Chapter Three

Double Marginalization

The subjugation of women is clearly visible in all religious scripts. In the introduction to Women in India Soman Das writes, “Iithihasas, Puranas, Dharma, slowly sank the position of women a commodity and a thing of pleasure” (xiv). Thus, the fact is clear about the age old superiority of man over woman. In The Bible, Adam is presented as the master. He names all the beasts and animals and Eve. The Koran also emphasizes the superiority of men over women. The Buddhists regarded the company of woman as an obstacle for the development of man. Judaism has not awarded equal status to women.

Jayantha Mahapatra, a remarkable personnel of India, uses his verbal power to put forth the deprivation of the doubly marginalized in the poem “The Lost Children of America”:

In the Hanuman Temple last night
the priest’s pomaded jean-clad son
raped the squint-eyed fourteen-year fishergirl
on the cracked stone platform behind the shrine
and this morning
her father found her at the police station
assaulted over and over again by four policemen
dripping of darkness and of scarlet death. (An Anthology of Common Wealth Poetry 29)
Women of America, Africa and India are the worst victims of male tyranny. They are assigned inferior place as far as culture and religion are concerned. A woman is seen in terms of the male-oriented world, a world which identifies her by the male counterpart. She is gentle, dependent, submissive and passive. The inferior status of woman is established right from her birth. The birth of a girl child is annoying, as she is considered to be an economic burden. The relationship between man and woman is very similar to that between the master and the slave. Woman is used as an object and is essential to man for his pleasure and family needs. Though the Indian Constitution allocates for the equality of sexes, the Indian society is male dominated and women are given only secondary status. They face exploitation, subjugation and subordination. The freedom which women enjoyed during the Vedic period, was denied when the Muslims invaded India. They are neglected, ill-treated and suppressed. Though the literary authors lift up women to the height of goddesses, in reality, they are denied equality and status.

In the ancient Jewish society, women were suppressed. Women, who were, childless, fragile and weak, easily fell prey to the existing social system. A typical evidence is Hannah, a barren woman, the wife of Elkanah in The Bible. Her co-sister Penninnah, “hurled at her because of her barrenness” (Johnson 40). She ill-treated Hannah, “her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb” (1 Samuel 1.6). Due to her barrenness, Hannah had no peace at home. Thelma Johnson comments, “Home to many is a refugee from various trials and turmoils of life. But to Hannah, it became the very scene of trial” (48).
In India, the birth of a baby girl is considered as, “a harbinger of curse” (Paul 99). The curse follows her till the end of life and the hardships that she faces are numerous. To Aruna Gnanadason, women in modern India face...

Dowry deaths, rape [...] (particularly as a political weapon teach a lesson to a rebellious peasant, worker or tribal) domestic violence, enforced sterilization; the test amniocentesis to discern the sex of an unborn foetus – so as to abort female children; sexual exploitation of helpless working women – are some of the forms of violence women face. (8)

Female infanticide arose from the Vedic attitude towards women. The large dowries prescribed by the Vedas proved that a girl was seen as a burden. Much stigma was attached to a woman who gave birth to only daughters. Hence infanticide arose as a convenient way of getting rid of the burden. Gender cleansing is a frightening reality. Girls are killed before or at birth –

If she survives, the girl cannot assume she’ll get a fair share of the family’s education budget. But she can be reasonably sure she will be molested – by the teacher, by a trusted relative, by a stranger. Chances are she will drop out; to look after her siblings, to cook at home, to work in the fields, to be married off for money. She may be ‘gifted’ to a temple” (Padmanabhan and Kankana Basu 8 March 2009).

The genocide in Rwanda was more traumatic to women than to men. It was essentially an ethnic cleansing and therefore, the reproductive capacity was targeted: “Women were raped and their genitals violated” (Menon 14 June 2009). A recent finding reveals that “Panchayat presidents belonging to Dalit communities and
women in particular are still being discriminated against and it includes practices of untouchability in many forms, denial of rights and non-cooperation from dominant castes” (Karthikeyan 25 Feb 2010). Though the Dalits try to accomplish a social status, tolerating all the vulnerabilities, they are looked-down upon, especially the Dalit woman.

Child marriage, another evil system, forcefully degraded the progression of women. Law books prescribe the best partner for a man as one-third of his age. Thus, an eighteen year old man would marry a six year old girl. It was meant to prevent scandals. Parents were appreciated if they gave away their daughters in marriage at an early age. As child marriages were entertained, “thousands of child widows were annually dying without a ray of hope to cheer their hearts” (qtd. in S.M. Adav 25), and it, thus became, part of Indian culture. In an interview with Siva Sankari, Mahasweta Devi opines, “I will say that the custom of child marriage practiced across the country and the consequent early widowhood are even more terrible than Sati” (97).

The novels of Maya Angelou and Mahasweta Devi provide glimpses of the various facets of the typical marginalized women’s birth, childhood, adulthood, marriage, and life pattern. Women belonging to the deprived communities are ruthlessly exploited by racists and upper castes respectively. Men of their own communities do not treat them any better. As a result, Black women are always in a state of “double jeopardy” (Beal 90) and Dalit women get the inferior status of “twice Dalits” (qtd. in Basu 195). Maya Angelou reveals her struggles as a Black woman to come out of the cultural schizophrenia of the Blacks. Mahasweta Devi, in her
oeuvres, makes an earnest attempt to show the caste based slavery stamped upon the hapless population by the institutions that are detrimental to women. The strict laws enacted by the ancient patriarchs to women took away their freedom. It implies that she has to be a subordinate individual all through her life. The Indian mother emphasizes her daughter to be docile and “to accept a secondary dependent role” (Unprivileged or Preferred: The Woman as Daughter 76). Mahasweta Devi and Maya Angelou address the subordinate position of the Dalit and the Black women respectively. They are testimonies rather than stories of imagination, and lived experiences than artistically designed. The Dalit feminist scholar and activist Swathy Margaret speaks about the attitude of the Dalit male towards their women:

They (the Dalit men) do not consider her in important decisions or in writing papers. Later I learned that excluding women from their committees was a deliberate policy they followed, as they believed women’s presence would cause ‘problems, and come in the way of serious politics. Women invariably mean ‘problems’, their sexuality being an uncontrolled wild beast waiting to pounce upon the unassuming dalit men in the movement. It is assumed that they divert the attention from the larger concerns of the movement (“Dalit Feminism”. www. Countercurrents. Org/feminism-margaret030605.htm).

Dalit literature, born out of lived experience, has contributed significantly, to the collective social conscience and notions of aesthetics. The Dalit women are a hard working lot; theirs is a twenty-four hour work schedule and they work more than
their male counterparts. They are akin to the Black women in America who toil hard to provide food for the family. The upholders of the male and female dichotomy define men as rational, and strong both physically and mentally and women as emotional, weak and sentimental. Women of the Dalit community are expected to be docile, obedient and strictly conformists. The conclusion drawn is that “the mainstream consciousness of society should be the male-stream consciousness and women’s consciousness should be subservient” (Moitra 2). In his autobiography Akkarmashi, Sharankumar Limbade describes his grandmother. Santhama, who begged and collected stale half-eaten food from the homes of the upper caste wealthy folk of the village. She gathers cow dung to sell, and looks for undigested pieces of grain in each cow dung heap before tossing it into the basket. She washes those pieces of grain in the village pond, dries them in the sun, and grinds into flour. She finally kneads it into rotis and roasts it only for herself, as she has already fed the family with brown millet rotis. The little boy, Limbade suspects that his grandmother must be eating something special, “snatches a piece from her plate one evening. He bites into it and immediately retches. It tastes like cow dung. He wonders then how his grandmother manages to eat the cow dung rotis so calmly every evening” (Mander 14 March 2010).

Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084 deals with the sufferings of Sujata, the mother of Brati Chatterjee. The women characters such as Sujata, Nandini and Somu’s sister in the novel are true to life. Sujata, the protagonist of the Mother of 1084 is a rich career woman working in a bank. She is pathetically ignorant of her son Brati, a Naxalite, who has taken part in the Naxalite Movement and reduced to
corpse number 1084. Dibyanath Chatterjee, the husband of Sujata, is a male chauvinist. He does not display care for the family. The novel commences with Sujata, enduring immense pain, preparing herself for the delivery of the youngest child, Brati. She “clamped her teeth on her lips to check the cry, the Sujata of the dreams waiting for Brati to be born” (1). Mahasweta Devi reveals that Sujata is not taken care of by her life partner Dibyanath Chatterjee at the time of childbirth. The children are not looked after by the father and the burden falls on the shoulder of the mother. To Sathyanarayana, the women characters “look realistic and impressive” (Kakatiya Journal of English Studies 85).

Man uses woman to promote his selfish ends and minister to his sensual gratification and she has to suffer all by herself. A mother-in-law, always has a hidden hatred towards the daughter-in-law. In Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, the mother-in-law of Sujata, lost her husband at an early age. She could not tolerate the daughter-in-law and so looks at Sujata with withering hatred. During the delivery of the three children of Sujata, the mother-in-law refused to stand by her, and left the house to join with her sister. Dibyanath Chatterjee, reveals, “Ma is too soft, can’t you understand that? She can’t stand all this pain and the commotion” (2). During the birth of Brati, the mother-in-law was with them, as her sister had gone to Calcutta. Though Dibyanath did not know that his mother would stay at home, he went to Kanpur on business, and had not made arrangements for the birth of the child. Neither the mother-in-law nor the husband accompanied Sujata to the hospital and she went to the nursing home all by herself. The doctor’s concern is lacking in her household. She asks the doctor,
Am I all right?

Of course

Child?

Go to sleep.

What will you do?

An operation.

Doctor, child?

Go to sleep, I’m here to take care of everything.

Why did you come by yourself?

My husband’s out of town. (3)

Sujata was shocked by the doctor’s query as she had not expected Dibyanath to accompany her to the hospital. He slept in a room on the second floor lest the cries of the newborn disturbed sleep. He would never come down to ask about the children, when they were ill. As Sujata was engulfed in the stifling patriarchal institutions such as family and marital life, she had to bear everything for her children. A similar situation is in Manju Kapur’s A Married Woman, where Hemant, the husband, wanted his wife Astha to take care of the baby, “the last thing he wished to bother about was taking care of a child” (70). Hemant believes firmly, “It’s woman’s work, hire somebody to help you, or quit your job” (70).

Akin to the Indian women novelists, the African American women novelists are also aware of the multiple dimensions of their female characters. For them, a woman is, to use Ralph Ellison’s analysis, “subjective, willful, and complexly and compellingly human” (qtd. in Alladi Uma,10). Maya Angelou in I Know Why the
Caged Bird Sings powerfully presents the subordination of women from her own experience. The novelist portrays, both the Blacks and the Whites as victims of male chauvinism. She pictures the hardships of Mrs.Henderson, the grandmother of Angelou, in Stamps. Angelou graphically portrays how she is raped at the age of eight by Freeman, the boyfriend of her mother. Black women suffered a lot in the hands of both the Black and the White men, and by the White women. Annie Henderson, the grandmother, who the children call ‘Momma’, in Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, raised them for many years. Though not formally educated, she is highly religious, hard-working, a great entrepreneur, and an extraordinary Black woman in Stamps. Momma has married three times, but no male member including the father of Angelou, takes charge of rearing up Bailey and Angelou. It is through the hardships of Momma, who runs a store in Stamps, that the children, and the crippled Uncle Willie are fed. Momma’s spouses remain a mystery to the children. Momma’s first husband Mr. Johnson, the grandfather of Angelou, left Momma with two small sons to look after; the children knew nothing at all about Mr. Henderson, Momma’s second husband. Her third husband, Mr. Murphy, came to Stamps one Saturday night, and Bailey had to stay home to watch Mr. Murphy from stealing. Thus the responsibility of both the family and society are thrust upon the grandmother Mrs. Annie Henderson.

Mahasweta Devi in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh presents the sufferings of the low caste women in Barha village, dominated by the upper caste Rajput males. Chhotki, the third wife of Medininarayan Singh, delivered a baby boy and his two wives, Badki and Majli sat like vultures outside the birthing room. Badki and Majli
have daughters and they feel that, the youngest wife who has given birth to a son, is evil for them. Immediately, after the delivery the child, the mother asks the midwife anxiously, “Boy or girl” (1). Thus, a male child is considered as the boon and heir of the family. A woman who gives birth to a girl child is ill-treated. As per local custom, Medininarayan married twice, and both the wives gave birth to only daughters. Chhotki, the youngest wife, has been chosen by him for the son-line on her palm. She performed many pujas, has drunk the waters of the three holy tirthas to get a boy child. Chhotki has two daughters which caused Medininarayan Singh a whole lot of heart burn. Thus a strong woman, Chhotki, after giving birth to three children, is wiped out. Medininarayan Singh hates the wives who gave birth to only girl children and is attracted to Lachhima, his keep. Feeling that he has every right to neglect his wives, he harassed them without reason and thus withheld the duties of a husband. He tells them, “What do you have to offer? All that food and care, does it show? Look at Lachhima? Now that’s a real woman” (6). The five daughters send Medininarayan into rage, and so they keep out of sight of the father. The two wives, Bhadki and Majli cast a spell on Ganesh, the son of Chhotki, the third wife of Medininarayan. Barkandaj Singh, a Rajput says, “My paternal aunt sliced her co-wife’s son in two on a festival day” (15). Women are psychologically affected as, they do not bear male children and are forced to kill their co-wives’ children. If there is no male child in a family, people believe that they are under a curse. Medininarayan screams bitterly and fiercely, “Thoo! They spread it around that the curse of Mahabirji was upon me, I’d never have a son, my line would end” (2). After the death of Chhotki, Lachhima, a barber-woman, takes care of the child, as Medininarayan does not trust Badki and Majli. He tells his wives, “I’ll cut you in half
if you shadow so much as touches the boy’s room” (4). Thus women are humiliated, abused and assaulted. The childless women or women who give birth to only girl children would throng the portals of Gods for a male child.

Maya Angelou in *Gather Together in My Name* depicts her life as a teenage mother, introduction to drugs, illicit activities, and duped by men in the name of love. The hardship of bare economic survival is also presented in the novel. The novel also recounts the hardships of Momma, a Black woman, who has to look after Willie, the crippled son, and the grand children Bailey and Angelou. Bailey Johnson Sr., the male member of the family, being insensitive to his children Bailey and Angelou, has sent them off to his mother. Angelou recollects,

After our parents’ divorce in California, our father took us from Mother, put identification and destination tags on our wrists, and sent us alone by train, to his mother in the South. I was three and my brother four when we first arrived in stamps. Grandmother Henderson accepted us, asked God for help, then set about raising us in His way. She had established a country store around the turn of the century, and we spent the Depression years minding the store, learning Bible verses and church songs, and receiving her undemonstrative love”. (77)

Though married thrice, Momma is not helped by her husbands. They do not take responsibility and smoothly slide it over to Momma.

Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, is devoid of female character occupying the central-stage, showing that women are liable to do only household work. The society has never taken meaningful steps to elevate her to the rank of an equal partner to the
male companion. Her being, enclosed in the mother’s womb, extends far beyond her birth and growth. The male world into which she finds her existence, imposes unlimited control. Those who allow themselves to be protected by males are being lauded highly in hymns and songs. Through Titu Mir, Mahasweta Devi exhibits the female psyche of Maimuna, who decorates and adorns herself in the presence of her husband. She does not pay much attention to appearance if her husband is away, and then, her “hair has tangles in it […] lips are unstained by paan […] face looks wan and lifeless” (46). She would wear new bangles only when the husband is with her. The responsibility of looking after the children falls on women, as men are busy in revolutionary activities. Titu, as he strives for the upliftment of the downtrodden, has no time to look after the children, Tajuddin tells him, “you’ll leaving your sons behind’. ‘How much do I see of them, anyway?’ (27).

Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes narrates her search for identity by moving to Ghana. Malcolm, a Black Muslim of African heritage pathetically says “our women were raped, then worked to death, and many of our children were born looking like me. The slave master fathers denied their children” (137). During calamities such as war, slavery, holocaust, and partition, the most suffering souls would be women. In the colonial era, women are the most targeted. They are kidnapped, raped, harassed and become destitutes. Their experiences are similar to the plight of Rukmani in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, whose father Nathu Singh is an upper caste and mother, Ganga, a low caste. Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes is introduced to Sheikhal, a Muslim from Mali. He reveals that he is the first son of the fourth wife of his father.
His father sired thirty-two children, and gave most of his attention to the first sons. He has married Sheikhalí’s mother, the youngest wife, in his old age. After the birth of Sheikhalí, the old man died. A man is allowed to marry as many times as he wishes; a young woman is heartlessly married to an old man and when he dies of old age, she becomes a young widow. Male children are given more attention and care by the parents. A girl child in a family is not considered as the heir of the assets of the father. The male child becomes the heir and is acclaimed as a boon, whereas a girl child is defamed as curse.

Man has always used woman to promote his physical and material comforts. In Mahasweta Devi’s the *Mother of 1084*, when Brati is three years old, the father, Dibyanath Chatterjee, a CA, due to some problems in his office, has lost two important accounts. So Sujata has to take up job in a bank. The members of the family encourage and support her. To mother-in-law, “You should have begun earlier. It was Dibu’s generosity that he did not send you to work earlier” (9). Sujata too wants to work, as Dibyanath and his mother constitute supremacy in the home and “had a shadowy existence she was subservient, silent, faithful and without an existence of her own.” (9). When Dibyanath’s firm came to stability, he wanted Sujata to give up the job; he wishes her to be dependant on him. The mother-in-law died, when Brati turned eight. As long as she is alive, “Sujata had never had the right to buy a sari of her choice” (24). Dibyanath, a male chauvinist, and womaniser, flirts with a typist. He never makes secret the affairs with young girls outside the house and feels it as his right. The mother looks upon his indiscretions with indulgence. For her, it is a mark of her son’s virility. Dibyanath has not allowed Sujata the
privileges of a mother. His mother holds the reigns and does not know that he could respect his mother without humiliating the wife, “His wife under his feet, his mother held aloft. That was his ethos” (45).

Maya Angelou in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings portrays the White women targeted by the revengeful Black men. Angelou pictures an incident in Stamps, when a former sheriff warns Uncle Willie to hide, as the Ku Klux Klan would be out searching for the Black man who “messed with” (17) a White woman that day. In another event, a Black man takes refuge in Momma’s store as he is hunted for assaulting White womanhood. Blacks, who are oppressed, suppressed and muted, hate the Whites. To disclose their anger, the easy weapon chosen as target were the White women.

Mahasweta Devi in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh pictures child marriages and the tortures of mothers-in-law. When Saraju and Sita, the daughters of Chhotki, are playing with dolls, Lachhima tells them, “Get up, Didiji. You don’t have to cook for your dolls any more. You’ll have your own households now” (16). The children are married at an early age, before they attained puberty. They are not given an elderly female relative to look after them. Saraju and Sita, are unhappy in their marital homes and sigh deeply. Medininarayan, the father, has given them in marriage and thus washed his hands off them, “Even if they wished it a hundred times, they had no way of returning to Barha again” (19). As per tradition, a daughter in law enters the house when she marries, and leaves it once and for all. The mother-in-law of Saraju beat her daughters-in-law, and abused them when they had girl children. She harassed them with endless work. Saraju is less abused than the others, as she is the
sister of Ganesh, considered to be the ‘god’ of Barha. The wife of Chandarbhann Singh, a Malkin, has lived ten years in town and is accustomed to use indoor latrine. When she communicates her requirement to her mother-in-law, she warns, “Don’t bring this up again. We have always gone to the field. We’ll continue to go there. Are all city ways good?” (44). The daughters-in-law are not allowed to speak, and the mothers-in-law are experts in hushing them up. Dhanpatiya, a low caste woman, married in childhood, has lost her husband at an early age. The widow is married again to Sukhram, a robber – cattle lifter.

In *Gather Together in My Name*, the dreams of Angelou are shattered like every Black woman’s dream in search for love, as men are disloyal to women. Angelou looks forward to a husband who would love her ethereally, spiritually, and on rare occasions, physically. She dreams to have a girl child and the husband to love both Guy, the son, and the imaginary girl child equally. She met a forty-five year old Louis David Tolbrook, a Black Episcopalian preacher, who is of the same age as her father. Angelou fell in love with Louis David Tolbrook, a married man. He promised to marry her after divorcing his wife and sending her to Louisiana. As he is badly in need of money, he wanted Angelou to indulge in prostitution. Blinded with love, Angelou offered to be a prostitute to help him. He tells her, “Don’t worry about going to bed with other men. It’ll just make me love you more” (174). Finally Angelou happened to know that Louis David Tolbrook is a liar and a pimp. He obviously has been living off the wages of women for years. He might have started the business with White women, for, he felt that he would be taking revenge on the White men, “who were free to insult him, ignore him and keep him at the bottom of
the heap” (191). Thus Angelou’s dream of marriage and a lovable family is shattered like every Black woman’s dream. She fell in love with Curly, R.L. Poole and L.D. Tolbrook, male chauvinists, who had used, deserted, and threw her like the peel of an orange. Those men were not loyal to Angelou. Akin to Angelou, the Black women are cheated by their companions and lose everything in their search for love and identity.

In Titu Mir, Mahasweta Devi discerns that a woman has to support a man only in his domestic activities. She is considered fragile, docile, and weak by the society and is not allowed to fight for the downtrodden, as she herself is marginalized. Muslims are marginalized in the novel by the Zamindars, and a Muslim wife is doubly marginalized as, she is trapped inside the house. Rokeya, the mother of Titu, reveals the agony of the daughter-in-law Maimuna, to her son. Though she cautions him out of love for him, her words reveal the Muslim women as totally unaware of the outside world: “I know. I know, too, that I have given my son to his jihad. But look at Maimuna’s face. Maimuna and I have never been anywhere, never left home, we don’t know much. We only know you. Be careful” (78). Women never come out of their houses:

Why are you getting up?’
‘I must leave now’.
‘Do go inside just once’.

Maimuna was waiting behind the door. ‘How are you?’ Titu asked her.

(103)
Sheikhali, a rich man in Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, speaking Fulfulde (a language in Mali), informs her of his only one wife. He wants Angelou to be his second wife and offers to build a beautiful house for her. Sheikhali, though he has a good wife, keeps women. In addition to that, he wants to marry Angelou as his second wife and she refuses the proposal.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Mother of 1084*, Sujata is isolated in the house. She does not communicate her sickness or pain even to Tuli, the daughter. Tuli suggests her to have the appendix operation. Sujata, knowing that it would not be wise to have the operation, as she does not have a strong heart, and suffers from anemia, replies, “I’ll have it operated” (25). When the mother of Somu laments over the death of her son, Sujata writes,

if she too could have cried aloud and lamented like her, it would have saved her. But if she told Somu’s mother that she had to bear within herself and burden of her grief for Brati like an inert rock, that she had never been able to weep for him, then Somu’s mother would think her unnatural. She could not weep before those whose first concern at Brati’s death had been to seek a way to hush up the news: her throat closed up tight. (64)

Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* holds that a Black woman is rootless and homeless in America. Angelou, as part of her education about life’s “finer touches” (104) goes to Mrs. Viola Cullinan, with whom she gets a job. Mrs. Cullinan, a White woman, on the advice of her friend, calls Margaret, as Mary. Thus there is no identity for the Black woman. In America, the White women take
the liberty to disrespect Black women. At the same time, the White women are not safe in America. They also suffer in the hands of men. The plump Mrs. Cullinan who illtreats the Black Maya Angelou, is cheated by her husband. Mrs. Cullinan is childless, while her husband has two children with a Black woman. To embalm herself, Angelou becomes an addict to alcohol, just as Pallavi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* has to undergo psychiatric treatment. Women who are harassed, are affected psychologically; they are, either forced to become addicts to alcohol or end their lives in asylum.

Women are suppressed and reserved as doormats by men. The condition becomes worse in the case of low caste women. In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mahasweta Devi discloses that the low caste women always remain mute:

The women did not reply. Impossible to. Their role in this life has not been freely chosen by them […]. Sometimes they are 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. This time too the women remained silent. (28)

The low caste women are not allowed to marry according to their wish. The Maliks decide the lives of the low caste people. Lachhima, a barber-woman, becomes the keep of Medininarayan Singh and the wet nurse of Ganesh. She is mortgaged by Gulal, her grandmother, for three bighas of land (bigha – unit of land area, one third of an acre), ten rupees a month and a cow. Lachhima feels that Medininarayan would keep her, as he keeps bullocks and buffaloes. After the wedding of Ganesh, Medininarayan wanted her to marry Mohor Karan. Lachhima, knowing that she
would be free only in her forties, and so could not marry Mohor Karan, pleads for mercy. She recounts the generosity of Medininarayan in the attempts of his wives to cast a spell on Ganesh. The angry Medininarayan, kicks Lachhima, shoving her aside and shouts, “Take the lower castes to bed, and they forget their place. Who are you talking about? They’re my dharampatnis, my wedded wives” (25). The force of the kick has torn off Lachhima’s earring, causing the ear to bleed. The upper caste do not consider the low caste as human beings; they are ill-treated, tortured and tormented. As Medininarayan would not allow Lachhima to marry Mohor Karan till the marriage of Ganesh, she wishes Mohor Karan to marry Dhanpatiya. Medininarayan is happy on retaining his keep, and victoriously says, “Oh! I’m still as strong as a horse! Good thing that Mohor Karan’s left you. Can that Barber’s son match up to me?” (37). Lachhima remains mute and accepts her fate as any Dalit woman.

Women are repeatedly cheated by men. Maya Angelou in *Gather Together in My Name* recalls that, after her disappointment in love with Curly, she fell in love with R.L.Poole. Looking for a girl partner, R.L.Poole from Chicago, finds Angelou and involves her in show business. He makes few sexual demands, for which Angelou remarks, “I gave no arguments to his monthly requests for lovemaking. After all, he was my teacher and my transportation to Broadway” (137). When his old lady love arrives, R.L. Poole leaves Angelou. His lady, who, once left him, changed her mind and came back to him. Angelou, in agony, lists the failures in life thus:

I had given Curly my young love; he had gone away to marry another woman. The self-defence tactics with the lesbians had gained me a
whore house, which I had neither the skill nor the courage to keep. I had fled to the home of my youth and had been sent away. The Army and now my dance career. […] All the doors had slammed shut, and I was locked into a too-tall body, with an unpretty face, and a mind that bounced around like a ping-pong ball. I gave into sadness because I had no choice (142).

Through the hardships and the failure in love, Angelou reflects the bitter and painful experiences of a dejected, disheartened, unhappy Black, who has to struggle in the White male dominated society. Thus Angelou, has only failures to recount in life.

Society plays a major role in moulding a woman’s mindset. She feels secure and safe under the control of man and finds pleasure in being submissive to man and serving him. Maimuna, the wife of Titu Mir, in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* discloses,

*You have brought me great honour, great glory. I am your wife, and that is my pride. I have given you my three sons, to be three mujahids. No, I will say nothing. As ever, once in a while I will get to hear news of you. I will look after the household, care for Jauhar’s grandparents. You need not concern yourself about me”. (78)*

When the sons of Titu became mujahids (Muslim revolutionaries), they went outside, and the poor mother Maimuna, is worried with mute agony. Rokeya, the mother of Titu, warns him, “Your sons never come home. Think of Maimuna!” (103).

*Man does everything to debase and enslaves a woman’s mind and body. He gloats over triumphantly that he has made his woman inferior and a dependent. In the*
*Mother of 1084,* Dibyanath does not pay attention to his children, but wants to be sure that Sujata is fit enough to bear child again. Whenever Dibyanath enquires about her health, Sujata knows that it is with only one purpose; he is stirred with restless lust. Savita Goel says “Her (Sujata’s) husband’s ethos was that his wife should be under his feet and his mother held aloft. He was a male chauvinist and thought that as an Indian wife, Sujata’s primary duty was to love, respect and obey her husband and he was not required to do anything to win his wife’s respect, love and loyalty” (A journey of Discovery: Mahasweta Devi’s Mother of 1084 121). He used to say, “I am the boss in this house; what I say goes – thousands of times” (44)

Sujata, an embodiment of love, realizing that the life of the child and hers are in danger, requests the doctor, “please operate. Save the child” (4). She is ready to sacrifice life, for the sake of the child. Sujata delivered Brati Chatterjee, the youngest son on a seventeenth January and in another seventeenth January, a phone call from the unknown, impersonal officer informed her to come to Kantapukur. She is told of the death of Brati, and has to accompany with Tuli, the daughter, to the morgue. She felt badly the need of the company of her husband, while Dibyanath was busy in hushing up the news of the scandalous death of the son. He did not allow Sujata to take his car. For him, it would not be the right thing to keep the car waiting in Kantapukur as, somebody could identity it. The next day the newspapers reported the deaths of four young men. Brati was not mentioned in the report. Sujata identified her son’s body and as mother, is unable to control her feelings:

She bends down to take a closer look at the face. She would have liked to caress his face with her fingers. She would have liked to call him
by his name, Brati, and run her fingers over his face. But there was not an inch of skin left smooth and clear to bear the touch of her fingers. It was all raw flesh, all battered and smashed. Then she covered up the face. She turned round and blindly clasped Tuli to herself. (11)

Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, painfully recounts that at the age of eight, she was sexually abused and raped by a foreman, Mr. Freeman, the boyfriend of her mother. He lived with Vivian Baxter, the mother of Angelou, at St. Louis. In her childhood, Angelou, had terrifying nightmares, causing the mother to bring the girl to bed with her and Mr. Freeman. Freeman involved the young girl in his masturbation, and was confused, yet felt very comforted when he held her afterwards. Angelou, longing for home and identity, has a deep seated desire for the physical touch of her real father. She never enjoyed physical show of affection or attachment of parents which had left a gap in life. Her longing for physical contact made her sit on Mr. Freeman’s lap and, “I knew he’d never let me go or let anything bad ever happen to me. This was probably my real father and we found each other at last” (73). She was too small and innocent to realize sexual abuse. When she has nearly forgotten the incident, he again approached her with the same intention. The incident became worse as Mr. Freeman had raped an eight-year-old kid. When she fainted, the paedophile sent her off to the library. The child, in half delirious state, walked down the street feeling, as if her hips were coming out of the sockets, returned home and went to bed. Mr. Freeman loomed over again and again and threatened her that if she ever told anyone, he would kill Bailey, her brother. Angelou’s mother
found out the incident. Mr. Freeman was arrested and he managed to get released the very same day. At home, later Angelou came to know about the death of Mr. Freeman, killed by the clan of her grandmother Baxter. When asked about the sense of insult at the age of eight, Maya Angelou replied in a telephonic interview: “Yes, but that's personally. Absolutely. I knew that if I was blonde and White-skinned, it wouldn't happen to me. It happened to me, Maya, who was Black”. Mr. Freeman represents the destroyed Black male who asserts his limited power to prey upon children. Thus the child, Angelou, who saw Mr. Freeman as her father, was raped by him at the age of eight and became affected both physically and psychologically. The agony of Angelou made her wish thus: “I [...] wished my soul that I had been born a boy” (75). As she had not recovered from the tragic incident that happened in St. Louis, she was sent back to Arkansas. There is no security for a woman anywhere in the world; they have to move in search of security and identity from one place to another.

The sufferings of low caste women are uncountable. They are abused and battered as beasts. In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Medininarayan Singh bed-ridden for six years, was reminded of the marriage of Ganesh by Mishir. Mishir, a Brahman, and the master of the government school in Barha, had already chanted in Medininarayan’s ear, “get your son married, And when you do, sweep out the garbage from your house” (20). The low caste Lachhima is referred as “garbage” (20) by the Brahman, Mishir. As Lachhima satisfies his sensual desire and takes care of him, Medininarayan has heaviness in his heart. When, Putli, the wife of Ganesh, enters Medininarayan’s home, Lachhima has to go away. Putli hails from a family of
high status, the daughter of Nathu, a high caste, and so could not live in the same house with a low-caste woman. Lachhima who feels herself a filthy carcass, tells Gulal, her grandmother,

First you mortgaged me to the malik, I was in his grip for sixteen-eighteen years. No gold, no silver, ten rupees a month, and that piece of land, three bighas. Didn’t let me marry Mohor, chased him off. Fell ill himself. Like a mother bird with her nest, I shielded him with both hands. Now I’m an old woman, in two years I’ll be forty (67).

Malkins, the wives of Maliks, as upper class women, too suffer. Ganesh, the son of Medininarayan, after fertilizing his wife Putli, roars in rage like a wild beast, “’You mud-doll!’ He kicked the wife aside yelling, ‘get out’. […]’Don’t you get enough to eat? Can a creature like you bring any man pleasure? “” (83). She is unable to walk straight and says: “If he beats me like that, it’ll kill me. He’s so strong” (84).

Maya Angelou, in *Gather Together in My Name* discloses that a woman spends half her time making herself attractive to men, and the other half guessing, which of the attracted are serious enough to marry her: Angelou discerns: “The crushing insecurity of youth, and the built-in suspicion between the sexes, mitigate against the survival of the species, and yet, men do legalize like poking, and women do get revenge their whole lives through for the desperate days of insecurity and bear children so that the whole process remains in process” (146).

In *Titu Mir*, Mahasweta Devi portrays the female characters spending their lives inside the four walls of the homes. Society never encourages a Muslim woman,
to take part in rebellion or fight. When Titu goes out of the house in search of the leopard cub, his mother is busy at home making the son’s favourite dish while his sisters are feeding the geese. Thus the women of the house are labyrinthed within the house. Men inform them of what is happening outside the house. Women, if they come out of the houses, are criticized strongly. Tajuddin, the chacha (uncle) of Titu, regards women in Calcutta thus: “The streets aren’t safe, and those memsahibs have no modesty! They roam about everywhere in horse carriages” (27). Pallavi Shah, a social worker in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh is mentioned as “That whore” (96) as, she serves the untouchables.

In Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, the death of the youngest son Brati has brought forth emptiness in the life of Sujata. It was decided to hold the engagement of Tuli, the younger daughter of Sujata, with Tony in their house, on the second death anniversary of Brati. The mother of Tony wished to announce the engagement formally on the birthday of Brati. She is advised by her guru to fix the date and, “neither Dibyanath nor Tuli had cared to consult Sujata” (25). Tormented and alienated, Sujata realizes that the more she keeps herself aloof from the household, the more satisfied would be the ‘others’, such as “Dibyanath and her mother-in-law” (45). Her children Jyoti, Tuli and Neepa have always provided their mother a subsidiary role, “They had never had to take account of her. In Sujata’s mind, one day they had joined the ranks of the others” (45).

In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou remembers Momma, a Black woman, mocked by white girls, and describes it as “the most painful and confusing experience I had ever had with my grandmother” (29). The girls mimic,
tease and culminate their attempts to unsettle Momma by having one girl wear a dress sans underwear stand on her head. As the young girl’s skirt falls over her face, Momma continues to hum, in complete control as her “apron strings trembled” (31). The White girls call Momma by name “Annie” (31), whereas she addresses them as “Miz” (32). Angelou gives full vent to feelings in a violent outburst: “How could Momma call them Miz? The mean nasty things. […] And then if they were dirty, mean and impudent, why did Momma have to call them Miz? (32).

In Mahasweta Devi’s The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, the low caste people are unable to articulate their anger or annoyance at the Malik. Lachhima, realizing that she could never marry Mohor, tells the latter about Medininarayan, in bitter helpless rage, “Rotten old corpse! His son, his household, his daughter-in-law – anything that’s his, that’s all that’s important. […] I feel like setting the house on fire and running away” (31). Thus the low caste women have, to share their feelings either with their own people or remain mute. The upper caste Ganesh, the son of Medininarayan, found enjoyment in the sufferings of female animals; “A pregnant buffalo was bitten by a snake, the more agony she was in, the boy laughed” (31).

The attitude of Medininarayan towards his wives proves that women are always censored, and crushed under feet. He drives away Badki and Majli, the two wives, for they have tried to cast a spell on Ganesh, and keeps Lachhima, the low caste, for satisfying his lust. Badki and Majli have taken part in the marriages of the five daughters of Medininarayan; Lachhima, the low caste, and the keep of Medininarayan, stays away from the house during the wedding. When the festivities of the wedding ended, the relatives, the in-laws, and the wives of Medininarayan
leave the house. Lachhima and her grandmother Gulal, are to come back and return to their respective roles. Medininarayan discloses to Lachhima at night, “Old shoes feel best on the feet. They looked after me well. But can they match you? (36). Medininarayan, an old, lustful inhuman, compares his wives to old shoes.

In *Gather Together in My Name*, Maya Angelou painfully describes men of her own Black Community who have cheated her. Curly, a Black, who she puts as, “God’s prettiest man” (19) becomes a customer at the restaurant where she is employed. Curly attracts Angelou and she falls in love with him. Curly and Angelou become close and they engage themselves in love-making. Curly departed to marry a girl, working in San Diego Shipyard. The throat hurting departure of Curly makes Angelou “One emotional runny sore” (28). She longs, pines, sighs, yearns, and relates, “By eighteen I managed to look run down if not actually run over” (28). Angelou’s mother consoles her, “People will take advantage of you if you let them. Especially Negro women. Everybody, his brother and his dog, thinks he can walk a road in a coloured woman’s behind” (132). Black women have to protect themselves both from the Whites, and the Blacks.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, though women are engulfed with agony, they do not express it, and remain mute. Titu tells, his wife Maimuna, “Why do you worry? I am not far away” (104). Maimuna wishes to say, that he is always far away and that he has never been close. Though they live in the same house, there is great gulf between them. She could not express feelings and, remains mute and replies “Oh, nothing! It’s just that you’re a famous man now. So many people are calling you Badshah. Sometimes I wonder if you’ll get yourself a Begum” (104).
In the *Mother of 1084*, the mothers of Partha and Somu lost their sons, the only bread-winners of the family and are helpless. The mother of Somu says, “I have lost one of my ribs. The Pyre that burns in my heart will burn till I mount the pyre myself” (64). The mothers are afraid of the Naxalite Movement, and fear that their sons might not return, once they leave the house. Sujata is filled with agony when Brati prepares to go out of the house. Unlike Sujata, the mother of Somu, suffered from poverty and after the death of Somu, his father died of shock. The elder sister of Somu was threatened by the cruel mob that had killed her brother. The mother of Partha broke down totally; collapsed under the shock and took to bed due to the death of one of the sons and the other in exile. To Somu’s mother, the life of a woman is “like a tortoise’s. She’ll find peace only if she dies” (56).

Nandini, an activist, and a faithful follower of Brati in the *Mother of 1084*, is tormented in the solitary cell and she describes it thus: “A long spell in the solitary cell in prison made one perhaps oversensitive. For a solitary cell is too lonely, too desolate” (72). She could not erase away the memories of the tortures she has faced during imprisonment. She reminiscences:

A thousand-watt lamp glared at the naked eyes of the person being held in that room. The person in charge sat in the dark. Smoker or not, a cigarette glowed between his fingers. From time to time, the interrogator, educated and sophisticated, could ask a civil and harmless question like ‘oh, so you’re Chatterjee’s friend?’ and clamp the burning cigarette to the skin of the face naked under the thousand-watt lamp. (73)
The wound inflicted on her in the prison cured, but the tortures suffered, have a permanent itching in the mind. Nandini lost eye sight, due to the physical torture by a male police officer. The torture and harassment in the cell played hide and seek in eye sight day-by-day and the future became insecurable. Nandini reveals to Sujata “My optical nerves were damaged from the exposure to the glare of the lamp for forty-eight, seventy-two hours at a stretch. My right eye is totally blind” (86). Similar to the pathos of the Naxalite activist, Nandini, Mahasweta Devi in the short story Draupadi, portrays Dopti Mejhen, a tribal woman Naxalite activist, captured and raped during Naxalite insurgency of the late sixties, whose spirit refused to surrender. Shoba Venkatesh Ghosh remarks:

The narrative begins with Dopti on the run from the special forces in the forest after having lost her comrades one by one to some form of police violence – bullet holes, crushed arms and legs, several limbs. But when Dopti herself is captured – “apprehended” – the violent reprisal she suffers is not from the bullet or the knife. It is a gender – specific reprisal, namely, multiple rape. (Refiguring Myth – Draupadi and Three Indian Women Writers 97)

In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings Angelou reveals that Bailey, her brother, also initiated girls into the mysteries of sex. He made a tent with branches and a worn-through blanket in the ground, behind the house where he played “Momma and Poppa” (147) with the girls. Though Bailey is an innocent small boy, he also made the girls his prey. Thus, the girls became the victims due to their innocence and curiosity.
A woman needs either, someone to protect her, or else, she has to remain at home. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the father of Angelou invited his teenage daughter to spend the summer with him in Southern California. From there, they took a trip to Mexico. On the way to Mexico, Daddy Clidell stopped to have a drink with a guard. The guard leaned into the car and caressed her cheek. Angelou, a fifteen year old girl, discouraged the guard by her attempts to get away; but he grabbed her. Thus a helpless woman is always hunted, as she could not survive without the help of a man and is dependent on him.

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the Maliks give displeasure to their wives and anguish to low caste women. Thus women, unanimously suffer due to male chauvinism as the Maliks feel that their wedded wives are bound to fail in the task. They keep low caste women to satisfy their hot-blooded virility. For instance, the grandfather of Putli keeps Mori; Nathu Singh, the father Putli, keeps Dhamni; Ganga and Lakhpatiya and the sixty year old Nathu wants Mori to send her granddaughter. In every Malik household, it is usual to keep a low caste woman, besides the wife. Thus, the wives of the Maliks and the low caste women suffer due to the high caste Maliks. If the wife of the Malik gave birth to a girl child, she is doomed forever. When Putli, the wife of Ganesh, delivered a daughter, she underwent a lot of suffering and tells Ganesh, “I’m of no use now. No strength at all” (98). A woman has to satisfy the physical needs of the husband, look after the house, and give birth only to male children. For misfortunes that occurred in the house of the husband, she is blamed as an ill-omen. Ganesh complains of his wife to Nathu Singh, the father in law, “why didn’t you train her in household chores? What’s her problem? Baba died
as soon as she came. Never said anything then, but was that a good sign?” (85). “Bahu gave me nothing. Not even a son” (99). Nathu’s wife reveals, “Since he’s had a daughter, Ganesh doesn’t even look at his wife’s face”. (102). A woman is not allowed to cry and when Putli cries, Ganesh is annoyed. According to the myth, Goddess Lakshmi is supposed to be offended by such gestures as woman crying in the open after dark, especially the daughter-in-law of the house, who is regarded as Lakshmi: “How dare you stand out here crying at night! Won’t it drive Lakshmi out of our house?” (127) and Putli is slapped by Ganesh. She suffered from bruises on both the arms, and so could not wash her hair; and the head is covered with wounds by the battering of Ganesh. To Ramrup, the brother of Putli, “Putli’ll be much happier as a widow. Ma says that of late he’d begun to hit the child too. You can’t even see the colour of Putli’s skin, it’s all black and blue and bruised, covered with hot iron burns” (162).

A woman is unsafe and insecure in the city Mumbai or in the village, Barha. She is always controlled and ruled by man. The social workers are treated like whores and for Ganesh, “women were only commodities for their use” (89). Pallavi Shah, a twenty-three year old pampered daughter of Tajlal Shah, a rich businessman of Mumbai, visits Barha. Though an upper caste, she is cheated by men. In Mumbai, a flagrant humanist fleeced Pallavi and has filled her with impossible dreams and made off with a hefty sum of money. So she is forced to flee from Mumbai and came to Barha in Gandhi mission to serve the Bhangis. While in Barha, Ganesh is attracted by the beauty of the aggressively nubile Pallavi Shah. Ganesh and his ilk are ignorant of the Harijan Sangh and Gandhi Mission. They believed that only fallen
women would do the kind of work. At the time of independence, a unit from the Mission came to Barha village to do drought relief work. Gajomoti, a Rajput from Barha, abducted one of the girls, raped and let her go and none recorded the complaint of the girl. For Ganesh, the very thought of having a low caste mistress, made him feel sick. He burned with unsatiated desire for Pallavi Shah, the Gandhi Mission worker and wanted her to stay in his house: “You will come to my place this evening. […]. Or else we’ll come and carry you off” (90). The Bhangis are terrified and scared, and Mangalal, a Bhangi warns Pallavi, “If you don’t go they’ll carry you off. They’re animals. They molest low caste women” (90). The Rajputs, treated Pallavi, the Gandhi Mission worker as a whore. Due to his lust for Pallavi, Ganesh burnt the Bhangi toli, (settlement). When Pallavi Shah escaped to Mumbai, her father and elder brother chided her for bemoaning the scandal she has caused by “consorting with the flotsam and scum of society” (95). She was removed to a nursing home for psychiatric treatment, as she suffered from nervous breakdown. Women are physically and psychologically tormented and tortured by men. They are proscribed by fathers, brothers and sons. For instance, Gajomoti Singh starved his mother to death, as he wanted to grab the property.

To men, women are gullible and could be deceived. Dieter, a German architect in All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes, invited Angelou to his German home. He is a blond, trim man who seemed to be a Nazi. Angelou accompanied by Torvash, an Israeli actor, visited Dieter’s house for supper. Dieter showed Angelou the collection of African art, African masks, Bambara, Fon, Yoruba burial urns and Ashanti. After supper, Dieter took Angelou in a car to the hotel. On
the way, he suggested to her that as she lives in Ghana, she could trade Ashanti carvings, Bambara or masks from Sierra Leone and offered to pay her well. Angelou refused the offer and said, “I don’t trade. I particularly don’t trade in African art” (172). Angelou and Torvash understand the reason for the invitation of Dieter. Dieter had thought of Angelou as a woman and a weaker sex; he could convince her to trade African art as it would be beneficial to her. Angelou, who formerly had worked as cook, dancer and prostitute, to make both ends meet, refused to accept the proposal. Thus, Angelou, as an African-American Black woman, proves that she is strong in mind and would never trade her country or its assets to a foreigner.

In the *Mother of 1084*, Sujata who loved the poor, died of appendix. Belonging to the upper class, she worked for the low class, such as for Hem, the mother of Somu, and the underprivileged. Despite being rich, she is simple, without the sham of rich life. A wealthy woman, she wants to work, and feels isolated in the rich family. The son, Brati accompanied her to the thatched house of Somu. An affluent person, Sujata, does not partake of the lives of the rich. She is the only human being, caring for the poor, besides Brati. Thus in the *Mother of 1084*, the women characters such as the sister and mother of Somu and Sujata, carry the entire burden and bear the wounds and humiliation that are meted out to them by the society.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou feels that Black women are physically tortured, and psychologically tormented. Angelou, is unhappy, about her body and is concerned less with ugliness. She is colour conscious and doubts about her femininity and jumps into the conclusion that she might be a lesbian. The
teenager picked one of the most handsome schoolmates she knew, and had sexual relationship with him. She believed it as the only way she could possibly snag a boy friend, temporarily. As a result, she became a young mother at the age of seventeen. Her pregnancy, fear, guilt and self revulsion are the results of lack of love and care. She has an overwhelming initial feeling of fear that in awkwardness, she would harm the new born son. To her, the Black women are storm-tossed ships. Finding no anchorage, they suffer, due to their colour and gender.

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mahasweta Devi confirms that women suffer in the hands of men only because they are women. Upper class women suffer in the hands of their virile husbands, whereas the low caste are burdened with the children of the Maliks. The low caste women lose their strength as a result of taking medicine to abort the children of the Maliks. Women have to cover heads with purdah. When Swarup Singh reveals to Ganesh, “My wife isn’t in purdah, my daughter goes to school” (144), to the latter, the new customs are “sacrilege” (144).

The harassment by the high caste Maliks cause the low caste women to commit suicide. Rukmani, the daughter of Nathu Singh and Ganga, is employed as cook in the house of Ganesh. Ganga, the mother is an acchut or untouchable, and the father Nathu Singh, a high caste and so Rukmani is not considered untouchable. The norm is for the convenience of the Maliks. Rukmani is in love with Kamu Ahir from Nahara. The latter, who belongs to the caste of cattle-raisers, is told by Ganga to earn hundred rupees, clothes and utensils to marry her daughter. Nathu Singh forces Rukmani to work in the house of Ganesh. He divulges to Pallavi, “Ganesh is a part of god. He does not consort with low caste folk. As for that girl, she was from a high

127
 caste and bhangis went against dharma by taking her into their house” (102). Nathu Singh is selfish and does not want his high caste daughter Putli, the wife of Ganesh, to be sent back to her parents. When Putli gave birth to a girl child, Nathu calculates that if Rukmani satisfies Ganesh, the latter would not send his high caste daughter home. Ramrup, the son of Nathu Singh is after Rukmani, his step sister. As Nathu fears that Ramrup would cause trouble at home, he sends Rukmani to Ganesh’s house. There, she became pregnant and took medicine to abort the child. Mangalal’s wife gave some roots to abort the child. Rukmani, a caged bird in the house of Ganesh, “Not even the sun or moon saw her face” (119), failed to get medicine at the right time. Realizing that she could not marry Kamu Ahir, and losing all interest in life, she hangs herself from the burnt-out amra tree in the abandoned Bhangi settlement. Thus, women suffer and are silenced.

The upper caste Maliks use the lower caste women as keeps and when they become old and haggard, they are kicked out. Then they have to clean the cowshed of the Maliks for food. They are not paid for their medical expenses. In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mori and Ganga, the one-time mistresses of the upper class Barkandaj and Nathu Singh, have to beg in Tohri. Ganga, fearing that Nathu would surely take revenge for the aftermaths of Rukmani’s death, tries to commit suicide, but is saved by Lachhima. The life of Mori is also in danger for sheltering Ganga. Mori and Ganga, “who had dedicated their lives and youth to the service of their maliks, became the symbol of all such low caste mistresses of all malik-mahajans as they took to the streets. In rags, with bundles under their arms, stained aluminium bowls
in their hands, Ganga with a walking stick” (127). They feel themselves free, for the first time, in their lives.

The novels of Maya Angelou, a Black African-American writer and Mahasweta Devi, an Indian writer in English, portray the sufferings of the African American and Indian doubly marginalized women respectively. Maya Angelou, an autobiographer, through her own life divulges the state of affairs of the Black women. The protagonist of the autobiography is, the writer herself, and her personal experiences. Instead of being mystically unique and individualistic, the novels encompass the pathos of the whole of the Black female community. Mahasweta Devi, pictures the caste based slavery of women in India. In their world women are stripped, harassed and molested for a long time. Maya Angelou and Mahasweta Devi present the subordinate positions of the Black and the Dalit women which are of real life experiences. The novelists reveal the sufferings of women treated as objects, who are essential to men for pleasure and for the welfare of the family. The male dominated society into which they find their existence, impose unlimited controls. Mahasweta Devi treats of child marriages and the tortures of mothers-in-law. The Dalit women, such as the sister of Somu in the Mother of 1084, and Lachhima in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, are a hard working lot. They are similar to the Black women in America such as Mrs. Henderson and Angelou, who toil very hard to keep their families together. Maya Angelou portrays the Black women as victims of male chauvinism, her sufferings as a teenage mother, deceived by men under false pretences of love, introduction to drugs and illicit activities, and the hardships of bare economic survival.