Chapter Four

Spacing the Marginalized

The reasons for divisions in society are manifold due to nation, race, language, culture, habits, dress code, and food. The major causes for division are caste, class and colour. Caste, means any of Hindu hereditary class or division, distinguished by relative degrees of purity or pollution, whose members have no social contact with other classes but are socially equal with one another. Racism is belief in the superiority of a particular race and the prejudice based on antagonism towards, or discrimination against, other races. Caste, class and colour stand for belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests. These issues keep one section of society always under the clutches of another.

The victimized, the marginalized and the doubly marginalized are to be provided with space. Society is not likely to change unless there is awareness and resistance on the part of the victimized. In Indian society, where the upper castes monopolized the polity and the economy, the Dalits become conditioned and are ashamed of them. The paralyzing state of impasse could be overcome by achieving collective self-consciousness. The marginalized community has to recognize and honour its own institutions by entering into mutual relations. The oppressed groups protest to uphold their rights and establish identity. Black feminism vociferously protests against the male notion that the women are a bunch of voiceless creatures akin to domestic animals created for sexual pleasures. Dalit feminism in India makes the Dalit males foresee for themselves the laborious work done by Dalit women for
the family. The Black women in America also toil very hard to keep their families together. Dalit and Black feminism peter out the male notion that the male alone is intelligent.

Mahasweta Devi, in the *Mother of 1084* presents the plight of the poor Naxalites who sacrificed their lives for the underprivileged and the downtrodden. The novelist portrays the young protagonist Brati and his friends who are brutally killed, for being Naxalites, and the sufferings of the poor women relatives. Sujata, the mother of Brati, a rich woman, adapts with her situation. Finally, she bursts out and takes on death, like the son on his birthday and death anniversary. The novel pictures gloom as a result of the death of good people. It shows that there is still hope for the future, by the helping hand given by the upper caste to the lower one and the resistance shown by the women characters to their male companions, who want to debase and enslave them.

Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* recounts childhood; she is haunted by her ugly consciousness, suppression in South America and the unforgettable memory of being raped by Mr. Freeman, the boyfriend of her mother. A striking feature of the work is that it faithfully presents a child’s view of all the struggles that Angelou went through as child. The writer should present, “with absolutely truthful intension, amid the multitude of facts presented to him must needs select, and in selecting assert something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within” (Peter 114). Angelou painfully portrays the sad plight of the Black cotton pickers’ hardships all through the day; they are paid low wages by the White masters. The Blacks in Stamps are made to lose
their dignity and are forced to become slaves. Their tales of pathos are evident in the sorrowful sight of Uncle Willie, the crippled, crouching into onion and potato bin to escape from the clutches of Ku Klux Klan, in search of a Black man for messing with a White woman. Due to the culprit, a Black man, the whole Black community is vulnerable. The White children in Stamps enjoy racial supremacy. They visit Momma’s store and treat Momma and Uncle Willie most insolently.

In Stamps, the Blacks are not mentioned with respect. The judge calls Momma as Mrs. Henderson to be subpoenaed. When Mrs. Henderson entered, the judge, the bailiff and the other Whites in the audience laughed. By calling a “Negro woman Mrs”, (48) the judge had made an embarrassing blunder. The Blacks have no name, identity or security for their lives in South America. When Joe Louis, won the fight against a White man, Angelou relates: “Champion of the world. A Black boy. Some Black mother’s son. He was the strongest man in the world” (136). They are afraid to celebrate a temporary victory, as the Whites, irritated by the victory of Joe, would harm the Blacks on a lonely country road. The White dentists do not keep their hands in the mouths of the Blacks. Black women are also suppressed in America. The males do not take up the responsibility of the family, and women like Momma underwent hardships to feed herself and rear up the children. Women are targeted by guards, sexually abused and exploited in their work places.

The air in Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is thick with the scent of racist opium, yet there are instances that give a ray of positive hope in the lives of the downtrodden. Angelou, who always entertains the dark, ugly consciousness, is transformed by the poem of James Weldon Johnson. Henry Reed,
the top boy in her class, usually quiet and conservative, led the class, in singing the poem known as the Negro national anthem. Parents joined in, and the small children were led on the stage to sing. Angelou felt great communal hope and proud to be a Black. Thus, she sustained immense optimism from the earlier state of disappearance of hope. The transcendence that occurred despite adversity is described. The poem transformed Angelou,

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)

Hearing those lines again on her graduation, Angelou’s ugly consciousness is changed. She feels that the Negroes are beautiful race. She confirmed; “We were on top again. As always, again. We survived. The depths had been icy and dark, but now a bright sun spoke to our souls. I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful race” (184). Her graduation itself was a positive turn, as she has felt, “We were maids and farmers, handymen and washer-women, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous” (180). The graduation has broken all the shackles of superstition that only the Whites are beautiful, wonderful and intelligent. Both Angelou and the brother Bailey destroyed the doll sent by their parents with blond hair and blue eyes – the exact traits, that Angelou wished to acquire. She has lost her fancy towards the Whites and accepts and loves the reality.

Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* presents the sufferings of the low caste in the hands of the upper caste Rajputs, the rulers of the village, Barha. The
low caste woman, at first has to be the keep of an upper caste, and in old age, she would be allowed to marry a low caste or driven away from the house. For instance, Lachhima, in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* became the keep of Medininarayan Singh, a Rajput. When Mohor Karan proposed to marry her, Medininarayan wanted her to take care of the house, till Ganesh has attained the age of eighteen. The helpless Lachhima could not vent her anger towards Medininarayan and bursted out to Mohor Karan, “I too was hoping to be free’. In bitter rage, Lachhima speaks, ‘Rotten old corpse! His son, his household, his daughter-in-law—anything that’s all that’s important. God knows, I’ve never cheated him, I never will, but I feel like seeing the house on fire and running away’” (31). The first step in the rebellion is, her unveiling the anger to Mohor Karan. The incident reveals that a low caste woman rebels and knows to identify good from evil.

Maya Angelou in *Gather Together in My Name* writes about the ruthless Whites who mistreat the Blacks. Angelou was forced to leave Stamps, as a result of speaking boldly to a White woman. The novelist states, that women are cheated by men. She herself was cheated by L.D. Tolbrook, Curly and R.L. Poole, who always use women for their pleasures and afterwards, desert them. After World War I, the Blacks and the Jews were left free and thus ended racial prejudice. Angelou feels, “Race prejudice was dead. A mistake made by a young country. Something to be forgiven as an unpleasant act committed by an intoxicated friend” (2). During the crisis, the Black people made more money in a month than they had in their whole lives. Black men did not leave their wives, though driven away by inability to provide for their families: “They rode in public transport on a first-come/ first-seated basis” (2).
Mahasweta Devi exposes in *Titu Mir*, a natural leader, who at the cost of his own life defended the rural poor against the exploitation of the landlords and the British. The novelist, brings forth history alive, by the famine of 1770 and the Sanyasi Revolt. In 1770, Bengal witnessed the famine, which had reduced the country to charnel ground. Fifteen million people lost their lives in the famine, yet the East India Company had not waived that year’s tax. In 1771, the tax collected was more higher. The Governor General, Warren Hastings, squeezed the people into yielding, for 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. The Sanyasi Revolt began with the attack on the company’s plantations in Dhaka. In “the Sanyasi Revolt – fakirs, sadhus, weavers, farmers, potters, labourers – everyone participated in it – and it had gone on for eighteen long years” (9). The supporters of the revolt were the low caste and the downtrodden. There was no religious or caste distinction with regard to the revolt and the Hindus and the Muslims with oneness participated in the revolt. Mishkin Shah, otherwise called as Mushirat Shah, a Muslim, recollects: “We fakirs fought in that war, and so did the sanyasis. And when Majnu Shah came, about twenty years ago, we became united” (16). They fought against the Zamindars, the Company and the government. The Sanyasi Revolt gave hope to the poor peasants and the masses of India.

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* describes the life of the Black Americans in Africa. By returning to the land of her ancestors, where all are black regardless of color, she hoped to find and recognize ‘home’. She joins other black Americans in quest for identity and security, and, like them, Angelou
discovered that the geographical search is a misleading one. The source of security, is not in a place, but within oneself. Their complexion, in Africa, is identified as perfect disguise. Yet Angelou felt a sense of intimacy in the air of Africa, the land of her ancestors: “The breezes of the West African night were intimate and shy, kicking the hair, sweeping through cotton dresses with unseemly intimacy […] We were Black Americans in West Africa, where for the first time in our lives the colour of our skin was accepted as correct and normal” (3). In America, “we know that we were mostly unwanted in the land of our birth” (20), Angelou foresees promise in Africa, the ancestral continent and opines, “In the yearning, heaven and Africa were inextricably combined” (20).

Mahasweta Devi in the Mother of 1084, presents the life of the Naxalites and the heart-rendering sufferings of their relatives. Characters such as Sujata and Brati, born aristocrats, throughout their lives, voice for the marginalized and listen to their hardships. Sujata has high family connections, aristocratic bearing and education, yet, her heart goes in compassion for the poor and not for the fake humans in the household. The novelist pictures a rich household, where the members of the family pull up various strings to hush up a matter unfavourable to them. Brati, a young Naxalite and the son of Sujata, is killed by the cruel mob and his body is kept in the morgue. While the father and siblings are concerned with themselves and busy in hushing up the death of Brati, the mother, belongs to the camp of the enemy. Sujata has never blamed Brati, for messing up her neatly organized life. She is more close to Hem, the servant, than to the members of the family, “she had made up her mind quite early that she would never seek consolation from those who thought first of themselves while Brati lay dead in the morgue. She had felt closer to them than to
Brati’s father, brother or sisters” (30). Sujata, a high caste woman, who finds solace in Hem, the servant, is a positive streak in the novel.

Momma, who owned a store in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was addressed as Mrs. Henderson by a judge. The Whites took it as joke and laughed. For the Negroes, it is a proof of the worth and majesty of Momma. Momma, a Black woman, has the courage to own a store in the village, where, only a White woman could have one. Momma has more money than all “the powhitetrash” (28) and owned land and houses. Thus, the wealth of a Black woman in Stamps vividly shows the resurgence of Black women.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, during Holi, the low caste get a chance to pour out their heart, and sing of their sorrows and sufferings. It gives a positive hope for them, as they are allowed to speak and criticize the high caste. The adivasis enter the forest for ritual hunt during the festival. The Holi is important to various castes for different reasons in the village Barha. In Chandarbhan’s household, as per Rajput family tradition, sword worship is held. The lower castes played with colour, drank and sang. They composed songs about new laws, murders and fights, oppression of the police and the scandals of the Maliks. In the Malik-controlled Barha area, “the only history of exploitation and oppression of the poor was found in their songs” (57). While singing, they showed off their dramatic makeup and collected money from the houses of the Maliks. The villagers from other villages also watched the fun from a distance, a routine every year. They sang about Medini Singh and Lachhima, Lachhima and Mohor, Mohor and Dhanpatiya, Mohor and the daroga (Inspector of Police); every incident was sung aloud in juicy language.
dripping with innuendo, erupting fountains of reckless laughter. They also sang of the Bhangis beaten up by Medininarayan Singh savagely, and later taken revenge. Thus the truth is stated courageously. The event was pivotal to a whole series of other events, which resulted in the death of Barkandaj Singh, the head of the Rajputs in Barha village and the paralysis Medininarayan Singh suffered from. The Bhangis, thus revealed their freedom of speech. The Rajputs were full of anxiety, as they did not know who, the songs would caricature. In large, all-powerful Rajput kingdoms, when great kings and emperors, masters of millions, perform evil deeds such as secret assassinations, killings of their minor wives, and murders for property, it was not the minstrels, but the Bhangis, who made songs and sang them in the capital city. Though the Bhangis were deprived of the right to live as human beings, in caste-bound Barha, no one knew as to who had given them the right to create such songs: “No point abusing Mahatma Gandhi. This hoary tradition goes back to a period much before Gandhi” (59). The anxiety and fear of the Rajputs carried a positive hope in the low caste.

Maya Angelou in Gather Together in My Name reveals that, racial prejudice has slowly begun to vanish, as the White women have taken care of the Black children. Angelou, taking up the job of chef, put her child Guy, in charge of a leathered old White woman. She was reluctant to leave the baby in her charge; Angelou’s mother reminded her that she had tended the White, Black and Filipino children equally well. She “reasoned that her great age had shoved her beyond the pale of any racial differences […]”. She simply couldn’t afford the precious time to think of prejudices. The greatest compensation for youth’s illness is the utter ignorance of the seriousness of the affliction” (15).
Titu Mir, the protagonist of Mahasweta Devi’s novel of the same name, finding a fancy to fight with lathi, made trips to Poonra and to Gobordanga. There, he competed with the local wrestlers and showed skills with the lathi. On one of the busy market days at Badur, he happened to see the policeman and the armed guard picking the choicest wares out of the vendors’ baskets such as fruits, vegetables, and fish. The fishmonger threw himself at their feet, crying, “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). The words of the poor man made no impact on the guardians of the law. Titu, unknowingly found himself taking the fish out of the policemen’s hands,

‘Chhi! Chhi! Chhi! Now you’ve gone and touched it! How can the Inspector Babu take this fish, eh?’

‘That’s true. I’ve touched it’.

Hafiz piped up, ‘Sir, when he touched the fish you had the fruits and greens, too, in your other hand. Everything’s been tainted now’.

The policeman flung his basket down. […] Titu said, ‘You’ve always taken your cut and why not? But take it easy, won’t you? Don’t take the best from them, or what will they live on?’ (11)

By helping the poor, Titu, showed his retaliation towards injustice in the market. When his mother suggested him to be a lathial (stavesman) in indigo plantation, he said, “No. I won’t join the plantation and fleece the farmers. Never” (21). Voicing for the destitutes, Titu speaks and suffers for the poor, and always stood for truth, justice and love – “The boy’s of fine mettle. Speak well to him and he’ll give his life for you; scorn him and he’ll flash into a rage” (23). Titu is determined to free India from the clutches of the English:
seventy four years ago the Company had defeated the Nawab of
Bengal and first begun to spread its rule over Hindustan. The
weakening of the Badshah of Delhi had been part of their plot, too.
These Europeans had unjustly taken away the empire of the Muslims,
but their time was over now. Once again free Hindustan would be
ruled by a Muslim king – by Titu Mir.(87-88)

To his father Nisar, “Titu is like some uncrowned emperor, born into our house by
mistake. Ever since he was a boy, he has been unable to tolerate injustice. He’d give
his shirt to the needy, he’d pour out grain for visiting fakirs” (47).

Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes adores Ghana and
yearns to live there. The novelist portrays the journey of the Blacks to their ancestral
land, after a century of suppression. The African-Americans had always longed for
home: “For centuries we had sung about a place not built with hands, where the
streets were paved with gold, and were washed with honey and milk.[…] There, at
last, we would study war no more and more important, no one would wage war
against us again” (20). The descendants of the early slaves taken from Africa, after
years of slavery, returned to their home continent, of which they had little memory.
Angelou doubts, “which one of us could know that years of bondage, brutalities, the
mixture of other bloods, customs and languages had transformed us into an
unrecognizable tribe?” (20). Yet they found promise in their ancestral continent. The
migrants have chosen the country because of its progressive posture and Kwame
Nkrumah, its president. Kwame Nkrumah welcomed the American Negroes to
Ghana and offered haven for Southern and East African revolutionaries who worked
to end colonialism. Captivated by the Ghanaian people, Angelou describes:
Their skins were the colours of my childhood cravings: peanut butter, licorice, chocolate and caramel. Theirs was the laughter of home, quick and without artifice. [...] So I had finally come home. The prodigal child, having strayed, been stolen or sold from the land of her fathers, having squandered her mother’s gifts and having laid down in cruel gutters, had at last arisen and directed herself back to the welcoming arms of the family where she would be bathed, clothed with fine raiment and seated at the welcoming table. (21)

Thus, it is evident that she has accepted her colour as normal. Angelou, liberated out of her ugliness, got intimacy with the land of Africa, where the people were busy adoring the flag, and their five-year old independence from Britain: “I would not admit that if I couldn’t be comfortable in Africa, I had no place else to go. I turned my back to the niggling insecurities and opened my arms again to Ghana” (36).

Mahasweta Devi in the *Mother of 1084*, portrays Sujata, the mother of 1084, as lovable, who cared for the family, the poor, and the downtrodden. Visiting the humble, dilapidated house of Somu, Sujata was amazed by the intelligence of the mother of Somu and realized that Somu’s mother, with little learning and limited intelligence had put her ideas effectively into words. The upper class feel that they only are intelligent, educated and god’s own children. They would never appreciate the intelligence of the lower class. Sujata’s appraisal of the intelligence of the mother of Somu is a positive point in her character. Somu, in Mahasweta Devi’s the *Mother of 1084*, though born in a poor household, is educated. He is intelligent and won scholarships every year. His parents did not have money for his education. Due to
the scholarship, he joined the college, revealing that the downtrodden are moving towards brighter path.

Grandmother Baxter, a Black woman living in St. Louis, in Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the autobiographer’s maternal grandmother, is a powerful figure in the community because of six mean offsprings and the ability to pull strings with the police. An entourage of crooks, requested her for help and in turn provided favours. When she came to know that Angelou was raped by Mr. Freeman, she became furious and the Baxter clan killed the paedophile. The death of Mr. Freeman heralded the beginning of women’s emancipation. During Angelou’s stressed condition, Bailey, the brother, provided solace for her. The Baxter clan, in support of Angelou, suggests that though one section of men suppress women, the other section, love and help them.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Pallavi Shah, the rich, twenty-three year old daughter of Tejlal Shah of Mumbai, visits Barha to help the Bhangis. She found that “the bhangis were the lowest of the low” (86). She also wanted to distribute saris, dhotis and baby food to the Bhangis in Bhangi toli (settlement). She has already worked in the slums of Patna. To Pallavi, the foul-smelling and filthy, the dirt-poor Bhangis in the Bhangi toli provided a sensuous pleasure. She ate boiled corn off dirty plates, slept on a raised bamboo platform, and at times, starved with the Bhangis. She spoke of the Indian Constitution to the wife of Mangalal, a Bhangi thus: “There was no such thing as a malik, because in independent India, Mangalal and his malik were considered equals” (88). She had to escape from Barha to save herself and the Bhangis, but her effort and risk to help
them shows a streak of light in the life of the low caste. Pallavi Shah, a high caste, educated, woman from Mumbai, who stayed alone in Barha, reveals that women are coming out of their barriers, to lend a helping hand to the poor. Though they fail in their attempts and are criticized by the society, their faith to cross the caste, class and gender barriers show that those women would be free in future. Pallavi escaped to Tohri, and recounted the true story to the SDO, “will you see to it that the bhangis are not tortured any more” (94). The SDO agreed with her request, yet she doubted him. She is helped by Abhay Mahato of Harijan Kalyansangh. Being ready to spend money for the Bhangis, she revealed to Abhay, “I still have a lot of money. Money. I couldn’t give anything else. Will you give it to them? To rebuild their houses? Will you?” (94). Abhay warned her that if the Maliks had found out the source of money, the Bhangi toli would be burnt down again. He suggested, “Didi, listen. Have faith in the Harijan Sangh and give us some money. We’ll give it to them as if it’s from us, and get them some bamboo and thatch for rebuilding” (94). The efforts taken by Abhay Mahato and others of the Harijan Sangh show a positive hope in the life of the Bhangis.

Ramchand, in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, the chief lathial (chief stavesman), of Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury, collected and deposited the Barogachhia (name of the place) tax, dreaming of becoming the next Zamindar. He pestered Bhudeb to convert the agricultural land to indigo plantation, so that, the former could lease out the land and grow richer. The real sufferers would be the poor farmers and the peasants, for whom he cared little. The sahibs were the indigo planters and the rulers of the Company, were the White men. Tarini Sanyal, the indigo planters’ agent, a greedy Indian, scattered indigo seeds in Bhudeb’s land. As a result, there was a riot in the
distant Pubpara of Chor Gobindopur. Clashes and killings were rampant, in the riot between the Zamindar’s and plantation lathials; Tarini Sanyal succumbed to injuries; two of the plantation lathials died, and thirty-two were hurt. The Zamindar disagreed to plant indigo in his land, and for that the lathials and the peasants were not to be blamed. The indigo planters, the Whites, knew the truth, – “the situation was hardly in his favour, white man though he was” (40). Titu Mir was sentenced to three years in jail; the others to two and a half years; the indigo planter got a “warning not to disturb the peace again” (41). Thus there is hope and justice for the poor peasants.

Bhudeb Pal Choudhury, in Titu Mir is a peace-loving, pious man. He is against the British and Indigo plantation and knew that he could not keep the estate out of the clutches of the Company for long. So he maintained a squad of lathials – “All around him had sprung up numerous ‘indigo concerns’. The lathials’ job was to thwart the Company’s men in the ongoing cold war between the zamindar and the plantations” (36). Sardar Ramchand Chakrabarti, the chief lathial of Bhudeb Pal Choudhury remarked with rancor at the sight of Titu Mir, “My master will employ no one but these Muslims” (31). Bhudeb Pal Choudhury, a rich Hindu Zamindar, is also “reverent toward Brahmans” (36). Sardar Ramchand, never missed a chance to collect money in the name of Bhudeb Pal Choudhury from the peasants. Thus, Bhudeb Pal Choudhury, a Zamindar, with concern for the poor low caste, who stood for justice, and revolting against his Brahman chief lathial, is a positive hope for the Dalits. Sardar Ramchand, accused his master as “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). Ramchand was accused by the Brahmans, of the conspiracy behind the death of Tarini Sanyal, the father in law of his daughter. As his daughter
could not visit the parents and when negotiations for the wedding of his younger daughter are off, “Even beggars and mendicants were avoiding his house, and to Brahmans, who were of his caste, he was as abhorrent as a leper” (43). The wife of Ramchand could never believe that, “things could come to such a pass! Oh what will become of us? Now our daughter can’t marry, and no one will come to our son’s initiation ceremony. We have not been ostracized, but oh! This is far, far worse! How can we live like this?” (43). The sad grumbling of the wife reveals that people hate a person of their own caste, who oppresses the underprivileged.

Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes shows the Blacks occupying the centrestage. She trembled with awe, on seeing the Africans enter and leave the Flagstaff House, the seat of the government. Angelou and Alice visited Black Star square to see the monument arch, “named in part for the newspaper founded in the United States by the ex-slave and abolishmentist, Frederick Douglass” (16). She was bewitched by the authority of the Africans on the marble steps and realized that the Whites were mistaken. The truth was that the Black and the Brown skin did not herald debasement or a divinely created inferiority; the Africans were capable of controlling the cities, themselves and their lives with elegance and success, “Whites were not needed to explain the working of the world, nor the mysteries of the mind” (16). The movement of the Blacks in the formal building represented liberty and freedom for the Africans, after years of suppression.

Distressed women are helped by their folk. In Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings the novelist remained mute by the shock of being raped by Mr. Freeman. She kept aloof for nearly a year, till, acquainted with Mrs. Bertha Flowers
“who threw me my first life line” (93). Of Mrs. Bertha Flowers, one of the few aristocratic Blacks in their town, Angelou writes, “one of the few gentlewomen I have ever known, and has remained throughout my life the measure of what a human can be” (94). She encouraged Angelou to speak in her period of shock. Mrs. Flowers knew the young girl Angelou as a voracious reader, and found it necessary for the human voice to infuse the written word with deeper meaning. By her acquaintance with, Mrs. Flowers, Angelou gained self-confidence, “I was liked, and what a difference it made. I was respected not as Mrs. Henderson’s grandchild or Bailey’s sister but for just being Marguerite Johnson” (101). She imbibed values from Mrs. Flowers: “After the rape, Maya becomes very introverted; Mrs. Flowers gets her interested in books and slowly instills confidence in herself” (Strong Yet Vulnerable: The Woman as Mother 57). She was thrilled to have Mrs. Flowers read out the former’s favourite book, A Tale of Two Cities. Thus the issues of identity, that have posed a major problem for the girl Angelou, chipped away. As Angelou reflects, Mrs. Flowers “made me proud to be Negro” (95).

In Mahasweta Devi’s The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, Mishir, a Brahman, offered puja to the household deities in the house of Ganesh. In Barha, the Rajput-dominated village, Mishir, soft and timid, is a cook by profession. Medininarayan Singh, who had gauged his limitations, kept him as tutor. Medininarayan called him ‘Deota’ (corruption of ‘Devta’ (God)), and so did Ganesh. For a long time, Mishir had worked as slave in exchange for food. Salary promised to him, once, was forgotten. Rukmani, the daughter of Nathu Singh, a Rajput, and Ganga, the untouchable, was employed in the house of Ganesh to help Putli, the wife, in household duties. Rukmani was in love with Kamu Ahir, from Nahara. Learning the matter of
Rukmani’s death, Putli cried at night and Ganesh roared in anger, “How dare you stand out here at night! Won’t it drive Lakshmi out of our house? (127). He slapped her and there arose a heartrending scream. The beastiality behind Rukmani’s death, had made Mishir heart broken. Like Ganga and Mori, the low caste women who had gone off as beggars, Mishir was also willing to go to Gaibinath or elsewhere, “there was no shame in a Brahman begging. An old Brahman. He could not take the rioting-blood-shed-violence any more” (128). He refused to accept money from Ganesh. On the way he met Haroa, the husband of Lachhima and visited her. The flight of Mishir from the house of Ganesh and his willingness to be a beggar than to work in the household and the meeting with Lachhima show the change in the attitude of the high caste Brahmans. They treat the low caste equally, and thus give positive hope for them.

In *Gather Together in My Name* Vivian Baxter, the mother of Angelou, passed on to the daughter, the former’s attitudes and values. To Meera Manvi, “the slave narratives, especially, stress on the “woman’s role as nurturer and teacher, as one who fought against inhuman conditions to ensure the survival of her children”” (84). Angelou, in the African-American tradition knows that the mother is “the major force behind her, a force she can rely on to exercise herself from the quagmire she is in, a force which helps her to define and redefine herself” (Alladi 102). Vivian Baxter encouraged her daughter “to learn how to be alone without being lonely, to love a man and not be consumed by him” (Alladi 102). Through her interaction with the mother, the daughter not only gets a sense of what she is, but also what she ought to be and ought not to be. The voice of Angelou clearly rings out the role of women and “in simple terms, her mother sets for her the co-ordinates which she accepts, questions
or rejects” (Alladi 102). She was initially skeptical about her mother. She has spent most of her childhood with her grandmother Mrs. Annie Henderson. After the rape, Angelou relied on Vivian who gave her enough freedom. As Alladi Uma opines: “Vivian encourages her to learn dancing or to do anything else she wants, urging her to be the best in everything. She instills confidence in Maya by having faith in Maya’s potential”. (102)

Krishnadeb Ray, a Zamindar of Poonra, in Mahasweta Devi’s Titu Mir sent a guard to Titu Mir, informing him to meet the former. As the guard, disturbed Titu Mir in the middle of his namaaz (Muslim prayer), the latter hoisted the former into the air. The guard took to his heels and ran away. Krishnadeb’s “pride as lord of the land had been wounded by this humble farmer’s son’s insult to his men. And the common peasants and artisans had witnessed his humiliation” (80). So he sent four well-armed guards to bring in Titu Mir. The guards ran away, on seeing atleast fifty men waiting for them, with lathis. Titu Mir’s companions are “not just the Muslims but the poor Hindus as well” (81). There is unity among the Hindus and the Muslims, of which Krishnadeb was desperate, “The low born and the Muslims were gaining the confidence to raise their hands” (82). Thus the unity, among the low caste created fear and tension among the rich and the upper class.

Krishnadeb Ray, mustered reinforcements from neighbouring Zamindars and planters and borrowed best of their lathials to loot and destroy the houses of people and burn down the mosque. His manager lodged a complaint against Titu Mir. Krishnadeb pocketed the inspector with fat bribe and cautioned both sides to keep
peace in future. Yet, the Surveyor of Revenue, Auckland Colvin, submitted a report on the affair:

Krishnadeb Ray was entirely to blame for the whole business, and that it was highly regrettable that he had no power to punish him. On the strength of this report the government wrote to the commissioner stating that it was due to the injustice, extortion and expropriation of Krishnadeb Ray that the peasants had revolted. The Joint Magistrate was told to take steps against him. (85)

The report showed that there is justice and victory for the poor and the underprivileged.

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* portrays the Black revolutionaries, fighting for their legitimate rights: “We were brave revolutionaries, not pussyfooting nonviolent cowards. We scorned the idea of being spat upon, kicked, and then turned our cheeks for more abuse” (121). The revolutionaries in Africa came to know about a march to Washington, D.C.; the Black American radicals also decided to support their people in the States and formed a march, sympathetic to the Washington march, “protesting American racism and extolling the indomitability of the human spirit” (125). The Washington march began at 7.00 a.m. on August 27, due to the seven hour time difference. The Black American radicals in Africa began their supportive march at midnight on the twenty-six in the park, against the American Embassy. During the march, they heard about the death of Dr. Du Bois, the first American Negro intellectual, who has proclaimed, “The problem of the twentieth century will be the problem of the colour line”(125). At the end, Angelou with Julian, Alice, Jean Pierre, and Dr. Hunton walked into the
embassy and gave a written protest to the first secretary. The first secretary accepted the letter and told that he would see it reach into the hands of the proper authorities and added, “My wife is marching in Washington with Reverend King. I wish I could be there” (128). The march showed the insatiable spirit of the Blacks for freedom.

Brati, a Brahman boy, in Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, often visited the household of Somu. He found more life and happiness in the household of Somu than his own and ate food from the house. Sujata, the mother of Brati, realized that he had not abandoned her to the desolation of a private grief. He had bound her to others by giving “her a new family” (58). She wanted herself to be accepted in the humble household of the family of Somu. Her yearnings showed that she wished to be liberated, “But how could Sujata find her liberation in the midst of all those people? She was rich and belonged to another class. Why should they accept her as one of them” (58). She was too willing to be accepted as a member of the low class family.

In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou recalls her first resistance to Mrs. Viola Cullinan, a White woman. The rich life of Mrs. Bertha Flowers, an aristocratic Black is contrasted with that of the White, Mrs. Viola Cullinan, with who Angelou got job as part of her education. Angelou was taught by Miss. Glory, the cook of Mrs. Cullinan. Miss. Glory’s ancestors had worked as slaves for the family of Mrs. Cullinan. Miss. Glory was very patient with Angelou, and the latter was fascinated with the novelty of the many pieces of silverware, special dishes and glasses for specific purposes, that she had never known to exist. A friend of Mrs. Cullinan suggested her to call Angelou “Mary”, (109) since, it was shorter than the
full name Margaret and Mrs. Cullinan agreed with the suggestion. She explained to Miss. Glory that the name was shorter and hence would be the better one. Angelou became furious and Glory tried to calm her by revealing that Mrs. Cullinan shortened her name too. When Angelou discussed the effrontery with Bailey, he devised a perfect stratagem that would not only bring revenge, but evict Angelou out of the house. Angelou carried out the plan by purposefully dropping an empty serving tray. When Mrs. Cullinan yelled “Mary!” (110), Angelou dropped the former’s favourite casserole piece and two green glass cups. When her friend asked “Was it Mary” (110), Mrs. Cullinan yelled back, “Her name’s Margaret, goddamn it, her name’s Margaret!” (110) and threw a broken piece of plate at Angelou. Mrs. Cullinan had learned a lesson, from Angelou who had successfully fought for dignity. The confrontation was caused by the White woman, Mrs. Viola Cullinan, who, neither accepted the name of Angelou nor her identity. Thus identity became one of the strongest concerns of a Black woman.

Abhay Mahato, son of Anand Mahato, in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, a harijan, who studied only upto class six, had taken active steps to help the Bhangis. He brought good tidings to the Bhangis, informing them that they would have no work till harvest, and he had talked to the minister about the matter. The minister, a harijan, would visit Tohri. Abhay also finalized things with the forest department so that the people of Barha were permitted to collect firewood in the Barha-Nahara forest where tree felling would be done for four years. The forest department puts forward conditions, there should be no tree felling, and no lighting fires. The Bhangis were afraid of the Malik who tried to stop them. To Abhay, “the new SDO (Sub-Divisional Officer) is not too bad. Hasn’t yet begun to accept the
ghee-mutton-rice sent by the malik-mahajans. […] If the maliks object to this, I
shan’t pay heed. Your duty is to bring courage and confidence into the minds of the
acchuts” (untouchable) (135). He informed them about the Harijan Sangh (a group to
help the low caste) : “Now the Harijan Sangh has around a thousand rupees in the
bank. We’ll spend it on work of this kind” (135).

The son of Mori, a low caste, wanted to know about his mother, who was the
keep of Barkandaj Singh: “Ma’s become a beggar, carries a bowl, sleeps under a tree”
(133). Abhay reveals, “Yes, she begs, but she stays and sleeps on my office
verandah. Snores peacefully all night. Don’t worry. Your mother wears eyeglasses
too. We’d called in an eye doctor and held a camp. Then I got glasses made. Now
she can see much better” (133). Mori, the low caste beggar, lived happily. People
like Abhay, took care of the destitute. The truth was that Mori had not been
abandoned or forsaken.

Abhay, knew that the village Barha was still in the middle ages. He hoped
that if there was some trouble in law and order, Barha would enter into modern times,

“Perhaps that was Barha’s destiny- one day the oppressed would turn
around and retaliate. Perhaps there would be a riot. […] Barha would
reach the twentieth century. […] If they were ousted, Abhay would go
with them. Try his best to get his friends and contacts to show more
interest, concern, towards them. He would try to live their life. That
would be Abhay’s union-party-sangh-mission work rolled into one”.
(159)
He felt that if he was arrested, he would fight the case till the end, with one hundred and fifty people in the witness box in court. To Abhay, the liberation of the Dalits is a constant dream. The presence of such people give hope for the Dalits.

Titu Mir, the protagonist of Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, met Syed Ahmad, a warrior, who lived to wield his sword as a crusader. He wished to spread the Wahabi doctrine and raise mujahid fighters. He informed Titu that, “’The Pathan tribes who live in that part of the country are great lovers of freedom, and they’re first-class fighters too’” (63).

“’[…] I believe unshakably that the poor weavers, both Hindu and Muslim, the farmers, cotton ginters, fabric dyers, all these folk will definitely respond to your call. It is always they who come forward. Our fight is against injustice of all kinds, against all torture and oppression. And who but they suffer all of society’s injustice, and endure its harshest oppression? So they will come’ […] ‘Our battle against the English is a holy war, a jihad[…]’ […] Allah’s Prophet has said to us, if you see a strong infidel oppressing or harming a weaker one, you must, of course, help the weaker’” (64).

The Wahabi doctrine was not against other religions, but against the English. Krishnadeb Ray, the Zamindar of Poonra, was told that there was “no quarrel between Hindu and Muslim. Instead, if a rich Hindu oppresses a poor one, they’ll side with the poor Hindu” (69). The reason for the mujahid fighters to remain as Muslims was that they began by setting their own houses in order. Various leaders and movements rose up for the poor, and as the movements were against the English, the poor hoped for better lives in future.
Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* narrates the zest of Kojo, a Black boy, to attain education. Wofa Otu, a steward and a second cook in the house of Angelou, introduced Kojo, a fourteen year old black boy to the latter. Otu and Kojo were from the same village and the boy liked to work for her. Angelou had no job for him, and Kojo expressed his wish to talk to her. To Angelou, Kojo “shared with Bailey a rich, dark brown colour, small hands and a perfectly round head” (55) who enthusiastically said “Auntie, I can be your ‘small boy’. I can bring you beer and wash your car, and if Wofa Otu will teach me, I can laundry. Auntie, I don’t want money. No salary. Just dash” (55). In West Africa, tips were not compulsory, yet they were expected and known as ‘dash’. He desired to go to school and as he wished to continue his schooling in Accra, he wanted to be with Angelou. He got good grades from the village school, but had not studied certain required subjects. Angelou, Alice and Vicki taught Kojo, and remembered, “I resumed the teaching-mother role automatically and easily” (58). Later, Angelou came to know that Kojo belonged to a rich family and had been with her, only to continue his education. The parents, uncles, aunts, and great-grand father of Kojo expressed their gratitude to Angelou. By their bearing, clothes and jewelry it was evident that Kojo belonged to a high-born and well-to-do family. They had travelled from Akwapin by lorry to thank her: “‘Auntie, we have family here in the town, but none has the Brioni education’ […] “Our chief and our grandfather told us if Kojo was to become better, he must have that understanding’” (73). In Akan languages, ‘Brioni’ means White. The zest of Kojo and the encouragement received from the family showed the enthusiasm of the Blacks to gain knowledge and prove that they are not inferior to anyone. By educating themselves, they want to break the manacles of ignorance and equal the Whites by mastering their lingo.
In Mahasweta Devi’s the *Mother of 1084*, Brati, a Brahman boy, who wore a sacred thread, loved and helped the poor and the downtrodden. He often visited the houses of his poor friends and took water and tea in the broken cup. Feeling intimacy with Hem, a servant in the household, “He would go to the kitchen, sit on a low stool near Hem and eat there” (27). Brati bought medicine to Hem for gout, in the midst of thousand worries of his own. He stopped her in the street, when she bought home the week’s ration and enquired, “How can you walk with such a heavy load? Can’t you take a rickshaw” (106). He arranged a rickshaw and helped her carry the ration home.

Fantasy, imagination and storytelling are the forms of resisting racism. For Black women writers, “Writing becomes a means of expressing not only their dissatisfaction of being repressed but also of voicing their desires. It is liberating” (*Autobiography as Repression, Desire and Expression* 15). Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* narrates about her unbearable toothache, and Momma, by convention, took her to the White dentist in town. Momma and Angelou waited at the dentist’s back door for over an hour, yet the doctor did not give in. He made a horrid comment about the Blacks and closed the door on Momma and Angelou. Momma, not being ready to give in, made Angelou wait outside. As she went in after the dentist. Angelou pictured an imaginative view of what was taking place. As long as she was given the chance to dream, the young girl dreamt of Momma ordering the dentist to get out of town by sundown and never to practice dentistry again. The helpless doctor cried before her. In her dream, Momma instructed Lincoln, the dentist “When you get settled in your next place, you will be a vegetarian caring for dogs with the mange, cats with the cholera and cows with the epizootic. Is that clear?” (190). On Momma’s way out, Angelou imagined, Momma turning the dentist’s nurse
into a sack of chicken feed. The fantastic victory revealed that imagination and storytelling helped to escape from racial prejudice. The fantasy also hinted that storytelling and imagination could serve as forms of resisting racism. When Momma, actually came out, she took Angelou on a Greyhound bus to the Black dentist. Later, the real story was revealed of what had happened at the White dentist’s office. Momma had pushed the dentist by making him pay her ten dollars for bus fare. She did not get what she wanted, but had not lost either. Momma could not always follow her own advice about steering clear of the Whites. Thus Angelou got a perspective of Momma’s strength and tenacity.

In the imagined version of the child Angelou, fantasy played, as she recounted scenes and ventured into the unreal or the impossible. Momma became a sort of superwoman of enormous proportions "ten feet tall with eight-foot arms" (191), who rescued the helpless child. Fantasy, is used to demonstrate the undiminished strength of Momma. In the alternate vision, Angelou switched to fantasy to suggest the depth of childhood humiliation and the residue of pain after her two bad teeth were pulled. Summarizing the complete anecdote, Angelou asserts, "I preferred, much preferred, my version" (193). Carefully selected elements of fiction and fantasy in the scene involving Dr. Lincoln and her childhood hero, Momma, partially compensate the racial displacement that she had experienced as a child.

In Mahasweta Devi’s The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, Ganesh and Ramrup, the Rajputs, went to Tohri and met the SDO. Ganesh requested him not to allow the harijans work in the forest. The SDO could not agree with the ‘strange’ proposal, “They’ll work your fields at harvest time. They’ll work elsewhere when you don’t
need them, so that they can eat. How’s that a loss of prestige for you?” (135). He warned them,

‘[…] because malik-mahajans are grabbing so much land year after year and rendering so many people landless, there are outbreaks of trouble in many parts of India. When conflicts occur, the problem of law and order comes up, and we have to intervene. Then there’s shootouts, and relations deteriorate between the public and the police.

Because your area is extremely underdeveloped, because you’ve been practising feudal modes of oppression, there still hasn’t been any problem, but problems might begin any moment’. (135)

Ganesh informed the SDO about the low caste people who would break the forest law, and order problem, forcing the police to enter Barha village. SDO, an educated man, smiled toothily and cracked a joke, ‘‘That’s good. Then Barha village will leave the middle ages and step into the present, In modern India, the peasants no longer suffer in silence when the Maliks oppress them. Now there’s unrest everywhere’’(136). The SDO hoped that an unrest would bring peace in the lives of the harijans. He knew that he would be transferred,

The SDO was no great supporter of the landless labourers or the Harijans. Nor was he against the maliks. He was not for or against the maliks. He was a great believer in the official line of national development through administration-government-Prime Minister-Constitution-legal reform. The passing of each new law brought him great joy, and in a place like Tohri, he couldn’t think of anyone who’d
share his pleasure at the fact that democracy was turning out to be a
success in India. (155)

He was angry with people like Ganesh, who were wealthy, but savages, uneducated
and feudal in outlook. They were impediments to the progress of the nation. The
SDO’s respect for the new government law for national development and his opinion
of Ganesh state that he is unbiased and so would work for the upliftment of the
downtrodden.

Ganesh, a high caste Rajput in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri
Ganesh*, is warned by the SDO. He had heard about the conspiracy of Ganesh to kill
Abhay and the acchuts: “Look, if you set fire to the forest and start trouble in their
name, the police will go there. And I’ll go, too. I’ve come to know that you are
planning all the trouble, and I’m not letting you free. You aren’t scared of me, right?
All right, I’ll also tie a rope round your waist, and drag you through Barha village to
the police van” (145). The SDO, a spokesman of the helpless downtrodden, scolded
Ganesh for creating problem to the acchuts. It shows that there is a positive streak for
the downtrodden.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir*, Titu Mir is against superstition. The pirs and
fakirs tell Titu “‘Well, what’s this you’re preaching to the people? ‘Don’t heed fakirs
and saints’! Don’t wear amulets in your times of sickness and trouble!’” (71). He is
rigid in the destruction of superstitious beliefs and replies,

‘‘only in Allah or Allah’s Prophet must we rest. We need believe in
no one else. Can you or men like you really do good or evil to man,
can you save him from the ills of the world?’ […] Hafiz’s father lost
his draft oxen and the zamindar confiscated his lands when he couldn’t pay rent, despite your giving him all sorts of advice to improve his circumstances. There are many such instances, all around you. I have looked upon them with open eyes and a fair mind. Not just you, no man alive can change the fate of another.” (71-72)

Rahmat Sheikh of Chandrapur was angry with Titu as, Rahmat lived by lending money at interest. Titu Mir and his doctrine say that usury is a sin. The vendors and shopkeepers who were not Wahabis followed the doctrine and knew that they were bound to pay their taxes to the Zamindars’s men. According to the custom, they had set up their stalls on the Zamindar’s land. They were ready to pay the tax of the Zamindar and refused to pay the manager, the bailiff, the agent, the sepoy or the priest. Krishnadeb Ray, Zamindar of Poonra, exploded with anger on knowing that Titu Mir had brought the Wahabi creed and was uniting the Muslims. To the Zamindar’s clerk, “It is not merely the Mussalmans, Huzoor, the potters and blacksmiths – cobblers and the like – are all in a mood to defy us” (76). Titu inspired people of all religion for a good cause. The doctrine, the people believed in and hoped it would liberate them from the iron shackles of the English, is a positive note in the novel.

In Maya Angelou’s All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes, the Blacks underwent untold sufferings, yet they had immense love towards their country, and respected themselves and appreciated their colour. Nana, a spiritual and moral leader of Ahanta people, encouraged the Black spirit of Dr. Kwegyr Aggrey from Ghana. Dr. Kwegyr Aggrey from Ghana who earned a doctorate from Colombia University taught in North Carolina. He understood racism and loved his Black skin. In self-
appreciation, he said, “‘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.’ […] We are Black BLACK! And we give no explanation, no apology” (110). When Angelou listened to one of Nana Nketsia’s speeches, she noticed that the chief’s majestic voice captured the rhythms of black preachers and that the African experience is similar to her own backdrop. She is caught between identifying with things African and using African culture as a way to acknowledge the abandoned country of her birth. Her need, to underline Ghanaian associations with African American parallels demonstrates what Dolly A. McPherson calls Angelou’s “‘double-consciousness’—a vision of her self containing both African and American components” (1990, 113). Through her identification with Africa, Angelou found the context to explore selfhood and reaffirm the meaning of motherhood.

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Haroa whose caste was unknown, killed Suraj Singh, the Malik in Singhbhum district. Haroa worked as a bonded labourer, for Suraj Singh, who made him 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, to either repay the debt or remain a bonded slave for generations. Since the debtors were always illiterate, the Maliks would show their debts as never-ending and made them slaves. Haroa was tortured by the Malik and so he killed him. The act showed his rebellious spirit and love for liberty. Medini Singh forced him to spill the truth and the former had conveyed the matter to Ganesh, his son, before his death. When Ganesh came in search of Haroa, quoting the latter as a murderer, Lachhima screamed, “That don’t
count anymore. If he killed someone it was in the British period. All these years you terrified him and got so much work of him, without wages, all so much money. Did he murder a relative of yours? Was he your slave labourer? That you scared him into being your slave for so many years?” (146). Lachhima’s words of retaliation revealed, the analytical power and determination of the Dalits.

Haroa sliced Ganesh with a sickle for self-protection whereas Ganesh shot Haroa in his thigh. Unfortunately, the bullet had entered Haroa’s lower belly and thus he died. To Lachhima, “He never told me his caste, and I never asked him” (148). Yet he is surrounded by the poor and the downtrodden. They realized that “Haroa had died for them, but no one knew what his caste was” (148) and built up a tall pyre on the plinth of the hut: “Everybody had their bundles of firewood, collected the day before. They brought the wood. Haroa who has spent his entire life as a slave, whose caste and creed was unknown, was laid upon a high pyre and cremated like a king amidst the leaping, crackling flames” (149). Thus the Dalits showed their unity and love for each other.

After the death of Haroa, Lachhima left Barha and went to the forest. Mishir, a Brahman, who formerly offered puja in the household deities of Ganesh, performed death rite pooja for Haroa and told Ranka, “Please look after Lachhima, baba, I’m a poor man. Don’t even have a hut. I sleep under a tree. I get hold of pilgrims once in a while. Eat Prasad from the temple. If I had a house, I’d have brought her to live with me. She would’ve stayed as my daughter” (150). Mishir, a Brahman, who could consider Lachimma, an untouchable barber woman, as daughter, brings in a tremendous turning point for the Dalits.
In *Titu Mir*, Mahasweta Devi describes a riot, when the officers learnt that Titu Mir represented a certain section of a religious community. Alexandar, an employee was told to precede the soldiers to Narkelberia. He went to Basirhat and made sure that the inspector of police and his men were with them. He found five hundred well-armed youth ready for battle. He realized that “this is no religious fanatics’ rabble-rousing” (100). Ramram Chakraborty, the inspector at Bashirhat, a few sepoys and the staff of the Kalinga police station were taken prisoners by the army of Titu. Masum dragged Ramram Chakraborty to a nearby rice field and killed him. Titu confessed thus: “‘However much they say we hate the Hindus’, […]’ it is not true. 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). Titu’s men beheaded the soldier, Nazir Mohammed Salim, of the English forces. Titu was acknowledged as Emperor by the poor Hindus and the Muslims over a vast area. The incident revealed that the fight of Titu was not for religion, but for freedom. Anup Beniwal and Vandana remark:

Mahasweta’s narrative carefully highlights the fact Titu didn’t merely represent a certain section of a religious community; rather his revolt was the revolt the oppressed against the oppressors. Titu Mir’s revolt cannot be compared to the battles fought by Kings and nobles against the encroaching powers of British imperialism which were a threat to their sovereignty. This revolt was fuelled by the desperation and hopelessness of the ordinary people. Bricks and unripe wood apples, spears and lathis were their weapons of war. With these, they valiantly confronted the rifles and cannons of the empire. Titu’s rebellion,
though doomed to failure, signaled common man’s capacity of resistance”. (Subaltern Historiography and Literary Aesthetics : A Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s Fiction 29)

The enthusiasm of the young generation to attain freedom gained optimistic hope. In Maya Angelou’s All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes, Guy, her only son, took part in the supportive march. The march illustrated the resilience of the Blacks who wanted to gain freedom. Identity is constructed not within the narrow confines of the hegemonic nuclear family, but in relation to the whole community. As John Reverie puts it, “There is no such thing as a single human being, pure and simple, unmixed with other human beings. Each personality is a world in himself a company of many. That self […] is a composite structure” (qtd. in Fitzgerald 122-3).

Guy arrived with a group of young Ghanaian friends to participate in the march. Angelou proudly proclaims: “At eighteen, he had a long history of marches, having participated in political protests since he was fourteen” (123).

Malcolm, a Black Muslim minister, on coming to Accra in Africa, spoke about the White Americans to the expatriates, who had met him. The White Americans did not tolerate the Blacks in their restaurants, churches, swimming pools and voting booths. He opined that though, the United States was a racist country, he believed that all the Whites were not devils, and that no human being is inherently cruel at birth: “On this journey to Mecca, I met White men with blue eyes, who I can call brother with conviction. That means that Iam forced to reconsider statements I have made in the past and must have the courage to speak up and out about those reconsiderations” (130). He pointed out that: “The teaching of the Honourable Elijah
Muhammad enabled me to break the noose that ignorance and racism put around my neck, and I will always thank Allah and the Honourable Elijah Muhammad for that. But a person must make the effort to learn, and growing is the inevitable reward of learning” (130).

In *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Mahasweta Devi portrays the tradition of the low castes in addressing the high caste Rajputs as Maliks and touching their feet as a mark of respect. Mori is the concubine of Barkandaj Singh, the father of Nathu Singh, whose former mistress is Ganga. After the death of Barkandaj Singh, Nathu Singh employed Mori for cleaning the cowsheds. She always wore tattered rags: “She has been given new clothes just three years ago” (124). Mori and Ganga, on becoming old, went to beg in Tohri. Mori informed Nathu that she was leaving the house as she had become old. She broke the tradition by, “No saying ‘Malik’ with reverence, no touching of his feet” (124).

Titu Mir, in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* had bands of youths from all over the countryside, to join him. His bamboo fort was reinforced with a cladding of earth. Unripe wood apples and bricks were piled up. To the weavers: “When it comes to a fight we will throw those at the enemy: we can’t fight with *lathis* and naked swords”’ (94). The weavers represented the enthusiasm of the downtrodden who had gained freedom from the English and the rich. Titu made the proclamation in the marketplace – “‘Whether Hindu or Muslim, don’t pay your tax to the zamindar!’” (94). At the same time, he demanded to landowners, moneylenders, rich anti-wahab Muslims and planters, “Give your tax to Titu Mir, or you will be severely punished”
The Mujahids (Muslim revolutionaries) of Titu looted the homes of the rich Muslims in Ram Chandrapur and Hooghly. The village people sang:

That which eluded a thousands pirs

Was done at last by Titu Mir. (96)

They said among themselves, “’It this real, are we dreaming? The planters have gone, the zamindars have gone, even the police have gone. We never knew that you could wield such power with a lathi. If only these times could last’” (96). The old men felt, “’It’s a worthy cause. But we are afraid. We, too, want to walk the banks of the Ichhamoti as far as we can, along the canals, streams and rivers, and not see a single indigo plantation anywhere. We want to travel afar and never see the zamindar’s elephants tramoling the villager’s huts or eating their grain. That is what we, too, want’” (96). Thus, Titu proved that he is not against other religions; but is against the English and the rich Zamindars who usurped the food of the poor.

Titu Mir and the doctrine made vast results. The anti-socials such as the planters, the Zamindars, the landlords, the rich Muslims, and the money lenders fled to Barasat, Gobordanga and Calcutta. The tax for the planters’ vast unofficial holdings were not collected, and the peasants had stopped planting indigo on the land. Though the government was against Titu and his troop, some of the officers secretly supported them, as they worked for the upliftment of the poor. The inspector of police, a Muslim, at Kalinga village which was very close to Narkelberia, helped Titu. He secretly sent word to Titu that the Zamindars and the planters had planned to go jointly to the magistrate of Barasart: “’Be prepared for them, Titu,’ he said. ‘I cannot say anything openly, as I as an employee of the government. But in secret I support you: that is why I have sent out no report of your activities.’” (94).
Zamindars who did not want to leave their land, supported Titu. The Zamindar of Bhushana who had not fled, sent Titu Mir rice and dal. Bhudeb Pal Choudhury also helped Titu and his men.

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* reveals the Blacks, fighting for their rights. Malcolm argued for the Blacks before the United Nations:

“If our cause was debated by all the world’s nations, it would mean that finally, we would be taken seriously. We could stop courting the ‘fair-minded white people in the U.S.’ as Martin Luther King called some of his constituents. America would be forced to face up to its discriminatory policies. Street protests and sit-ins would be as passé as auction blocks and as unnecessary as manumission papers. If South African Blacks can petition the U.N. against their country’s policy of apartheid, then America should be shown on the world’s stage as a repression and bestial racist nation. (131)

The Africans are not born low. They are to be acknowledged, recognized and respected and should have the nerve to question the White Americans. Malcolm narrated his experience in the Nigerian Airport, where he met a White American. The latter approached Malcolm and offered his hand to shake. The White American told Malcolm, “I’ve admired you, Mr. X, truly admired you” (132). Malcolm asked boldly, “Would you have shaken my hand in New York?” (132). The White man was ashamed and revealed that he was not supposed to do, and indignantly said, “Well, we’re both Americans!” (132).
Malcolm, who voiced for the Blacks and proudly called himself Black, was not really black in complexion. Yet he whole-heartedly suffered for the Blacks. He rejected all merriments in parties:

I am in no mood to dance. I think of our brothers and sisters at home, squirming under the heel of racial oppression, and I do not care to dance. I think of our brothers and sisters in the Congo, squirming under the heel of imperialist invasion, and I do not care to dance. I think of our brothers and sisters in South Africa squirming under the heel of apartheid, and I do not care to dance. (134)

A student told Malcolm, “Mr. Malcolm X, what I don’t understand is why you call yourself Black. You look more like a White man than a Negro” (137). Malcolm revealed that he was born to a Black woman and a slave master. As the slave master father did not accept him, he retained enough Africanisms. He narrated his life experiences thus:

Before I became a Muslim, when I was hustling on the streets of America, because of my color, Black people called me mariney, and Detroit Red. Some even cussed me out and called me unprintable names, but nobody tried to give me away to White folks. I was accepted. Now, my point is, if Whites who should know do claim me, I think it’s clear where I belong. I am a Black man. Notice, I don’t say Black American, I don’t consider myself a democrat, a republican, or an American. I am a Black Muslim man of African heritage. (138)

Though the Africans are different in size and appearance, they have oneness. To an ambassador in the novel, “Some are big, some are small, but we are all one” (140).
Titu Mir, in Mahasweta Devi’s *Titu Mir* found a Bagdi’s boy, Kanai for sending message to Bhudeb Pal Choudhury: “This time the fight will be hard. We don’t know what the outcome will be. If any of my people come to you later, make arrangements for them to go to Jessore” (111). Titu revealed to the fakir his belief: “Just as there is victory in war, there is also defeat. If the bamboo fort stands, we need not worry. But if it falls, you must take whoever you can and go to Jessore. From there go on to Faridpur. Saryatullah is there, and Dudu Mian.” (111). Titu and his rebellion would never die, as some rebels escaped to distant places, and continued to voice for the poor. Titu was killed by McDonald, a Lieutenant, by the cannon, which was used to destroy fortification and not men. Yet a voice proclaimed:

‘Brothers, raise the name of Titu Mir! Brothers, raise the name of Titu Mir!’ Who was saying this? Why were they calling his name? They should cheer the name of Narkelberia, of ripe grain, of smiles on a farmer’s face! They should remember the names of the people for whom Mushirat Shah had taken up arms, for whom Syed Ahmad had died a martyr at Balakot, for whom Saryatullah kept his spear sharp! Yet they went on shouting – Titu Mir! Titu Mir! As if it was a charm, an elixir, an incantation! Slowly this tremendous noise faded in Titu’s ears, until at one point it suddenly blinked into silence’. (116)

The body of Titu was laid surrounded by those of the slain mujahids in the fort. The Whites set fire to the fort and felt that the corpse of Titu Mir would be more dangerous. Yet, “Alexander could not decide whether this was the end, or the beginning, or merely one chapter in an unending story. He looked at Titu Mir, on whose face there still lingered a faint, unsullied smile. That smile seemed to be
goading Alexander to think of the answer to his question for himself” (117). The smile in Titu’s face symbolized that the war for equality was not yet over; people like him, who were alive, would continue the war, till the attainment of freedom “Titu cannot die. Now we are on our way to tell everyone this. A mujahid lives on in all the other mujahids who are alive.” (113).

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* brings out the differences between the Black American and an African. The Black Americans had developed a doctrine of resistance over centuries of oppression, “which included false docility and sarcasm” (158). They were always willing and ready to fight. As a result, a White man seldom physically threatened a Black man, saying “You know they will cut you” (158). An ancient joke among the Blacks was told of a bigot, who was chided by his friends for calling all Blacks ‘niggers’.

“But that’s what they are,” he announced.

“What do you call the minister of the venerable White Rock Baptist Church?”

The bigot answered, “A nigger.”

“And the president of the Black university?”

“A nigger.”

“And the award winning scientist?”

“A nigger.” was the reply.

“And that Black man standing over there watching us with a knife in his hand?”

“Oh, I call him, ‘Sir’”. (158)
The war for freedom took place in different places by different leaders. Syed Ahmad in Mahasweta Devi’s Titu Mir, attained martyrdom in the fight against the forces of the Sikh ruler. Syed Ahmad’s fight was a crusade for the individual’s freedom to worship as well as a revolt of the oppressed against the oppressor. In him, the Pathans witnessed a symbol of hope of eventual freedom. With the Pathans on his side, Syed Ahmad had overrun Peshawar. Wahabis and Faraizis from Mymensingh and Faridpur flocked to the remote northwestern province to fight in the jihad. Syed Ahmad, as he had wished, became a martyr, “The religion he died for was the faith of freedom […] Now it was the duty of every Wahabi to think and act like him. Because the Wahabi movement would continue; nothing could stop it now” (106).

Maya Angelou in All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes points out that the missing element in West Africa is “‘Black American insouciance’ […] ‘Courtesy and form, traditional dignity, respectful dismissal and history were the apparent ropes holding their society close and nearly impenetrable’” (158). Black Americans were able to guard against intrusions of any sort. They had developed audacious defenses and it might seep through the pores at any moment “and show themselves without regard to propriety, manners or even physical safety, I had missed those thrilling attitudes, without being aware of their absence” (159).

The Black Americans, after suppression, had become creative, resistant and resilient. Angelou concludes All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes with a positive note:

There was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated
from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. We had crossed the unknowable oceans in chains and had written its mystery into “Deep River, my home is over Jordan.” Through the centuries of despair and dislocation, we had been creative, because we faced down death by daring to hope. (207)

In ancient days, Women are not allowed to go out of their houses. The education and employment of women marked a positive note in their liberation. Sujata, the wife and mother in Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, took up a job in bank. Her husband Dibyanath faced problems at the office and had lost two important accounts. Due to the circumstance, Sujata took up the job; the family encouraged and supported her. To her mother-in-law, “You should have begun earlier” (9). Dibyanath and his mother constituted the centre of attraction in the home. Sujata had only a shadowy existence, “She is subservient, silent, faithful and without an existence of her own” (9). She wished to show her rebellion by refusing to leave the job – “Refusing to leave her job was Sujata’s second act of rebellion was when Brati was two. She had refused to a mother for a fifth time” (46).

Maya Angelou in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings boldly opines that though women are suppressed by men, one section of men and women constantly gave confidence to the womenfolk. Daddy Clidell taught her tricks against the wealthy Whites. Though uneducated, he owned apartment buildings and, pool halls and Angelou admired him. He taught an array of card games and introduced her to “the most successful con men in the world” (221). The Blacks, Momma and Angelou’s mother proudly explained to her their various tricks against the wealthy Whites, so
that she would never be taken by anyone. As Alladi Uma in the article *Introduction: A Historical Background* remarks: “Momma in Angelou’s autobiographical novels who teaches self-reliance and resilience to deal with the hostile forces of the world, or Maya’s mother who is always supportive” (17).

Mahasweta Devi in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* deals with the changes that had taken place in the society when women received education. Swarup Singh, thikadar (forest contractor), who worked in Hazarebagh conveyed to Ganesh, the changes brought about by the education of women. Ganesh, a male chauvinist still in the middle ages, felt that there was no meaning in schooling and education, as he had not sent his daughter to school.

‘You’re married? Children?’

‘A daughter’.

‘There are no schools in the village’.

‘Schools! I didn’t go to one, and my daughter will?’

‘Bhaiya, the ways of our fathers-grandfathers won’t do any more. Why, in Ranchi you can see girls whizzing around on bicycles’ (143).

Swarup Singh, a modernist, had his daughter educated; his wife did not wear purdah. He viewed the transformation thus:

My daughter also goes to school.[...] My wife does all the pujas. Our household idol is Lakshmi-Janardhan. The gods love her and she has borne me three sons- Bhaiya, if I was not devout do you think I’d have made a profit of six lakhs in seven years? The officers, the daroga, the forest officers are all under my control[...] I too was married at a young age. But my in-laws were from Ranchi town. My father-in-
law kept me with him and educated me. He has no son. Thanks to him, I’m a contractor”. (144)

An educated and cultured man, he was happy and contented with his family, and had successfully liberated himself of all superstitious beliefs.

Women came out of the shackles of slavery and had taken up jobs to stand on their own legs. Momma, a Black, in Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name*, a courageous, single person, owned a country store in Stamps, when stores were run only by the Whites. After the divorce of her parents in California, the father took Angelou and brother Bailey, put identification and destination tags on their wrists and sent them alone by train, to his mother in the South. As Angelou remembered, “We had some food, some laughter and Momma’s quiet strength to lean against” (77).

Maya Angelou in *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* breathes the air of belongingness in the promised land of Africa. She was irritated, when she heard the Whites’ discussion on Black Americans in Senior Common room at the institute of African Studies. An Englishman, a Yugoslav woman, a Canadian, and a German professor, criticised the democracy of Ghana. An African, joined with them, by accepting beer and commented, “Delicious. We may not make a great democracy, but no one can complain that we don’t make a good beer. What?” (50). The Europeans and the African laughed. To Angelou, “They had assassinated my people as well as my new country” (50). Thus Angelou, a Black African woman, belonging to the suppressed class, a doubly marginalized, revolted against the suppressors. Raising her voice, she spoke:
Obviously you people think you’ve got all the answers. Well, you should wait until someone who really cares asks you a question. You don’t know a damn thing about Black Americans, a I resent every stupid thing you’ve said […] You people are idiots, and you dare speak of Ghana. You rejects […] You left your old cold ass countries and came here where you’ve never had it so good. Now you’ve got servants and can bathe more than once a month. It’s a pity more than of you don’t take advantage of the opportunity. You stinking bastards. […] And don’t say a word to me, I’ll slap the water out of all of you.

(51)

The angst of Angelou showed the bottled-up emotion of a Black American woman who had been demoralised for centuries. With a positive outlook, she dared to shout at the suppressors face-to-face. The Blacks in Africa ignored the rudeness of the White establishment. As a steward believed, “This is not their place. In time they will pass” (52). Hearing the words of the poor Ghanaian uneducated steward in Africa, Angelou was wounded and thought of him as stupid. The poor servant was secure and so he could neglect established white rudeness. Angelou felt, “No Black American I hadever known knew that security. Our tenure in the United States, though long and very hard-earned was always so shaky, we had developed patience as a defence, but never as aggression” (52). She told him about the African, who insulted the democracy of Ghana. For the steward, the African was just a “Beentoo”, (52), a derisive word used for a African who had his education abroad and returned to Ghana with European airs. The African had, “been to the United Kingdom. Been to the United States. In time, that posing will pass. Now he is at home, and home will
take him back […] Don’t let them trouble your heart. In a way you are a ‘Beentoo’
too. But your people…they from this place, and if this place claims you or if does not
claim you, here you belong’” (53).

Mahasweta Devi, in the *Mother of 1084* presents a positive hope for women,
who suffered for the downtrodden. Sujata rebelled against and shouted at Dibyanath,
when he queried her delay to home. Challenging Dibyanath for the first time, she
climbed a step up the hierarchic ladder:

> If…you…don’t leave…this room…at once, I’ll…leave…this house…and never come back again. Sujata spoke cuttingly, pausing
> before each word. She hates, detests the man […] For Dibyanath it
> was a slap on the face. In the thirty-four years of their married life,
> Sujata had never spoken to him in that tone. […] Her words hit him
> like a whiplash. Dibyanath went out tamely, wiping the nape of his
> neck”.(93)

For Maya Angelou, a Black woman of power, the self-imposed self-reliance
gave her confidence. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* Angelou recollects that at
the age of fifteen, she decided to leave school and work, knowing her mother would
admire her gumption, which the latter herself had so much of. Angelou got job as
conductor on the San Francisco streetcars: “Women had replaced men on the
streetcars as conductors and motormen, and the thought of sailing up and down the
hills of San Francisco in a dark-blue uniform, with a money changer at my belt,
catched my fancy” (264). Her mother told her that there were no Blacks working on
the cars as “they don’t accept coloured people on the streetcars” (265), she fought for
the job, not as her mother’s daughter, but as someone who must be her own self. In Stamps, there were no opportunities for rebellion – Angelou had the pleasure of breaking her oppressive employer’s dishes, but the scheme was Bailey’s and the revenge fleeting. Her chances to fight, added to the strong self-image. She realized that she should have some control over her fate. Her confrontation with the oppressor itself was a drive to achieve order out of chaos, in the form of daily appearances in the streetcar office, to see the personnel manager. The teenager, not only forgave the clerk, she constantly encountered there, but saw her as a “fellow victim of the same puppeteer” (267). Angelou sought the help of various Black organisations and government officials for getting the job, except to allow them to weaken her resilience and wonder if she truly was as mad as they believed: “What allows her to finally be hired is completely unclear, but Maya does get a job as the first Black conductor on the San Francisco streetcars” (269), albeit with seemingly the least desirable shifts.

Putli, the wife of Ganesh, in The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh is convinced that “Ganesh was not human, he was now a beast a bay. The Maliks, Nathu, Ramrup, Chandarbhan, Sagar and all the others knew she was right” (159). Though they all belonged to the same community, of Rajputs, they became sensitive to matters such as the fleeing of Ganesh’s subjects, the death of Haroa, and of Lachhima leaving the village and proposed to hold a joint discussion. The SDO issued a search warrant to seize the gun of Ganesh, as the latter had got it without a license. When they took off the gun Ganesh roared as it was “his companion, friend, protector” (160), and shouted: “You’ll take my gun on the say-so of that bastard Abhay Mahato? Because I killed a slave” (160). To the SDO, “ ‘The law doesn’t recognize the term ‘slave’.
Here is the search warrant. I’ve searched the house and taken the gun on the strength of this” (160), Ganesh, a stone-hearted animal was hated by the people of his own community. It revealed the slow change in the minds of the upper caste towards the lower.

The life of Maya Angelou as narrated in Gather Together in My Name is itself an embodiment of female courageousness; her attempts to join the army, the show business, the whorehouse with the lesbians, and love affair which ended in failure. Though every door was slammed shut, she did not allow herself to be crushed by the thought of self-pity: “For, after all, only poets care about what happened to the snows of yesteryear. And I hadn’t time to be a poet. I had to find a job, get my grits together and take care of my son. […] I was off to live real life” (142). At the end of the autobiography, Angelou returns to “normal life and through her obstacles and experiences she realizes that she was not just a little girl but a woman” (Chau 3).

Motherhood is respected and cherished by the Africans, who compare Africa to mother. Every society including African-American gives primacy to motherhood as an important experience for women and imposes the role of mother upon them as their proper identity. The African Yoruba proverb says “Mother is Gold” (Sultana 35), and the mother figure is idealized in African literature and “a theme throughout African literature depicts the woman as guardian of traditions, the strong Earth-Mother who stands for security and stability” (Sultana 35). To Nana, in Maya Angelou’s All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes,
It is known that your salary at the University is less than any amount paid to a non-Ghanaian. It is also known that your son studies at Legon and that you receive no financial assistance for his education. […] You are a mother and we love our mothers. Africa herself a mother. The mother of mankind. We Africans take motherhood as the most sacred condition human beings can achieve. (112)

For the Africans, Motherhood and Mother Africa were inextricably intertwined. Angelou smiled as she imagined the Chief and the Chief of Protocol were to announce a fabulous raise in salary. The words of Nana echoed those of Camara Laye, “The mother is there to protect you. She is buried in Africa and Africa is buried in her. That is why she is supreme” (112). Angelou expressed the spirit of the Black Americans who praised Motherhood: “Nana, I appreciate hearing that Africans cherish their mothers. It confirms my belief that in America we have retained more Africanisms than we know. For also among Black Americans Motherhood is sacred. We have strong mothers and we love them dearly” (113). Though women are subjugated, women and motherhood are lauded by Nana, by comparing Africa to mother.

The involvement of Nandini in the Naxalite movement in Mahasweta Devi’s the *Mother of 1084* revealed the attitude of women in social activities. They never withdrew from action, knowing fully that they had no security in life. The death of Brati and his friends kindled hope for the upliftment of the underprivileged: “The question that followed his (Brati’s) death was whether by killing him the authorities had been able to destroy the burning faith in faithlessness that Brati and his compatriots had stood for. Brati was dead. But did that mean the end of the cause?”
The ideology of the Naxalites continued to live in the mind of every human being, who suffered for the underprivileged. Sujata mentioned the living Dhiman, Amit, Dibyanath, Mr. Kapadia, Tuli, Tony, Jishu Mitter, Molly Mitter, and Mrs. Kapadia as corpses. Raising the dead son Brati, to the height of a martyr, she spoke: “Did Brati die so that these corpses with their putrefied lives could enjoy all the images of all the poetry of the world, the red rose, the green grass, the neon lights, the smiles of mothers, the cries of children – for ever? Did he die for this? To leave the world to these corpses?” (126). She cried out “Never” (126), that smelt of “blood, protest, grief” (127). In her last moment, Sujata, showed protest by shouting “Never” (126). Kalyani Dutta in the article “Battling for the People: Mahasweta Devi” opines:

In the writer’s eyes, Sujata achieves her human potential because she tries to understand, stepping out of her soft cocoon, in her pain trying to touch, to understand the lives of the mothers of the four who died with Broti. She is stretched fight across the gulf that separates the existence of poor slum dwellers and her own luxuriating family. The intolerable contradictions end in her collapse at the end. (6)

Nandini’s zest to help the poor remained with the hope that the young Naxalites in the jail might rise like phoenix to help the underprivileged.

The Blacks are accepted as human beings, by giving education and encouraged by scholarships. Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings narrates that after her arrival in San Francisco, she was transferred out of a school of brash girls to another, outside of the Black neighbourhood, where initially she was,
one of the three Black students. She felt an affinity to the Blacks, as she rode the streetcars each day to and from school, through the starkly differing neighbourhoods. In the new school, Angelou was not a smart student. When she was fourteen, Angelou got scholarship to college, where she studied drama and dance at night. Thus, the novel becomes an accurate index of the African-American struggle for identity. It enumerates the “identity crisis, alienation and the restless movement, as well as a particular set of views on education, knowledge and resistance (Butterfield 155). Maya Angelou looks back on her childhood and articulates her own as well as the collective trauma of the Black community, and the struggles of herself and Bailey “to have a life where love, honor, loyalty and freedom are possible and not just a dream” (Kalyani 186).

Tradition does not respect women, by giving men the right to have more than one wife. To Nathu Singh, a Rajput, in Mahasweta Devi’s The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh, “’Someone who gets rid of his dharampatnis for no fault of theirs can never prosper. Which woman can tolerate the son of a co-wife?’” (62). He told his father Barkandaj Singh about Medininarayan Singh who had driven out his wives, “The scoundrel! To satisfy his lust, he brought Lachhima into the house, chased off his rightful wives! And now, he’s meddling with our subjects” (50). Though Ramrup chased Rukmani, the step sister, and his gang harassed Lachhima, the low caste, he was not totally inhuman. A transition was seen in his character towards the end of the novel. Rebuking Gajomoti Singh, he said: “you don’t understand anything beyond women, especially low caste women” (125), and added, “Chhoo! Ganesh Singh! Part of god! Due to this god, my sister’s life’s turned into hell” (125). For him, “Now after the Rukmani episode, if anyone tries to bed these low caste girls, there’ll surely
be trouble” (126). The words of Ramrup suggested an awakening among the low caste, which would lead to their upliftment.

Women yearned to gain freedom and liberation from all types of barriers. Feeling that their monthlies were a burden, they underwent operation to be free from it. Johnie Mae and Beatrice in Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name* were lesbians, who did not want to be controlled by men. Johnie Mae revealed to Angelou about Beatrice, her beloved, “Her monthlies. I don’t get them anymore. I had an operation. If she wasn’t so scared of hospitals, she’d have one too […] Had my ovaries and all that mess taken out.” (51). Angelou found men as over-bearing; her “first husband Tosh stifles her religious sentiments […] She leaves him […] Her next marriage – to Vusumzi Make, […] at first willing to be the docile contented housewife. But she cannot put up with his sexual infidelity, his displeasure at her taking a job and his desire to have a son only to enchain her to her house. She leaves him” (*To Accept Question or Rebel: The Woman as Wife* 34).

Putli, in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* is tortured by the husband Ganesh both sexually and verbally at night. During day time, she worked very hard and so was tired. Nathu Singh, the father of Putli, knew about the sufferings of his daughter. He sent his wife to visit Putli. She told Ganesh, “there’s some happy news Medini Bhaiya’s heir seems to be on the way. At such a time, with no other woman at home, wouldn’t it be better to send her to our house for awhile” (84). For Ganesh, “How can that be? There’s no such tradition in our family. Nor in any other. The bahu enters the house when she marries, and leaves once for all. Tell me, how can I break tradition? (84). When Ganesh was mad with fury to kill Haroa, the low caste, Putli,
like a flash of lightning, dashed into the barn, and informed him of the plan of Ganesh. She also suggested to pile sacks against the door. When Ganesh entered, Haroa escaped by tearing the thatch off the roof. Ganesh, glaring at his wife, furiously said, “I’ll kill him first, then I’ll kill you”’ (146). Putli, picking up her daughter, rushed towards her father’s house followed by the maids. Thus, Putli, an uneducated, orthodox woman had broken the tradition by leaving the husband’s house. Though afraid of the husband, and herself a malkin, she mustered up courage to help Haroa, the underprivileged.

To Ramrup, the brother, “Putli’ll be much happier as a widow” (162). He accepted the breaking of tradition, amidst the dark cloud of ignorance and enquired of his father, “You too first had daughters, then me, then Putli. Did you beat up Ma like that because you didn’t get a son the first time round? Don’t make excuses” (162). The modern age had crept into the mindset of the village Barha. The sons of Nathu Singh and Gajomot Singh did not pay heed to their fathers; Putli ran away from her husband. The mother of Putli refused to send back her daughter: “‘My daughter, granddaughter and I will leap into the well’ [...] The very existence of the maliks seemed threatened” (162). At the end of the novel, the Rajputs had rebelled against another Rajput, Ganesh. Ramrup, the son of Nathu Singh and Sagar Singh, the son of Gajomot, also rose against Ganesh. To Sagar Singh, Ganesh has “abused and insulted all of us. [...] I’m not going to tolerate this. I’m a Rajput. I’ll teach him a lesson, then I’ll let him go’” (162). Chandarbhan, a Malik opined, “Anyone, the way Ganesh abused us in unforgivable” (162). To Ramrup, “Ganesh has stepped on the serpent’s tail. I’m not going to let him off” (162).
In Maya Angelou’s *Gather Together in My Name* men such as Curly, R.L. Poole and L.D. Tolbrook were venomous and exploited women. Though women were forced to live in the midst of such monsters, some men were full of love and compassion for women. Bailey, the brother, a constant protector of Angelou, had played a vital role in the life of his sister: “I respect women” (198). He led the sister in the right path, as he did not want her to become a whore:

I’m not talking about you. There is such a thing as a whore mentality. You can find it in a housewife who will only go to bed with her husband if he buys a new washing machine. Or a secretary who’ll sleep with the boss for a raise. Hell, you’re both too smart enough to be a whore. Never. But I don’t want you trying it again. (198)

Bailey, one year older than Angelou, was seven inches shorter than her, but “he became even larger in my mind” (198) as an affectionate brother.

When Angelou informed about Louis David to Bailey, he revealed to his sister that Louis David was a wicked self. Angelou knew Louis David as gambler and in trouble with the big boys. As they were to be married, she offered him help for a month. Bailey made her aware of the reality. He suggested to her to go to Stockton and get her baby and inform Louis David that, “he’s not to worry about the big boys any more. That he can start worrying about one little boy. Just one. And tell him how little I am. Also tell him that you are my baby goddam sister. Then you’re going to get back on the bus and come home” (187). Bailey, the lovable brother gave her money for the trip and to pay the baby-sitter.
Black African women showed resistance against the superiority of the White race. In Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, the novelist shows her patriotism and love for African art through rejection of the fleshy offer made by Dieter, a German. Dieter an architect, is interested in trading too. He instigated Angelou to get some old Ashanti carvings and some Bambara or masks from Sierra Leone. He was ready to give her a fair amount of money. Angelou shows her resistance by saying that, “I don’t trade. I particularly don’t trade in African art” (172).

In Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, Ganesh entered into the forest with kerosene, tin, a rag and matches to set fire to the forest. When he was found out by Ranka, a low caste and his people, he went to the hut of Lachhima. For the first time, Ganesh addressed Lachhima as “‘tui’” (‘you’ in English, to mention a person with respect) (164). Ganesh, a Rajput, and high caste called Lachhima, the low caste with reverence and requested her to save him from the crowd, but

Lachhima brandished the sickle at him and screamed into the night like an angry kite. ‘Wherever you are, come quick! Ganesh Singh had come to set fire to the forest, he’s hiding in my hut. Wherever you are, hurry! Ganesh Singh is hiding here. Come quick!’ Those who were asleep, awakened. Those who had gone into the forest, responded. Gradually human voices called out to one another. A tumult of voices. Then their screams – harrrrr! – leapt up to the sky in tongues of flame. Racing forward like an all-consuming forest-fire. A sea of armrd people, voices raised, surged around the house in mighty waves.
Lachhima moved aside, leaving the door free, and became one with the crowd.(165)

Though men and women with black skin, low caste, and low class are deliberately lowered in society, the characters in the novels of Maya Angelou and Mahasweta Devi show that the marginalized are also provided space. They break up at some point in their lives and occupy a new space of liberation and freedom. The novelists exhibit the marginalized, after eras of long suffering, moving to the centre of the society. In the quest for wholeness it is of vital importance that the characters come to terms with their past. The message is that “through the power of the human spirit one can wean the best out of bleakness, doubleness, horror, poverty and violence and emerge newer and more whole” (Koshi 169). There are instances in the novels of Maya Angelou and Mahasweta Devi that are cordial to the Blacks, and the Dalits and the doubly-marginalized in the days of apocalypse. Angelou, whose dark and ugly conscience, transformed to great communal hope, is proud to be a Black. Through her graduation, she has broken the shackles of superstition that only the Whites are beautiful and intelligent. Analogous to Maya Angelou, Somu, a low class boy in Mahasweta Devi’s the Mother of 1084, is intelligent enough to win scholarships every year, though they are not encouraged to get educated. Mahasweta Devi, through her characters, voices for the destitute. The rich people such as Pallavi Shah, Brati and Sujata, help, suffer, and sacrifice their lives for the poor. Resembling the rebellion of the Black revolutionaries in South America, Mahasweta Devi pictures the revolution of the peasants against the Zamindars and the British colonialists. The martyrdom of the Naxalites espoused and envisaged a new social order. Characters such as Sujata, Putli, Haroa, Titu Mir, Bhudeb Pal Chaudhury and Bailey, break the
norms of tradition and gender and speak for the suppressed men and women. Thus
the marginalized, assume optimistically, that the future world, for them, would be
better, bereft of divisions, casteless and without racial prejudice.