to issue rights of marriage and equality, economy and privacy, all depend on these two institutions in the novel.

The once given rights immediately turn into breach of rights and duties when things go against the formulated old cultural schemes and family/political taboos. Here, the social and the political become one adding to the misery of the protagonists. Velutha’s case gets closed with his death. Neither his family member nor the Communist party leaders, for whom Velutha had worked a lot in protest of the class system, come to bail him or enquire about his state. Even Ammu’s acceptance of their love could also not save him. This way Ammu too in a way becomes untouchable and a Dalit- strangely cut off from the mainstream. In fear of losing social prestige
and economic vested interests, both the family members and the political party join hands against Ammu and Velutha. They formulate quick ways that can save them from the immediate reactions, paradoxically trying to protect their own false prestige, and thus gravening the situation all the more. In one word, Ammu and Velutha are murdered to save honour. Again the question arises about the credibility of the existence of rights and laws in a country.

The decision to pose Velutha as a kidnapper of the children and deporting Ammu from the house, and eventually separating the children from each other and their mother, are heinous crimes and human rights violation which are done undercover, beneath the closed eyes of the public and legal bodies. These decisions kill not only the honor of the protagonists but kill them both physically and psychologically. The social pressure and cunning ways of the society actually dictates the protagonists to death, rather than suggesting ways to save them from the scandal, the loss of prestige. It is their false sense of ego and prestige that kills the ultimate truth. Roy by exposing such a problematic situation rhetorically asks: who are the criminals- the victims or the oppressors?

Though we recognize and analyse the limitation of law and culture in solving out the problematics of human rights in a layman’s life, yet we cannot pretend that literature or literary studies will serve as an answer to the problem of human rights violations—or that it will come to rescue the law from lawyers, legislators, politicians, diplomats and the people in power who make and unmake human rights according to the contexts required. The novel though is an objective presentation of the rightlessness in the socio-cultural constructs of the society yet it stands as unique representation bringing about the issues straight to the audience to find its
solutions and answer who is right and who is wrong. This way it surpasses the stage of being called an awareness package as the time in which the novel is written or the timeframe that the novel captures are much ahead in its understanding of human rights. The novel is a solution seeker in its own way and the various questions asked by the author proves her dilemma in understanding the world as the way it functions. The questions she puts forward proves to the fact that she is a human rights activist and her novel wants the world to improve in establishing equal dignity and rights for all.

From the above discussion it is clear that the novels studied in this work are human rights documents acclaiming the cause of equal scope of rights in all people. The comparative study of the novels highlights a progress of human rights issues and action according to its time frame. Similarly, the authors also hold views that have advanced in passage of time and space. From Anand to Amitav Ghosh, the authors show a considerable change and progress in upholding their themes, issues and their treatment. The attitude and treatment towards Dalit have changed from the time of Anand to Ghosh. Though they are deprived, insulted, tortured and discriminated in many aspects yet they have not been seen in any novels to act like the days of Anand. In other words, the type of dealing with the Dalit has changed from a worst context to a worse context to a situation where a considerable section of the Dalits in India is leaving a bad life in the present.

With the progress of time and technology and laws being implemented in the country, we see in the novels that untouchability has become less frequent and they do not shout their presence while mixing in general public. They are of course negated at many places but unlike Bakha, Valmiki, Bama or Velutha, they do not face such degradation at the market or at the well like
Sohini had faced, due to the progress of the society. The Bhangis also proved their skills through education and jobs in the novels written in the later period. In fact, Valmiki is a worker in the Ordinance factory and does not continue like his father, Bama is also a teacher, a social worker not like her parents. In *Paraja* also we see urbanization coming in by the construction of roads and can hope to see boys like Mandia and Tikra working to get upgraded both economically and socially. With women used for construction work, it can be safely concluded that the construction of road in the forests like Koraput had brought in modernization. And today we find that the tribals of Orissa are exposed to their rights and there is economic prosperity in various tribes. With the death of Ganesh in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Barha village will have a better future as we sense an awareness factor in the other Maliks after the death of Ganesh. It can be hoped that the feudal system would definitely bring in reforms and the administration would rise up to the situation to help the poor. With the passage of time reservation for the Dalits are also implemented and we find Bama getting scholarships for education. Valmiki and Bama both proclaim the improved positions of the Dalit but there are still miles to go. The total change over from low to high amidst all corrupt practices is a mammoth task which cannot be achieved in a day’s time. But with the progress of time we see that the people are enjoying several rights and better living conditions as compared to the earlier times.

Conducting a survey about the latest state of human rights violation in India would be a melting pot of issues where human rights violation is not particularly restrained to the poor and Dalit. Now the high caste is equally vulnerable to any human rights violation like the low. This is because much of the concern has shifted from cultural parametrics to socio-economical matrix.
This is what we start visualizing in Ghosh’s in *The Hungry Tide*, Desai’s *The Village by the Sea* and Kapadia’s *Seven Steps in the Sky*.

In Ghosh we see the Dalits much superior to what they are in any other novels. Though economically disadvantaged, the Dalits are self sufficient to establish a community in themselves and hold a political struggle against the Bhadro Samaj. Desai, on the other hand, is very far sighted and modern in approach as she already hints at the well being of Hari and his family by tutoring Hari to mend watches. And we also find the other two sisters Bela and Kamal continuing school which is a definite hope for the coming future. Women too had been uplifted from the position of Sohini or Lachhima to women as presented by Valmiki and Bama. They too are studying and are enterprising for jobs. The women in Kapadia whatever their state may be, are provided with bare necessities and are educated; some are even working or writing to establish their identity. The socio-cultural mindset of people is what that ultimately needs a change for the fullest development of women together with their economic and educational status to provide equality in society. The condition of children too has improved with their parents and we expect that Valmiki’s or Bama’s children will face a better future.

From the above analysis we can keep trust on the fact that, human rights which are necessary elements in human lives have consciously been introduced by the government in many forms, and with the passage of time people are being and will be benefitted above any cultural or gender bias hold by the society at large.
Jack Donnelly grapples with many of the aforementioned arguments and ultimately concludes that universal human rights are a potential global reality. By tackling questions of “cultural relativity,” “Asian values,” underdevelopment and the issues which preoccupy much of contemporary political science debates, “humanitarian intervention,” Donnelly convincingly refutes any position that suggests, universal human right is an unattainable objective. The most important problem of human rights discourse is that it has been proven to be adaptable and amendable to the needs of the both the powerless and the powerful to legitimise all sorts of grievances. As a consequence, the language of human rights has become an object of struggle between human rights advocates and also the spokespeople of hegemonic state governments. The transformation of the discourse of human rights into a language of desire and indulgence threatens to undermine “their position as central principles of political and legal organization”, that is human rights begin to lose their institutional force as for founding ideals of a polity when they become a free-floating discourse of social satisfaction and goodwill. And when the world specially after globalization has become totally ‘customer’s delight’ oriented, then it is very difficult to segregate the definition of rights and delight at every step. A problem of attainability and satisfaction of attainability of a right has become major elements in today’s world and the expression ‘restitution of rights for one’ has come to mean bigger things, something greater than getting his/her mere right concerned.

It is ultimately true that there can be endless appeals for various types of rights and its degrees of attainability respectively but the vulnerability of human rights when exposed to such prodigies can lead to dangerous circumstances which have very little scope of fulfillment. It is bizarre to think that an oppressor can equally appeal for a right as an oppressed can. Achievement of one’s
satisfaction through right-fight is definitely an impingement on another’s right and vice-versa. And here lies the ultimate question whether human rights can really be used for the equal good of all or whether human rights are just names to cover up or re-tilting the disparity problems. The answer to this kind of question is very difficult to attain as situations are changing rapidly thus, turning answers into questions. Even though this work leaves scope to delve in this problem for later work and emancipation, yet one solution can evolve out of such cases. Any person standing for human rights could be served in perfect degrees if we can categorize human rights according to its degree of primary importance.

Though the solution sounds ironic as this would lead to a fight that would try to decipher rights that are primary and that are not, yet right to life, basic necessity fulfillment rights, right to dignity, equality, liberty, reproductive rights, equal economic rights for all, health facilities, educational facilities, must be judged at a prior basis when issues arise for persons having crisis with each other. In such a case the oppressor may find himself in a better position if it is his life that is at stake. For example, Ganesh or Sahukar, however brutal they are would receive more importance as they had felt the crisis of life and not the villagers who despite being highly oppressed had the right to live. This definitely does not mean that they should be let free with a clean chit but what stands as primary in this case is the right to life and that is to be saved. Here the laws and legislation should support for the punishment of the Sahukar and Ganesh and find perfect ways to penalise them and not the public themselves. This can be viable equally for the advantageous persons when they are taking up arms against the lives of the poor or disadvantaged. But this is practically very difficult to attain as the laws and bureaucrats are equally corrupted. Though the situations can be quite confusing and overlapping at times yet
preference ought to be given to the person failing in his/her basic rights, further things can be
judged as per the need of the hour.

Several researches and studies are going on throughout the world regarding the attainability of
human rights at all levels and the scope of future emancipation of human rights in the world. But
a fool proof answer is far to come. In spite of being stable concepts, human rights problems crop
up in not so stable situations, rather in a variety of complex situations that needs special
attention. Total fulfillment of human rights for one and all is a utopia or a political reinstatement.
Sending the refugees to Madhya Pradesh can be providing proper human rights if seen from the
government’s perspectives but it is very much a human rights violation for the refugees if
analysed practically in *The Hungry Tide*. Taking out Communist processions with socialist
slogans in *The God of Small Things* is not establishing a human rights filled world but hypocrisy
of the party members as slogans cannot execute Velutha’s needs at the time of his death.
Achieving a flawless equilibrium between the people and sexes is again a utopia like Anandgram
in *Seven Steps in the Sky* which has no real existence, but fighting against crimes is definitely a
step to attain this utopia. Medinarayan’s dispatching off his wives and daughters for Ganesh’s
well being can be a reason of satisfaction for him but it is a gross human rights violation for the
wives and daughters in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*.

The problem of implementing human rights in all corners of society is practically difficult
despite everything, as the very term ‘human rights’ remains indeed problematic. The expression
often masks the attempts to reduce the plentitude of its meanings to produce a false totality. One
such endeavour locates the unity of all human rights to some designated totality of sentiment
such as human ‘dignity’, ‘well being’ and ‘flourishing’. Another way of reading it is that human rights are the basic rights and privileges suggesting that some others may be negotiable, if not dispensable at least in the short run, experienced as a horrendously long run by the violated humanity. The deprived, disadvantaged and dispossessed may indeed find it hard to accept any justification for the very notion of human rights that may end up in their lifetime, and even intergenerationally, as denial of their right to be, and to remain human. As prescriptive ventures, such modes simply privilege certain preferred values over others, thus complicating, as well at times diminishing, future human rights enunciation. This overall, obscures the contradictory nature of the development, realization and praxis of ‘human rights’, for there are several contradicting worlds of human rights- for example: the global world of intercultural production of human rights norms, standards, principally within the United Nations auspices, the national reproduction of the international standards, the activist world of human rights in socio-cultural sphere and the independent individual human rights always in conflict with the previous two worlds. This gap in various layers make human rights a conflicting and diverse subject that creates, recreates and uncreates gaps in between the microcosmic world of an individual and the macrocosmic world of socio-cultural-ethical-legality. The above premises lead us to a definite conclusion that there is a want to rewrite the norms and standards of human rights in a uniform code which is again a very conflicting and mammoth task indeed.

According to Wendy Brown in contrary to Donelly says that rights including human rights, emerge in several different images:

….. rights as boundary, and as access; rights as makers of power, and as masking lack; rights as claims, and protection; rights as organization of social space, and as
a defense against incursion; rights as articulation, and mystification; rights as
disciplinary and anti-disciplinary; rights as marks of one’s humanity, and as
reduction of one’s humanity; rights as expression of desire, and as foreclosure of
desire.\textsuperscript{6}

This makes its uniformity almost unattainable and its exploitation vulnerable as human rights constitutes different constellations of diverse subject-positions in and through, agency-in-
structure. The term human rights though produces a simple uniform notion of rights given to human beings but it actually arouses varied complexities of understanding in fact wanting homogeneity.

The problem of human rights discourse sometimes is problematic in representation of human suffering as they suffer in different forms through the narrow layer of politics of and politics for human rights. For the hundreds of millions of have not’s, human rights matter when only they are protected against torture and tyranny, deprivation and destitution, poverty and powerlessness, de-sexualization and degradation when it acts as a shield. The most paradoxical and interesting fact about the delivery of human rights to the masses of impoverished peoples is that, it is served in people only in ‘homeopathic’ or calibrated measures as its therapy reproduces the symptom of advancing its cure.\textsuperscript{7}

The authors discussed above have tried to justify to this very fact through their writings where we see the government is both trying and untrying to protect the people’s human rights in calibrated measures; it overtly has laid down terms for human rights implementation for people’s good but is again a silent observer of many corrupt practices that violate the
implementation of those very human rights that are meant to reach at every corner of the society.

The violated people know in their lived and embodied experiences, the way in which the reality of their sufferings remains unnamable. The limits of human rights language lie in the limits of their world. The people know that even the improbable feat of translating all human violations into human rights violations will not transport the unnamable into the namable sphere. There are every day sufferings which cannot be related to the human rights text and thus the gap forms in between the framed laws and perceived facts. The organic / experimental knowledge of pain and suffering of the violated does not always find articulation in erudite knowledge formations concerning human rights law and jurisprudence. The meta-languages of human rights thus, remain problematic on the plane of representation and mediation of human sufferings, which literature can alone bridge and thus again forms a solid ground for human rights issues to pop up at different layers. Questions therefore, arise regarding the use of language of the elite in documenting the feelings of the grassroots which has minimal or faint answers in the jurisprudence of Human Rights Declaration.

Reading literature as a mirror of the times gives an opportunity to the scholars for realizing literature as a product of society, born through aesthetic constructs of the authors who are themselves human and vulnerable to the laws and language of human rights. In this case, the legal side of human rights should be interrelated with literature as human rights are also a set of cultural discourses as are literature. The authors by advocating solutions or criticizing the happenings of the world write their novels so as to provide awareness and arousal in people about the wrongs done on characters in reality. Some opine economic liberation as the source
right besides equality to make the world a better place to live in and some opine the superiority of the need to change the negative mind set and gives a call to come forward with open minds for the good of all. Some are sensitive to the problem and demands answer from the readers. Though it is correct that literature cannot solve an existing situation, yet it plays an important role to realise the violation of rights in people.

As literature is a rich source to inform the instances brought out of the corners of daily existence, it helps the world to know about them and helps the human rights charters for future amendments or emancipation. But human rights charter or concepts are handicapped as it has not the access to the orthodox mindset of the people. Moreover, the legal power of human rights mostly stand paralysed as they are not sue able at all instances, they also fail to capture the violations from nook and corner of one’s home and locality as they go unreported. Literature by bringing these concerns to light helps in liberating mindsets and encourages future emancipation of human rights clauses.

To sum up, in the preceding Chapters an attempt is made to understand and analyse the fact that human rights and literature when brought together and studied in the light of each other, the two individual disciplines grow more interrelated and prominent in its expression and understanding. Studying human rights considering literature as a manifesto of the society and times not only raises questions on its premises formulating it but also lends a scope to see through its politics and problematics working both universally and locally. Again, studying literature through the eyes of human rights not only increases the poignancy of understanding the characters and their circumstances, but also points to its fantastic attainability in real lives. After all, stylistic devices and narrative techniques speak more than that of dry law for human understanding. But viewing human rights through literature does have a danger of over trusting the author’s point of view.
and judging the cases by overlooking the underlying political or biased vein in the words of the text. On the whole, this work tries to find solutions by bringing both the perpetrator of good and bad from the novels on to a same level and evaluates them from human rights perspectives. Apart from finding the two interdisciplinary chords running simultaneously in each text, this work successfully reads them as pronounced human rights documents considering the different nuances in the presentation with their poetics and politics thus emphasizing the need of understanding the human rights concerns in literature.

It is very difficult in a practical world to find solutions of the human rights problems as the concepts of rights and rightlessness are changing at a very fast pace. Even though the third and fourth generation rights are coming up in recent times, yet no theory can be called absolute and constant. Nor can the contexts of crime and solutions be ultimate. In this fast pacing world with thousands of complexities, it is a real question that what should be a human right of a person and what should not. Several researches are going on in the world to find answers for the betterment of people by making human rights tenets the primary ladder. This work represents only one aspect of the entire proposition to study human rights and literature on the same plain used for praxis and theory. In fact, this study does not put forward any claims with respect to the exclusivity or exhaustiveness of the critical enquiry. The interdisciplinary reading of human rights and literature cannot possibly be contained within a single study. In fact each and every aspect of the thematic and contextual calls for a full length study of its own right. The work leaves a considerable scope for further emancipation and theorisation. This study will always demand newer insights, analysis and critical frameworks, especially in posing human rights as a theory to evaluate works of literature.
Notes & References


Bibliography

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources

Books and Journals


**Electronics Sources**


4. Devi, Mahashewta. ‘Year of Birth-1871, Mahashewta Devi on India’s Denotified Tribes.’ *IndiaTogether*. Interview by Mahashewta Devi on March 2002. Refer to:
http://www.indiatogether.org/bhasha/budhan/birth1871.htm/

5. “Feminism in India”. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism_in_India#mw-head?


   http://www.iep.utm.edu/h/hum-rts.htm#H2.

8. India and CEDAW: Who’s Afraid of Too Much Equality?” Human rights Features

9. Interview with Hina Jilani by Jennifer Byrne on May 2, 2000. Refer:
   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hina_Jilani#p-search#p-search


   A Project of the Asian Human rights Commission.
   Refer to: http://www.hrschool.org/doc/mainfile.php/Lesson62/225/


   Refer: http://www.newint.org/features/special/2006/12/06/dalit-women//
14. Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. Refer:
   http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html/

15. UN Convention on Child Rights. 1989. USA Refer:
   http://www.factmonster.com/t/hist/child-rights/
Name: KOYEL CHAKRABARTY
Father’s Name: MR. SAMYA CHAKRABARTY
Date of Birth: 22\textsuperscript{ND} MAY, 1981
Designation: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN ENGLISH
Name of the Employer: ITM UNIVERSITY, GURGAON
Nature of Appointment: PERMANENT
Work Experience: 6 YEARS
Qualification: B.A (English Hons.)
M.A
PG DIPLOMA IN MASS COMMUNICATION
NET QUALIFIED
Residential Address: VALLEY VIEW ESTATE, FLAT: 1703, TOWER-14
GWAL PAHARI, GURGAON-122003
Phone Number: 9899671227
E-mail: write2koyel@yahoo.co.in