Chapter Two

The Muted Voices of the Marginalized

From the creation of man till now it is evident that one division of the human species, always kept at the bottom of the society, are subjected to all sorts of privations. In India, they are stamped as the Dalits and in America, the Blacks. Class, caste and colour are the trios that spoil the improvement of the society and the aspirations of people. It is the prevailing caste system in the society that causes discrimination among people in India. Caste system came into being during the Vedic period, as seen in Purusha Sukta (Rigveda, Book X, Hymn 90), “The Bra’hmana proceeding from the mouth of Purusha, the Rajanya from both his thighs and the Sudra from his feet” (Verse 12, qtd. in Nath 04). Among the four castes, the Brahmins are regarded as the superior caste and the Sudras, the lower. In India, the Dalits are the low caste people and they suffer in the hands of the upper caste. They are placed in the lowest rungs of the society. The Honourable Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, speaks of caste discrimination as a “blot on humanity” (Sivaramakrishnan 18 Apr 2010).

In the colonial era, the Africans had to undergo untold sufferings in the hands of their White bosses. The colonization of Africa by European powers including Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and Portugal brought Africa into the world economic system as a major target for exploitation. Africa, not only provided Europeans with a source of raw materials, but also with what they viewed as raw, uncivilized people, the Blacks. Europeans considered the Africans as people on whom they could impose their views and exploit, and at the same time conquered the
land. Robert Gnanamony in the article *Black Thoughts from Black African Poetry: An Overview* opines “the Blacks were objectified and distanced. They were treated as the ‘other’, madman or leper” (273).

Black writing is the writing of protest, exile and liberation. In the contemporary literary scene, the Black writers such as Toni Morrison, Paul Marshall and Wole Soyinka vie with one another to bring out the pastness of Africa and the present sadness in their umpteen literary creations. Bernard B. Dadie (1916 - ) an African poet, sarcastically cuts open his sorrows to God in the poem *I Thank You God:*

I thank you God for creating me Black,

For making of me

Porter of all sorrows,

Setting on my head

The World.

“I thank you God”. (121-122)

The Black American Maya Angelou is recognized as a successful woman writer who has coped with racial and gender discrimination portrayed in the autobiographical novels that marginalized could relate to. Mahasweta Devi, like her contemporary Mulk Raj Anand, the champion of the downtrodden, reflects the sad plight of the lower caste in her works. A Bengali writer, preoccupied with the issues of the low caste and the tribals, Mahasweta Devi expresses tremendous concern for the socially deprived people, the destitutes. Unlike Maya Angelou, Mahasweta Devi, who does not belong to the dispossessed class, lives most of her time amidst the tribals, and the low caste.
Mahasweta Devi, in the *Mother of 1084* (1997), deals with the climactic phase of the Naxalite Movement in urban Bengal between 1960’s and 1970’s. The novelist is very much affected by the Naxalite Movement. She wrote the novel *Hajir Churashir Ma*, when faced with the death of her student, a Naxalite. The Naxalites, inspired by communist ideology, staged a successful rebellion against landlords and the movement spread all over India. The efforts taken by the Government to put an end to the movement failed. The Naxalite movement caused damage to men and materials and the most affected, are the socially downtrodden people. To Uma Parameswaran, Naxalites are “ruthless terrorists” (457). In a telephonic conversation with Mahasweta Devi, she asserts her view of the current violence in the name of mass struggle by the Maoists: “We do not know if Maoists are representing the people. Naxalism in the 1970s had some ideology. They made some positive contribution to society. But Maoism is not Naxalism. Using violence has to be stopped.”

The sufferings of the Naxalites for the poor peasants and tribals are portrayed in the *Mother of 1084*. The inner agony of the victims of the Naxalite movement are unbearable. The brave Naxalites are reduced to mere numbers. The novel depicts the excruciating agony of Sujata, mother of 1084, who receives a phone call from the government morgue to identity corpse number 1084, of her favourite son, Brati. While her husband, Dibyanath Chatterjee is indulged in hushing up the whole affair, Sujata accompanied by Tuli, the sister of Brati, goes to the morgue. She identifies the dead body, as Brati, the son.

Brati Chatterjee?
How are you related?

No, you won’t see his face.
Identification mark?

A mole on the throat?

You don’t have to see the face. […]

The dom had felt pity for her, and asked, what will you see, Mataji? Is there anything left of his face? […] There were three bullet holes on his body, one on the chest, one on the stomach, one on the throat. Blue holes […] Brati’s face. Brati’s face, battered and smashed by the blunt edge of a sharp, heavy weapon. (11)

The Naxalites are killed cruelly and the dead bodies are not handed over to the members of the family. S. Nirai Mathi remarks in the article, Mahasweta Devi, The Rebel Playwright of Mother of 1084, “Sujata’s physical identification of Brati triggers off a process of awakening in her and ends up with her ‘discovery’ of her son” (34).

Maya Angelou, in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, a chronicler of her own story, delineates the sufferings of the Blacks in South America comparable to the Dalits in India. The writer’s reflections in the autobiography shows that “Life in not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged: life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelop surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (Woolf 220). Without any inhibition, Angelou narrates her views, perceptions and fears faced during childhood, when, adults appeared distant and unapproachable. As a child, Angelou is in need of identity in the cruel world of the Whites, and liberation from the society in which she is being oppressed. D. Maya in the article Self Revealed and Self Mythified : The Autobiographies of Maya Angelou and Kamala Das remarks “segregation and betrayal suffered by the black child begins with his birth” (62). Angelou’s work portrays powerfully the Black child’s struggle of growing up and
developing an identity, the combat with racism, the desire for a home and its love, security and acceptance. The lines from the incomplete poem of Angelou,

“What are you looking at me for?
I didn’t come to stay…”. (1)
captures two of the most significant issues she struggled with, in her childhood and young adulthood; feeling ugly and awkward and never being attached to one place. Uprooted and sent away from parents at the early age of three, Angelou narrates the sufferings thus: “If growing up is painful for the South Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult” (4). Early in her life, the child received the painful message that Black is ugly and White is beautiful. Angelou imagined that though judged by people unfairly by her awkward looks, they would be surprised one day when the true self emerged. She was amused and pleased with the story that she was White with long and blond hair, with light-blue eyes that hypnotized everyone. She invented a story, “because a cruel fairly stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too – big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number – two pencil”(3). As a child’s story, it revealed that Angelou is obsessed with awkward consciousness and thinks the Black as curse. Latha Bharathan in her article Female Voices: A Focus on the Autobiographies of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Maya Angelou opines “being born Black is itself a liability in a word ruled by White standards of beauty” (170). Conscious about her ugliness, she compared her beauty with that of the brother. She was described by the playmates as being shit – colour, but the brother was lauded for his velvet – black skin. He had black curls, while Angelou’s head was “covered with black steel wool” (22). Thus, the normal average happy childhood was denied to her, as she is poor and
Black and Angelou recounts in the autobiography “the story of her struggle to carve out an identity” (D. Maya 61).

The Blacks are considered as ‘disorder’ or ‘the other’ by the modernists. Modern societies rely on continually establishing a binary opposition between ‘order’ and ‘disorder’. Thus, asserting the superiority of order, the modernists want to represent ‘disorder’. As Mary Klages observes,

In western culture, this disorder becomes ‘the other’ – defined in relation to other binary oppositions. Thus anything non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-hygienic, non-rational, (etc.) becomes part of ‘disorder’, and has to be eliminated from the ordered, rational modern society. (04)

Just as the Dalits and the Naxalites are considered as cancerous growth to be removed from the face of the earth, the modernists want ‘non-white’ as ‘disorder’ to be eliminated from the society.

Like Maya Angelou, who sings about the sufferings of the Blacks in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Mahasweta Devi in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh depicts the lives of the underdogs, as contrast to the lives of their powerful overlords. The title of the work itself becomes a tool for subversion, through multilayered narrative into the socio-economic malaise of post-independent rural India. The sprawling novel narrates the sufferings of the landless and the low caste Lachhima, Rukmani, Dhanpatiya, Mohor Karan and Haroa at the hands of the rich Malik, Medininarayan and Ganesh. Mahasweta Devi portrays the village Barha, where the Rajputs are the masters of the low caste. In Barha, the village heads are sipahis (soldiers) of the former rajas. In the village, there would be nine Malik families, and the rest are
bought subjects. The subjects bought are the descendants of those who have taken loan from the Malik. They become bonded slaves. The Rajputs, the Maliks in Barha, have kept the village underdeveloped. There is untouchability, bonded labour and the Maliks raped low caste women. The novel commences with the birth of Tritirhanarayan, born with a tooth in his mouth. The infant is born with a clump of moles between his cheek and the ear, the big toes are unnaturally elongated and he is revered as Lord Ganesha and nicknamed as Ganesh. His mother Chhotki, seeing a sharp tooth in the infant’s mouth screamed and died. Medininarayan, father of Ganesh, a Rajput, did not trust Chhotki’s co-wives Badki and Majhli, in bringing up the child. So he employed Gulal, the midwife, and her granddaughter Lachhima, to look after the child. Gulal, a Barber-woman and her mortgaged granddaughter were housed in a decent room in the house. Lachhima had to look after the child and as she belonged to the lower caste, she was to be the keep of the Malik.

Akin to Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesha*, where the Dalits are lowered in society, Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name* narrates the novelist’s second visit to Stamps, in the state of Arkansas, where there is still colour consciousness. McPherson views that in writing the autobiography, Angelou “undergoes the archetypal American journey of initiation and discovery” (55). Though she has visited Stamps, in Arkansas after five years, the colour discrimination remained. She was thirteen, when she moved to California from Stamps. Angelou returned to Stamps after five years, “expecting to find the anonymity I (she) had known as a child” (77). Vividly portraying the prevailing conditions in Stamps, the novelist, finds the town halved by three aspects namely the railroad tracks, the swift Red river and racial prejudice. There is segregation in Stamps on the town’s small
rise where the Whites live – and the Blacks, in “what had been known since slavery as “the Quarters” (76).

Similar to the segregation of colour in Stamps in Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name*, Mahasweta Devi in *Titu Mir* (2000) depicts the separation of the high caste and the low caste. The low caste poor farmers and peasants, underwent untold sufferings in the hands of the rich ruthless Zamindars, the Sahibs and the indigo planters. By the time Titu Mir was born, the Bengal famine had become a fading memory. He was born in a tiny village Hyderpur, as the eldest son of Nisar Ali, a rich farmer and Rokeya. Titu was a “perfect diamond” (23), and it was difficult to find another like him. Nisar Ali, a respectable man, owned a lot of land and cattle. The novel begins with Titu, as a child, in search of a baby leopard. The search of the leopard and his spirit to wrestle with it, symbolizes that he is the one who would fight with the human leopards, the Sahibs, the Zamindars and the indigo planters, who squeeze out the blood of the poor farmers. As a young boy, he was restless and fearless of the leopard cub. The people of Hyderpur had many complaints about Titu, a rogue, a foolhardy, “a mischiefmaker with a band of young wastrels keeping him company” (6). He was of great help to the villagers in times of their need. For instance, when Tajuddin’s eighteen-month-old daughter fell into the pond, Titu dived from the *jamrud* (star-apple tree) tree into the water and saved the little girl. Titu and his friends were first on the scene ahead of the village elders, when the houses of the weavers had caught fire.

Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, shows the novelist’s developed sense of ancestral and racial connection with the African past. She dedicates the text to Julian Mayfield and Malcolm X, who are passionately and
earnestly in search of their symbolic home. She states "our people had always longed for home [...] In the yearning, heaven and Africa were inextricably combined [...] So I had finally come home" (19). *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* takes Angelou to Ghana, where she is swept into adoration for the country. The novelist adopts it as her homeland, and joins with a community of Black Americans. In a vivid celebration of the sights, sounds, and feelings for Africa, Angelou explores what it means to be African-American on the mother continent, where color no longer matters, but Americanness asserts itself in ways, both puzzling and heartbreaking. Once again, she longs for home. During her three-year stay in Africa, she is not welcomed as she has expected to be; even more painful, she is frequently ignored by the very people with whom she thinks she shares roots, the Africans. As she tries to understand the new kind of pain and homelessness, she also struggles with the sense of having two selves, an American self and an African self.

Caste discrimination and class distinction prevail in the society. The rich are respected and given all the privileges. Sujata, the mother of Brati, is a rich high caste woman in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Mother of 1084*. She gets a job in the bank because of her “family connections, her aristocratic bearing and the way she pronounced her English” (9). The poor are ill-treated and sullied as the doormats. They are made to work like beasts and the rich take all the liberty to abuse or yell at them. Hem, the cook in the house of Sujata, is scolded by Tuli, the latter’s daughter. Hem, grief-stricken, informs Sujata sadly, “she said that I was useless, just sat and ate all day, that I sponged off you in Brati’s name” (95).

In Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the novelist brings out the pride of the rich and the White through a former sheriff. The horrible fear and the
evilness the White mete out to the Black are pictured. Angelou and her brother Bailey overhear Momma being warned by a former Sheriff, that Uncle Willie should hide himself as the Ku Klux Klan would be out that night searching for the Blackman that “messed with” (17) a White woman. Angelou is sickened by the fact that the former Sheriff is proud of himself for providing the warning and not caring to stop the rampage. The novelist relates, “His nonchalance was meant to convey his authority and power over even dumb animals. How much more capable he would be with Negroes” (17). Angelou felt humiliated by the confidence of the White man that the Black men would scurry under their houses to hide in chicken droppings when they heard Klan’s ride. Each Black man is in danger of losing life, including the cripple, Uncle Willie. They are not respected as human beings, and treated equal. They have to suffer for no sin of their own. Angelou pictures the sad plight of the Blacks through Uncle Willie. He has to squeeze himself into onion and potato bin inspite of his misshapen crippled body. Angelou, brother Bailey and Momma covered him with layer upon layer of vegetables and heard his mourning throughout the night. A White man does not have to squeeze himself into onion and potato bin even if he has raped and killed a Black woman.

Analogous to the White masters in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, presents the Maliks as rich cunning masters, who know all the tricks to usurp the land and extract free labour from the poor. The Maliks gave land for sharecropping and as the sharecroppers had taken loan, they were to pay the Malik his share. Thus they had nothing left with them, and got bonded. The rich Maliks did not allow the poor lower caste people to flourish. If a farmer tried to pay money to lease the land, they would raise questions and would not let him live in peace. In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Bigulal, a
kharidi subject, suggested to Mohor Karan, the Barber, to take land on lease, pay taxes with crops and borrow money from the Malik. As the latter got economic support from Lachhima, he desired to pay money to lease the land. Bigulal knew that if Mohor Karan did so, all the three, Bigulal, Mohor Karan and Lachhima would be caught and punished. Mohor wanted a way out for the problem and Bigulal retorts:

Are you mad, Mohor? It’s not even three months since Medini Singh got the news that the adivasi subjects of Nawagarh are buying things for money, paying for things with crops. One word from him and the former sipahis, his brothers-in-caste, burnt the adivasi basti. No Mohor, these people are terrible. Don’t do a thing like that”. (48)

The selfish, power-drunk Medininarayan, a Rajput, effortlessly destroys the simple joys and desires of people such as Mohor Karan, Lachhima, and Dhanpatiya. Though Mohor Karan did not pay cash for the land, he became the target of Medininarayan’s rage. Medininarayan stopped Barkandaj Singh from giving land to Mohor Karan for sharecropping. On the day of Mohor Karan’s marriage with Dhanpatiya, the daughter of Bighulal, Medininarayan brought sipahis (police) from Tohri police station and arrested Mohor Karan for stealing his utensils. Mohor Karan was mercilessly beaten and thrown into the police lock-up. Everyone knew of the innocence of Mohor, but no one was courageous to speak against the Malik. After release from jail, Mohor Karan left Tohri and did not return to the village. Bigulal, the father of Dhanpatiya sighed and told Mohan Dusad, “If the maliks start poking their noses into our marriages, then how will we survive?” (53). Due to the ruthless, cunningness of Medininarayan, Mohor became “a fugitive, an exile” (55). To Medininarayan, “This is the way to keep the lowly in their place, firmly under your feet. You’ll be able to do, won’t you?” (58).
In *Gather Together in My Name*, Maya Angelou presents an incident to show that the Blacks are victimized not only by the Whites, but also by their own community for the sake of money. Louis David Tolbrook, a Black, an established gambler and pimp, indulged Angelou in the field of prostitution. He acknowledged love with her and advised that there was nothing to worry about going to bed with other men, as it would make him love her more, and be of help to him financially. He outsmarted Angelou and she came to know of him as pimp and liar. Thus, by taking advantage of women, he lived an honourable life. He took revenge on the White men who had insulted, ignored and kept him at the bottom of the heap. Though he started the business with the Whites, the poor Black American women became victims, as his hatred for the Whites had extended to love for money.

Mahasweta Devi in *Titu Mir*, shows the high class people taking advantage of the hapless and the downtrodden. The people are tossed by the Zamindars and the plantation men. They have to pay for both the Zamindars and the plantation men. The established custom demands the tenant to contribute towards social and religious festivals and rituals held at the mansion of the Zamindar. Bhudeb had never demanded the share of the people for the rituals, but Ramchand, Bhudeb’s chief lathial or stavesman, without the former’s knowledge, had collected money in his name from the peasants. When the plantation men approached people with baskets to extort goods, they said, “they can’t pay both the zamindar and the plantation men” (37). The village schools were closed for want of patronage, whereas the Zamindars, spent public money lavishly on social and religious festivals.

Close to Mahasweta Devi, Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* pictures the rich, exploiting the poor Blacks’ invaluable art and
tradition. Dieter, a German White architect is a trader too. He urged Angelou to get some old Ashanti carvings and some Bambara or masks from Sierra Leone. He was ready to pay, but Angelou refused and said “I don’t trade. I particularly don’t trade in African art” (172). Dieter exploited the innocent Africans and the African sculptors.

The rich wanted the hapless to return to slavery and the concentration camps. After the encounter with Dieter, Torvash, an Israeli actor, and a Jew revealed to Angelou, “Neither you nor I can afford to be so innocent. Not here in Germany or anywhere in the world, unless we admit that we want the return of slavery and the concentration camps” (173). Thus, one section of the society always remain in the lowest rung due to the cunning sadists.

There is a strong contrast between the lifestyle of the rich and the poor. In Mahasweta Devi’s the *Mother of 1084*, the novelist cuts open the loose, worldly and sophisticated life of the rich and the traumas of the poor. The mother of Somu spoke about the death of the son and the hardships of the daughter, who gave up college and spent time by giving tuition. The poor have to undergo hardships and abuses for their living, whereas the rich spend lavishly. The rich people like Dibyanath Chatterjee entertain themselves in immoral activities; he has illegal relationship with a typist and his daughter Neepa with Balai, the cousin of her husband. The rich live in terror-free areas such as Park street, and Camac street, the predominantly upper-class and westernized areas of the city, while, the poor in unsecure areas, like the mother of Somu’s household. The gang that killed Brati and friends would be there all the time in the nearby teashop. They used to tell the sister of Somu when she returned from her tuitions, “Hey, why didn’t you have the last rites for your brother? It would’ve been a great feast for us” (63). There is a wide difference between the ways of life of the rich and the poor. The rich have nothing to worry; they spend money for their
vanity such as make-up, dress, hair-doing, and parties. The conversation of the affluent Mrs. Kapadia and Molly Mitter show the contrast between the concerns of the rich and the poor:

Diamonds are must. The Swami says the diamond is a symbol of the soul. Purity.

How nice!

But I haven’t forgiven you, my dear.

Why?

You didn’t let my Golden Retriever win the prize in the dogshow.

Not me. It was my Rover.

Yes. I was so angry. But when I saw your dog!

She turned to Sujata and said, you won’t believe me, dear, but something in me went mad in envy”.(110)

In cognate with Mahasweta Devi, who pictures the sufferings of the poor Dalits, Maya Angelou has great empathy for the poor Black cotton pickers of South America. Through the cotton pickers, Angelou in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings presents the sufferings of the poor Blacks. As they worked all through the day in cotton plantations, their fingers were cut by the mean little cotton bolls, their backs, shoulders, arms and legs resisting further demands, revealed the harshness of the Black Southern life. They were paid low wages by the White masters. To Angelou, “their wages couldn’t even get them out of debt to my grandmother” (CB 8) who owned a shop at Stamps. At night, they had to sew the coarse sacks under a coal oil lamp with fingers stiffening from the day’s work. The Black cotton pickers started their day with hope, yet at the end of the day, in the “dying” (8) sun, their hope and expectation had died and what remained was the inheritance from their ancestors –
pain. The White owners dropped the payment of ten cents for a pound of cotton, then reduced to eight, seven and finally to five cents. Angelou believed; “God was white too” (49). She doubted whether God the Father would “allow His only Son to mix with this crowd of cotton pickers and maids, washerwomen and handymen” (123). The only feeling that did not show discrimination to the Negro community was “Depression”(50). People, reduced to a class of marginals by virtue of their race and racism serves as the source of marginality. To the anthropologist Victor Turner:

Marginals are simultaneous members of two or more groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from and often opposed to one another. What is interesting about these marginals is that they often look to their group or origin, the so-called inferior group, for communities and to the more prestigious group in which they aspire to higher status as their structural reference group. (qtd. in Salve 137)

Similar to the cotton pickers of America, who are debtors and work under the White masters, the Dalits in India are bonded labourers and debtors to the high caste Maliks. Mahasweta Devi in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, portrays the rich high caste who keep the poor under their thumb. The Dusads of Barha, the Scheduled Caste, were evicted of their land due to their debt to the Maliks. They had the Forest Department permits to collect, sell wood and live in temporary shacks on Forest Department land. They feared the Maliks, for they had suffered land-debt-tormented life. As told by Ranka Dusad,

Our land, was grabbed by Chandarbhan Singh and Gojomoti Singh. The land on which our huts stood belonged to Medini Singh. No flat land. A colony of ant hills. [...]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)

They were dispossessed from their village and farm by the rich high caste Maliks, had

lost jobs and became “rootless migrants” (54).

The rich high caste found pleasure in the sufferings of the poor low caste. The

son of Medininarayan, Ganesh, a sadist, encouraged his father to beat the poor and

the helpless, “Malik thrashes the field hands with his nagra shoes just to make him

laugh” (20). When the Malik thrashed Haroa, the boy laughed. The low caste in

Barha were assigned many roles to play at different times, “sometimes these men and

women are bonded labourers, sometimes debtors, sometimes they were landless

farmers evicted from their land, sometimes kept women – these roles were decided by

the higher castes, who usually spoke while the lower castes listened” (28).

Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, pictures the cruelty of

bonded labour system. The bonded labourers found it difficult to work under their

masters. The bonded labour system is born out of the ignorance, illiteracy and

poverty of the poor. Under the system, a labourer and his progeny are doomed

forever. The system was not abolished after independence and thus was beneficial for

the rich, high class land owners. The poor slaves had to cultivate the land and they

were paid in grain. In seasons of good harvest, they did not get enough food to eat

and, “in years of drought–poor harvest–flood, the rule for debt repayment was a

thump impression in the malik’s ledger. They have to give him the lion’s share of the

crop plus, if necessary, free labour” (40). Thus, they were mortgaged and had fallen

in the snare of the all-powerful ledger in the Zamindars’ offices. They were called

*Kharidi banda* or ‘bought subjects’.
Mahasweta Devi pictures the pathos of the Indian soldiers due to colour discrimination in *Titu Mir*. Titu, in *Titu Mir*, felt sad about the pathetic condition of the poor Indian sepoys. The East India Company’s vast army relied on the humble Indian sepoys. In the revolt in Barrackpore, the whole of Forty seventh Regime refused to travel over water to Burma. They were paid only five rupees a month, whereas the English soldiers were paid much more: “Today we are sent to Seringapatam, tomorrow Lashoari, the day after Nepal – how many places must we go and fight so that the English may rule” (*Titu Mir* 56). Many Indian soldiers were hurt. Some of them were hanged to death and the others were expunged from the regimental register.

Congruent with Mahasweta Devi, Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* reveals that, in Africa, the Blacks are paid low, whereas the Whites are paid high. As administrative assistant at the University of Ghana, the novelist felt the job blessing, whereas the pay was not bounteous. She was paid only seventy-five pounds, of which her mother in San Francisco would spend on two pairs of shoes. Ghanaians at the University took home half that amount with gratitude, whereas a British man in the university was paid four times more. To quote Angelou’s words, “Sheer discrimination. The old British philosopher’s pocket was crammed with four times that, and all I ever saw him do was sit in the Lecturers’ Lounge ordering Guinness stout and dribbling on about Locke and Lord Acton and the British Commonwealth” (31). The same condition prevailed in India. In Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, she pictures the Indian Zamindars’ respect for the assailant British, and deprecation for the poor Indians.
The rich, who led the classy life are respected, whereas the love of the rich for the poor are fatal to them. In the *Mother of 1084*, Brati and Sujata, rich aristocrats, love the poor and so are not allowed to survive in the world. Brati, born and brought up in a rich family, has no fancy for the luxuries of the rich backdrop that offered him sophistication. S. Nirai Mathi says of Brati; “being aware of economic deprivation and exploitation, he swears to emancipate mankind from the clutches of the hydra-headed exploitative mechanism. He revolts against the senseless ethics of all those institutions that add to the woes of the underdog” (34). Brati, gave up the life, he was born into. If he had stuck to it, he “would have gone to Britain, found a good job, and risen up the social ladder with effortless ease” (*Mother of 1084* 68). Instead, he chose to be with the poor and the sufferers. A Brahman, he loved the poor and hated the sham of the rich upper class. As a child, he had revolted against the strange discipline enforced at home. He got up late in the morning and when he came down for breakfast, the plates had been removed according to the rules of the table. Brati would go to the kitchen, and sitting near Hem, the cook, ate in the company of the latter and took care of her. He brought her medicine for gout in the midst of a thousand worries of his own. When she brought home the week’s ration, he sympathised with her, “how can you walk with such a heavy load. Can’t you take a rickshaw? (106). After the death of Brati, Hem mourns, “He’s no longer there to call a rickshaw for me and help me into it!” (106). Brati often visited his poor friend Somu’s ramshackle household with “cracked walls patched up with cardboard” (35) and thatched roof. Lying on the torn mattress in the house of Somu, Brati talked and laughed and took tea which Somu’s mother had prepared. Though born in an aristocratic family, he found pleasure in the smiles of the poor. To him, the bourgeoisie was marked for destruction, and his goal was the emancipation of the
proletariat. The kind-hearted Naxalite Brati was killed. Satyanarayana opines: “Brati, a prospective heir, gets solace in the company of the downtrodden. As a matter of fact, Brati like many young men, is disillusioned with the present social-system – a system that harbours many evils which thrive on the gullibility of the innocent. As he is aware of economic deprivation and exploitation, Brati swears by the cause of the exploited” (Mothers in Mahasweta Devi’s Mother of 1084 and Bayen 55)

Identical to the high caste aristocratic Brati, who entertained hatred for the high caste and class in India, Maya Angelou, too has a deep rooted hatred for the Whites, the oppressors of America. In I Know why the Caged Bird Sings, Angelou reveals her aversion for the Whites, and does not believe that “whites were really real” (25). The novelist is happy in the Black area of Stamps. Whenever she entered the White part of the town, she felt herself as an explorer “walking without weapons into man – eating territory” (25). In Stamps, the segregation was so complete that the Black children did not know how the Whites looked like. Angelou differentiated the Blacks and the Whites in Stamps thus: “They were different to be dreaded, and in that dread included the hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich, the worker against the worked for and the ragged against the well dressed” (25). The Blacks had a deep-rooted hatred for their suppressors. During the stay in Stamps, she fell in love with the British dramatist Shakespeare, “He was my first white love” (13). Angelou and her brother were afraid to memorize a scene from The Merchant of Venice, as they realized that Momma would question them about the author and they have to tell her that Shakespeare was White, and that “it wouldn’t matter to her whether he was dead or not” (14).
Akin to Brati and Sujata, in the *Mother of 1084*, Pallavi Shah an aristocrat, and high caste in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is sullied by the rich high caste due to her love for the poor. A social worker, she is the twenty-three year old rich daughter of Tejlal, a busy shipping businessman and later the Finance Minister of India. She wished to serve the underprivileged, and happened to know of Bhangis in Barha as the “lowest of the low” (86). The SDO (Sub-Divisional Officer) to the daroga (Inspector of Police), the woman head of the mission, is not pleased with Pallavi’s act of selfless self-sacrifice. Pallavi found the foul-smelling, filthy, the dirt-poor Bhangis “don’t have proper houses, health centres, schools, drinking water facilities. They must be very, very poor” (86). The Bhangis, finding none to help them, thought of Pallavi as certifiably insane. When Abhay Mahato of Harijan Kalyansangh introduced her to the Bhangis, they asked Abhay,

“‘Where will she live? What’ll she eat?’

‘Whatever you eat’.

‘Hujoor, we practically starve’” (88).

The low caste people of Barha lived in poverty; the rich such as Medininarayan took “two seers of meat, a bowl of ghee and twenty rotis. Ghee and meet excited sensual desire. Hence Lachhima slept with Medini” (21). A character similar to Medininarayan is portrayed by Mahasweta Devi in the play *Water*. When the low caste suffered due to scarcity of water, Santosh Pujari, a Brahman, and the head of the panchayat, took sumptuous breakfast. A villager in the play says, “he must have his oil massage first. Then he’ll be bathed by his servant. Then his wife will give him his breakfast, thickened milk, sugar-puffs, and chida, and only after he has had his fill will he find time for us” (*Water* 102). Though Rajputs and the Bhangis lived in the same village, there was wide distinction between the high and the low caste.
Caste system was followed in Barha, where the Maliks are the landlords in working places. The Tohri station master tells Abhay, “You’re so concerned about the *acchuts* (untouchables) of Barha village, why don’t you go to the puja of our rail coolies, the ones who work on line repairs. ‘Because I’m an *acchut’” (157). In such a caste drunken village, the rich, high caste Pallavi Shah starved and suffered with the low caste out of love for the poor.

Homogeneous to the SDO to the inspector of police, the woman head of the mission, and the Malik, who hate Pallavi Shah’s helping hand to the poor, Maya Angelou in *Gather Together in My Name* opines that the law itself does not allow the Blacks and the Whites to be friendly or entertain relationship between them. As they are oppressed, the Blacks have a strong rooted hatred for the Whites. Mother Cleo, a Black woman, affirms “One thing I don’t hold with is women messing ’round with married mens. The other is messing ’round with white men. First one the Bible don’t like, second one the law don’t like” (68).

Mahasweta Devi in *Titu Mir* pictures the horrors of the Bengal famine of 1770 which caused havoc. As a natural disaster, the low caste, low class, and the natives were the sufferers and people died like flies. The rich sahibs bought rice in cheap price, “stored it in their silos and sold it at exorbitant prices” (8). People ate anything they could find such as trees, roots, and barks. The robbers and dacoits felt, “Keep your gold, we don’t want it. Give us food, give us rice” (9). The Bengal holocaust wiped away fifteen million people. The tax collected in 1771 was higher. The Governor General Warren Hastings, who was setting up the Asiatic society, squeezed the poor people into yielding more revenue. After the Bengal famine, the peasants and the masses, both Hindus and Muslims, revolted against the British Raj and their
revenue collecting agents, under the leadership of fakirs and sanyasis. Though the revolt was called Sanyasi revolt, “fakirs, sadhus, weavers, farmers, potters, labourers – everyone participated in it – and it had gone on for eighteen long years” (TM 9).

*Titu Mir* brings to light the aim of the British to rule India eternally, resorting to extreme steps to repress the fakirs and the sanyasis. They received help from the rich Zamindars in India to retain Mother India in their hands. The venomous Whites, vanquished the poor Indians, who started the rebellion. Tajuddin, the chief lathial (chief stavesman) of Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury, taught Titu to fight with lathis, archery and other weapons. Titu went to the villages Poonra and Gobordanga, where he competed with the local wrestlers and showed his skill with the lathi. On one of the busy market days at Badur, Titu heard the announcement of a proclamation by the police musketeers and the messenger of the Zamindar. Beating drums in the market place, they pronounced,

“Hear, hear. The Honourable Governor General proclaims that the sanyasis and fakirs have been vanquished utterly. The capture of Suvan Ali, Neyaju Shah, Budhu Shah, or any follower or followers of theirs will be honoured with a reward! Any shelter given to these men will be severely punished!” (TM 11)

The fakirs who revolted against the Zamindars, the Company and the Government were stamped as “robbers” (10), the usurper was mentioned as “Honourable” (11) and the sons of the soil, were heartlessly branded as robbers.

Similar to the fakirs, who were stamped as robbers in India by the Zamindars and the Whites, the Black Americans in Africa were seen as disguisers. Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* narrates her experience in West
Africa, “where for the first time in our lives the colour of our skin was accepted as correct and normal” (3). She felt intimacy with the soil of Africa, and experienced a sense of security in the land of her ancestral continent. The novelist’s longing for home is presented to the extent of blending heaven with Africa. The joy, happiness and fulfillment on reaching Africa revealed the suffering, the hardships and pain felt by the ancestors of Angelou, when they were weaned from the land of Africa. The Africans did not accept the Black Americans, as children of their soil. To a high ranking pundit, “America can use its Black citizens to infiltrate Africa and sabotage our struggle because the Negro’s complexion is a perfect disguise[…]” (80), thus suggesting that, if at all the Africans have to approach American Blacks, they have to do it with caution. In America, their birthplace, they were enslaved and exploited; in Africa, the land of their ancestors, they were rejected, suspected and finally denied. The Africans were denied space and their plight in Africa was more worse than their sufferings in America.

Parallel to the Blacks, who suffered to live in the world, Mahasweta Devi in the *Mother of 1084* shows, the cunning, anti-social rich, leading comfortable lives, whereas the poor had to suffer. Dibyanath Chatterjee, the father of Brati, a CA bribed clients away from other firms. A womanizer, he had set up a typist in a rented flat. The father of Somu had, “nothing but misery, misery, all the way” (54). He was bullied by everyone, from the fish seller to the local tough. They bought things from him and would never pay. Though poor, the father of Somu, a shop keeper with no capital, made an attempt to step forward to save his son from the threat of murder by the crowd. He ran to the police station, but the police were not for the poor and the Naxalites. To him, “There’s no justice in this country!” (67). At the same time, the rich Dibyanath Chatterjee, hushed up the news of the death of the son, as it would
spoil the reputation of the family. He attempted to ensure that the name of Brati did not appear in the press, “The two fathers, Somu’s and Brati’s, lived in same country, but poles apart” (66).

Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, pictures the Whites, who do not respect the elderly Blacks, as the former have no dignity to maintain. Angelou and her brother were taught to treat their elders with utmost respect. Everyone Angelou knew followed those rules, except for “powhitetrash” (28) children, whom Angelou described as living on Momma’s land but treating Uncle Willie and Momma in the most disrespectful manner, as if they were mere servants. Momma is “not omnipotent; she is a realist. When the poor White children call her Annie and make fun of her, she sings in praise of the Lord and lets the incident pass” (Uma 102). The White girls used to address Momma by name “‘Bye, Annie’” (32); Momma entitled those “nasty” (32) girls as “‘Bye, Miz Helen, ‘bye, Miz Ruth, ‘bye Miz Eloise” “(32). Momma taught Angelou and Bailey life’s lessons, she had learned from the ancestors. The only lesson stated was, her perspective on how to deal with the Whites. Momma believed that one risks one’s life if one speaks to a White person and that in their absence, they should not be spoken of harshly. To Momma, the approach was not cowardly, but realistic. As D. Maya, remarks in *Self Revealed and Self Mythified: The Autobiographies of Maya Angelou and Kamala Das*, “from her (Momma) she acquires her courage, her infinite faith in the Negro race, her religious faith and the knowledge of the white that is necessary for every black child to hold her own in life’s battle field” (63).

In harmony with the Whites, who enslaved the Blacks, the Maliks in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* bind the Dalits and do not want the
low caste to flourish. The government gave permission to the kharidi subjects to collect firewood from the forest. The forest tehsildar had consented to give daily permits, so that they could collect firewood everyday. The Maliks, in the absence of the field labourers had to resort to migrant low caste acchuts or adivasis to work in the fields. Ganesh recalls, “The adivasis used to live here once. We evicted them and took control” (130). The high caste did not allow the low caste to live. The landless labourers were to work in the field of the Maliks for only six months, and the next six months, they had to starve. Ganesh frets, “They’ll starve for six months? They’ve always done that. It’s nothing new. Why should I worry about it this year” (130). The labourers from other villages were free to beg, work as coolies or do road construction work, but the labourers of Barha were totally controlled by the Maliks. They “either have to starve, or do the Maliks’ odd jobs for a handful of bajra-makai-chattu. The women would gather cowdung to make cowdung cakes” (143).

Corresponding to the adivasis who are denied necessities of life such as food and shelter, Maya Angelou in *Gather Together in My Name* describes an incident that happened in Stamps to reveal that a man with black skin is unprotected in life; he has to face cruel death at any time in the hands of the Whites. Bailey, the brother, saw the body of a Black man that had been pulled out from the river. The cause of the death of the Black man was not broadcasted, but “Bailey had seen that the man’s genitals had been cut away” (79). He was shocked and the incident forced him to believe that it was dangerous for a Black boy to live in 1940 in Arkansas. The incident made Momma sent her grandchildren to California with the hope that they would be treated as people. Thus the Blacks become rootless, have to move like gypsies and lose identity. Though the Whites in South America are heartless and
without human values, the Blacks are kind and provide more worth to age than wealth, and value, to religious piety than beauty.

Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* presents the life of the Blacks as unsafe in Stamps. The Black townspeople squeezed into the store to hear Joe Louis’ fight with a White man on the radio. With every serious blow that Louis took, the audience said that the entire Black race suffered as well. Angelou imagined that if Joe lost the fight, they would again be victims of slavery and beyond help, “true that we were stupid and ugly and lazy and dirty and, unlucky and worst of all, that God Himself hated us and ordained us to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, forever and ever, world without end” (135). Finally, Louis won and kept the heavy weight title. There was great celebration in the store. People living far away had to stay in town that night as it was unsafe “for a Blackman and his family to be caught on a lonely country road on a night when Joe Louis had proved that we were the strongest people in the world” (136). Though it was a temporary victory for the Blacks, they were treated as “lower types of human beings, only a little higher than the apes” (135). As there was no security for their lives, they had to suffer, both in victory and defeat.

Comparable to the Blacks who are angst-ridden in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, the peasants and farmers are tortured by the Zamindars and the Sahibs. The novelist presents a scene where, the policeman and the armed guard picked the choicest wares out of the vendors’ basket – fruits, vegetables, and fish. Throwing himself at their feet, the fishmonger cried and said, “Sir, I must sell that fish for an anna, I have to buy oil and rice for my family. Please don’t take that one” (10). Seeing the distressed fish monger, Titu took
the fish out of the policeman’s hands. The irritated policeman shouted at Titu, the Muslim, untouchable thus: “Chhi! Chhi! Chhi! Now you’ve gone and touched it! How can the Inspector Babu take this fish, eh?” (10). The irate policeman flung the basket down. The vendors were overjoyed and said, “the zamindar’s men want their bit, and the police want theirs, how can we keep them all happy? The other day they took ten jack fruits, and made us carry them as well” (11). The courageous Titu stood up against extortions in the market place. As leader, he always stood up for the victims of injustice. The Muslims are treated with contempt by the Brahmans. Ramchand, the manager of Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury in Titu Mir remarks with rancour, “My master will employ no one but these Muslims” (31). When Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury dismissed Ramchand, the latter replies hotly, “‘You accuse a brahman without reason? You will suffer for this’. Then he raised his voice and said in ringing tones to the general assembly, ‘Our master is blinded by the love of these Muslims and infidels. As a true brahman, one day I will see with my own eyes how he suffers for it’” (43). Though these people belong to the same country, the low caste, the lower class and the Muslims are not treated as equal. The rich high caste people adore the White skinned from the West with great piety.

Parallel to the sufferings of the poor Indians by the colonizers and the high caste Zamindars, Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes presents the sufferings of the Blacks in Africa by the colonizers. The Cape Coast Castle unveiled the sufferings of the Blacks in the past. Black Americans visited Cape Coast Castle and the nearby Elmina Castle at Ghana in Africa, the fort for captured slaves during the time of slavery, prior to the Civil War. The thick stone walls of the fort still echoed the old cries. When Angelou passed through the Cape Coast Castle, she reminiscences the eternal melodrama; of children passing together tied by ropes and
chains and with tears in their eyes, stumbling with tiredness. She could see women with uncombed hair and dirty body sagging in defeat, and men, whose muscles moved without memory and minds dimmed, with wounded feet. As they walked, they left behind bloodied footprints in the dirt. The calmness in the castle at present was awful, “none of them cried, or yelled, or bellowed. No moans came from them. They lived in a mute territory, dead to feeling and protest. These were the legions, sold by sisters, stolen, by brothers, bought by strangers, enslaved by the greedy and betrayed by history” (98). Similar to Golak Kura, who sold himself, wife and progeny to Raavan Shunri, out of poverty in Mahasweta Devi’s play Aajir, the Africans were sold to the greedy colonizers by their sisters and brothers. Thus, the slaves became the permanent property of the masters. The men worked to death; the women were raped, and their children were orphaned.

In conformity with the sufferings of the Blacks in Africa, the Dalits in India also suffered. Mahasweta Devi, in the Mother of 1084, presents the hatred of people for the Naxalites, a group of young revolutionaries who worked for the upliftment and liberation of the poor and the Dalits. The Naxalites bore the burden and carried the cross for the people, yet they were looked upon as terrorists: “a crowd had gathered outside Somu’s house? The elders of the locality, respectable, old gentlemen had raised the cry – Throw them out!” (53). Young rebels were considered as, “a cancerous growth on the body of democracy” (29). People wanted the Naxalites to be wiped away from the face of earth in their tender age. People of all political parties, of all creeds had the unlimited, democratic right to kill those young men who rejected the rules and regulations of the party establishment. To kill them, special sanction was not needed from the law or the courts of justice. The killers of the society, such as those who adulterate food, drugs and baby food, have every right to live, but Brati
was considered a worse criminal than them, “because he had lost faith in this society ruled by profit-mad businessmen and leaders blinded by self-interest. Once this loss of faith assailed a boy, an adolescent, or a youth, it does not matter whether he is twelve, sixteen or twenty-two, death was his portion” (19). As Savita Goel opines, “His (Brati) firm conviction in the right cause, his courage and his selflessness, his exemplary integrity and his irresistible passion, led to his death” (*A journey of Discovery: Mahasweta Devi’s Mother of 1084* 120).

Equivalent to the native Dalits and the revolutionary Naxalites who are deprecated in India, Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, recalls that the Blacks are not respected in America; if by mistake, mentioned with respect, they are made fun of. In Stamps, a Black man was hunted down for assaulting White womanhood. In his attempt to escape, he ran to Momma’s store. Momma and Uncle Willie helped and sent him on his way for an overland journey. He was apprehended, and in court he revealed that he took refuge in Mrs. Henderson’s store on the day of the crime. As the judge asked Mrs. Henderson be subpoenaed, Momma introduced herself as Mrs. Henderson. The judge, the bailiff and the other Whites in the audience laughed because “the judge had really made a gaffe calling a Negro woman Mrs.,…”(48). Age, experience and education are valueless in South America; colour is all that matters.

Colour discrimination in South America, and caste difference in India are well-matched features. Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* discloses the superiority and domination of the high caste over the low caste. Near Barha, there was an old-animal-carcass pit. Bajulal, a contractor from Tohri, was the supplier of dried bones. They were powdered to make fertilizer by government firms. The
Bhangis were sub-contractors of the pit. When the decaying, maggot-ridden animal carcasses slowly transformed into white skeletons, they thrashed them with bamboo poles, smashed the skeletons, stuffed into sacks and dragged to carrion pits. They sprinkled the pit with the lime mixed earth given by Bajulal contractor. If they stopped pouring lime-earth into the earth, the sky would be full of kites and vultures, with unbearable stench. There was no way of removing the disposal pit from there. The duty of emptying the shit fell on the Bhangis and they took wages for their work. Thus, the role of Bhangis were of great importance.

In Barha, Holi is important to different castes for various reasons. On the day of the festival, the adivasis enter the forest for their ritual hunt. The Bhangi folk would compose songs on village scandals, and stirring events. They painted their faces and sang the songs in the bazaar and collected money from people and the houses of the Maliks. In Malik-controlled Barha, “the only history of exploitation and oppression on the poor was found in their songs” (57). If they are prevented from celebrating Holi, they would not work, making the village dreadful. The untouchables are not allowed to speak the truth. On the evening of Holi, the Bhangis arrive with flaming mashaals, beating on their dhols. Valentine Ekka in the article Cultural Expressions of Tribals remarks:

“Almost all the tribal festivals of the seasonal cycle include drinking bear, singing, dancing, and either in the courtyard or on the akhara, the common village dancing ground. The middle aged tribal people drink rice beer together and sing together to the accompanying rhythm of mandar tal, the most common drum found in the tribal society”. (202)

There is an undercurrent of excitement to know who, the songs would caricature among the Rajput community. Every incident such as Medininarayan and Lachhima,
Lachhima and Mohor Karan, Mohor Karan and Dhanpatiya, Mohor Karan and the daroga (Inspector of Police) –is sung aloud in juicy language dripping with innuendo, and the people are filled with reckless laughter. Witnessing the scene, Medininarayan roared, leaped directly into the crowd of Bhangis, and beat them savagely. They moved away to a safe distance and pointing at Medininarayan, continued to sing and dance. All the Rajputs laughed and Nathu yelled “Come back, come back, Or else the lowborn will touch you” (59). In Barha, for stating truth, the Bhangis, the untouchables, are ill-treated, beaten and insulted by the Maliks. Just as the Bhangis were attacked by Medininarayan, in recent years, the Dalits are assaulted, by the high caste Hindus, if they touch the ‘ceremonial umbrella’ of the temple. They claim that the Dalits have defiled it: “Attacks citing defilement due to touch was on the rise and Dalits joining queues at ration shops and at photo sessions for medical insurance had invited the wrath of caste Hindus in the recent past” (The Hindu 30 Dec 2009). To avoid rupture, the Dalits do not enter into the temple. It is self-restraint on the part of the Dalits to ‘avoid conflict’ in the face of evident hostility. For them, “We have a ‘samudaya kovil’ (community temple) and we don’t want any trouble” (Srividya 30 Dec 2009). During temple festivals, “Dalits were prevented from going ahead with their celebration” (The Hindu 8 Mar 2009).

In Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name*, the Blacks in America are portrayed as rootless, nameless and pastless. They are also marginalized. Angelou goes for a downtown shopping in White Town. When she glides into White Town, she feels that the air has died and there is only vacuum everywhere. She reached Stamps’ General Merchandise Store and saw a young, blond woman. Angelou asked for a “simplicity pattern” (90) to the sales girl. She replied that it was not available in the shop and would put an order to Texarkana. Angelou appreciated the girl and
wrote her name as “Marguerite A. Johnson” on the small pad, the girl had given her. When Angelou went to pick up her order in the store, a tall sales woman wearing a clerk’s smock confronted her. The sales girl appeared and the clerk interrogated her whether that was Sassy Ruby Lee. The girl flipped the pages of a pad and said, “this one’s Margaret or Marjorie or something like that” (93). The clerk wanted her to pronounce her name. At that moment, Angelou felt herself as rootless, nameless and pastless. She replied:

My name […] is Miss Johnson. If you have occasion to use my name, which I seriously doubt, I advice you to address me as Miss. Johnson. For if I need to allude to your pitiful selves, I shall call you Miss Idiot, Miss Stupid, Miss Fool or whatever name a luckless fate has dumped upon you. (93)

The novelist remarks that the Blacks do not have the right to have their own names; instead, the Whites rename them according to their convenience. The Whites would deny the family name of the Blacks and render them rootless. Angelou congratulated herself since she felt that she was speaking correctly. On reaching home, Momma was tensed and told her that Miss June, Mr. Coleman’s granddaughter, from the general Merchandise Store, had informed Momma that Angelou was “downtown showing out” (94). As Angelou explained the truth, Momma slapped her and she fell down in front of the porch. Momma, charged with hatred spoke:

You think ‘cause you’ve been to California these crazy people won’t kill you? You think them lunatic cracker boy’s won’t try to catch you in the road and violate you? You think because of your all – fixed principle some of the men won’t feel like putting their white sheets on and riding over here to stir up trouble. (96)
Momma decided that the only thing that would protect Angelou was that she should be some miles away from Stamps and so Angelou escaped to California. These incidents reveal that an intelligent and educated, Black-skinned woman is afraid of the Whites. The Blacks dare not open their mouths, and are always muted.

Similarly, Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* states that the Blacks have no name and identity in Southern America. Any White woman would rename a Black for her convenience. Angelou got a job in the house of a rich woman, Mrs. Viola Cullinan, as part of her education. Angelou was taught by the cook of the landlord, Miss. Glory, whose ancestors had also worked for the family. Mrs. Cullinan, an upper class White woman, called Angelou ‘Mary’, since it is shorter than her full name Margaret. Angelou is aware of the fact that every person she knows, has a hellish horror of being “called out of his name” (109). She felt that, “It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely constructed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dingers, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks” (109).

Akin to the Whites in America, the Whites in India lived an honourable life. The Indian rebels, were stamped as robbers, as they defended the rural poor against the exploitation of the landlords and the British. They led the life of gypsies. In Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, Titu Mir met Mishkin Shah, a fakir with an open wound on his forehead. The latter, though injured, had to travel a long way begging along the road, and the forest. His life was in perpetual danger from tigers, crocodiles, snakes and robbers. The fakirs, who were caught, were locked up in the Harinbari Jail. Titu understood the pain, suffering and torture the fakirs had underwent, to
release the poor peasants from the clutches of the Zamindars, the Company and the Government.

The Permanent Settlement, enacted in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis, declared that all Zamindars were to pay a fixed rent to the British government in perpetuity; that was to hold good for their descendants as well. With the settlement, the British created a loyal class of Zamindars in the Bengal presidency who strengthened the social basis of British rule in India. The landowners were ready to say “‘Yes, Huzoor’” (20), if the Sahibs said, “‘The sky is green’ or ‘It is pitch dark on a full moon night’” (20). They gave the government ten rupees for every twenty they squeezed out of the poor people. The Company did not want Zamindars like Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury, who could not charge high taxes on poor peasants and farmers. Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury, a peace-loving, pious man had a lot of lathials (stavesman) whose jobs were to thwart the Company’s men in the ongoing cold war between the former and the indigo plantations. In places such as Krishnanagar, Taki and Calcutta there were Zamindars, who were keen on raising the taxes, while their managers enjoyed good time in the villages. The old landlords, found it difficult to pressurize the people to pay taxes. So the Company declared that if land revenue did not reach its offices in good time, the landlord in question would forfeit his right to the land. Such lands would be auctioned.

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* states that in the United States, during segregation, the Blacks are prejudiced. At the same time, she remembers the generosity of the Blacks. In America, as the Black American travelers are unable to stay in hotels, reserved for the Whites, and the Blacks informed the Black ministers or deacons, of their predicament. Church officials would select
homes and inform the host of their decision. The hosts would never protest; they fed
and entertained the guests. The neighbours would also help the host by providing
macaroni, cakes, and cheese. To Angelou, some Africans she met, loved the glories
of Europe; they were too immobilized to construct a splendid African future. Their
admiration towards Europe was understandable; Europe brought to Africa, language,
religion, modern ideas of medicine, and self-love. She painfully tells: “How could
one suggest in one’s own secret heart that Whites were not gods, descending from
heaven, and like gods, bringing bounty on one hand and brutality on the other? That
was the way of the gods”. (155).

Resembling the Whites who do not provide space for the Blacks, as they
would not consider them equal, Ganesh, the landlord, in Mahasweta Devi’s The Glory
of Sri Sri Ganesh, does not want to recommend parity to the poor villagers of Barha.
He rebukes Swarup Singh, a Rajput, who moved from his aristocratic bearing to
civilized life. Ganesh wants the poor villagers to be ignorant of India’s
independence, so that he could enchain and extract hard labour from them. To him,
they are “Low caste folk, scum” (161). In Tohri, Ganesh met Swarup Singh of
Nawagarh, formerly a landlord, and at present working as a forest contractor. Ganesh
wished to remain a landlord, as he felt that high class people should not take up other
jobs. He was shocked, on hearing the occupation of Swarup, and asked, “Why? What
happened to your land?” (143). Swarup Singh wished to be modern; he likes
electricity, cinema, and fan. He does not want to be surrounded by buffaloes, hay and
wheat. He sent his daughter to school, and his wife did not wear purdah. To Ganesh,
Swarup’s newly forged identity is sacrilege. Ganesh feels that if the other Maliks
come in contact with people like Swarup Singh, they would become bad, “Imagine
giving up something like land to be a contractor! Swarup seemed to have become a whore, somehow” (145).

The young revolutionaries in India suffered due to their love for the underprivileged and socially deprived people. Uma Parameswaram remarks in *World Literature today*, that Mahasweta Devi, “focusses on the young intellectuals who were drawn to the cause because of their idealism and on peasants and tribals because they were victims of centuries-old oppression” (457). The Naxalites underwent trials and tribulations in the prison cells. In the *Mother of 1084*, Nandini, a young woman Naxalite is tortured in prison. She describes the silent scream of torment and desperation in the prison. For her, “How else can one explain the walls raised higher around the prisons, the watchtowers? Why does a single person raise his voice when thousands of young men are still rotting in the prisons” (20). She relates the torture meted out in the prison thus:

Cigarette burns caused only surface cutaneous injury. Only the skin gets charred. The burn could always be cured with an ointment. It is described as ‘surface cutaneous healing’. The burn on the skin healed soon. But in the young heart within, every single burn ached for ever. Then back to the solitary cell. Alone with oneself.(73)

Resembling the torture of Nandini in the solitary cell, Pallavi Shah in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is tormented as she has stayed in the houses of the low caste. The rich Malik do not want the poor to receive help from any source. They insisted that a rich person, who comes to Barha as a guest, should stay in the house of the Malik. They molested the women who come to their village. Medininarayan has as his keep Lacchima, a Barber woman, whereas for Ganesh, the
son of Medininarayan “the very thought of having a low caste mistress made him feel sick” (89). Ganesh, enamoured by the beauty of the rich high caste Pallavi, yelled at the Bhangis, “You’re keeping this well-groomed pretty woman in your hut?” (89). He told Pallavi, “Did you hear him call me “Malik”? We Rajputs are the masters of these low caste people. For someone like you to stay with them is unacceptable” (90). The rich high class would not allow the low class to live in peace. As Ganesh threatened Pallavi and the Bhangis, they escaped to the forest with the help of Ranka Dusad, the son of Mohan Dusad, a harijan. Ranka Dusad shouted in anger, “Your huts will surely burn today [… ] The maliks control the land – money – government, and she’s come to help! Why did she have to come here” (91). Pallavi felt that she would rather have worked for the poor in Mumbai, and found it impossible to work in a bizarre social set-up, “Was it possible to even teach these bhangis the basics of health hygiene” (92). There is no education, health and hygiene among the low caste. A similar instance is in Mahasweta Devi’s play Urvashi and Johny, where the one-eyed Moti narrates the sufferings in the slum, “and these mosquitoes! You can’t escape them, with twelve families clustering in the slum, with a single washroom! They let their children shit right on the doorstep. A real hell, what a hell!” (Urvashi and Johnny 65).

The Maliks set fire to the settlement of the poor, if they did anything unfavourable to the rich. In the Bhangi toli (settlement), there are about eleven households, consisting of forty-two people with kids and two pregnant women in two of the houses. Ganesh set fire to the Bhangi settlement, as, Pallavi refused to stay in his house. If they rebuild their huts, it is sure to be set on fire by the high caste Ganesh. Pallavi, crest fallen, left to Mumbai. She went to Tohri and narrated the story to the SDO several times, and failed to get him take action against Ganesh. She
burst into tears, recounting the hardships of the Bhangis, “I feel so small, so worthless, so humiliated” (94). Due to her bitter experience in Barha, she suffered nervous breakdown and was removed to the nursing home for psychiatric treatment.

A poor low caste woman is to become the keep of the high caste, and then, she had to be the wife of the low caste. For instance, Rukmani, in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, is the daughter of the high caste Nathu Singh and his low caste keep Ganga. Rukmani is forced to work in the house of the high caste Ganesh. She is in love with Kamu Ahir from Nahara who belonged to the caste of cattle-raisers. He is demanded by Ganga to fetch hundred rupees, clothes, utensils to marry her daughter Rukmani. In the intervening time, Ganesh made Rukmani pregnant. Rukmani, realizing that she could no longer marry Kamu, committed suicide. Thus the lives of the low caste people, are in the hands of the Maliks. The low caste men “always get seconds after the maliks have had their fill. Whether before the wedding or after” (101).

Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* presents Nana, a spiritual and moral leader of Ahanta people, who narrated the Black spirit of Dr. Kwegyr Aggrey from Ghana. Dr. Kwegyr earned a doctorate from Columbia University and taught in North Carolina. He understands racism and loves his Black skin, “If I died and went to heaven and God asked me would I like to be sent back to earth as a white man […] I would say no, make me as black as you can and send me back […] make me completely, Black, BLACK,BLACK” (110). The Black brave revolutionaries are proud of their race.

Similar to Nana who loved his race, Titu Mir in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* loved his religion and country and never submitted to the demand of the oppressors.
The Zamindars forcefully collected tax from the peasants with the help of lathials (stavesmen). Krishnadeb Ray, the Zamindar of Poonra, instructed his men to collect tax from the subjects who had grown beards and became Wahabis. The peasants were to pay two and a half rupees per head as tax. The Zamindars considered themselves greater than God. When Titu was saying his namaaz (prayer), the guard of Krishnadeb informed him that he had not paid tax for beard. The guard knocked his lathi on the ground and said, “Yes, you’re to come at once. The zamindar has called you; is your namaaz more important?” (79). Thus class distinction is evident.

When the clerk of Krishnadeb Ray said that the Mussalmans, the potters, the blacksmiths, cobblers and the like were in favour of Titu Mir; the Zamindar called them as “Low-born dregs!” (76). The downtrodden, the poor, and the low caste, the victims of the Zamindari system, are also targeted by the Sahibs.

Likewise, Titu, who is disliked by the Whites and the Zamindars as he voiced for the poor, the Naxalites are hated and despised as they favour the downtrodden. Joseph Marianus Kajur in his article From Conscientization to conscious: Tribal Movements for Survival and Assertion in Chatanagpur says, “The main support for the Naxalite movements comes from Dalits and Adivasis. Dalits and Adivasis constitute one fourth of India’s population” (129). Mahasweta Devi in the Mother of 1084 shows the lack of concern of the police for the feelings of the Naxalites. Nitu, a young Naxalite is beaten to death right before the police station. When the women of the locality gathered there to register their protest, they are teargassed. These incidents never appeared in the newspapers. The young rebels, who suffered for the low caste people, are betrayed for money, jobs and power. The young Naxalite Brati, and his friends are betrayed by Anindya, a Naxalite for material comforts. The Naxalites are killed at their younger age. Nandini, the Naxalite, reveals “Only a
generation between sixteen and twenty-four was wiped out. Is being wiped out…” (78).

Analogous to the Naxalites who are wiped away from society, the Blacks are weaned from their land. Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* relates that the Blacks always dream of liberty from the insults of the Whites. The Negro national anthem written by John Weldon Johnson and composed by J. Rosamond Johnson is an instance.

> “Lift ev’ry voice and sing
> Till earth and heaven ring
> Ring with the harmonies of Liberty…” (183)

The small children are led onto the stage to sing the song about slavery and suffering.

> “Stony the road we trod
> Bitter the chastening rod
> Felt in the days when hope, unborn, had died.
> Yet with a steady beat
> Have not our weary feet
> Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?” (183)

The song portrays the painful truth and path, the Blacks have treaded. When lighted up with a ray of hope, they are immediately put out by the Whites. The interrogation mark ‘?’ at the end of the poem strongly suggests the truth that they have not attained liberty inspite of blood shed, humiliation and suffering.

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mahasweta Devi states that the low caste are compelled to contribute money and free labour for Kali Puja, the festival celebrated by the Maliks in Barha. For the festival, the BDO, the station master, the daroga, the
government doctor and the timber contractor from Tohri – arrive in Barha. Among them, an officer comments: “the more backward a place, the more simple its folk – they remain obedient, they fear the police. Progress spoils them. It annoys the malik, and in turn we face problems. Development is not suitable for rural India” (78). The selfish government officers who are against progress, wish to rule and gain respect.

In *Titu Mir*, Mahasweta Devi remarks that the poor people have to pay unreasonable due towards the personal needs of a Zamindar. Krishnadeb Ray, the Zamindar of Poonra, demanded ten *gamchhas* (the multipurpose length of cloth used as a towel, head covering, and to tie a bundle) from each of the peasants to hold his father’s annual *shraddha*, (the post-death rites among the Hindus). Every year, the poor, poverty-stricken peasants have to give ten *gamchhas* to the Zamindar. Titu suggested them to use thread for making five *gamchhas* and spin it out to make ten, for which the peasants feared that the Zamindar would torment them throughout the year. The tradition compelled the poor peasants to contribute to the festivals conducted by the upper class. The rich upper class Rajputs in Barha or the Brahmans in Poonra, are different only in castes; they are born to rule and suppress the poor. The fate of the lower class is to die of hard labour. The rich upper class are greedy and stingy to pay the peasants.

The Blacks in America are treated ruthlessly by the Whites. In their ancestral soil in Africa, the Whites who ill-treat them, respect them. Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* introduces Malcolm, whose unknown father is White and the mother, a Black. He has strong hatred for the Whites and calls them “Blue-eyed devils” (129) and accuses America of “totalitarian genocide”(129). He furnishes an incident that happened in the Nigerian Airport. A White man
approached Malcolm, and shook hand with him, in the Nigerian Airport. Instantly, Malcolm asked him whether he would have shaken his hand in New York. The man, taken aback with surprise replied that he would not. Malcolm wanted to know whether it is all right to do so in Africa. He indignantly replied that, “well. We’re both Americans!” (132). Malcolm entertained doubt about the feeling of brotherhood in Africa, which is lacking in American soil; a race of people are subjugated to slavery in a part of the world, whereas they are treated with dignity in another part of the world. The Blacks are not born low. Where there is suppression, the crooked minded sadists would take advantage and suppress them. Thus, like the Shudras, the Blacks are also deliberately lowered in society.

Akin to the Blacks, who are intentionally lowered, the Dalits in India, are subordinated by the high caste and the Sahibs. In Titu Mir, Mahasweta Devi reveals the rich helping the Sahibs and harassing their own countrymen. Ramchand, the chief lathial (chief stavesman) of Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury, collects and deposits the Barogachhia (name of a place) tax, dreaming of becoming the next Zamindar of that place. He pestered Bhudeb to convert the agricultural land to indigo plantation, so that he could lease out the land and grow richer; the sufferers would be the poor farmers and peasants, for whom he cared little. The indigo planters were the Sahibs and the White men were the Company rulers. The greedy Indian managers were on the side of the sahibs, “Wherever there are plantations, the managers lend out grain in autumn to farmers and slowly enmesh them in debt. Then they stake out the land and plant indigo on it” (58). The Sahibs, as per the caste system in India, brought Santhals, the low caste, (who remove the dead animals, garbage, sweep the streets and drains) to do work in the indigo plantation. The peasants had reasons to hate the plantation men; “the latter had often forcibly grabbed an aubergine or a gourd, or
impounded their cattle, or paid just one cowrie for five cowries’ worth of milk!” (39). Tarini Sanyal, the greedy agent of an indigo planter, scattered indigo seeds in Bhudeb’s land. A riot was going on in the distant Pubpara of Chor Gobindopur between the lathials of the Zamindar and the plantation’s, Tarini Sanyal ordered: “Knock down those zamindar’s lathials, keep the plantation’s name unsullied, and you’ll all get a rupee’s reward!” (39). In the fight, lathials of the Zamindar defeated the plantation’s and the peasants became happy. The people of Pubpara were grateful to the lathials of the Zamindar who fought on their behalf. They slaughtered a goat for the lathials. Thus, the happiness of the peasants showed their hatred for the indigo planters.

Maya Angelou declares in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes that the Blacks are purposely persecuted in America. The novelist is filled with awe and trembles when she sees Africans enter and leave Flagstaff House, the seat of government, and a formal building. She realized that the Blacks were wronged in America; she had not witnessed such an authoritative movement so far there and was thunderstruck by the sight.

Their authority on the marble steps again proved that Whites had been wrong all along. Black and brown skin did not herald debasement and a divinely created inferiority. We were capable of controlling our cities, our selves and our lives with elegance and success. Whites were not needed to explain the working of the world, nor the mysteries of the mind. (16)

The Whites in America, do not tolerate the Blacks and discriminate them in the restaurants, churches, swimming pools and voting booths.
Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* asserts that the proletariat are treated inferior by the rich. The low caste are made to work for the Maliks and are thrown out by the latter, when worn out. Medininarayan, a rich Malik, owned acres of land and was the head sipahi (soldier) of a Raja, and so belonged to the working class. When his son Ganesh was born, a Brahman informed that *Deota* (corruption of ‘Devta’ (god)) Ganesh is born to Medininarayan. Medininarayan, feared that his wives Badki and Majhli would cast a spell on Ganesh. So he drove them out of his house. The uncle of Majhli suggested “All right, if you don’t want them, let it be. Shall I arrange your marriage with my younger daughter? […] Let your son be brought up by someone of your own caste” (11). Some Maliks did not want their children to be touched by the low caste; yet they had the low caste women as their keep, “The high caste Rajput males were a hot-blooded lot. They solved this problem by keeping a low caste woman in addition to the wife at home” (27). Medininarayan promised Gulal, the grandmother of Lachhima, three bighas of land (unit of land area, one third of an acre), and ten rupees a month. On leaving the house, she got a cow for looking after the child. Gulal advises the granddaughter, Lachhima, “Let’s make hay as long as we’re here. As soon as the boy grows up, he’ll kick us out” (15). The Maliks employed the low caste to look after their household needs and as the latter became old, the Maliks would kick them out and they had to beg for their livelihood.

In harmonious with the plight of the Dalits in India, who are treated as beasts by the Maliks, Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* reveals the Blacks being regarded as inferior to animals by the Whites. Momma took Angelou to a White local dentist, with severe toothache. The dentist, ironically named as Lincoln, refused to treat the child, though he was indebted to Momma for a loan she extended to him during the depression: "'Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's
mouth than in a nigger's."(189) A silent witness to the scene, Angelou suffered from
the pain of her two decayed teeth, which were reduced to tiny enamel bits by the
avenging "Angel of the candy counter,"
(185) and from the utter humiliation of the
dentist's bigotry: "It seemed terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and
have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness."(187).

Akin to the Whites who assume that they are superior, the high caste in India
also believe in their superiority. The Zamindars have the notion that only the
Brahmans are intelligent. They are filled with jealousy if the low-caste Bagdis or
Chandals are intelligent. In Titu Mir, Kani, the son of Charan Bagdi, a low caste, is
an intelligent boy, who could remember and repeat everything he has heard. The
priests in the temple believed that, “the times were really bad: God had seen fit to
give such a gift not to the son of a brahman or a kayastha, but to a Bagdi’s boy”
(110). Feeling jealous of the high caste, people opined, “They have everything –
wealth, land, all they could want. Yet if Bagdis and Chandals get just a bit of
intelligence to see their way by, they’re consumed with jealousy” (110).

Analogous to Mahasweta Devi’s Titu Mir, where the priests would not
tolerate an intelligent Dalit boy, Hitler, a German White in Maya Angelou’s All
God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes could not assimilate the fact that the Blacks are
brave and intelligent. To Angelou, the Blacks are misrepresented by the German,
Hitler, the architect of the holocaust. Angelou narrates her experiences in Germany,
where she met a group of New York actors. She recounted the past when Adolf
Hitler killed thousands of Jews, harassed and sent them to concentration camps. She
would forgive only those African chiefs, who had collaborated in the slave trade
centuries before, but not the stewardesses, the toddlers at the time of the holocaust:
“Prejudice is a burden which confesses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible” (155). Hitler hated the Jews, and the Blacks. Angelou, relating an incident that happened in Germany, during the 1936 Olympics, states that the Black runner, Jesse Owens, representing United States, won four gold medals and shattered Adolf Hitler’s dictum that the Aryan race is superior. The German audience reportedly booed Owens and Hitler refused to award the Black winner the medal by himself. As a Black, Angelou is very much offended by the ruthless gesture of Hitler and the Germans. She wished the angry Blacks to call the entire allied army back, and whip the Germans.

Titu in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* planned to overthrow the English from Mother India, by organizing mujahid (Muslim revolutionaries) fighters. His telescopic vision revealed that the Pathan tribes, the poor weavers, both Hindus and Muslims, the farmers, cotton ginners, and fabric dyers would respond to his call for raising a mujahid army, as the fight was against “injustice of all kinds, against all torture and oppression” (64). Though not a religious fanatic, he remembered the words of Allah’s Prophet “if you see a strong infidel oppressing or harming a weaker one, you must, of course, help the weaker” (64).

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* Mahasweta Devi narrates the predicament in the lives of the Dalits, who are muted. The aim of a tough Malik showing love towards the Dalits, is meant to trap them by their innocence. The Maliks rule the lower caste with iron hands and the latter are denied the right to speak in favour of justice. After the death of Medininarayan, Ganesh appeared in a new role. He proved to be a tough master, by leading Gajomoti Singh, a high caste Rajput, in the right way and succeeded in getting the former’s wet nurse Lachhima to marry Haroa, a bonded
labourer in the house of Medininarayan. In the Holi festival, the Bhangis sang of the power and glory of Ganesh, as he had put Gajomoti Singh on the right path and settled Lachhima, the keep of Medininarayan, in her new household. Ganesh in a gesture of happiness, poured out rice and took money from his pocket. The Bhangis, the lowest of the low “don’t have proper houses, health centres, schools, drinking water facilities” (86). Ganesh reveals to his guests,

“That year they abused Baba. This year they praised me and demeaned Gajomoti chacha; since when have they had the guts to do this? […] Gajomoti Singh had no sense of shame. He said, ‘For centuries the low castes have had the right to speak their minds. Didn’t Ayodhyapati Raghuram banish Sita to the forest because some washermen gossiped about her?’

‘Ram! Ayodhya! This is Barha village’.

‘What are you saying, son?’

‘I’ll get the bhangis evicted from the village’. (75).

As the low caste attained courage to speak, Ganesh decided to evict them from Barha. He told his guests to get rid of all the latrines and suggested them to use fields for the purpose. Ganesh vows, “I’ll teach the bhangis a lesson. They can make up their songs, paint their faces and clown around, but they shouldn’t bring the maliks into it. A malik is a malik” (76).

Maya Angelou in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings feels that the Whites who profoundly hate and bully the Blacks, gain sadistic pleasure in humiliating the marginalized. The novelist portrays an incident in Stamps. One night Bailey, the brother, arrived home, shaking and speechless. He had witnessed a dead, bloated Black male, wrapped in a sheet, being pulled out of the pond by Black men. A White
yanked it off, grinned, and ordered the Black men to remove the body to the nearby jail. While Bailey was watching the sight, the White man ordered him to help carry the rotting body. Once they got the body inside, the White man pretended he was going to lock in all the men, then laughed and said it was a joke. The actual prisoners were already yelling that they did not want the body in there with them. Bailey got out as fast as he could. The young boy wanted to know from Uncle Willie and Momma the reason behind the Whites’ intense hatred for the Blacks.

Parallel to Uncle Willie and Momma who hushed up the queries of Bailey, Lachhima, in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, had to remain quiet to the Malik and accept the entire burden put on her. The calmness of the dispossessed is to accept everything, whether they like it or not. The high caste people rout the undemanding joys of the low caste. Saraju and Sita, the daughters of Medininarayan Singh, were married at a young age, whereas Lachhima, the keep of Medininarayan Singh, who is employed to look after Ganesh, was not allowed to marry Mohor. She had to wait till Ganesh’s bahu entered the house. The high caste women are married young, whereas the low caste have, at first, to become the keep of a high caste Malik and then, the wife of a low caste. If a low caste eloped, the Maliks would kill their relatives and burn the huts. Due to the innuendoes of the Bhangis about the Rajputs in the Holi festival, Barkandaj Singh, the head of the Rajputs in Barha village, died of coronary attack. Soon, Medininarayan Singh was confined to bed, with speech slurred and left side paralyzed. So, the burden of looking after him fell on Lachhima, a low caste. Lachhima reveals her pathetic condition thus: “the malik has bought me in exchange for three bighas of land. Just like he keeps bullocks and buffaloes” (29). In agony, she blames Gulal, the grandmother who, “Mortgaged me for money, and
land and cattle. I didn’t think of you? I could have gone off somewhere with Mohor. I didn’t because you’d bear the brunt” (32).

Torvash, an Israeli actor, in Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* narrated the sufferings of the Jews during the Second World War. In the German cum Jewish story, a Jew, of sixth perception, had entertained a premonition of the raid by the German soldiers. He used to leave the place, moments, before the soldiers would arrive. It went on for three years and once, his power deserted him and he was caught. The soldiers took him to the Nazi officer for interrogation. The Nazi officer said that only one question would be asked, and if the Jew answered, he would be allowed to immigrate. The German officer told him that one of his eyes was false, which was made by the world’s greatest false eye maker. The Jew replied “I know, sir, I know because the false one looks so human” (168). The story reveals the inhuman nature of the oppressors. The Dalits, the Blacks and the Jews suffer, for no fault of theirs, and their oppressors are identical with inborn dictatorship.

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mahasweta Devi recalls that the rich would go to any extreme step to silence and keep the underprivileged under their thumb. To teach a lesson to the Bhangis, Ganesh picked out an old cow from the cowshed. He tied a heavy stone to the end of the rope around the cow’s neck and let it loose near the Bhangi settlement, so that the old cow would die of thirst. Ganesh informed Gajomoti Singh, a Rajput, that “the cow is bhagwati – the mother who provides; bhagwati chose to die in your garden to stop you from the sinful acts you indulge in even now, in your age” (71). For the act of showing the right path to Gajomoti, he was acclaimed by the Bhangis. The same cruel Ganesh opted to take revenge on the
Bhangis who praised him for his instruction. The old cow of Ganesh died of thirst and Mangalal, a Bhangi, skinned the cow, and threw the carcass into the carrion pit. A constable took Mangalal to Ganesh. The daroga (Inspector of Police) refused to hear about the death of the cow. Ganesh had no intention of taking Mangalal to court; he got him released. When the Bhangis came to pay their respects to Ganesh, he threatened them thus:

We can kill you, and we can save you – why do you forget that? […]

‘And you make up songs about us?’ ‘I don’t want to hear another one. I’ve shown you what I can do if I wish. If ever I hear a good or bad song about any malik – I’ll burn down the bhangi toli. No government, no Gandhi Mission, no contractor for animal hides will be able to save you. (83)

Congruent to Ganesh, in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the privileged, in Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* wished to create a notion that the underprivileged should accept all sorts of hardships and remain mute. Angelou remembers her visit to Berlin, where she met Dieter, an architect and a cunning German White, who wanted to exploit the marginalized. He narrated a German folktale which symbolized that the suppressed class should continue to be muted and bore the burden. A German worker, on his way to the factory, saw a small bird on the ground, too cold to move. The worker felt the heart beat of the bird, took it in his hands, breathed hard and blew warm air on the little bird. His repeated action made the little bird open its eyes. The worker heard the factory bell and left the bird on the hot large pat of the cow dung. It recovered, and peeped loudly. A starving wolf in the forest, on hearing the “peep, peep, peep” (170) of the bird, gobbled it. To Dieter, there are three morals in the story. First is,
“Remember, he who puts you in the shit is not necessarily your enemy. And two, he who takes you out is not necessarily your friend […] and the most important moral of all is […] once you find yourself in the shit keep your big mouth shut” (170). Thus the marginalized people who remain muted, undergo hardships, accepting it as their destiny.

Mahasweta Devi in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh opines that from the past, till the present, people such as the father of Abhay Mahato, and Haroa, who voice for the fellow downtrodden, are wiped out from the face of the earth. Abhay Mahato, a harijan, on seeing the burnt Bhangi settlements, recounts his past. His house in Purnea district was burnt thrice, in his childhood by the Malik-Mahajans of Punrea who are the high class Kayasth Zamindars. The second time when they burnt the settlements, Abhay’s father and other villagers gave petition to the government officers. Three of them were killed by the men of the Zamindars and their dead bodies were thrown into fire.

Ganesh planned to kill Abhay Mahato, as the latter had taken steps to help the labourers by providing them work in the forest. Haroa, a labourer and the husband of Lachhima, informed the conspiracy of Ganesh to his wife. She told Ranka, a Dusad, to guard the forest, as Ganesh had planned to set it afire. Haroa went to Tohri and cautioned Abhay Mahato. He reported to the SDO about the plan of Ganesh and the SDO threatened Ganesh. The bullet from Ganesh’s gun cut across Haroa’s lower belly. Haroa sliced, through the left shoulder of Ganesh, with a sharp honed sickle. Haroa, as nearing death, narrated that he was a bonded labourer of Suraj Singh, a Malik in Singhbhum district. The Malik forced him to put his thumb impression on a sevakpatta, (a bond written by the Malik on which the slave puts his thumb
impression). According to the bond, the debtor would agree either to repay the debt or remain a bonded slave for generations. Since the debtors are illiterate, the Maliks would show their debt as never-ending and made them slaves. Haroa was tortured by the Malik, Suraj Singh. As Haroa could not tolerate, he killed Suraj Singh, and ran off. Haroa loved the low class but no one knows of his caste. The Zamindars, on finding the fault of the bonded labourers, would use it as whip to control the innocent, poor, low caste eternally. To Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Shudras are deliberately lowered in the society:

That the Shudra was to take the last place in the social order […]should not be respected in the same way as the other classes […] Shudra is of no value and anybody may kill him […]. Shudra must not acquire property […] cannot hold office under the state […] duty and salvation of the Shudra lies in his serving the higher classes […] if the Shudra touches a woman of the higher classes he will be liable to dire punishment. That the Shudra is born in servility and must be kept in servility forever. (*Who Were the Shudras* 46)

After the death of Haroa, Lachhima, lived at the edge of the forest. The Bhangis invited her to stay with them, but she told them: “No, no. Don’t you understand? Today, because his sister’s (Putli) had to run for her life, Ramrup is angry. But tomorrow they’ll join forces again, malik and malik. Will they let me stay with you? Because of me, your huts will be burnt down” (*The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* 149).

Identical to Ahbay Mahato, in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the Naxalites are threatened in the *Mother of 1084*. The novelist reveals the young Naxalites showing dignity even at the verge of their death. They are killed, as
they battled for the cast out. The house of Somu, a young Naxalite, is surrounded by the cruel mob who shouted “Send them out. Or we’ll set the house on fire. Come out, Somu. If you’re your father’s son, come out!” (Mother of 1084 64). The fearless Brati declared, “Stop shouting. We’re coming out. Wait for us” (65). When Partha, a young Naxalite and the friend of Brati, gave the first order “Let’s go, Bijit” (65), the fearless young men walked out of the house and were killed by the cruel mob. The harshness of the Naxalite Movement, reduced Brati to corpse number 1084, “Brati, the corpse number 1084, who had taken part in the Naxalite Movement and become a Martyr” (Mathi 33). The pathetic death of Brati and his crew reflect the sufferings of the Naxalites for the downtrodden.

Cognate with the killing of the Naxalites in Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, the Black revolutionaries are also killed. In Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, the echoes of the song of Henry Reed shiver in the air:

“We have come over a way that with tears
has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through
the blood of the slaughtered.” (184)

The lyric reveals the Blacks’ bitter past and present. They raised monuments to the poets who have made the Blacks’ lonely nights less lonely by their songs. They are still in slavery and could not follow their heart’s desire to raise monuments and offer sacrifices. As Angelou points out, “slavery cured us of that weakness” (184). The idiom “Caged Bird Sings” symbolizes the Blacks who want freedom to fly far away, singing of their freedom and liberation. These caged birds are singing of their age-old sufferings of slavery, suppression and oppression. Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird, struggling to escape from its cage. The caged bird represents the confinement
of Angelou, as a result of racism and oppression. The metaphor invokes the supposed contradiction of the bird, singing amidst struggle.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, a bonded labourer Haroa, who voiced for the poor, is killed. Bilas Prasad, a government lawyer from Bhagalpur, resigned his post as government lawyer, to take up the peasant’s case against the Malik Narayan Misra. He won judgement in favour of the peasants. The Malik appealed in the Patna high court. On his journey to Patna, Bilas was murdered by unknown assailants. The ancestors of Bilas Prasad also achieved martyrdom in the anti-British struggle in Bihar. The twenty-one peasant families for whom Bilas argued, were forced to abandon their land, and the village. As Abhay Mahato, a Harijan, says: “Mastersaab, there’s no party or union for people who’re so poor. If there was, would my Bihar have so many peasant deaths, so many evictions?” (157). They do not care about rural India’s low caste, dispossessed, tyrannized, tortured peasants, who are brutally killed. Ganeshes, who contribute money during the elections, are important to the government.

Titu Mir, the protagonist of Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* is killed due to his love for the poor, low caste. He, was the member of the Wahabi movement which originated in Arabia and reached India via Syed Ahmad Barelvi (1786-1831). The Wahabis wanted to reform Islam. Syed Ahmad proclaimed that India had become Darul-Harb or a country inimical to Islam, since British, the foreigners, ruled it. So the Wahabi movement took on the character of a liberation struggle against British rule in India. The brother-in-law of the Scindia king at Gwalior and thousands of other Hindus were Titu’s supporters. The Paatan tribesman also joined with Titu’s troop, who declared, “We hate no religion. If we did, the rich Muslims would not be
enemies in our eyes. Our faith is the faith of freedom” (107). The Zamindars, with the help of the British army, plotted to wipe Titu. As a result, the collector of Nadia and the Governor General Bentinck concluded that drastic measures should be employed to deal with Titu Mir.

In his last fight against the Sahibs, Titu Mir ordered Masum, the son of the former’s sister Hashima, “Kill, kill the enemies. They have brought these Zamindars and moneylenders and planters to Bengal; kill them” (115). A lover of freedom, Titu Mir yearned to see smiles on the faces of the farmers, and was killed by the upper class Zamindars and the English men. They collapsed his bamboo fort; put the dead bodies of Titu Mir and the dead Muslim revolutionaries together and set fire. The Zamindars wished to keep the peasants and the poor, low caste under their control. They allowed the planters to take the lands of peasants on lease, collected taxes, squeezed the vendors, and wanted the downtrodden, to remain eternally in ignorance and wallow in darkness.

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* relates that she has witnessed the White women in the United States flirt shockingly with the Blacks in public that reminded her of “dogs in heat” (165). If a Black has asked for dates and persisted, the White woman would refuse, and become angry. As Angelou comments, “it is a cruel minuet danced between spike-heeled women and barefoot men” (165). The Blacks are not treated as human beings, and are puppets in the hands of the Whites. To Torvash, an Israeli actor, “Jews are for German women as Blacks are for nice White women in the States. They dream of us, the untouchables, and maybe we dream of them. But we are unsafe, except as toys” (165). The Black Americans in America die in fields, in prisons, hospitals, on battlegrounds, in beds
and barns and their deaths do not attract notice from others, “if pain accompanied their births, only the dying knew of their deaths. They had come and gone unrecorded save in symbolic lore, and unclaimed save by the soil which turned them into earth again” (188).

The novels of Maya Angelou and Mahasweta Devi are oppressive stories of racism in America and casteism and classism in India. The novelists exhibit the voices of the marginalized as muted. The Black Americans are wronged by racism, a life threatening, non-nurturing force. Similarly, the Dalits such as Somu, Lachhima, and Bigulal are laden by casteism and classism aggressive, bullying powers. In India, there is bonded labour system, where the rich high caste usurp the land of the poor. The young revolutionaries such as Somu, Brati, Partha, and Bijit, who suffer for the poor, are killed brutally as Naxalites. The discrimination brings with it pain, sorrow, bloodshed, death and the negation of an entire race or caste or class. The African-American race and the Indian Dalits are ghettoized, viciously persecuted, and brutally outlawed from all avenues of decency, hope, progress and livelihood. The basic myth of racism, is that the White skin brings with it cultural superiority; the Whites are more intelligent and righteous than the Blacks, by the mere fact of being White. On the psychological echelon, Whiteness is equated with beauty and culture, and Blackness with ugliness and slavery.