PREFACE

Considered as the champion of the downtrodden, Mahaswetha Devi has been able to portray powerfully the problems and sufferings of the poor and downtrodden. She has been placed in a prominent position as a prolific writer among Indian writers in English. She is a writer with a purpose and mission. She always aspires to find and explore something challenging and does not accept the existing ideals. All her creative writing is characterized by an unflinching commitment and passion for the underdog. The chief contribution of her works is to explore and expose the bare realities of exploitation in our society and show the plight of people under exploitation. She is both a social writer and social activist. She has received several reputed honours and awards - Sahitya Akademi (1979), Jnanpith (1996), Raman Magsaysay (1996) and Padma Sree (1986) for both literary and social work.

The aim of the study is to examine the state of victims and genesis of victimization in Mahaswetha Devi's plays and fiction. The study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter places Mahaswetha Devi in the tradition of realism and victims' literature. It discusses the writers Daniel Defoe, Richardson, Henry Fielding, Ibsen, Brecht, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya who have endeavoured to depict reality and victim consciousness in their literature. Like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya, Mahaswetha Devi's writings are based on humanism, showing 'man's inhumanity to man'. Mahaswetha Devi penetrates deep into the pathos of the downtrodden and explores the victimization under social evils. The second chapter is about victims of bonded
labour in her works. It projects the plight of bonded labourers under the exploitation carried by feudal mechanism and shows that the system of bonded labour is operated beyond law. It also presents the victims under bonded prostitution and contract labour. The third chapter deals with revolutionaries as victims. It focuses on the revolutionaries who fight against injustice and exploitation to free the people from the clutches of corrupt and exploitative system. In their revolts they either lose their lives or are injured. The fourth chapter is on the victims of poverty. It explicates the agony of the poor and their struggle for existence. It concentrates on the effects of poverty and its results. It shows different straits of livelihood people take up to survive and exist. The fifth chapter delves deep into the superstitions of people. It exposes the ignorance of rural folk and the tyranny of feudal mechanism in victimizing the innocent and making them alien and outcasts. The sixth chapter studies women as victims. It articulates both psychological and physical torments experienced by women under patriarchal and male dominated society. It portrays women's anguish for their suppression. It speaks of the sexual harassment and assault of women by men. The seventh chapter gives a brief summary of the themes. It brings out a critical appreciation of all Mahaswetha Devi's works as the legends of the poor and their suffering. It portrays her voice of protest against the evils of the society.

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