Chapter V
Politics of Power and Revolution for Change
(Analysis of Select Plays by Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi and Manoj Mitra)
Politics of power can be seen as a special kind of trick or game that often results in fatality. The key role players are generally few in number, but in several issues it is possible for the entire population to have a role to play. It could be debated that one of the easiest and most functional approaches of thinking of power is the capability or technique to coerce someone to do something that they generally do not want to do. The consequences of the game are dreadful and disastrous. It is generally perceived that the holders of economy and wealth always endeavor to hold the power and influence the lower class people of a particular society. Generally, power is explicitly described as the ability of a representative to impose his wish on the wish of the powerless or the capability to compel them to do things which they do not wish to do. Therefore, here, power means possession that is something owned by those who are in power. Most of the Marxist thinkers argue that power refers to those institutions that exert cruelty and oppression on individuals and groups. Renowned Marxist thinker Louis Althusser essentially expounds how people are oppressed by the state machinery and how they build themselves as individuals through the bewildering act of the ideology. According to Althusser, individuals are just only the puppets of the ideological state apparatus and repressive apparatuses and power is seen operating from top to bottom.

Although the dominant class can use military and police force to repress the working class to maintain its dominance and achieve interpellation, it more frequently than not chooses to use the Ideological State Apparatus, or the hegemony. In effect, the dominant class’s hegemony prevents the insurrection of the working class. (Bressler 199)

Another Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci opines that power resides in ideology. Gramsci demonstrates that power exists in the complicated relations of force within the society. It is present and discernible in reality. The power is primarily wielded by
the dominant bourgeois group through the medium of ideology. “The shaping of a people’s ideologies is, according to Gramsci, a kind of deception whereby the majority of people forget about or abandon their own interests and desires and accept the dominant values and beliefs as their own” (Bressler 198). The ideological notion works on the popular mentality through the institutions of civil society and it sets up hegemony using the State apparatuses. The influence of Machiavelli on Gramscian notion of power is overt and on the basis of his idea, power is embedded in the relations of force. Hence, in Gramsci’s notion of power, the ideology and the philosophy of action are indivisible.

The problem and politics of power cover the major area of French philosopher Michel Foucault’s philosophical work. The problem in relation to power is fundamental to his philosophy concerning the relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions. Michel Foucault is one of the few intellectuals who on power make out productive and positive aspects. According to his viewpoint power is not only just a negative, coercive and repressive thing which compels the people to do things against their desires, but it can also be a productive and positive force in the society. Foucault’s notion of power conspicuously is different from the Marxist interpretations of power relations, disputing that power is not fundamentally something which institutions possess and use oppressively against individuals and groups. Accordingly, Foucault strives to move the interpretation one step further than only observing power as the simple oppression of the powerless by the powerful, intending to study how it functions in daily interactions between people and institutions. Foucault examines the problem of power from the critical and historical perspectives in his various books such as *Madness and Civilization, The Order of Things, Discipline and Punishment, The History of Sexuality* among others and also in his many articles and interviews. According to Foucault, it is wrong to envisage power as something that the institutions possess and exercise oppressively against individuals and groups. He tries to move the investigation one step ahead and views it in some positive approach. He disputes the Marxist notion of power and says that we must rise above the idea that power is oppression. He observes that even the most fundamental types of oppressive measures are not just suppression and restriction, but they are also productive, causing fresh behaviors to appear. Power is not something which can be possessed, but rather
something that works and mirrors itself in a certain approach; it is more a tactic than a possession. As Foucault asserted that:

Power must by analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault 98)

Envisaging power as strategy and not as possession leads to consider power as something which has to be exercised and not something that can plainly be obtained. It is not confined to a small area entirely in certain institutions or individuals, but it is a set of relations diffused all over the society. And the view more explicitly disagrees to the Marxist notion of power which conceives power as a form of repression or oppression. Foucault thinks that power must be viewed in a different way rather than repression which just plainly compels individuals to obey. As Foucault rightly asks “if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?” (Foucault 36).

The most important aspect of Foucault’s argument on power is his stress on the productive and positive side of power’s present exercise. He investigates that discipline is a kind of self-regulation endorsed by institutions and later becomes the tradition in present societies and works for the individual as an appliance to change the actuality and himself or herself. “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it excludes, it represses, it censors, it abstracts, it masks, it conceals. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault 194).

Michel Foucault states in his book *The History of Sexuality* that “where there is power there is resistance” (Foucault 36). He views power as coextensive with resistance. It has a productive aspect because it has constructive and positive outcomes such as individual’s self-making and transformation of behavior etc. Foucault demonstrates the power relations between individuals and that cannot be condensed to master -
slave or oppressor - victim relations. But these are positive, productive and constructive relations since it implies resistance. And without resistance no power relation can be considered. Wherever there is power, there is always someone to resists it. Hence, Foucault says, power is “coextensive with resistance; productive, producing positive effects; ubiquitous, being found in every kind of relationship, as a condition of the possibility of any kind of relationship” (Kelly 38).

The major plays of the three renowned and versatile playwrights namely Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi and Manoj Mitra limelight the problem and politics in relation to power and dominance in the society. And these playwrights exhibit the resistances, protests and revolts of the marginalized and oppressed sections against the oppressors and established societal order. Massive body of their plays is constituted with the paradigms of revolution and reformation to change the established power structure of a particular society.

Now, I will take up the major plays of these three playwrights for critically analyzing and exploring the revolutionary paradigm of the playwrights to change the prevailing power structure in the society. It will also bring out the nuances of the texts and emphasize the issues they have dealt with in their dramatic works. My study will be dissecting the primary sources minutely, solidified by the secondary sources. The texts will be scrutinized from various theoretical approaches such as cultural studies, humanistic approach and other contemporary literary theories.

I

Utpal Dutt was a committed Marxist and one of the most politically inclined playwrights of the Bengali theatre. He wished to see a revolution that will bring together all the sections of society on the basis of equality. He desired to create a society in which the dimension of violence and conflict between different unequal social forces will come to an end. His major plays dramatize the voice of the oppressed and construct a resistance against the catastrophic social powers and social forces. “He draws much influences from the schools of Brechtian theatre and like Brecht, tries to make people aware of their situations by highlighting social issues and problems” (SK 81). He is the icon of the political theatre of Bengal who used his ‘revolutionary theatre’ as a weapon to overthrow the political power of bourgeois-
feudal forces from the society. During Dutt’s long theatrical career, the political controversies and challenges were constant with him and several times he was put behind the bar. About his revolutionary theatre Utpal Dutt states in his book *Towards a Revolutionary Theatre* that “The revolutionary theatre must, by definition, preach revolution, a radical overthrow of the political power of the bourgeois- feudal forces, a thorough destruction of their state machine” (Dutt 74).

Utpal Dutt’s play *Hunting the Sun (Surya Shikar)* (1971) is set against the historical background of the reign of the emperor Samudragupta. Though the play is set in the fourth century India, actually it depicts the socio-political image of contemporary West Bengal as well as India. To stay away from the direct criticism of the bourgeois class and their power-dominations, the play is set in the historical background. It displays the various aspects of the society incorporating the power-play between the people of different social stratum, politics of caste, suppression of women and the hypocrisy of the ruling class to retain their dominance over the common masses, and the resistances and protests of the marginalized communities. Through the play *Hunting the Sun* the playwright endeavors to put forward the revolutionary message to the society and the playwright wants to make the common people aware of their rights and of how they are discriminated by the dominant class.

In the play Utpal Dutt sketches the character of Indrani with the enough fervor of revolution and resistance. Indrani represents a voice of resistance to the power of the cruel and devilish emperor Samudragupta and his rule. She is the disciple of Buddhist monk Kalhan who carries out a research about the truth and fact of the earth. Kalhan and Indrani also study the scriptures of comparative religion and they come to know the truth and internal politics of the emperor and his royal officers. In order to sustain their predominance over and oppression to the common people, the emperor and his responsible men and the royal priest manipulate the religious scripture and make common people understand their manipulated facts. Kalhan and his disciple Indrani try to preach the common masses about the truth and the hypocrisy of the emperor. As they are revealing the truth, the emperor Samudragupta and his royal men arrest Indrani. Emperor Samudragupta’s general Hayagreeva detains Indrani and the Emperor tries to compel Indrani to say in the royal court by falsely saying that Kalhan is a fraud and rapist. They heinously torture and assault Indrani because she denied to
utter a single false statement against Kalhan. Consequently, Indrani is killed by the emperor Samudragupta. To enjoy power and dominance, the king suppresses the truth and through the power of the state they kill Indrani and maintain their power structure. Through the veil of the historical background and the reign of the emperor Samudragupta the playwright Utpal Dutt essentially strives to represent the dirty politics of power and domination of that contemporary time of Bengal.

The sentries bring in Indrani, almost unconscious and dripping with blood, laid on a wooden wheel. They are followed by Urmila.

URMILA (laughing). Your majesty, Indrani won’t accept your proposal. She has very few bones left unbroken. Yet she would not say a word. I don’t see any way except killing her off.

SAMUDRAGUPTA. Indrani, will you say in public that Kalhan has raped you, or that he has known you sexually?

INDRANI. Acharya Kalhan is my father.

SAMUDRAGUPTA. Well, if you choose, you need not slander your father. Say instead that the earth is not round.

INDRANI. How can I tell a lie? The earth is round.

SAMUDRAGUPTA. Will you admit that the moon is a god?

INDRANI. The moon is matter. There is nothing in the world but matter. (Dutt 95-97)

French thinker Michel Foucault views that “there are no relations of power without resistances” (Foucault 142). The resistance that comes against the destructive social forces remains a vital concern for the humanist authors. Here, emperor Samudragupta with his state power tries to suppress the voice of truth and maintains his supremacy over the people. Indrani figures here as a voice of resistance and she resists till her last breath. Finally, Indrani dies and establishes the value of truth and humanity. Foucault expounds that resistance does not come from outside rather it develops from where the power relations exist. As Foucault rightly says in an interview that “that there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised” (Foucault 142).
It is extensively viewed that certain group of people in a society plays the foul politics of caste to retain their power over the people. The existing societal structure of Bengal as well as India consists of Brahmin, Kshatryia, Vaishya, Shudra, Harijan etc. Amongst these hierarchical orders, the upper caste people make the hypocritical norms and rules to enjoy the power of the state. The Brahminical codes and rules of state forbid the Shudras to read the religious scriptures. Indrani, in the play, belongs to the caste of Shudra but she reads all the scriptures. She studies all the scriptures including the manipulated scriptures of the Brahmins. Indrani and her master Buddhist monk Kalhan discover that the royal priest and the emperor always give reference from the manipulated one. They give reference which suits their ideology and hypocrisy such as the Shudras are not allowed to read the scriptures and enter into the temple for prayer etc. Kalhan and his disciple Indrani unearth their hypocrisy to the people and consequently they face severe brutality which leads to the death of Indrani.

**SAMUDRAGUPTA.** Come here, Indrani. You are a Shudra?

**INDRANI.** Yes.

**SAMUDRAGUPTA.** Then by what right have you read the books?

**INDRANI.** By a right recognized over centuries by such masters as Kanad, Gautam and Kapil.

**SAMUDRAGUPTA.** But the Ramayana tells us how the Incarnation Rama killed Shambuka for reading the Vedas.

**INDRANI.** The story of Shambuka is not to be found in the original Ramayana. It is an interpolation ordered by the State, and written into the Ramaya as recently as 10 years ago. It is part of the current campaign against shudras, a contingency Valmiki could not have foreseen.

**VIRUPAKSHA.** Woman, are you calling me a forger?

**INDRANI.** Yes. And I have both Ramayana- the original and the spurious- and can prove several other distortions of. (Dutt 74-75)

*Hunting the Sun* exhibits the structure of power in the society in which people living in the lower strata of the established social order possess nothing and lead their life
like a beast. At the outset of the play, people of upper class brand a particular section of people as slave and treat them as wild beast. It is declared that a branded slave Madhukarika is to be sold at the public market along with her ten years old son Veerak. Suryavarma, the prime minister of the emperor Samudragupta, presents his slave Madhukarika for sale. This is how the playwright Utpal Dutt shows the injustice, violence, cruelty and inhuman treatment meted out to the people living at the lower stratum of the society. Moreover, the condition of women is more pathetic and helpless than that of other slaves. The ruthless treatment meted out to them goes beyond the control. The women section suffers physically and mentally with the equal intensity. Madhukarika who is the mother of a child is asked to take off her clothes in front of her child Veerak. While Madhukarika denies, she is compelled to do it. All these shameless activities happen in the presence of general Hayagreeva. Instead of protecting the values and worth of humanity, Hayagreeva facilitates the inhuman marketing of human selling.

BASUBANDHU. You can get a slave in the market these days cheaper than a dog. Woman, take off your clothes.
MADHUKARIKA. I am a mother, and my son stands before me. I would rather you did not make me naked.
SURYAVARMA. What’s the world coming to? I suppose one of these days cows will demand to be clothed.
MADHUKARIKA. Are you saying that you will stand there and watch a defenceless woman stripped naked?
HAYAGREEVA. Yes, and I shall laugh, watch and laugh. Women to me are a single night’s fantasy. With daybreak, nothing is left but a despicable mass of flesh, and bones. This has been my experience for years. You are no better. (Dutt 35-36)

This is how women are suppressed to an entity of sexual and physical pleasure. General Hayagreeva privileges the social power of upper stratum and he plays with the values of female chastity. Hayagreeva also takes over Indrani and dishonors her virginity. The fact is clearly exposed while Basubandhu asks him that “To you therefore a woman is merely flesh that you enjoy for a night?” (Dutt 31) and Hayagreeva shamelessly or casually replies, “Naturally. Every night I suck the life out
of a fresh body and the following morning toss the dry flesh on the dung-heap and they have one more applicant for the cathouse” (Dutt 31).

But, each and every oppressive power could be resisted. Michel Foucault demonstrates that each and every individual owns the power to resist the supremacy of the power of state machine. Everyone has the power to challenge the influence and dominance of the state. According to Foucault no one alone can possess the power. In an interview Foucault says that:

> Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possess or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. Certainly everyone doesn’t occupy the same position. Certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of supremacy to be produced. This is so much the case that class domination can be exercised just to the extent that power is dissociated from individual might. (Foucault 156)

And this is what the play displays through the Buddhist monk Kalhan and his disciples. He prepares his disciples to revolt against the power of the dictator emperor Samudragupta. He pushes revolutionary zeal amongst the slaves and shudras and directs them against the emperor. He revitalizes the revolutionary passion in Gohil and asks him to direct the force of shudras and slaves to annihilate the monstrous power of the emperor. Kalhan says to Gohil that “In Ayodhya alone they have kept in chains a hundred thousand slaves. Let those slaves shatter their chains stand up, and bring down this State erected on sin. This is the only way” (Dutt 86). This is how Gohil leads the force of slaves and directs them against the disastrous power of emperor. “Indrani does not bow his head before the power of the king even when she is crushed to death by the stampede of elephant. On the other hand a huge mob of rebellious slaves gather in front of the palace to bring the power of the state down on the ground” (SK 88).

Thus, it is observed that the playwright Utpal Dutt tries to show the vicious panorama of societal stratification where the people of higher stratum do everything whatever they like with the power of the state. On the contrary, the people of lower stratum own nothing and lead a life like animals. Utpal Dutt portrays all the events and incidents in
the play apparently through historical setting and reign of emperor Samudragupta but in actuality playwright dramatizes the present-day scenario of Bengal as well as India. Through the play he strives to push the fervor of revolution among the masses to eradicate the autocratic power of any state or empire. The play Hunting the Sun remains one of the pioneering works of his revolutionary theatre.

II

Like the play Hunting the Sun, the play The Great Rebellion (Mahavidroha) is also set in the historical background but actually it embodies the prevailing situation of West Bengal in nineteen sixties and onward. The playwright exhibits the oppression, exploitation, and torture of the British soldiers before the sepoy mutiny and the way the Indians revolted against the British in the play The Great Rebellion. History testifies to the fact that oppression and exploitation never lasted long and after prevailing for a certain period, exploitation and oppression found their decline. After the long and severe oppression of Indians by the British soldiers, the Indian sepoys revolted in 1857 as form of Sepoy Mutiny. The Great Rebellion is the first revolt of Indian independence against the British and after long struggle and resistance India got independence from the oppression of British in 1947. Playwright Utpal Dutt, here, in the play wishes to show that after twenty - thirty years of independence the vicious Babu culture and the suppression of poor started by the British never ended. Specifically, the playwright desires to limelight the aspect of power domination and hegemony of the upper class particularly in the state of West Bengal in the nineteen sixties and seventies which explicitly reflect the British colonial hegemonic culture. As the British ruthlessly smashed the uprisings of Indians during the independence struggle, the rising of communists and the worker sector against the autocracy of the contemporary government in Bengal were also mercilessly suppressed by the elected government of West Bengal. Hence, it is apparent that the British had left India in 1947 but the hegemonic mental set up created by the British among the upper class Indian did not end. And the hegemonic attitude of the upper class people of West Bengal as well as India creates same kind of problem in the society. Thus, Utpal Dutt represents the vicious consequences of the neocolonial attitude of the upper class people of independent India through the dramatization of the play The Great Rebellion.
The play *The Great Rebellion* begins with British East India Company’s new rule of land and the land seizing policy which seizes all the lands of the local landlords. The local landlord Panjakush becomes landless and penury through this land grabbing rule of the British Company. The local weavers of the region work under Panjakush but the British Company compels the weavers to increase their rate of cloth which leads to destroy the future of the weavers of India. The agents of British East India Company sell the cotton at a high rate as compared to the Indian weaver and naturally the British company faces loss. And that is why they forced to increase the rate of cotton of Indian weavers and it ruined the future of weavers and cotton industry of India. The weaver Budhan refuses to increase the rate and advises the British agent Frazer to make their rate similar to that of the Indian cotton. Consequently, the right thumb of weaver Budhan is cut by them. In an atrocious and heinous manner the British exploited, harassed and oppressed the Indians.

FRAZER. Weaver, is it true that you are selling cloth at two rupees a yard?

BUDHAN. Yes, Sir.

FRAZER. How do you manage it?

BUDHAN. By working hard.

FRAZER. The Company orders you to raise your price to five rupees a yard.

BUDHAN. As the gods are my judge, even the Emperor cannot order me to change the price of my own stuff. Why don’t you bring the price of English cloth down instead-to one rupee a yard?

FRAZER. But this is suicide. We hold a monopoly over the whole of Hindustan. What will you do- a lonely helpless weaver?

BUDHAN. You may call this a protest on behalf of all those weavers who died of hunger. (Dutt 140-141)

After that particular incident the sons of Budhan, Bishen (disguised as Heera Singh) and Kalu (disguised as Lachman Singh) leave the village and join as sepoys of the British East India Company in different camps. Eventually, exploitation and oppression of the British Company increase in extreme manner in different forms and all the Indian sepoys who work in the British Company internally begin to prepare for
rebellion. Indian sepoys from various camps of British Company across India internally connect to each other such as from Gwalior, Patna, Kanpur, Lucknow, Meerut, Bengal, Delhi etc. Heera Singh is in the Meerut Camp and later he is accompanied by Lachman Singh. The sepoys of Meerut have a special task i.e. they have to go to Delhi to wake up the Emperor Bahadur Shah who lives like a lifeless soul. Accordingly, the sepoys try to convince the Emperor and appeal to him lead the rebellion but he becomes vigor less in front of the power of the British. Although the emperor denies and expresses his weakness, the sepoys are preparing for rebellion. According to Subedar Bakht Khan of Bareilly, on 21th May the sepoys of Gwalior, Patna, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi, Meerut, Bengal, and Delhi will simultaneously revolt. Accordingly, the sepoys all over the India take part in insurrection and take it to mass level and shake the British Company.

During the time of British East India Company, a peculiar kind of monstrous money lender class rises up and even after the independence this vicious practice never ends. These money lenders are the most opportunists. They become loyal and faithful to whosoever are in the power and these people can betray their mother land for their personal benefits. Here, in the play, the playwright focuses on this specific aspect through the character sketch of money lender Tularam. He becomes loyal to the officials of British Company and exploits the native Indians by lending money and grabbing interests. But, at the end of the play Tularam becomes the victim of his self-centered harmful practice of lending money. Lachman Singh protests these local money lenders and he unearths out their hidden property and forcefully seizes and utilizes it for the rebellion. The following conversations limelight the deleterious mind set up of the money lender Tularam and its noxious effects on the society during the tenure of British Company.

TULARAM. I am only a businessman. I shall be faithful to whoever is in power.

HEERA. We know you all. Behind your smiles and courtly manners hide traitors.

MIRZA. Do you know that we searched the garden of your friend and partner, moneylender Jamna Das, and unearthed a massive quantity of hoarded wheat?
Indian society has been based on the several caste hierarchies since the pre-independence period. These social hierarchies have been weakening the social fabric of India since ages. The British observed these social diseases but instead of eradicating these norms they used it as a tool to rule India and to dominate the Indians. On the basis of caste and class they tried to split the unity of the people and took political mileage out of it. In the camp of the sepoys, the split among them on the basis of caste and religion several times comes into light in The Great Rebellion. As Lachman Singh belongs to a lower caste, he is denied drinking water in the camp from the same vessel. The girl Waziran rebukes and insults them for having Enfield of the combined fat of pig and cow. She calls sepoys as white man’s slave and licking the fat of pig which ruins their religion. Lachman Singh eats with Muslims and even with the Englishmen and that is why he gets death threat from his fellow sepoys in the camp. In such an intricate manner the casteism of Indian society is exposed in the play.

LACHMAN. Can I have a little water?
PRANTAP. No.
LACHMAN. Why not?
PRANTAP. If you touch any vessels it’ll have to be thrown away.
GOVIND. Don’t touch it. We’re not going to lose caste because of you.
LACHMAN. Religion? When you burn widows alive to steal their property, you call it religion. In the name of caste, you reduced millions to penury and call it religion. (Dutt 152-153)

Therefore, it is viewed that the playwright Utpal Dutt competently captures the foul tricks of the British to dominate the Indians. They utilize every single weak point of the Indian systems and policies to coerce and took mileage out of it. The British Company’s agents strategically and forcefully exploit the native people and rule the land. When the limit of exploitation and oppression crosses its limit of severity, the sepoys revolt in the form of Great Rebellion and shake the British Company’s
authority. Utpal Dutt, through the portraiture of all the events and incidents as the historical backdrop in the play, essentially displays the prevailing socio-political ambience of West Bengal from the nineteenth sixties onward. The British left India in 1947 but the Babu class created by them did not end. They left, but, their tactics of oppression and exploitation were adopted by the upper class Indians. To sustain their power and hegemony over the common people, the upper class people suppressed the common masses. And the ruling government of that contemporary Bengal acted like a feudal and autocrat king and the cadres of the ruling party ruthlessly suppressed the emergence of the communist in the state politics. This is how the playwright Utpal Dutt displays the feudalistic and neocolonial attitude of the contemporary state and central government. To avoid the direct criticism, playwright criticizes the government through the curtain of historical settings in the play.

III

Unlike Hunting the Sun and The Great Rebellion, the play Nightmare City (Duswapner Nagari) (1974) straightforwardly portrays the oppression, hypocrisy and the hooliganism of the Indian National Congress party led government of West Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s. Hunting the Sun and The Great Rebellion also exhibit the ruling governments’ misrule and governmental hooliganism in the veil of historical settings, events and incidents. Utpal Dutt himself was a committed Marxist and he worked for the Communist Party of India (Marxist) party in the state of West Bengal during his life time. Thus he himself faced several atrocities of the congress led government of West Bengal and the brutality of state police. In the play Nightmare City he demonstrates the foul trick and politics of the congress party and their hypocritical political agenda and vendetta to retain their political power over the state. The play captures how the ruling governments’ leaders and ministers, and the state police worked under the mafias and as a consequence the common masses suffered. Dutt also explicitly displays how the congress leaders and gangsters in collaboration with the state police suppressed and oppressed the rise of communists in the state of West Bengal through the play.

In the play, Lakshman Palit is a mafia, black marketer, gangster and ghastly businessman. He represents an oppressive force of the state as well as central
government of that contemporary time period of Bengal. He with the leaders of ruling party and the illicit coercive force of state police illegally grabs the ration food and the other basic ingredients which are supposed to be given to the common people. Lakshman Palit is the antagonist in the play. With the power of his mafias and the ruling party leaders and cooperation of state police, Lakshman Palit discriminates against the people by not providing adequate financial support and enough food. In this specific case one can refer to the inquiries of Marxist thinker Louis Althusser who in his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* asserts that:

> The ‘State’ is defined in the Marxist tradition as a ‘force of repressive execution and intervention in the interests of the ruling classes in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat’. This is its basic ‘function’. It is, in that sense, an apparatus or instrument by which the ruling class cements its hold on power.

(Althusser 128)

Through the play, Utpal Dutt exhibits the emergence of communists in Bengal and how they were oppressed by the agencies of contemporary government of Bengal. The formidable businessman Lakshman Palit grabs all the foods of ration with the association of youth leader Chinmoy Goswami of the ruling congress party and stores food and kerosene at various store houses of Palit. But, the cadres of the communists led by CPIM workers Swapan and Mustafa break into the warehouse and expose the duality and hypocrisy of the leaders of the ruling party. The gangster Lakshman Palit is trading with people’s hunger and poverty. When the British left India, Bengal was in top position in the field of per capita income. But, in 1967 it ranked seventh among the Indian states. Through the depiction of Lakshman Palit and Chinmoy Goswami, the dramatist wants to represent the congress led state and central government and its hooliganism and oppression. The cabinet ministers of congress led state government and the state police associatively served the interest of gangsters and mafias in 1960s and 1970s West Bengal. And the emergence of the communists was ruthlessly suppressed by their joint gangsterism as the advent of communist was risky for congress to sustain their political power over the state. Accordingly the leaders of congress with state police and gangster play foul trick and hypocritical game to hold communists responsible for their own hooliganism and misrule.
PALIT. Our man on the spot reports that, last night, a group of men broke into my warehouse number one and helped themselves to my store of rice. It is further reported that the group of bandits was led by Swapan and Mustafa.

ROY. God! I thought the Reds had been driven out of this part of the city!

PALIT. Communists are spreading a canard that six Cabinet Ministers and all local Congress leaders are involved with Lakshman Palit in this deal. They are saying that the Congress leaders involved have so far received 22 lakh rupees from Lakshman Palit as bribe. Twenty-two lakhs is an understatement. Let’s not deceive ourselves. So far I have paid you 27 lakh rupees.

GOSWAMI. And what was the police doing, may one ask? (Dutt 227-228)

Dutt displays his dexterous theatrical craftsmanship by putting side by side the two worlds i.e. the bourgeois ruling class and underworld mafias and gangsters. To analyze the complicated social and power structures and its coercive hegemonic appliance which Dutt showed in Nightmare City one can refer to Michel Foucault’s investigation in The History of Sexuality. He states that “Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (Foucault 93).

Unemployment and poverty sometimes enhance criminal and anti-social activities. The playwright projects the character of Monibhushan Mitra to limelight this specific aspect. Through the character sketch of Monibhushan Mitra Utpal Dutt exposes the state of disillusionment and despair of the youngsters of Bengal of 1970s who had to indulge in criminal activities due to the financial constraint and penury. Moni is an educated youngster who due to his unemployment and his family’s economic conditions is compelled to murder for earning some money. But, the political leaders of the ruling government exploit his weakness and use him as a mafia. The following song of Moni would limelight the state of his mental despair and agony:
We were the down-and-outs, beggars without work,
Insulted at home and pitied in the street,
Pursued by coppers like queers on heat...
Then came a bunch of political snob:
‘Finish the Marxists and you’ll get jobs’...
‘As soon as the elections are successfully over and
You’ve put us in a position of absolute power.’
So we fired the booths where votes were to cast,
and with grenades chased hopeful voters home fast,
and stamped the ballots with our own hand,
for universal suffrage is the law of the land,
And so you came to power
And we are still beggars without work. (Dutt 252)

After committing one mistake Moni realizes his misdeed and becomes disturbed. He seems to have been suffering from schizophrenia. Monibhushan gets divided into two entities i.e. the gangster and the virtuous man. Utpal Dutt here uses the technique of doppelganger to boost the theatrical effect and dramatize the distress of Monibhushan by representing Devdutt as his alter ego. By projecting Devdutt playwright wants to show psychological aspect of Monibhushan’s disillusionment and disenchantment and also the prospect of Moni’s natural expansion towards his ambition of life. Rustom Bharucha in his book Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal states about Utpal Dutt’s sympathetic lesson of the personality of Monibhushan who suffers from fragmentation and disenchantment. Bharucha asserts that:

Was this a political strategy? Was he pandering to a certain section of the goondas by making them believe that they were more sinned against than sinning? Did he hope to persuade them to support the CPI (M) party (for even the Communist Party needs goondas)? Or did he want to vindicate those Communist goondas who had been accused of murdering policeman? (Bharucha 112)

In the end of the first act of the play it is noticed that Lakshman Palit gives some criminal task to Monibhushan such as murdering a policeman and throwing bomb at
the local party office of congress. Lakshman Palit with the association of police commissioner and congress leaders plots the criminal assignment and later the communists are held responsible for the crime accordingly. The conversation between Palit and Moni turns warmed up when Palit orders him to murder CPIM worker Swapan. There is an aggressive exchange of words between them when Moni refuses to murder Swapan. However, the interference of Devdutt, alter ego, humorously makes the mockery of the dramatic situation.

The play Nightmare City overtly reveals how the congress led state government ruthlessly smashed the demonstration of communists against their miss-governance and gangsterism with the power of state machine. The state police instead of protecting the common people became the threat to the masses. With the power of state machine the leaders of ruling congress government used the police force as mafias. The emergence of communists in the 1970s Bengal was brutally treated with by the police and their gangsters. The CPIM workers like Swapan, Vikas, and Mustapha were arrested by the police with false charges and they were severely beaten by the police. The lady Ashima Poddar who was also a CPIM worker was raped inside the Presidency Jail. Besides, several false encounters and massacre took place under the regime of the ruling congress party in the state of West Bengal like as in the name of Naxalite twelve men were shot dead in Barasat, ten people were beaten to death inside the Presidency Jail. The following conversations from different parts of text would limelight the matter:

GOSWAMI. What about the 12 corpses at Barasat, with bullet holes in the back of the head…That too was an achievement of the Calcutta police.
ROY. ..policemen are not cowards. At Tollygunge, in the south, 200 of them defeated in battle and then killed two toughs belonging to the Marxist Communist Party. (Dutt 229)
KRISHNA. When did you get out of jail?
SWAPAN. About a month back.
KRISHNA. Did they beat you in jail?
SWAPAN. Viciously.
KRISHNA. I know a fellow called Vikas. They’ve probably killed him in jail by now. (Dutt 263)

Most of the Marxist thinkers opine that power means oppression and repression but Michel Foucault argues that power is coextensive with resistance. The long standing suppression and oppression of the congress led state government of West Bengal was resisted by the communist cadres and the workers of the CPIM party joined hands with the common people of the state. As a consequence, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) defeated the congress party and they were able to form left parties led government in the state of West Bengal. Here one can refer to the argument of French Philosopher Michel Foucault who asserts that:

You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you're not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic. (Foucault 167)

Hence, it is observed that the play Nightmare City expounds the game of power and hegemony and how revolutionary passion overcomes the illicit power of any state machine. Through the play Utpal Dutt unearths the congress party’s vendetta politics, gangsterism, oppression and satirizes the Emergency of 1970s. As it harshly criticized the ruling government of West Bengal of that contemporary time, the performances of the play faced several police and gangster’s brutality. The playwright states in his book Towards a Revolutionary Theatre that the performances of the play have been fourteen times attacked by the agent of ruling party and the state police. Though media never highlighted the state oppression, the theatre group of Utpal Dutt resisted for not allowing the performances of the play. “The CPI’s organ said: ‘It was a peaceful demonstration which everyone has the right to stage’. The Chief Minister said, ‘Political plays will naturally be dealt with politically’. Then, Bibhuti Chakrabarty, the Deputy Commissioner, Detective Department, filed sedition charges against us. Section 124-A…” (Dutt 110). Thus, the play shows that any oppression or
suppression of any state machine cannot continue for a long time and it does face resistance and after all resistance or revolution brings changes.

IV

Utpal Dutt worked for the downtrodden communities. He was a committed leftist and supporter of CPIM Party. He strived to reach his revolutionary agenda through his political and revolutionary theatre throughout his entire theatrical career. But, Mahasweta Devi was an activist turned writer and writing was activism to her. She never associated herself with any political party. The complete spectrum of her writings registers an explicit grass-root dissent and protest of the oppressed and exploited sections of society which have deliberately and strategically remained excluded from the socio-economic and political mainstream of the society. And the oppressed and suppressed communities are at the lowest level in the realm of the hierarchical order of the society. As a postcolonial writer Mahasweta Devi had been working, writing and speaking about the ‘Other-ed’ India throughout her entire life of political activism and writing. “This concept of ‘otherness’ has been thought upon by various writers but the way it has been treated in Mother of 1084 by Mahasweta Devi is an achievement in itself” (Singh 61). In the process of decolonization, the reconstruction of new nation state, the communities, race and ethnicities of the people of the country are the primary concerns of the postcolonial theory. Being a postcolonial writer her writings question the othering of the Indian sub-nation which comprises around 67.6 million people, nearly eight percent of total population of the nation ruling this nation state.

She critiques the ‘construction’ of the political as well as the socio-religious-economic constitution of the nation. She critiques the political “Constitution of India” as it gives the marginals basic rights and representation only in law, not in application. (Gupta 31)

India got independent from the clutches of British colonialism in 1947 but after that the socio-economic and political milieu of India has not changed so far. In 1947 the British left India but they left their culture behind in India. People of certain specific segment of the Indian society adopted the British culture and divided the social structure into upper, lower stratum etc. The main purpose of the social stratification
was to exploit the people of lower stratum and represent themselves as their master and dominate the lower section people. Unequivocally this culture of hegemony and the economic and political exploitation reflect the British colonialism. Roughly eight percent of total India’s population holds the political power and economy of the nation. Like the era of British colonialism a silent exploitation, marginalization, oppression, suppression and discrimination are going on in India. Resembling the culture of the British colonial era a whole new rich class has emerged that oppressed and exploited the common people in a silent manner. It is a kind of practicing neocolonialism or neo-imperialism. The key purpose of neocolonialism is to make people unchained slave to the imperialistic powers and to create circumstances more difficult for the people where the people never be able to get freedom from these silent exploitation and oppression. These sorts of situations emerge specifically in the state of West Bengal as well as whole India. But, the exploitation and oppression cannot last long because if there is oppression, there must be resistance. In late 1960s and 1970s, in the state of West Bengal a leftist militant movement started which is known as Naxalite movement. In the Naxalbari region of West Bengal a rural revolt of landless workers and tribal people started against the landlords and moneylenders. The insurrection was the consequence of the feudal exploitation and oppression of the common poor people of the rural Bengal. The state machine i.e. the Indian state and the government of West Bengal used repressive force and policies to silence it. The state machine ruthlessly and brutally smashed and crushed the revolt by the police and military force. On the backdrop of the uprising of Naxalite Movement of West Bengal and the brutal treatment of police, Mahasweta Devi sets her play *Mother of 1084 (Hajar Churashir Ma)*.

The Naxalite Movement started in the rural Naxalbari region of West Bengal but eventually the movement spread in the urban areas too. The movement attracted the attention of urban Kolkata’s students section and they too participated in the movement. A large number of students from Kolkata left their education and participated in revolutionary activities. Consequently, the West Bengal state government took atrocious and brutal initiatives to repress and silence the insurrection. The brutal police treatment led to the Barasat killing of November 1970 in which eleven young men were slaughtered on the road of Barasat and on August 1971 in Baranagar more than hundred Naxalites were killed in the daylight. In the
play *Mother of 1084* Mahasweta Devi evocatively represents these organized killings of Naxalites by the police especially in the region of Kolkata. In the play Brati Chatterjee belongs to the Bengali ‘Bhadrolok’, bourgeoisie Kolkata family. Like his mother Sujata, Brati is also disillusioned with the hypocritical elite and bourgeoisie culture. He is very much concerned with the exploitation and oppression of the poor people by the landlords, moneylenders and the upper class people. Like the other youngsters, Brati is also disenchanted with the misrule and hypocrisy of the ruling government and the exploitation and discrimination of the poor people. Subsequently, Brati with few other youngsters comes together and joins the Naxalite Movement. They work together for the militant movement but one of their comrades betrays them and the betrayal helps the police to smash the plot. Brati and his rebellious group are brutally killed by the police in an encounter. The Naxalbari uprising including the urban Kolkata’s Naxalite uprising are crushed and silenced by the police within two months using the state repressive apparatus. To repress the Naxalite Movement, state police often violates the human rights and civil rights. Like other several works of Mahasweta Devi the play *Mother of 1084* also displays a concern for the violation of human rights and ruthless treatment of police. In this specific case one can refer to the inquiries of French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. Althusser asserts that the ruling class uses the repressive state apparatus to govern or dominate the lower class people. Any insurrection or anti governmental or anti-establishment activities of the working class are repressed or suppressed by the state using the Repressive State Apparatus. Ruling class controls the Repressive State Apparatus as it also controls the powers of state such as political power, legislative power, armed power etc. In the play *Mother of 1084*, the way Brati Chatterjee and his rebellious comrades are ruthlessly killed, it reflects the state’s power of Repressive State Apparatus.

Ideology has always has a material practice, and is embodied in an apparatus that has a *material* existence. State power is maintained through *Repressive State Apparatuses* (RSAs) like the police, the army, law courts and prisons that operate through actual or threats of *coercive force/ violence*. (Nayar 121)

As Sujata is unaware of Brati’s secret mission, she is not able to restrain him from joining the Naxalite Movement. During Brati’s internal mission and plot he comes
close to a girl, Nandini, who is also a member of their militant movement and with Nandini, Brati shares his dream of new and perfect social order. Because of the betrayal of Anindya who is also a member of their militant movement, Brati and his three close associates: Somu, Partha and Laltu are cruelly murdered by the police. Soon after, police informs Brati’s father and asks him to come to the police morgue to identify the body of Brati. In the meantime Brati has been reduced to a dehumanized identity that is corpse number 1084. Brati’s father refuses to go and forbids other family members to go to the morgue. But, his mother Sujata decides to go keeping aside all the pretension of fake social respectability and fear of public censure and criticism.

O. C. (to Sujata, looking at the papers in his hand). Brati. Yes, Brati Chatterjee. (Sajata stands, her hands pressed tightly to her mouth, a look of disbelief in her eyes.) Yes, the third body from the left. Yes. Height five ten, isn’t that so?
SUJATA. Yes.
O. C. Your son’s. Brati Chatterjee’s.
SUJATA. Where’s Brati?
O. C. No. Don’t uncover the face.
SUJATA. I must see his face.
DOM. What’s there left to see, mother? There’s nothing left!
SUJATA. I’ll take him home.
O. C. No.
SUJATA. Can’t I take him home?
O. C. No. You won’t get the body. (Devi 6-7)

Evolution of Sujata’s consciousness enables her to reconstruct her fragmented and disorganized life in search of a consistent identity and existence. She always visits her past with Brati, or Somu’s mother or even Nandini to release her long suppressed personal loss and sufferings. “From a weak-willed, hopelessly dependent and a non-assertive moral coward, Sujata is transformed into a morally assertive, politically enlightened and a socially defiant individual” (Tariq 4). But, her husband Dibyanath Chaterjee and entire family continue to blame Sujata for misleading Brati. They allege that because of Sujata’s misleading Brati joined the militant movement which led him
to destroy his life. On an occasion in their house once Dibyanath Chaterjee even said that “Bad company, bad friends, the mother’s influence” (Devi 39) led him to become a Naxalite.

Mahasweta Devi through the portraiture of husband-wife relationship of Dibyanath Chaterjee and Sujata takes a dig at gender politics and the male supremacy over the women. Dibyanath Chatterjee is represented as a true representative of male chauvinistic and patriarchal society. At the very outset of the play it is noticed how Sujata is neglected in her own house which represents the patriarchal social structure. While police inform of Brati, instead of rushing to the morgue Dibyanath Chaterjee tries to hush up the matter. Sujata is shocked to see the attitude of her husband towards Brati. The following conversation will explicitly show the male supremacy in their house:

SUJATA (uncomprehending, in a panic). What will you hush up?
What are you talking about?
DIBYANATH. Jyoti, there’s no time to waste. (Exit).
SUJATA. Jyoti! (Jyoti is busy dialing a number. He does not reply.)
Jyoti! (Reproving). Jyoti! What’s happened?
JYOTI. …… (Devi 4-5)

Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to state that Mahasweta Devi’s *Mother of 1084* is one of the pioneering works in the domain of revolutionary literature. It dexterously exhibits the consequences of longstanding exploitation and oppression of the poor and insurrection or violent uprising of the working class people. They play displays the sacrifice and dedication of the youngsters for the cause of the underprivileged and the deprived. “A willingness to die for the country enhances the identification with the collective standards of the group, and perhaps an infantile hunger for love and recognition is also met, for it appeals to a personal as well as collective narcissism” (Jain 205). But, the commitment of the educated youngsters for the revolution and re-ordering the social structure meets their doom in front of the power of state. Through the play *Mother of 1084* the playwright Mahasweta Devi strives to display the outcome of exploitation and discrimination of poor and how working class or lower class people can shake the foundation of any government or establishment.
Like *Mother of 1084* the play *Aajir* is also concerned with the exploitation and oppression of the downtrodden communities by the upper class or ruling class people. The term “Aajir” is a Bengali word which means ‘bonded-labourer’. The play deals with a vicious social evil which reduces a human being to subhuman level. It is an irony that after thirty years of the Indian independence bonded labor or slavery system exists in Indian society. Through the play *Aajir* playwright Mahasweta Devi reveals how the so called upper class people or the ruling class holds the political, economic and social institutional power and misuses these power to exploit the poor common masses. These self-centered, hypocrite and fanatics of power and wealth reduce the entire humanity to a subhuman level because of their own interest. In the bonded labor or slavery systems human beings are treated like an animal. Mahasweta Devi herself was an activist who worked for the marginalized communities such as tribals, lower class, working class, bonded labors and other deprived and underprivileged section of society throughout her entire life. The play *Aajir* is also a product of her lifelong struggle for the right and justice of the underprivileged and suppressed communities of the society. “Though the play is set in the past it is a representation of the present state of exploitation that continues in spite of numerous legal reforms and defenses because of the lack of proper implementation of the laws and of the awareness of them by the exploited” (Behera 83).

The play *Aajir* is centered on the slave Paatan whose ancestors signed a bond of slavery long ago for themselves and also for their entire future generation. There was a terrible famine in India and that time Paatan’s ancestor Golak Kura and his wife Gairabi Dasi sold themselves to Raavan Shunri as the bonded slaves of his. Paatan also ancestrally became the bonded slave of present day tyrant Maatang Shunri. Unlike his ancestor Paatan wants to free himself from this bondage of slavery and wants to live a life like other people in the society. Like other ordinary people Paatan also dreams of marriage and his own family and this is quite natural for someone to dream of his own life. But, what we have seen in the play that because of his wishes Paatan was severely beaten up by Maatang. In accordance with the norms of bonded slavery, a slave cannot think of his own life and freedom. Whatever a slave’s master wants he or she is bound to do that and they have no life of their own and no freedom.
In such an inhuman manner a normal human being’s right to life has been snatched away by the feudal decadent tyrant and a human being has been made an animal. Through the portraiture of the plight of character of Paatan, Mahasweta Devi tries to show feudalistic and oppressive attitude of the present ruling class of the Indian society and how the people like Paatan become the lifelong victim of the oppressor. The following extracts from the text will blatantly expose the feudalistic and inhuman attitude of Maatang Shunri towards Paatan:

MAATANG. What a body the bastard has! Strong as a horse! I beat him up, and my hands are aching now.
MISTRESS. Were you beating Paatan?
MAATANG. I had to! He’s a horrible sinner.
MISTRESS. Why?
MAATANG. Why does he forget he’s an aajir? His forefathers sold him away. He won’t keep that in mind. He dreams of marrying, having a family of his own, looking upon the face his own son. Is there anyone who’d give away a daughter in marriage to an aajir?
MISTRESS. You beat up Paatan and only add to my hassles. He’s a gem of a boy otherwise, and helps me such a lot. (Devi 49-50, 52)

Through the depiction of husband-wife relationship of Maatang and his wife the playwright wants to represent the feudal and patriarchal subjugation of women in the society. Like his bonded slave Paatan, Maatang’s wife is also a kind of bonded slave to him. The feudal and tyrant Maatang is an impotent and he marries a woman who is much younger than him. His first two wives died without child and he married this young girl who belonged to a lower class. As Maatang is impotent and infertile and his wife is denied sexual satisfaction and freedom, she longs for Paatan. She is attracted to the sturdy and able bodied young Paatan. She feels much closer to Paatan than Maatang in terms of class. In order to escape the erotic demand of his young wife, Maatang regularly visits Punnashashi, the town whore. On the contrary, Paatan wants to free himself from the clutches of bondage slavery and Mistress longs for Paatan. The mistress promises Paatan to give back his bond of slavery to free him and along with him she will also flee. In their first attempt the people catch Paatan and punish ruthlessly and in the second attempt mistress finds that the bond of slavery of
Paatan’s ancestor was reduced to a dust long ago. But, Paatan thinks that mistress betrays him and he strangles her. Paatan and the mistress both long for freedom from the long wristlet and clutches of bondage slavery. “Legal reforms or legal defenses for the exploited have rarely affected the exploitative mechanism sustained by the illiteracy/ignorance of the exploited” (Chakraborty 3). Finally, Paatan gets freedom from the bondage of slavery and unwillingly kills the mistress. The playwright Mahasweta Devi wanted to make ruling class people realize their feudalistic and inhuman behavior towards a human being. The decadent feudalism and materialistic philosophy and hypocrisy of the ruling class reduce a human being to a mere beast. Through the portrayal of Paatan’s resistance and struggles for life in the play, the playwright wishes to show that the oppression and feudalism cannot continue to exist and resistance must change the hierarchy of power.

MOB. An aajir, you! An aajir you! There’s no release for you! No release for you!
PAATAN. An aajir I! An aajir I! There’s no release for me! No release for me!
MOB. No life for you! No wife for you!
PAATAN. No son for me. No joy for me.
MOB. A slave from birth! A slave from birth!
PAATAN. For ever! For ever!
MAATANG (falls on his wife). Wife! Wife! Wife! (Looks at Paatan, and breaks into a howl) You’ve killed her?
PAATAN. Why didn’t she give me my aajir bond?
MAATANG. How could she? I haven’t seen it myself, my father hadn’t seen it, it had turned to dust long ago in this gaamchha in which it had been once upon a time…. (Devi 60, 67)

Through the character of town whore Punnashashi in the play Aajir Mahasweta Devi tries to limelight another case of feudal and patriarchal supremacy over the women. Under the upper caste patriarchal authority the town whore Punnashashi has been reduced to a mere sexual object. Her body as a whore is used by the community in a wild and bizarre manner. She has been marginalized in terms of caste, class and gender and sexuality by the patriarchal norms. The notion of town-whore is created
and legalized by the ruling class and the upper caste patriarchal authority. In order to protect the society from famine and infertile, the town-whore Punnashashi go naked with a water pitcher on her head all through the streets. Here, Devi presents Punnashashi as another ‘aajir’ in the play who is made to use her naked body to entertain people and bring rain and fertility to the earth. Punnashashi protests the torment meted out on her body by the flagitious social tradition. She expresses her feeling of revolt against the sordid social norms which reduce female body to a mere sexual and pleasurable object:

Isn’t a whore’s body a human body after all? You bastards, you had to tear me apart, and then I have to fast without a drop of water. (Devi 59)

Therefore, it can be stated that Mahasweta Devi in the play Aajir strives to display the pathetic plight of the oppressed communities in the hand of the self-centered, decadent feudalistic and hypocrite ruling class people. Through the play she also wishes to exhibit that injustices, exploitations and oppression cannot go on for a long time and they must face resistance. It is said that where there is oppression there must be resistance. In the play, the playwright shows Paatan’s longing for life and freedom and his struggle and resistance finally make it possible to free himself from the clutches of bondage slavery. Through the demonstration of Paatan, Mistress and Punnashashi’s distress, in reality, Mahasweta Devi tries to limelight the present exploitation and oppression inflicted upon the common poor people. And through the resistance of Paatan, the playwright basically tries to spread her revolutionary propaganda amongst the deprived and marginalized communities. She essentially wants to make conscious the underprivileged communities about their right and how they are exploited by the ruling class. Mahasweta Devi wishes that the marginalized communities come forward and struggle for their right and this is how the long standing exploitation and injustices can be vanished and equality can be maintained in the society.

VI

Like several other works of Mahasweta Devi the play Water (Jawl) is also centered on the theme of exploitation and oppression of the underprivileged and deprived communities by the upper class and ruling class people. The play Water shows how
the people of upper caste through the hegemonic power exploit the downtrodden communities and the marginalized communities take it normally or naturally. The French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser rightly states that the dominant class or the oppressors naturalize their oppression to the oppressed class through the appliance of ideology. Here, in the play playwright Mahasweta Devi exhibits that the lower class and oppressed people have been continuously exploited and oppressed by the upper class or the dominant class for several decades in a particular region. But, it is said that wherever there is oppression there must be resistance. Injustices, exploitation and oppressions cannot continue to work long and it must have an end. Naturally, the people of that particular region protest and revolt the exploitation and oppression which continuously deteriorate their life. The playwright Mahasweta Devi through the portrayal of the exploitation and injustices in the play Water essentially wants to make conscious the common people about their right and hypocritical politics of the upper class people. “Water provides a powerful indictment of the existing social values and Devi’s unfailing commitment and passion for the uplift of the tribes. The social discrimination and the bureaucratic indifference exert oppression on the tribal communities” (Athista 629).

Mahasweta Devi sets the play in an imaginary region called Charsa where the natural disasters like drought and flood encircle the region. The majority of the population of Charsa belong to lower castes such as Dom, Chandals, Tior, Mahishya, khetmazdoor and other lower classes. But, a few people belong to upper class and they are depriving all the lower class poor people of all kinds of basic amenities. Santosh Pujari is a Brahman educated man. The government sends all the relief material and funds for Charsa through Santosh, but he, in collusion with the government officials, grabs all the materials and deprives the poor. During the drought the government sends wells for the common people but Santosh uses all the wells like his personal property. The villagers are not even allowed to touch the government wells of the village and if someone dares to take water from wells, Santosh lets his dog loose on them. Magahai Dom is the water diviner and with his help Santosh gets dug up all the wells in the village. As Maghai Dom belongs to lower caste, even he and his family are not allowed to take water from the wells. Due to the scarcity of water the women of the village gather at the bank of river Charsa and dig holes in the sand with their bare hand. They dig hole in the evening and in the night water trickles into the holes
and before sunset they fetch it. On the contrary, Santosh and his all relatives use the water from the government wells and even his cattle are washed with the water of government wells. In the record of the government officials there is no casteism and caste hierarchy in Charsa but in reality in the name of caste people are not allowed to touch the wells of the village. In such a pathetic manner the villagers of the Charsa are oppressed and deprived by Santosh and the corrupt government officials. The following speech of Maghai Dom from the text would clarify and underscore the oppression and exploitation which are meted out to the villagers of Charsa.

It’s me who’s been the water-diviner for all your wells, the panchayat ones as well as the others. I’m one of the dom caste. We have been told that there’s no untouchability in our subdivision, and yet Santosh-babu, you, your caste brothers and your relations won’t let us draw water from any well. Santosh, you won’t give us the kerosene due to us against our ration cards, and because of that our people die of snakebite. You hoard and trade in the drugs that government sends for us. (Devi 138-139)

But, it is Maghai Dom’s son Dhura who has been rebellious from the very beginning against the discrimination and exploitation of the lower caste by Santosh. He has always been in the forefront to protest and reply to Santosh in a harsh manner. At the outset of the play it is noticed that three naxalites are in Charsa with Dhura and he saves them in Charsa from police. Most probably with the acquaintance of three naxalites Dhura becomes rebellious against Santosh and other corrupt government officials. Maghai Dom is like a slave of Santosh Pujari who always obeys his orders and works tirelessly. But, Dhura leaves no chance to take a dig at his father for his devoted works for Santosh, and as a consequence they are denied their basic amenities and water from the panchayat wells. Even Dhura tries to make his father Maghai conscious of the fact that Santosh bitterly exploits him but Maghain, in response says, “That’s our fate, Dhura”. And Dhura furiously says if that is their fate, he spits upon the fate. The following robust and rebellious expression of Dhura emphasizes the intensity of his detest and anger against the corruption and hypocrisy of the government bureaucrats and Santosh Pujari.
The bastard draws the relief, draws a lion’s share out of it for himself, gives the rest to his brother-in-law and then there’s nothing for anybody else. At puja time, he feeds his servants and farm labourers and has it photographed for the newspapers, so that he can claim that he has fed so many people. (Devi 149)

The sub-divisional officer and other government bureaucrats work in favor of Santosh. With the indulgence and corruption of government bureaucrats Santosh Pujari dares to snatch the right to education of the lower class children of Charsa region. The government sends the books, slates, copybooks, chalks and other components related to school education but Santosh grabs all the materials and stores in his store house. Santosh Pujari and other representatives of upper caste would not allow the upper caste children to sit with the children of lower caste and that is why they snatch the materials of school education. But, when new school teacher Jiten Maiti comes to the school, he tries hard to give the education to the children of the tribal. He is a follower of Gandhian philosophy and he devotes himself to the cause of underprivileged. Jiten tries to end the discrimination and injustices which are meted out to the villagers of Charsa and complains against Santosh to the Sub-divisional officer. But, the SDO expresses his weakness and says that the leaders of ruling party are also involved with them and he cannot do anything. If the SDO takes an action against the people like Santosh, the ministers will interfere into it and he will get transferred. In such an organizational order all the members of administration and government authority are involved with corruption and people like Santosh are working in forefront as their representative. As a consequence, the lower class people of Charsa such as santhals, adivasis, dom, chandals, tiors, mahishya suffer a lot due to lack of basic amenities of livelihood.

SDO. Charsa’s only a block in the district, and has a regular supply of relief. A lot of cash too!

JITEN. Not the block, it’s Santosh who gets it all.

SDO. I know all about that, but it’s for the BDO to see to it. It’s such a shaky system!

JITEN. Do something about it.
SDO. It’s no use. Laws are made because they have to be made. The laws have abolished agricultural debt, the system of bonded labour is banned. But what do you find in reality?
JITEN. Isn’t it your job to enforce the laws?
SDO. Me? Who the hell am I? I’m powerless. If I threaten a moneylender, the minister will jump on me…. (Devi 172-173)

But, Jiten who has devoted himself for the cause of marginalized, cannot accept defeat. He tells the villagers that they would build a dam in Charsa to store the water of monsoon for summer season and they can use the water at the time of drought. Maghai Dom and his son Dhura with Jiten Maiti convince the villagers and they all together with their joint effort build a dam at Charsa River. But, the construction of dam at Charsa River makes Sanotsh furious and he convinces sub divisional officer and other police officers that the villagers of Charsa have become naxals and they have become outrageous against the government. As a consequence, on the day of grand celebration of the construction of dam, huge police force come and open fire at them. In the police firing Maghai Dom is shot dead and all the other villagers including Dhura, Jiten and Maghai’s wife Phulmani get severely injured and they are arrested. The climax of the play becomes the scene of brutal attack and the resistances of Dhura, Jiten, Maghai and fellow villagers.

DHURA. Kill the bastards! Kill Santosh! The bastard couldn’t stand the doms building a dam by themselves, and he had to set the police on us. Kill!

*For a while the stage is the scene of brutal attack and resistance. Jiten snatches a policeman’s rifle from his hand and throws it away. A policeman brings down a crushing blow with the butt of his rifle on Jiten’s head. Jiten falls to the ground with a wail.* (Devi 197)

Hence, it could be asserted that Mahasweta Devi brilliantly exposes the hypocrisy and the viciousness of the ruling class. To retain power and wealth, they can destroy the life of thousand of innocent people. Here, in the play *Water*, the playwright exhibits the extremity of exploitation and discrimination of the lower class people by the upper class. But, the playwright also demonstrates in the play that the resistance is more powerful than the oppression. Santosh Pujari and his other associates including
government bureaucrats inhumanly and heartlessly exploit and discriminate the poor lower class tribal people in Charsa and they resist against the oppression and injustices. Mahasweta Devi sketches the character of Dhura and Jiten Maiti with the noble fervor of revolution and the constituent elements of resistance and till the last breath of their life they protest the injustices and marginalization of the lower tribals people of Charsa region. The school master Jiten Maiti sacrifices his life for the rights and justice of the marginalized and the oppressed section of the society though he does not belong to any marginalized community. In fact through the portrayal of the exploitation of the tribal people of Charsa, the playwright Mahasweta Devi strives to represent the present state of exploitation of the lower class people of society. She says that the play Water is the ‘history of the present’.

VII

Like Utpal Dutt and Mahasweta Devi, playwright Manoj Mitra’s major plays display a concern for the commoners who are deftly repressed by the power holders of the society. But, playwright Manoj Mitra harshly excoriates the clash between different sections of people who, to retain their power over another, plays foul trick. And because of their dirty game the commoners are suppressed in between their malicious game of power. Manoj Mitra badly exposes these hypocrisy and politics of supremacy and power of these particular sections of people of the society through his theatre and theatricality. His major plays are deeply concerned with the present social and political milieu of the society and the playwright very skillfully represents the present state of noxious game of power in his plays. He exhibits the hypocrisy and war of power and dominance between different sections of people through the delineation of historical events, incidents and characters in some of his plays. Manoj Mitra in an interview with noted theatre critic Samik Bandyopadhyay acknowledged that people “had to be taken back into history, for the simple reason that I could not afford to make the statements that sought to make about the contemporary reality, in plain, direct terms. It’s a secret that I’m sharing with you. It’s a candid confession I’m making” (Mitra 263).

The play The Tale of Hekim-Shaheb is one of the pioneering works of Manoj Mitra in which the playwright shows deception, hypocrisy and nasty politics of two talukdars
to sustain their dominance and power over each other. To retain their supremacy over another, these talukdars are playing with the life of poor and common people of their respective taluks. In between their war of dominance the Hekim who is an honest and pure man finds himself in a trap. He has devoted himself for the cause of ailing and sick people of a particular taluk. “Manoj Mitra creates an archetypal figure that rises above the corruption and callousness of the times” (Chowdhury 4). But, between the malicious and callous trickeries of the power holders he finds himself worthless and is in a state of misery. Through his crafty and skilful craftsmanship, Manoj Mitra basically strives to represent the present panorama of politics of power, supremacy and dominance between various sections of people in the society and how the commoners and lower class become the victim of their noxious game. The playwright wishes to see a revolution that will establish an environment where all the sections of society can live with equal dignity and prosperity in the society.

Manoj Mitra is the one who dreams to see a revolution, as in France, to bring all the sections of the people on the same ground of humanity. He has longed to create a society where the dimensions of conflict and violence between unequal social forces come to an end. (Sk 54)

The play *The Tale of Hekim-Shaheb* is set in the two respective taluks namely Dariyagunj and Palashpur which come under the same zamindar. Wali Khan is the talukdar of Dariyagunj and Pashupati Poddar is the talukdar of Palashpur. There are several conflicts between them in relation to power and both play nasty tricks to dominate other. Hekim Shaheb is the ayurvedic unani medicine doctor of Dariyagunj taluk who for the service of humanity, untiringly works in the whole taluk of Dariyagunj and travels on a lame donkey. Because of illness and sickness of the common people in Palashpur the commoners cannot pay taxes and neither doctor nor hekim is available to take care of the people of the taluk. On the contrary, Hekim tirelessly treats the ailing and sick people of the Dariyagunj and the people of the taluk pay taxes on time. As a result, few villages from Palashpur taluk are taken away and given to the talukdar of Dariyagunj. Consequently, Dariyagunj becomes more powerful than the Pashupati’s taluk Palashpur. To get the Hekim of Dariyagunj to Palashpur, Pashupati Poddar tries hard but fails. Finally, Pashupati sends Mohor-Bai to Dariyagunj as a spy and she becomes the mistress of Wali Khan and she
purposefully creates several problems for Hekim in Dariyagunj. Mohor- Bai falsely accuses Hekim that he poisoned the pet cat Munna and Hekim is severely beaten up by Wali Khan. But, each time they fail in their secret mission as Hekim does not think to leave Dariyagunj.

MOHOR. There is no end of my foolishness, Sister. How I have harassed this man! In order to entrap him, not only roses have I withheld but I have poisoned Munna too….
GANGAMONI. You!
MOHOR. I am a spy of Palashpur. I’d thought he would leave Dariyagunj once I denied him his roses! He did not! So I killed Munna to have him beaten up by Khan-Shaheb…. I have raised him ever since he was this small… (Mitra 97)

Talukdars are fighting with each other to get the Hekim in their respective taluk not for the sake of people’s health but for their own dominance. To get the Hekim in Palashpur Mohor-Bai falsely accuses Hekim of killing the pet cat and he is dragged by the Hortuki. When Hekim is brought to Wali Khan, with him all the villagers gather in front of talukdar’s house. By the order of Wali Khan Hortuki unties Hekim and he is set free. As Wali Khan spares Hekim, all the villagers shout with joy.

WALI. Who shouts?
MAULAVI (joyous). Hujoor, the shopkeepers. They cheer ‘victory’.
WALI. What? I cannot punish my own subjects? (jabs hekim) Are they your followers?
HEKIM. Hujoor, they are your subjects!

WALI. My taluk, and I am not there! When did you take the soil off under my feet? (Beats Hekim with his shoes). (Mitra 83, 85)

Both the talukdars fight for the Hekim but Hekim serves the humanity not for any materialistic or selfish pleasure. He dedicates himself to serve the humanity. To get the Hekim, they even play with the life of Hekim himself. But, in the last section of the play it is noticed that Hekim goes to Palashpur for the treatment of Mohor-Bai who is affected with a dreadful disease. Mohor-Bai is the one who gets him beaten at the hand of talukdar Wali Khan but Hekim Shaheb, out of his generosity, comes to Palashpur for her treatment. Here, the playwright Manoj Mitra wishes to demonstrate that there is nothing above the humanitarianism and morality. In the play, both the talukdars are fighting for the power and try to coerce each other but Hekim selflessly works for the humanity. Through the character of Hekim Shaheb, the playwright wants to foreground the value of morality, humanity, equality and justice and that there is no value of material violence in relation to power, supremacy and dominance. Through the delineation of the two talukdars’ conflict of power, Manoj Mitra desires to change and reform the contaminated social ambience which is terribly polluted by the war of the power holders. And he dreams of seeing a society which would be free from all kinds of sordidness.

To show the degraded state of Palashpur taluk, the talukdar of Dariyagunj Wali Khan sets the hoodlum robber Bhondul Bagdi against Palashpur. Bhondul Bagdi is a dacoit who always creates an ambience of terror and fear among the people of Palashpur on the instructions of Wali Khan. On the instruction of Wali Khan, Bhondul Bagdi with his associate dacoits loots even the grains and cattle of Palashpur and makes Dariyagunj rich. In fact Bhondul Bagdi and his wife Gangamoni are very poor and they are unable to pay the taxes of talukdar Wali Khan. As they fail to pay taxes of talukdar, talukdar Wali Khan exploits him and sends him as a goon in Palashpur. Bhondul Bagdi works for the talukdar Wali Khan and he forgives all the taxes of Bhondul Bagdi and Gangamoni. On the other side, the talukdar of Dariyagunj alleges that Pashupati Poddar also sends the dacoits to Dariyagunj and loots their grain. Here, Manoj Mitra wants to exhibit that how the poverty and penury of a person are being exploited by the ruling class. To retain their supremacy the talukdar Wali Khan
Alam 198

exploits the poverty of Bhondul Bagdi and makes the life of Bhondul’s wife Gangamoni miserable.

JUGI (loses patience and starts shouting). You have but made colts out of us…..beaten us into colts. Infesting Palashpur with hordes of dacoits. Robbing us of our grains and cattle and making Dariyagunj rich.

HORTUKI. How vile!

JUGI. Vile! That dacoit….your Bhondul Bagdi. Don’t we know where he gets his strength from? From Khan-Shaheb. This time we’ve caught him…we’ll turn him over to the white police. Tell your Khan-Shaheb that not even fourteen talukdars like him put together can save Bhondul. We won’t rest until he’s hanged! (Mitra 64)

Thus, it would not be a hyperbolic statement to state that the play *The Tale of Hekim-Shaheb* is one of the most extraordinary plays of Manoj Mitra in which he dramatizes the deleterious consequences of the malicious clash and conflict between different factions of ruling class. To hold the power and supremacy, the ruling classes eventually devastate the pure and clean ambience of a society and the innocent commoners suffer. Playwright Manoj Mitra in actuality embodies the political and social disorder and turmoil of that contemporary West Bengal in the backdrop of historical settings, character, events and incidents in the play. Through the character of Hekim Shaheb, the playwright represents the contemporary political and social outlook and Hekim’s humanistic attitude actually reflects playwright’s endeavor to reform the society from the vile conflicts of power. In his essay *Some People, Some Plays* Manoj Mitra states that:

The characters- Dwaipayan of The Palace of Shadows, Gauri and Lokendrapratap of Debi Sharpamasta, Hekim of The Tale of Hekim-shaheb-are all spokespersons of their times, and all of them created from imagination (Translated by Mousumi Roy Chowdhury). (qtd in Chowdhury 5)
The play *The Honey from a Broken Hive* by Manoj Mitra is quite similar to the play *The Tale of Hekim-Shaheb* as it also shows the plight of downtrodden communities in between the battle of power of dominant classes. In this play, Manoj Mitra displays the oppression, cruelty and brutality of the dominant classes towards the lower class people of the society. The play is set against the backdrop of 1960s and 1970s Naxal movement in West Bengal which stages some of the monstrous social diseases such as class inequalities, struggles of power between different factions of people and the different forms of oppressions. The play limelights the rise of money lenders in Bengal in 1960s and how they grab the land and property of the poor people through the policy of money lending. It uniquely represents the oppression of the Jotedar class and the resistances of the oppressed Ojha communities and other subsequent deprived section of a particular society.

Chance news of a man dying of snakebite at the Ojha’s house in a village in the Sunderbans triggered off the play. Contrary to news reports and popular belief, Manoj Mitra shows violence within a community of extreme poverty as erupting from forces that cannot be contained within an ideology or a rationalized will to act. (Chowdhury 4)

The play *Honey from a Broken Hive* is centered on the Ojha family and the Jotedar Aghor Ghosh. Jotedar Aghor Ghosh is a vicious money-lender who lends money to poor people of the village. If the people fail to pay his money, he grabs all the property and land of the downtrodden. By the process of money lending Aghor Ghosh becomes the most wealthy and influential person in the village. The entire village becomes the place of fear and terror because of Aghor Ghosh’s dreadful trick of money-lending and grabbing the lands of the poor and common people. As Aghor Ghosh becomes the most powerful and wealthy person of the village, he clutches the power and misuses it. Consequently, the villagers and the other lower section people of the region suffer because of his tyranny and viciousness. Matla Ojha and his uncle Jata also borrow money from Aghor Ghosh but they cannot pay back his money. Aghor Ghosh and his sister Dakkhayani come each month to take interest from Matla
and if they fail to pay interest, Aghor takes whatever he can see in the house of Matla. And that is why Matla and his uncle Jata often think of fleeing from the village to get rid of the cruelty of Aghor Ghosh. Here, Manoj Mitra reveals the oppressive aspects of power through the oppression of Aghor Ghosh towards the Ojha family. The playwright wishes to draw the attention of the present day oppressor who holds the state power and heartlessly marginalizes and suppresses the poor innocent people of the society. For this specific aspect one can refer to the inquiries of the French Marxist thinker Louis Althusser who argues that the common and working class people are just the puppets in the hands of the Ideological State and Ideological Repressive Apparatuses. Besides, most of the Marxist thinkers show the oppressive aspects of power and they exhibit that power means oppression. The following conversions from the text would limelight the oppression and viciousness of Aghor Ghosh.

JATA. Listen, Matla……listen, Granddaughter….  
MATLA. What’s there to listen? He’ll come and hold the pages of his red book right before my face….  
BADAMI. If we can’t pay him interest-  
MATLA. He’ll kick my ass and grab all he sees before him… How far is he? Hei, Badam!  
BADAMI. Let me go and hide in the garden.  
MATLA. Don’t make a sound….. (Mitra 124)

When the play begins, it is seen that Aghor Ghosh is bitten by a snake and his body is carried by his son Shankar and his sister Dakhayani to the Matla’s house. Matla Ojha has the power to remove the poison out from one’s body and he can save a life. But, because of Aghor Ghosh the entire villagers including Ojha family live in an ambience of terror and fear. Accordingly, the Ojha family is in a dilemma whether they let him die to save the villagers or they should save Aghor’s life. Matla and his uncle Jata decide to flee from the house and they would not save Aghor Ghosh’s life. But, Matla’s daughter Badami tries hard to convince his father to save Aghor’s life. Finally, Matla removes the poison from Aghor Ghosh’s body and saves his life. Here, playwright Manoj Mitra shows and promotes the Foucauldian notion of power that the man of higher social stratum does not possess full control over all the power relations.
Sometimes they are compelled to come to the feet of the ordinary and common people. In this regard playwright Manoj Mitra also advocates the Michel Foucault’s notion of ‘productive aspect of power’. Matla through his power of magic chant saves a life and gives Aghor Ghosh a new life. On the other side, Matla Ojha is a man who belongs to downtrodden and lower class but he has the magic power to regulate rise and fall of poison inside one’s body. Through his magic power Matla saves Aghor Ghosh who previously exercises his power to dominate others. Foucault asserts in an interview that:

But it seems to me now that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. One which has been curiously widespread… If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (Foucault 119)

Matla and Badami save Aghor Ghosh’s life and show their care for humanity. But as soon as Aghor Ghosh gets back his life, instead of showing gratitude to them he rebukes them and demands interest. Besides, Aghor shows immoral desire for Badami and he wants to take her to his home. At the climax of the play Badami leads Aghor Ghosh to the path of death by the hands of the angry mob of the village and establishes the value of life and humanity. Here, Manoj Mitra seems to advocate the Michel Foucault’s notion of the individual’s capability to resist the power by portraying the character of Badami who murders the jotedar Aghor Ghosh in the end of the play. Badami possesses the power to resist the vicious force Jotedar Aghor Ghosh and that the resistance takes the life of Aghor. Foucault argues that resistance does not come from outside rather it grows from where the power relation exists. In an interview Foucault says, “That there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised” (Foucault 142).
The playwright Manoj Mitra is a politically cognizant writer who endeavors to create a discourse that mirrors an alternate history such as the history of the social conflict between unequal power relations and power structures. In the play *Honey from a Broken Hive* Jotedar Aghor Ghosh possesses the mechanism of power of lending money in interest and this mechanism of power enables him to practice the power over the common people. Here, in the play the Ojha family embodies the class which remains at the margin of the society. The Ojha family is ruined by the power tactics of Aghor Ghosh and his fellow class members over them. Matla and his uncle Jata with Badami often think of leaving the village to get rid of the monstrous trap of Aghor Ghosh. Badami, who is a pregnant woman, has got nothing to eat for the last several days and even Matla could not manage any grain for Badami. The following lines would expound the agony and pining for food of the Ojha family:

BADAMI. Wouldn’t be back without rice, you said…..where were you all day? I searched all the streets for you! *(Looks around, as though searching for something.)*

MATLA. Why did you roam the streets for me?

BADAMI *(expectantly).* Have you brought anything? Could you get anything? No? *(Picks up the empty net pouch.)* Nothing? Three days and you’ve not been able to get a single grain! Let it die, the demon in my belly-let it die! (Mitra 118)

Therefore, it is observed that the playwright Manoj Mitra deftly demonstrates the oppressiveness and ruthlessness of the power mechanism of the upper class and the individual’s capability to resist the monstrous forces in the play *Honey from a Broken Hive.* The playwright strategically takes back his audience to the history in the play to address the contemporary conflicts of class and the conflicts related to power relations. The Ojha family’s action of saving the life of Jotedar Aghor Ghosh serves the level of ethical values and the killing of Aghor at the hands of villagers by Badami re-establishes the value of life. The playwright Utpal Dutt states in the end of this play that “proletarian humanism” that helps to establish the revolutionary spirit of human life-Badami having killed the jotedar at the end of the play to establish the value of life” (qtd in Chowdhury 27). Matla’s daughter Badami possesses the power to resist the evil force Aghor Ghosh and that particular resistance takes the life of Aghor
Ghosh. Hence, playwright Manoj Mitra produces a spirit of revolt or revolution through the dramatization of the play *Honey from a Broken Hive*.

**IX**

From the above discussion of the plays of three playwrights: Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi and Manoj Mitra it is manifest that their major plays showcase the politics or game of power between different factions of ruling class and eventually the common people become the victim of their noxious tricks. All the three playwrights’ works speak for the voiceless people of the society. They severely denounce the feudalistic mind-set, hypocrisies, exploitative and abusive attitude of the ruling classes and vicious social customs and traditions and the oppression and discrimination of the common people. Almost entire bulk of their plays dramatizes the voice of the marginalized and the oppressed and constructs resistances against the monstrous social powers and forces. Through their theatre and theatrical literature they strive to make the suppressed and oppressed section cognizant as to how the ruling class enjoys the privileges of power and victimizes the common people. From the plays like *Hunting the Sun* to *Mother of 1084* and *The Tale of Hekim-Shaheb* all display the dirty game of power and they also show the resistances of the oppressed. They wish to bring social and political revolution and reformation through their theatrical literature.

These three renowned playwrights through their dramatic works make an effort to enlighten the downtrodden communities about their exploitation and to construct resistance against the vicious social powers. They try to pluck out all kinds of injustices, exploitations and oppressions of marginal class from the society and wish to bring all the people from different sections of society on the ground of equality and justice.

But, each of the dramatists has certain specific quality of portrayal of these issues which makes them distinct and different from each other. Utpal Dutt is one of the most prominent politically inclined playwrights of Bengali theatre. The prime concern of the dramatic works of Utpal Dutt is contemporary politics, and his works ideologically reflect his endorsement with left wing ideology in politics and socialism. “What Utpal Dutt did was to give the political play a more substantial theatrical body and a left ideological colouration reflecting the radicalization of political thinking in
Bengal in the post-independence period” (Raha 162). He is the only figure in Bengali theatre who explicitly denounces the misgovernance and hooliganism of the congress led state of government of 1960s and 1970s West Bengal. His plays uniquely condemn and denounce the feudal bourgeois class and speak for the working class and labour class. Likewise, Mahasweta Devi is an activist turned writer. She is a determined and dedicated social activist. Her works always distinctively speak for the justice of adivasis and the tribal people of West Bengal as well as whole nation of India. “One of the main concerns that emerge from Mahasweta’s own works relate to tribal independence, self-possession and the historical possibility of peasant insurgency” (Sen 26). Her works, uniquely in Bengali theatrical literature, embody the socio-political and economic-cultural circumstances ranging from the urban bourgeois to the urban underworld, from rural untouchable societies to tribal segments, and exhibit a viewpoint of India barely ever seen in any sort of Indian literature. In the same way, revolutionary qualities present in the plays of Manoj Mitra make him distinctive and different from his predecessors and other dramatists of Bengali theatre. His plays exclusively represent the class conflicts, typical societal structure and social dilemmas of lower middle class society. His plays are not politically biased, but based on the ground reality which make him unique. Uniquely, he always takes a dig at the contemporary politics in the backdrop of historical settings. He outspokenly confesses this in an interview with the well-known theatre critic Samik Bandyopadhyay that people “had to be taken back into history, for the simple reason that I could not afford to make the statements that sought to make about the contemporary reality, in plain, direct terms” (Mitra 263).


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