ABSTRACT

Mahasweta Devi is a formidable activist, writer and a historian who has diligently endeavoured to subvert the unbalanced equation of caste and hence has highlighted the need for an egalitarian society. Mahasweta Devi’s radical stance of empowering the subaltern is evident in her oeuvre where she gives a poignant depiction of the deplorable condition of the subaltern right from pre-colonial to post-colonial contemporary times. The writer’s major concern has been the universal fact that the subaltern has been dispossessed of his voice due to which he is at a loss to articulate the recurrence of discrimination, subjugation and oppression faced by the subaltern masses. Mahasweta Devi as an unflinching advocate of the subaltern has provided the subaltern with an agency to speak, and has through her works apprehended the totalitarian systems which have relegated the subaltern to the fringes of the society. The impetus of Mahasweta Devi has been to attack the historic/official misrepresentation of the subaltern as a ‘criminal’, ‘mad insurgent’, ‘savage’ and other contemptible pejoratives which the mainstream has been levelling against him. Further, her works highlight how the voice of subaltern which is preserved in the oral sources as in folklores, myths, and legends has been most insidiously trivialised, suppressed and forgotten due to which the existence of the Indian aboriginals and other marginalised sections of the society is highly endangered. It is in her works, that these obnoxious realities of Indian society as perpetrated by the elites be it colonial or native elite is exposed and apprehended to prosecute the culprit and empower the subaltern.

In the present study, it has been established how Mahasweta Devi as a subaltern historian has rectified official history, and has reclaimed an authentic Indian past, thereby, empowering the subaltern classes who were hitherto consigned to the margins. Accordingly, the thesis has investigated selected novels of Mahasweta Devi from the prism of Subaltern Studies which as an academic discourse delves into the polemics of subaltern history vis-à-vis official history. The major concern in the thesis has been to argue the issues of representation, subalternity, subaltern consciousness and orality as a means of protest as well as means of preservation of subaltern existence. Mahasweta Devi’s radical stance as a writer and an activist in fighting for the cause of the subaltern has been examined to underscore the need of subaltern history, which has been fabricated and tampered with to marginalise the subaltern in letter and spirit.