Chapter Four  
Female Resistance to Stereotyping

“No, don’t run  
don’t take long strides  
don’t raise voice  
be a woman, be moderate in  
everything.”
-Lakshmi Kannan, “An Omen”

The quest for the identity of Indian women either through their personal struggles to combat challenges or through the expression of personal discontentment has brought about a phenomenal change. This theme has been developed in the previous two Chapters, to show how Native and Diasporic women have emerged victorious in re-discovering their identity in all circumstances. They have taken ‘long strides’ and ‘raised voice’ as Lakshmi Kannan ironically expresses her desire for woman empowerment by stating it loud and clear in her poem cited above. Indian Postcolonial literary Feminism has provided a firm base and suitable guidelines to study various social restrictions controlling the women from realising their authentic self. This perspective has been studied in the previous Chapters while scrutinising the way Indian women writers, especially, Mahasweta Devi and Jhumpa Lahiri have successfully dealt with a wide range of thematic and critical issues in their short stories.

Beneath a courageous and self-confident facade, there lurks an inner self of discontented women forcing oppressive Patriarchal power to accept its culpability for what it has done to subjugate their self. The present Chapter defines the meaning of resistance in the Postcolonial Feminists’ context to evaluate positive perceptions of self-worth in Indian women that enable them to speak out against the abuse dealt out to them. It also evaluates traditional myths and epistemological constructs that have
denied cultural representation and historical locations of Indian women. It is asserted by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their *Essay*, “Post-Colonial Reconstructions: Literature, Meaning, Value” that Post-colonial theories of literature emerge from a view of language grounded in an assertion of the importance of practice over the code, the importance of the variant over the standard. Applying this thought, it is examined how Native and Diasporic short story recovers the hidden voices by repudiating cultural ‘code’ and distorted traditions. The study examines the ways in which Devi and Lahiri have perceived their women who voice their resistance in a bid to earn self-respect, dignity, and freedom.

A simple meaning of resistance is to revolt against injustice and humiliation. It is to stand up against the traditional assumptions and exploitation. These assumptions are ‘roles, images, models, and labels that occur in discourse in response to specific social imperatives’ which are discussed by Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan in her *Essay*, “Real and Imagined Women: Politics and/ of Representation”. Rajan opines that these assumptions have distorted the actual image of women. She implies that the image of women is socially constructed in which Patriarchal Discourse has a condescending attitude toward women’s position. Indian short story on this subaltern subject critically examines these stereotype images of women in order to re-write their identity. The analysis examines these derogatory images that have caused pain and misery to women.

In “Female Desire: Women’s Sexuality Today”, Rosalind Coward opines that resistance is a struggle against the traditional acceptance of the “father” as the “all powerful” (189) force. She opines “adoration of the powerful male” and “adoration of the father by the small child” (189) has distorted social roles of men. This
indoctrinated notion of the acceptance of ‘father’ as all ‘powerful’ is traditionally perpetuated in all societies. Coward states, the traditional portrayal of men as “powerful” and the assertion of their identity as strong men is conceived from the “Pre-Adolescent” (189) period. Coward debates it is a “fantasy” and an “exaggerated” (189) phenomenon. She opines that this illusion has under-estimated the potential of women from their childhood to be “a dependent child” (189). It has become “controlling and suffocating for a child struggling to become independent” (189). She argues that it has “distorted the power and authority” of women and their “equality is denied” (189). Coward’s argument conveys that the identity of women is controlled and fantasised. Hence, the resistance of women is an examination of their perception of personality. It means that women strive to earn their social respectability, and exercise their power. The argument of Coward is applied to examine the distinctive capabilities of Indian marginalised women to speak out against their gendered inequalities, unequal division of labour, and their unfair social roles.

Taking Coward’s argument into consideration, resistance can be defined as a realisation of an abject position. It is an effort to assert one’s individuality. It is a revolt against exploitation and subjugation. Resistance helps, one to rise from his/her inner struggle for freedom and to become aware of their marginalised position. Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan states that resistance is an “analytical task of ideological critique” which helps a woman “not only to reconcile in her subjectivity the conflicts between tradition and modernity… but works also to deny the actual conflict that women existentially register as an aspect of their lives” (“Real and Imagined Women” 129). It signifies women accept their subjectivity by rejecting “cultural determinism” (130) constructed by “dominant modes of ideologies” (129). Resistance is becoming aware of the degradation caused by various cultural presuppositions. She further
defines resistance as “the logical second step in the critique of male discourse”; “it is a “form of recuperation” (130). It means that resistance is not only a struggle against oppressive presumptions it is also a self-realisation that helps them participate in a struggle and feel equal to their exploiters in a moment of repression and revolt. Thus, it becomes an empowering and ennobling element. It is an opportunity to realise their self-worth and exercise their social responsibility. Resistance is a voice that puts them apart from the others in their community or society. It comes out as a curious blend of angst, rage, rebellion, assertion, and confidence to question the basic rights for freedom. It is an emotion of discontentment that grips one to righteously interrogate and then to retaliate for a particular cause. It is a personal cry for social justice and community integrity.

Having elaborated on the meaning of resistance, the discussion continues to see how resistance as an empowering element builds Native and Diasporic women to assert their identity and exercise their individual responsibility. Thus, resistance discussed in the study is a holistic force for Indian women that helps to realise their self, brings about solidarity, and social transformation. Devi and Lahiri in the short fictional narration give real effect to their short stories through resistance to make their women understand the socially ill-fitting roles enforced on them by exploitative forces. The study looks at resistance as an ennobling voice that helps the marginalised women to see themselves apart from the others and empower others who are in the same position. It examines resistance as an emotional discontentment helps Indian women to fight for social justice and communal harmony.

E. A Thomas in his Essay “Postcoloniality as Counter-Discourse” comments that the Postcolonial creative and critical Discourses are overtly counter-discursive.
Their concern is not merely questioning or problematising but resisting and subverting. It implies that the dominant and imperialistic Discourses have been resisted and subverted by Postcoloniality by questioning their oppressive nature. Considering his statement, the Postcolonial feminists’ interpretations also have subverted the imaginative self images of women. The idea is supported by Shashi Deshpande’s Essay, “Telling Our Own Stories.” Her argument is, the image of women is created by men as “stone women” (86). Accordingly, ‘stone woman’ has accepted male conception of her identity by “letting herself be shaped by him, that she is willingly posing for him” (86). Deshpande appeals to shed all kinds of “myths” (87) that condition their ideas and search for their real identity. Applying this thought, the study examines various myths and stereotypes which have distorted the authentic images of Indian women.

The voice of women in Devi and Lahiri’s short stories not only question but as E.A Thomas states ‘subvert oppressive Discourses’. The unheard women express their voice to interrogate the traditional practices that have distorted their images and enforced stereotype roles on them creating unequal gender participation. There is a paradigm shift in their short stories that reconstructs a space for their women to express their longings, sentiments, and desires for autonomy. The adoption of different paradigms by the writers is to establish an act of resistance in order to counter social roles imposed on women. Their concern is to explore women’s unexpressed voice and in-visible experiences by means of new images, representations, and themes in order to re-write their stories. Jasbir Jain in “Mythological History: The Indo-British Experience” calls this act as “Rewriting history” that “unravels the mysterious nature of reality” (152). Therefore, the very fact of positioning the
subaltern women amidst the cultural Discourses by the writers is to re-write their history, to resist the dominant powers, and re-construct their identities.

The dominant powers as Michael Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* discusses are ‘Discourses of strategies of power and subjugation’. Devi and Lahiri try to dismantle the strategies of mainstream discourse by giving a consistent voice to their women. Frantz Fanon in his *Wretched of the Earth* defines mainstream power as a “Manichaean world that everything is represented in terms of coloniser/colonised, good/evil, white/black, civil/savage” (31). He discusses that these paired oppositions have led the latter to a sort of socio-economic, political, and psychological marginalisation. By presenting these opposing powers, Devi and Lahiri expose social disharmony and gender inequality meted out to their women. The discussion in their short stories unravels the structures created by caste, class, ethnic, and gender as ‘paired oppositions’. Taking into consideration the opinions of Foucault and Fanon, the short stories of Devi and Lahiri are examined to see that their women resist their oppressive powers in their respective cultures. The silenced and the oppressed voices of women examine their distinctive capabilities by questioning their ill-fitting roles. Hence, their resistance is a positive response to counter repressive social moulds enforced on them.

The reading takes up Devi’s five stories: “Rudali: From Fiction to Performance”, “Bayen”, “Statue”, “Bedanabala: Her Life, Her Times”, and “Giribala”; Lahiri’s five stories, “Hell-Heaven”, “Only Goodness”, “Nobody’s Business”, “Once in a Lifetime”, and “Going Ashore” for discussion. It has to be acknowledged at the outset of the Chapter that “Rudali” and “Bedanabala” are taken as longer forms of a short story. The reasons for selecting these stories are that they are women texts that revolve around subaltern women having a single theme and a single
plot. The resisting voice of these women against oppressive cultural Discourse is discussed to see how resistance has become an empowering phenomenon for them to exercise their social responsibilities. The domination of women within Patriarchy and ethnic discrimination is taken to evaluate the lives of the marginalised women to explore how they resist them. By voicing the cultural repression of Native and Diasporic Indian women, the writers make constant effort to portray social realities of Indian women. The study evaluates ten short stories to see how Devi and Lahiri resist various cultural ‘codes’ and social ‘moulds’ inflicted on their women. The resistance to the very concept of gendered identity of women is depicted by recording their history, geography, and society.

To begin with, the first voice of defiance for survival is recorded in Sanichari, the woman protagonist of “Rudali”. Devi counters the traditional narratives by devoting the story to a socially unaccepted low caste woman and a bonded-labourer. It reflects how Devi wants ‘a feminist historiography’ by reconstructing the presupposed subaltern identity of Sanichari, a low caste and bonded-labourer. In “The Metamorphosis of ‘Rudali’” Anjum Katyal describes “Rudali” as a story of “women’s journey towards agency and empowerment” by exposing “multiple strands of exploitation” (3). Sanichari’s subaltern position is examined that she after resisting her caste, class, and gender roles as a low caste woman and a bonded-labourer finds different means to empower her own self and exercises her social responsibility to empower the other women of her community.

In Indian social system, the bonded-labourers and the sex-workers are subjected to domination and control; distorted by the mainstream powers such as the landlords, the religious heads, and the money-lenders. In “Empowerment of Sanichari: A Resistance Narrative” I. D. Sharma asserts that “Rudali” gives a realistic
picture of the inevitable suffering of the women against the degradation of woman by a male chauvinistic society. It is not only a story of an endless suffering of poor low-
caste women but voices a strong protest in Sanichari against the ill-treatment of
women. As subaltern women, they are subjected to cumbersome tasks as slaves,
maids, and other underpaid servants creating an unequal division of labour. Devi
constructs a poverty-stricken low caste woman, Sanichari to speak against the
inhumanity and gendered marginality enforced on them by the upper caste, the malik-
mahajans, the Rajputs of Tahad, and the Brahmins of Tohri. Sanichari resists her
marginalisation caused by them that had exposed her to abject poverty, hunger, and
destitution. It is supported by Nivedita Sen and Nikhil Yadav in their “Introduction”
to Mahasweta Devi An Anthology of Recent Criticism, “Mahasweta indicted colluding
socio-economic and religious systems that ironically compel some women to use that
very system to attain agency” (18). Sanichari’s story from the subaltern perspective
becomes a symbolic representation of the resisting voice of the Native women against
unethical systems of exploitation and immorality.

The exploitation of Sanichari as a low caste ganju woman begins in Tahad
village. As the narrator of the story, Sanichari awakens her subaltern-consciousness to
defy her unfair identities as a “ganju woman”, made to live in “desperate poverty”, a
woman “born on and named after a Saturday”, “wasn’t free to speak up”, “never able
to answer back” (Devi, “Rudali” 54) forced to work for the malik-mahajans and a
bonded labourer of Ramavatar. As the story progresses, Sanichari does not remain in
the periphery as a bonded-labourer. Rather, she empowers Bikhni, Gulbadan, Rupa,
Budhni, Shombri, Ganguand, and other exploited women from the red-light area by
getting them employment at higher wages to mourn the dead (the upper caste
landlords). Her realisation of her abject position as a ganju woman fuels her assertion
of resistance and subversion, seeking some opportunity to earn some money for herself from the *malik-mahajan* and accepts to be their funeral-wailer. It is how she changes her position as a mere bonded-labourer to “rudali to earn five rupees” (90) per day. Here her tears symbolically revolt against injustice and the immorality of her exploiters that help her in economic freedom. It is asserted by Anjum Katyal that there is an evolution in the central character, Sanichari, who emerges at the end as better equipped to adapt, survive, and manipulate the system. She is more empowered-than she is at the beginning. Her resistance helps to reconstruct her identity as an economically empowered woman for social mobility.

Placing Sanichari amidst powerful, exploitative, and repressive social structures is to locate injustice done to subaltern woman. The various episodes throughout the narrative expose manipulative structures: religion and faith at *mela* (fair) at Tohri Shiva temple, repressive rites and rituals after the death of her mother-in-law and her husband to appease Mohanlal, a *Brahmin* priest of Tohri, superstitions and false beliefs for the misery of Sanichari for being born on a Saturday. Sanichari’s story attests to the oppressive social constructs in the Tohri and Tahad villages which have perpetuated ‘myths’ to degrade the social and economic conditions of Indian rural women.

Poverty and hunger challenge Sanichari to voice her suppressed self-awareness to subvert her predators. Her suffering is triggered primarily by the patriarchal, socio-religious, and cultural assumptions witnessed in the caste barriers between the *malik-mahajans* of Tohri (the upper caste men) and the *dushas* and the *ganjus* of Tahad (the lower caste men). These political agencies created by the upper caste men as her oppressors reveal multiple dimensions of exploitation of the *ganju* and the *dushad* women of Tahad village. Sanichari as an outcast is not exceptional in
sharing the brunt of the sufferings inflicted by the powerful structures. Ramavatar Singh is one of the powerful forces who imprison the young *dushad* and the *gunju* men for the loss of some wheat. Sanichari’s voice of resistance sets her apart from the people of her community and it enables her to carry on the task of cremating her mother-in-law who dies grieving for her sons who are unjustly imprisoned by Ramavatar Singh.

Sanichari’s resistance becomes a redeeming power when after three years she loses her brother-in-law and his wife to the cruelty of Ramavatar Singh. She does not cry. Instead, leaving the six year old son, Budhua at her hut, she goes to the *malik’s* house where she splits wood, gathers fodder for the cows, and works through the harvest season. In the inherited drudgery caused by religious piety, her husband becomes a victim of cholera at the ‘Baisakhi mela at Tohri’. After offering worship to Shiva, he drinks glasses of milk offered to the Shiva idol that had a ‘sour stink, and was thick with buzzing flies’. People paid the *pandas* (money) to drink glasses of this milk and promptly fell sick with cholera. Despite the loss of her husband caused by religious exploitation, she does not cry but washes off the *sindoor* from her forehead, breaks her bangles, and makes ritual offering. To pay the debt incurred for her husband’s *shradh*, she is forced to work in Ramavatar’s field as a mere bonded labourer for five years. Everyone notices that she has not cried at her husband’s death yet she pays no attention. It is how she recognises her power as potential woman to reject culturally determined widow’s role. When Budhua, his wife, Parbatia and their son Haroa escape subalternity by fleeing from the village, Sanichari stands alone to fight against the oppressors. The grieving Sanichari does not loose courage. Rather, she fights the battle with inner strength. The resistance of Sanichari as a *ganju* woman becomes an example of the voice of the voiceless. This supports that Devi is a
“feminist historiographer” who exclusively records “women’s history” and “acknowledges that each aspect” of Sanichari’s “reality is gendered” (Sangari and Sudesh, 2), class, and caste based.

Devi’s depiction of Sanichari’s cultural subalternity can be witnessed in every description of her appearance, clothes, mannerisms, and habits of speech. Her life portrays how she emerges from her abject position to freedom and empowerment. It is in Sanichari the “gendered position is represented” and her “subject-position” (Spivak, “Literary Representation of the subaltern” 332) is made visible. The struggle against the ‘gendered position’ begins for Sanichari when she questions the existing hierarchies by not shedding tears when her family members: mother-in-law, brother-in-law, his wife, her husband, and son die one after the other. Her grief is surfaced in the desperate struggle for her survival which is her ‘subject-position’. Her unshed tears for her dead family members are token of resistance against her commodification by the malik-mahajans who hire rudalis to mourn their dead so as to enhance the family prestige. With single-handed effort, she exposes social injustice and exploitation of the lower caste men by the malik-mahajans who are her oppressive agencies. The landlords: Ramavatar Singh, Bhirav Singh, and Lachman Singh support for dehumanising agency and manipulative structures that invade the individual space of Sanichari to exploit and oppress.

As the narrator of the story, Sanichari is not the victim of marginality but a keen observer who empowers herself at every stretch. Sonali Das in “The Theme of Resistance” records what Sarah Joseph has said about the fictional characters stating: “A character is not just a character; it’s also a mind. This mind is constantly communicating with the society she lives in, its history, the individuals in it and their relationships with each other.” (301) Devi conveys this fact explicitly through
Sanichari and her encounter with Bikhni, Dulan, and her upper caste lords. The conversation of Sanichari with Lachman Singh shows how she realises her ‘gendered position’ (degradation) and asks for some work for her grand-son, Haroa to subvert it. It is her straightforward and confident approach that draws attention to the various cultural traditions oppressing the subaltern. Here a subaltern voice recorded in Sanichari is the weapon that resists marginalisation. She questions the exploitation of the mainstream in the following:

What am I here for? The malik-mahajan demands honour even when he’s a corpse...his generation kept whores too... the whores mourned for them out of genuine affection and gratitude. But the Bhairab, Daitari, Makhan, Lachman Singhs of this world treat their labourers and whores alike- they treat them into the mud... what vicious bastards that lot are! The worst is Gambhir Singh. He kept a whore, had a daughter by her. As long as the whore was alive, he kept the child in comfort. When the mother died, he told the girl, a whore’s daughter is a whore- practise your profession and support yourself. (Devi, “Rudali” 70)

The statement reflects the upper caste hegemony that exploited the subaltern. There is a social sanction for the upper caste to exercise its authority to exploit the lower caste women.

The pivotal aspect of resistance of Sanichari is evident in her subtle manipulation of the tears for the funeral ceremony of her masters. She uses her tears as commodity for the sole aim of her survival and the sustenance of her community. Sanichari’s new employment as a mourner at the funeral ceremonies of the dead members of the malik-mahajans is to increase their family honour. The situation is used by Sanichari by re-organising a union of professional mourners from among the sexually exploited women by the upper caste men. Such subverting acts against the
hypocrisy, corruption, greed, and sexual exploitation of her masters are pioneering attempts by Sanichari as a subaltern to resist the existing oppressive structures. In “Woman in Decolonisation: the National and Textual Politics of Rape in Saadat Hasan Manto and Mahasweta Devi”, Sachdeva Harveen Mann states the resistance of “the tribal and untouchables of Tohri revolt (is) not through armed forced uprising or electoral ballot but through the “domestic” organization of women as funeral wailers” (136). Through the defying acts of funeral wailers as empowered women, the story critiques the oppressive structures of the upper caste society, and their practices to oppress women.

The story of Sanichari is also a triumphant victory over the exploiters, the oppressors, and the higher caste Patriarchy. Sanichari is an example of the subaltern who dismantles the binary divisions based on caste, class, and gender to reconstruct her identity. Her resistance is not by running away from society like her family members, but subtly defying her traditional role as a bonded labourer and empowering herself as an economically independent woman. Sanichari acquires her identity through the means of earning a livelihood at any cost. Formation of a union of funeral wailers from among the sexually exploited women gives her ultimate victory, and it paves a way for the empowerment of women as against their stereotypical occupations. Sanichari’s initiative for organised labour and trade-union for the funeral rites helps to fight for the workers’ basic rights and social mobility by earning their economic freedom like Gramsci’s ‘oppressed group’. Therefore, like Dulan Ganju, she too can be called as Madhumita Chakraborty in her Living on the Edge; Women in the Writings of Bessie Head and Mahasweta Devi calls an “organic intellectual” (251) who resists subalternity and asserts her individuality. By ‘organic intellectual’ Chakraborty means a person who realises his/her subaltern position and tries to
empower self and others who are in the same position by collectively countering the exploitative powers. This aspect of Sanichari posited that subaltern resistance is a means to fight for social justice and community harmony.

In Sanichari and her friend Bikhni there is a critique of the history of the lower caste people of Tahad village. Devi records their history from the subaltern perspective told by Dulan a member of their own community to see how they have struggled to resist their oppressive forces. A. Usha in “Feminism in Mahasweta Devi’s Selected Stories” observes that Devi has brought out the rebellious spirit of the tortured people of the past and the present with a rare blend of facts garbed in fiction. Sanichari’s rebellious act becomes a successful resistance against the rich and the higher caste, the *malik-mahajans* who are the root cause of the discrimination against the *dushas* and the *ganjus* communities. The story of Sanichari speaks how the original inhabitants of the *dushas* and the *ganjus* were driven out of their land by the wealthy landowners with the help of religious and political forces. It helps to understand the rich culture the natives had, and which perished in the cultural marginalisation by the wealthy. The story is an example for what Ishleen asserts in “Counter Narratives: A Discourse in Contestation”, the inclusion of these excluded narratives help to understand the challenges of these groups to assert their identity. Devi’s narration on Sanichari records a reality about the women who were placed in the margin by societal discrimination and in turn how these women have resisted it.

Resistance to traditional assumptions on the image of woman is evident in Chandidasi Gangadasi, a socially marginalised woman of *Dom* community in “Bayen”. In “Cast(e)ing Wicked Spells: Gendered Errancy in Mahasweta Devi’s Bayen” Brinda Bose opines that the story weaves the politics of caste, gender, and superstition to entrap the subaltern and outcaste women. Considering it, the un-
recognised voice of Chandi is recorded to examine social practices and traditional beliefs of Dom and Kalu, the lower caste communities of Daharhati village which control the social freedom of women. Chandi is portrayed as a fair woman with light eyes and reddish hair yet she has been stigmatised as a witch and denied of her motherhood. Throughout the story she is silent and does not talk. Her silence is a form of resistance and a means of subversion against her oppressors. Devi asserts this idea in her interview with Gayatri Charavorty Spivak in “Telling Histories.” Chandi as ‘the subaltern woman will be mute as ever’, to assert Spivak, in “Can the subaltern Speak?”, if not intervened by other voices. Devi uses two powerful voices of Chandi’s son, Bhagirath and her husband, Malindar as Spivak states “anti-imperialistic”, powers of the lower caste men to speak for the subaltern woman.

In “From Vocation to Apotheosis: A Psycho-Feminist Study of Mahasweta Devi’s Bayen” Durdesh Ravande observes on the cultural marginalisation of Chandi that there is a ‘coercive glorification’ of motherhood in the society, but the society disassociates Chandi from her son Bhagirath without respecting her maternal concerns. The beliefs of the communities combined with caste and gender intricacies ostracise her as a pariah (outcaste) and banish her into a hut by the railway tracks by creating for her a socially constructed subaltern status as a Bayen (witch). The assumptions of the villagers command her to a worse position of breast-feeding dead children. Her ability as a normal woman is further distorted by ostracising her as a woman who casts spells on every member of her community.

Chandi’s oppression is stereotyped and perpetuated when beliefs are coercive enough to make out that she cannot be killed like an ordinary one, because to kill a Bayen means death for their children. Her birth is magnified as the great descendent of the Dom community for a perpetual life of loneliness, poverty, hunger, and
deprivation. The subalternity of Chandi is enforced by assigning her to her hereditary profession of guarding the graves of the little children of the village. Devi explains the deep rooted exploitation of women by religious faith in ‘witch-cults’ and human sacrifices in West Bengal and Orissa.

Felix Padel in *The Sacrifice of Human Being*, explains how the *Dom* traders kidnapped and sold small children as *meriahs* or the victims of human sacrifice to the *Konds* of Orissa who sacrificed them to *Darni* or Earth Goddesses. Chandi as the *Dom* woman is suspected by the villagers that she would kidnap and kill their children. Chandi becomes the victim of ignorance, fear, and suspicion created by the caste hierarchies and superstitious beliefs of the rural masses. Devi depicts how traditional practices restrict women from a happy and peaceful existence. It is against these social evils Chandi tries to find her identity by questioning patriarchal norms and defying societal expectations through her silence.

Devi’s portrayal of Chandi is not a victim woman. Rather, she is a strong willed, rational, and determined. The story of Chandi no doubt is a narration of her subalternity and marginalisation; it is to expose Patriarchal conceptions of womanhood and motherhood. E. Satyanarayana in “*Bayen*: A Portrait of the Rebel as Mother” posits that the major portion of Devi’s creative writings has been devoted to expose inhuman subjugation of women and their struggles for survival. He asserts that women in all societies are victimised by Patriarchy and sexism. Their identity is distorted and their freedom is curtailed at all levels. The story documents the denial of motherhood and separation of child from the mother as repressive methods in the oppression of women. It is from this subaltern position Chandi asserts her identity.
The recording of a young voice, Bhagirath is employed to examine how traditionally cruelty is imposed on the lower caste women. It is to what Uma Chakravarty “Through Another Lens: Men, Women and Caste”, supports that “Bayen” introduces a new dimension to the working of the caste system and the multiple manifestations of Patriarchy in the different caste groups. Devi shows that this construction on the image of women is diverse within Indian societies. The narrative voice of Bhagirath reveals that caste and class intricacies exploit the women. His voice challenges the discrimination and misconceptions on the identity of his mother as a witch (Bayen). It is evident at his declaration at the end of the story, “my mother…not a bayen. She was never a bayen, my mother.” (Devi, “Bayen” 41) Bhagirath realises the gendered and caste marginality of his mother that Bayen is not a witch. Rather, she is a woman and his mother. After her death, when the railway department announces a medal for Chandi for her heroic self-sacrifice in preventing a major train accident, Bhagirath makes use of the opportunity to raise a public alarm against the ill-treatment of his mother. Devi uses his voice to reveal the identity of Chandi as the biological mother. The denial of Chandi’s motherhood is fundamental to the construction of her subaltern status. Devi discloses the exploitation of a mother through a dramatic dialogue between Malindar and Bhagirath in whose viewpoint Chandi’s resistance is portrayed. Malindar tells his son that Chandi had everything in her biological motherhood. Malindar had given her ‘striped saris’ and ‘silver jewelry’ to wear. He had fed her and rubbed oil into her hair. He had also massaged her body. His past story with Chandi reveals how women get subjected to marginalisation and ostracism in the caste-ridden the Dom and the Kalu communities. The whole story narrated through the conversation between the father and son evaluates how Chandi expresses her resistance to accept her womanhood. Devi uses nuances, a conversional
style to portray the distinctive qualities of a woman who exercises her ‘self’ in rural disparity created by caste, class, and gendered biases.

Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, supports that mothering is central to the sexual division of labor. She supports gender equality and equal division of labour between genders in raising their children. She states that the maternal role of a woman has profound effects on their children and asserts that a mother plays a crucial role in the life of every child. Considering Chodorow, it is argued that motherhood is denied to Chandi to exercise her sexual division of labour. It has led to gendered inequality and social injustice. Devi records this asymmetrical relationship between the spouses to see how the lower caste women are exploited for a life of poverty, hunger, and destitution caused by complex social divisions. The maternal condition of Chandi is to question the subaltern mother’s struggle for autonomy within her family and community.

The entire story is placed amidst the subaltern world of the *Dom* and the *Kalu* communities to examine their lives, beliefs, fears, predicaments, and their treatment of women. It is within the constraints of the community that Chandi wants to be free from her social stigma as a *Dom* woman and she expresses her resistance saying “get hold of somebody else for this work. I am not fit for this job.” (Devi, “Bayen” 34) The exploitative ideological structures are perpetuated to maintain the divisions between the lower and the higher class communities and these have an adverse effect on women. Chandi rises from her inner struggle to resist her cultural identity as a *Dom* woman and refuses to work in the burial-ground. The caste-division and un-equal division of labour perpetuate the exploitation of untouchable women from one generation to the next. The gap marginalises them to suffer exploitation and ostracism. Devi exposes these double-standard structures of society and aims at
gender equality through her ‘feminist historiography’. She records the exploitation of women by exposing fabricated myths, religious distortions, and ancestral misconceptions created by rural hierarchies.

Chandi’s subaltern status is imposed on her and she is made to believe that she is a proud descendent of the Dom community who has ‘inherited the burning ghat of the world from the ancient King Harishchandra.’ She is assumed to be privileged to execute the task of burning dead children of the village and guarding their graves. But, Chandi resists these stereotyped roles and repudiates it stating: “I don’t have the heart to do it anymore” (33). After begetting a child herself she feels the pain for every dead child and resists the denial of her space for motherhood. The narrator observes it in the following:

At those times she also prayed for each and every child in the village that each should live forever. This was a weakness she had developed of late. Because of her own child, she now felt a deep pain for every dead child. Her breasts ached with milk if she stayed too long in the graveyard. She silently blamed her father as she dug the graves. He had no right to bring her to this work. (34)

The exploitation of Chandi begins with imposed multiple social roles. The stigma of untouchability is given to her together with her role as a grave-tender. Rajiv Kannan Menon in “Unheard Streams and Silent Acceptance” observes that it depicts the transformation of a working class woman into a public scapegoat and ultimately, a subaltern woman with no bodily or social agency. It reflects how she is ostracised as a witch and thrown out of the village. Her husband who loves her so dearly disowns her out of fear and becomes a prey to the suspicion created by the ignorant villagers about the identity of Chandi. Thus she suffers ‘double-marginalisation’. But she also
repudiates the hereditary responsibility that forces her to continue her father’s work of burying dead children.

A dramatic shift takes place in the story when Chandi feels it cumbersome to accept the distorted roles yoked onto her. She rejects her traditional occupation of burying dead children infected by cholera. Devi depicts multiple oppressions of women in the continued struggles of Chandi. A suspicion triggers in the villagers when they hear of the sudden death of Chandi’s relative, Tukni, a girl stricken with small-pox during an epidemic. Chandi is targeted for the mishaps. She is excommunicated for no fault of hers. Including her husband, all fall prey to the inhuman practice of ostracising her. Thus she is driven out of the house as a Bayen. As earlier supported by the statement of Menon, the subalternity of Chandi is observed due to gendered bias. It is imposed out of fear of repressive coercion from the community.

Chandi is imposed upon by number of distortions: ‘made to believe suck blood out of little children’, ‘cast spell to kill innocent children’, in public appearance forced to warn people of her approach and has no right to cast her eyes on young men. Everyone avoids her, shuns her, ostracises her, and exiles her as a Bayen. Chandi forced to wear red cloths with a dog tied on her trail. She is marginalised and restricted with only an half a kilogram of rice, a handful of pulses, oil, salt, and limited food grains to feed on for the whole week. The metaphor of Chandi’s story clearly indicates that presumptions created by traditional structures inflict misery and mental trauma on the lower caste tribal women.

Chandi resists her imposed identity till the end of the story on an ironic note with her redeeming act of saving her own people from a train accident and robbery.
Resistance as an ennobling power helps her to see herself apart from the others and to exercise her social responsibility by confronting the people who pile bamboo sticks on the railway tracks to loot the Lalgola Passenger Train. Resistance as a weapon of discontentment empowers Chandi to interrogate them. Resistance comes out for Chandi as rebellion against inhumanity and she confidently ask, “Who are you? So you are piling bomboos, ah? You would rob the train, eh? What running away from fear of me? Ha! Throw away these sticks first, or you are done for!” (Devi, “Bayen” 40) This act of Chandi in dying to stop the train is an example for subaltern resistance and a redeeming power of Chandi as a human sacrificial ‘scapegoat’. Her cry to stop the train from a heap of bamboo on the tracks is her act of generosity to save her community from tragedy.

Chandi’s story ends on an optimistic message that whatever be the onslaught, the lower caste women will relentlessly carry out their fight for justice and social integrity. Devi denounces the traditional and patriarchal practice of targeting women for human sacrifice. In the holocaust of Chandi, Devi rings the death knell to inhuman sacrifices and beliefs of idealising women for human sacrifice and oppression. Resistance of Chandi helps her to be recognised for her potential when the Railway Department takes the initiative to reward Chandi for her heroic act by acknowledging her power as a heroic woman and Bhagirath accepts her as a loving mother. While looking at Chandi’s existence it defines her ‘self’ as a person “who places [herself], separates [herself], and therefore strays instead of getting her bearing, desiring, belonging or refusing” (Kristeva, 5). On the contrary, Chandi despite being in the subaltern position, she secures social security for her family and community. Her subaltern position awakens her to resist it, and she realises her responsibilities to help her community members from a major tragedy, strife, and violence.
Resistance in “Statue” is against caste-ridden Patriarchal history. The voice of Dulali, the protagonist interrogates its impact on the tribal poor, especially, on women. Dulali’s voice recaptures the oppressive cultures of the rural caste hierarchies of the Thakur and the Bhunya communities, class exploitation and gender discrimination. The story records how Dulali even though a victim of caste, class, and gender, realises her degradation caused by these structures and resists by recapturing her entire life in her old age as she narrates it to her nephew, Nabin Bhunya, a social activist of Chhatim village. Her resistance is to create a space for herself and her community for its social acceptability and economic mobility. Devi reconstructs “Statue” in a woman’s voice to awaken the hidden-consciousness that reminiscences childhood and repressed widowhood beset with traditional cultural cruelties of a seventy eight year old widow, Dulali who belongs to Bhunya, a low caste community.

In the caste intricacies of relationships between the upper caste, Thakur and the lower caste, Bhunya, Devi places Dulali to record her resisting voice against subjugation. Her exploitation is viewed in the male gaze of Dindayal Thakur, a son of an upper caste and a rich landlord. She recalls her forbidden romance which is buried in her heart for fifty four years ever since his execution. This silence is her resistance against the caste groups that inflicted her agony. Devi makes the subaltern mind active by penetrating through the interactive voice of her nephew, Nabin. The Thakurs and their inhuman attitudes are revealed in Dulali’s viewpoint. “Statue” represents Dulali’s freedom in her younger age to express her love for a Brahmin boy by transcending caste and class hierarchies. The subaltern voice is powerful in her old age even though she is “a wretch thrown in a corner with less power than field-cattle” (Devi, “Statue” 26). This resisting voice of Dulali is her discontentment and interrogation of the exploitative agency.
Mariamma Panjikaran in “Old Women: A Geropsychological Mosaic” states, “Statue document the theme of gerontic ideology- accepting defeat in the hands of hunger” (92). To disagree Panjikaran, Dulali does not accept defeat even in her subaltern position. At seventy eight, she looks like a vindictive snake-goddess, ‘Manosha–crone of myth’, white hair, torn clothes, and emaciated body. Devi re-makes the myth of Manosha- an avenging goddess in the household of the ancient Bhunya landlords who are presently victimised as landless peasants. Devi portrays Dulali as goddess Manosha to show how subaltern women attempt to reconstruct their space by being assertive and vindictive. The re-interpretation of ‘Manosha myth’ through Dulali’s perception of her experience is to subvert Patriarchal versions on the image of women. It is through the myth, Dulali and her community history is recorded in the silent recesses of her mind to evaluate how a subaltern has borne injustice all her life. She resists her subaltern status by accepting her distinctive potential as a vindictive woman by questioning hunger pangs as a chronic and inalterable reality.

The misery of Dulali had started at the age of four from the day of her child-marriage, marginalising her as a widow at six followed by a maze of men’s gaze and haunted by poverty, hunger, and starvation right to her death bed. Dulali’s mind is a resistance that reflects the evil effects of child marriage and the fate of a subaltern woman after losing her husband at an early age. The story is heard through the past and present events in Dulali’s life. She questions societal constraints on forbidden love and gathers courage somewhere in her inmost heart to reflect that she is not guilty and feels that loving Dinu is ‘not a crime’ but a freedom of the heart. It is how Dulali resists and expresses her freedom by questioning the oppressive cultures histories.
Dulali’s resistance is against imposed ideologies; her widowhood forbids her to go for wedding ceremonies and other social gatherings. Devi portrays in Dulali a subaltern status of widows who are culturally denied social respectability, dignity, freedom, and love. It is distinctly recorded in the ‘resonant silenced voice’ of Dulali. It shows how Devi’s recording of the subaltern woman voice in the old woman of Dulali is unique. Shachi Arya in *Tribal Activism: Voices of Protest* exalts that Devi is a writer of hope. She has told tales, not only of the helplessness and displacement of the exploited class, but also of their ‘valour, protest and rebellion’. It signifies that in raising the subaltern-consciousness of the tribal and the lower caste women, Devi stands supreme among the Indian women writers.

The greatness of Devi as a Native short story writer is witnessed in the story where she places her woman character in Chhatim, a ‘seven-cursed godforsaken village’ to imply a remote and unknown village. It shows Devi’s subaltern concern is to retrieve the unspoken voice of rural women. The hypocrisy of the upper caste people as ‘imperialistic powers’, is revealed when the villagers gather to unveil the statue of a freedom fighter and martyr, Dindayal Thakur and to construct a road for the tribal villagers in his memory. The irony behind the pomp and show of the event is unknown to the tribals: the Santhal, the Mundas, the Bhumjis and the Bhunyas to which Dulali belongs, when the local MLA refuses to construct a road. Through a detailed narration, Devi goes back to the history of exploitation to trace inhumanity of the business trade of the ancestors of the high caste community, the Khan and the Thakur families who exploit the natives. The two worlds of natives: the upper and the lower castes can be examined for the formation of caste, class, and gender discrepancies. The subaltern history is traced by the oppressive struggles of the Bhunyas for their individual identity and social acceptability. The narrator resists the
inability of the political parties to construct a road for the social mobility of the native. The subaltern history is evaluated to see Dulali expression of her resistance to gain her freedom.

The exploitation by the upper caste agencies testify to the legacy of violence handed down to the subaltern women. It is similar to the tragic and oppressive experiences that haunt Dulali. The hidden experiences of Dulali can be recorded when she avers, “What painter is sitting in her mind today and showing picture after picture, explaining everything? What a pain in her chest. What weight does memory have, why does it hurt? A great destruction had come down on the village.” (Devi, “Statue” 44) Devi’s mode of questioning the identity and status of the subaltern are always through introspective interrogation. The intention is to depict how an old woman like Dulali continues to survive despite oppression, discrimination, and starvation. It depicts that due to inter-caste politics in India, the lower caste women are subjected to all kinds of oppression.

Dulali wants to find a way to survive in the present. She recalls inhuman realities as she looks at her oppressors with regret for accepting the imposed identity as a ‘stone woman’. With her rapt look she resists the fire of injustice burning in her mind. Like Chandi and Sanichari, she too does not believe in the past and in the present her “thoughts are belly-centred” (16). There is an inner struggle in her dreams. Thus, she consciously recounts the unwritten account of her story. It is argued that the story questions the inhumanity meted out to a subaltern elderly woman. There is open outrage in the old woman who sits on a flat stone to recollect the prosperity of her father, the Bhunya family; presently the land is appropriated by her oppressors. She counteracts them as she affirms, “I’ll crush some and take it. I’ll put some salt in the
tart kadam and eat it with rice” (16). Devi’s art of expressing the tribal nostalgic aspiration for tribal land is highlighted in the story.

The resistance of Dulali against her denial as an authentic lover of Dinadayal recorded directly through the research scholar who goes to write a Doctoral thesis on the neglected events of the history of the armed struggle in Midnapur District. It is how Devi makes a historiography of the Indian subaltern. The real history of the marginalised is seen in the recovery of a love letter written by Dindayal to his beloved, Dulali by the scholar. The letter echoes the subaltern concerns by raising many questions regarding their basic rights. Dindayal’s letter protests the condition of women stating: “Who says life ends at widowhood? Who says there can be no marriage between a Bhunya and a Thakur” (18). The voice of Dindayal resists traditional taboos of looking at the love relation between an upper caste man and a lower caste widow. The narrator adds saying that loving Dulali, Dindayal faces some ferocious opposition from rural society; still he challenges the ‘unrequited love’. It conveys how Devi is a remarkable writer in depicting the agonies of her native people.

Resistance shown by the woman does not leave her in the subaltern status. Rather she accepts humiliation with courage and renewed expectations. It is witnessed in Dulali who in her old age accepts her challenges with stoic endurance and anticipation. She is ready to live in a shack, upon the river-bed in the woods. She recollects the past as she narrates to her nephew on a day when the reporters came to enquire about Dindayal Thakur in order to erect his statue. Lying down on the platform she remembers everything that was forbidden to her as a young girl. Even after many years she does not forget her disaster caused by oppressive forces and which she deeply buries in her mind. Her present concern is to fight the battle of
starvation which she recollects “that today’s unappeased hunger appears much more real than the unrequited love of the past” (28). It is an account for that the subaltern resistance is not only for social acceptability but for economic freedom and to eliminate poverty imposed by the caste discrepancies.

A reading of the subaltern character, Dulali, through the brief interpretation of the socio-economic struggles of the Indian poor revealed in the story suggests the empowerment of the rural women. Dulali’s voice is recorded to dismantle the ‘binary positions’ of male/female, urban/rural, rich/poor, caste/outcaste, and Thakurs/Bhunyas. It can be studied within the parameters of a short story to evaluate the subaltern women’s struggle for space. A peek into the woman’s space puts Dulali in her own local situation where the real growth of the subaltern could be noticed within her effort to challenge her society. Her desire for space grows within the narrative and her resistance has been focused on in a unique mode through retrospection.

The reading has suggested an alternative outlook on the subaltern woman’s position for her empowerment within the limited space of the Thakur and the Bhunya communities. It is analysed within those basic identities of ordinary women who are often neglected and forgotten. The tribal woman empowered by Devi has resisted her subaltern role in her caste-ridden cultural contexts to reconstruct her individual space. The story has located the study of the subaltern to present the real context of a woman’s existence and the need for her empowerment. The resistance of Dulali depicts that she has her own consciousness that grows along with her past story. So, the ‘female resistance’ revealed in “Statue” is the representation of the woman’s space which consists of her subaltern consciousness and her struggle to re-define her identity. Devi has argued that a woman’s space is central to her identity through an
introspection of the emotions, desires, and challenging experiences of Dulali in the caste disparity. It is justified the claim of voicing the subaltern need for space as “Statue” speaks about a woman of a lower caste Indian society.

Devi emphases the subaltern need for space in another story of the forsaken, the un-noticed, and the sexually exploited women in “Bedanabala: Her Life, Her Struggle”. The voices of two women explain how Indian women are marginalised at different points of time and their suffering is perpetuated through various generations. A ‘female resistance’ is recorded in the first person narration by Bedanabala, a woman who tells the stories of two women: her mother, Kamilini (a kidnapped Brahmin child) and Did’ma (a brothel agent). The story reflects social change that is brought about through the three generations of subaltern struggle against exploitation and violence inflicted by oppressive ideologies. Ajay S. Sheker in “Writing and Agency: A Minor Critique of Mahasweta Devi’s Narration” states: “Mahasweta Devi’s writing whether a note or a novel, is always done with specific socio-political intentions. Social change and cultural politics are core to her life and works” (64). It is supported in the story of Kamalini and Did’ma whose lives from the subaltern prospective are taken for analysis. The intersecting experiences of these women reveal the subaltern need for space.

The resistance is recorded by Bedanabala, it depicts how from the Nineteenth Century despite prostitution and trafficking of girl-children, the women have defined their selfhood. Devi’s mode of narration in the story implies the suppressed lives of Did’ma and Kamalini, the women resist injustice and violence meted out to them in their diversity. Did’ma reminiscences her profession as a brothel owner, revealed from the viewpoint of Bedanabala who records the exploitation of subaltern women by comparing her present happy existence. Devi writes about the voice of Did’ma to
talk about the unpleasant experiences of the sex-workers and to represent their hidden history that expressed their discontentment. It is an earnest effort of Devi to record the real image of tribal women who are victims of prostitution, poverty, and slavery. It is how ‘feminist historiography’ of these women is recorded from their daily events and experiences.

Devi writes that the distortions of the sexually exploited women were from time immemorial and the images of such women were socially constructed by multiple expressions such as ‘whores, sluts, and prostitutes.’ They were neither accepted by society nor by their family members. Such women were perceived as harlots. The names of these women were ‘old, very old- dig into this earth, this soil and deep, deep down, buried in the history, will find these names carved in stone.’ It indicates that the identity of women was indoctrinated and documented into ‘history’ and ‘myth’. Did’ma counts a dictionary full of their names to reveal their exploited history by reading out the names of the women in alphabetical order and exclaims, “You can add to the list the later versions like Kashibi, Kuchi... From one kingdom to another... if one counted all their names, they would perhaps add up to no less than a few million” (Devi, Bedanabala 38). It signifies that the marginalisation of such women is perennial in all ages. Devi asserts that these women are human beings and are ‘born with some rights, some hopes, not just with a scar across their fates’. Did’ma as a brothel owner narrates the misfortunes of the subaltern women by recording her own exploited history. Devi’s concern for the tribal women is outstandingly recorded in the story to give voice to the women- “a voice in history” (Spivak, Can the subaltern Speak? 550) who are socially marginalised and sexually exploited. It is to counter the irrationality of Indian rural society and its biased attitude towards women.
The profession of Did’ma is emphasised as a ‘trade for generations’. It is imposed by her society and perpetuated from her ancestral times. She recollects the misfortunes of the other women like Nanda-bahu and Sulochana, whose ‘happiness isn’t fate for a whore’. From her birth Did’ma is singled out for an inhuman destiny. Born illegitimate, she lacks knowledge of her father. It is how the narrator traces the second generation of the brothel owner as the victim of flesh-trade. The women’s voices record how religious dogmas exploit them with stringent rituals to become ‘everybody’s woman.’ The writer critiques at the social practices that banish women into a cruel destiny stating, “they have no afterlife, no rebirth. This lifetime is equal to a hundred lives, a hundred births” (Devi, Bedanabala 22). Devi records how subaltern issues submerge the aspirations of the lower class, the lower middle class, and the upper caste women to be sub-humans in cultural construction. This forced labour also exploits them to pay for ‘temple constructions’ and other religious rituals.

The dreams and aspirations of these women are also retold by the narrator as many of them die being unable to have social, economic, and political freedom. It is echoed in Did’ma’s voice that ‘whores die of many things’. Physical violence against these women is also recounted in the story in the subaltern voice. Devi goes on narrating the destiny of Taramani, the dancer in the theatre to universalise the struggles of the Native women. The story records the exploitation of housewives are no better than that of whores who are forced to be mothers at the age of thirteen and considered as old by twenty. The monotony and drudgery of a housewife and a sex-worker is same which is implied in the phrase, ‘bird in the same cage’.

The resistance of the narrator who counters men who “come for new tastes, new flavours, no one calls them sinners after all. That name is kept for women.” (11) Devi reiterates the struggles of women to escape from the lust of men by revolting
against their sexual exploitation. The young girls stolen at ‘Gowal Haripur dol
festival’, Mani and Rani testify to the base behaviour of their oppressors. The multiple
voices of the women in the story are represented to speak of their tragedy and resist
their subaltern position. Did’ma records their demanding lives in the following:

Even the police records had her name down as a professional. And she’d thought of
returning home? Of course all this is talk of long ago. Mani and the rest knew they
were whores, knew that society thought them rotten at the core. That society called
them ‘kept women’. And Mani, the others, they knew no difference. Lived for no
more than corrupting men. (15)

Did’ma counters the ‘myth’ that ‘every girl-child is misfortune’ in each family.
However, she feels that the girl from such a family has no escape from suffering.
Their escape means social ostracism for their fathers from their landlords. The
delineation on the three-fold marginalisation of these women is heard from Did’ma
who states that a sex-worker generated by society is wanted neither by ‘the family nor
her master nor does she find any spouse’. From the “moment of their births, they are
no more than bundles of sin” (17). In deep anguish and frustration, Did’ma despises
her identity as an agent of the unjust social system and begins to resist its
manipulation.

The challenges of Did’ma help her to find ways out to realise her identity.
When she is attracted by the Nawab’s son, she revolts by changing her religion to
become a Muslim. After getting a fixed amount every month and a house, she gets
divorced and marries another man. It is how she realises her distinctive potential and
earns economic freedom. She casts a spell on Nawab to get a house for herself in the
village, Bareily. ‘No longer she is the professional whore, neither her name is
recorded in the police centre. Astute and clear, she makes her own life. Even though
she is ostracised by society for running the brothel business, she finds a way to condemn damaging ideologies. Did’ma is not a subaltern but an empowered woman resists oppressive stories of other women who are exploited as sex-workers and their untiring efforts to find a way out of their situation. Did’ma’s resistance as as ennobling power helps her to support other women and to voice their concerns.

The voice of Did’ma vents her frustration by attacking men-centered writings. She cites the names of Shakuntala and Urvashi from Indian mythology as prey to the patriarchal ideology operated by male-domination. Her resistance can be seen in the following words “Fate was against me. A girl, that too born to a whore. What else would I expect? My mother pushed me into sin and I’m carrying on with job” (20). The stereotype profession of Did’ma is coercive and imposed on her by society. Her fate as the gendered marginalised woman is considered ‘no-good, an empty-head no matter how young and beautiful she may be’. And there is no ‘pride in high birth’. ‘He has written all this. And he was a saint after all’. Devi interrogates it as she potently raises a question on the distorted identity of subaltern women.

The resistance in the story is against prostitution that causes HIV-AIDS for tribal people. P. K. Kar, Pujashree Mishta, and Soubhagya Ranjan in “Issues and Perspectives of HIV-AIDS among Tribal People” opine that AIDS has killed twenty five million people and has infected forty million. It is the poor and the marginalised, especially, women who are most vulnerable. A social response of blame, denial, discrimination, and stigmatisation of HIV positive people has further excluded the people who are already marginalised. It shows the tribal women as victims of prostitution have become victims of HIV-AIDS in the rural Indian society. Subaltern-consciousness of Devi raises this sanitary concern of the women and the need for the healthy environment to the rural women.
The cultural challenge of Did’ma is that she is tied down to the ancestral job as a professional agent maintaining the sex-workers in her house. She is forced by the trade to kidnap little girls, buy, and bribe her way to get other people’s daughters for flesh-trade. The introspection of her life makes her feel that prostitution is a heinous offence yet her fate is destined by Patriarchy due to her social stigma that ‘a whore’s daughter is always a whore’. Did’ma’s resistance makes confusing of her love for the girl, Kamalini and the societal taboos. She is forced to yield to the cultural constraints and ethos of her society. Did’ma’s voice is a voice of resistance against the age-old stereotype roles imposed on women as prostitutes. They try to reclaim their identity by rejecting these roles as sex-workers.

The resistance portrayed in Kamalini by comparing her life with Did’ma. Ayon Haldar in “An Untold Tale from the Margin” supports the story of Kamalini as it is about the rise of a woman from the worst possible deplorable condition but she retains her innate good qualities throughout. Born to a rich landlord she is oblivious of her parents as she is kidnapped by the brothel agents and wants to escape from the wretched house. She resists the stereotyped profession of her foster mother, Did’ma longs for freedom, and self assertion. Kamalini’s subaltern role is social construct and she is made to suffer from treachery, wickedness, and oppression yet her desire for freedom is consistent. Devi wants to convey the emptiness in the kidnapped girl, who has lost her identity and everyone looks at her as a whore. Although she is from a wealthy Zamindar’s family, yet has lost her dignity after associating with the sex-workers. Kamalini’s conscience is awakened when Did’ma lavishes love on her. It is how subaltern women come together in harmony to resist their external powers. Kamalini’s freedom for existence from exploitation is seen in the following:
Slipping into an oblivious daze. Forgetting to feed the pet cat, the bird in the cage.
Forgetting to add honey to the fresh tulsi plucked from the pot. Forgetting to plaither hair. Dry before twisting it into a knot. Then forgetting to pin it. And sitting, sitting by the window, watching the rain. Rain clouds. Rain drops. (Devi, Bedanabala 31)

Through these women’s voices, the writer suggests an alternative system to change inhuman realities of Indian social evils: prostitution, rape, ostracism, hunger, and violence. The feminist resistance is strengthened when Balaram- Bahu, a Vaishnavite social reformer works for the empowerment of these fractured women. Kamalini’s name would be out of the list of the whores. Her marriage with him changes her destiny and thereafter she lives happily. Bedanabala, a baby girl born to them is accepted warmly with a desire that ‘daughter will be worth a hundred sons’. This awareness on the importance of a girl-child is a celebration of the identity of women. Devi suggests that empowerment of women is possible through men like Balaram- Bahu who work to raise the dignity of women, unmindful of their status and upbringing. His activism creates a new wave of freedom in the lives of marginalised women. It reveals that gender equality is possible only if men and women work together as individuals accepting their self and each other with respect.

Resistance in “Giribala” can be noted in Devi’s ‘feminist historiography’ of the wretched life of a lower caste girl, Giribala nicknamed as Giri from Talsana Village in Kandi. The argument of Devi in “Giribala” is that a girl needs to be taken care to fulfil her roles as a responsible daughter, wife, and mother. Devi’s idea on empowering womanhood in “Giribala” can be supported from Lauretta Ngcobo’s article, “African Motherhood: Fact and Fiction” and Buchi Emecheta’s novel, Second-Class Citizen. Ngcobo and Emecheta endorse the social respectability of a woman and opine that a girl is born to accomplish a particular task. Therefore, she is the
responsibility of her society and has to be taken care of. Motherhood as a powerful institution persuades a mother to exercise her power. The contention of Ngcobo and Emecheta is that women are made to exercise their position from the periphery and are treated as ‘second-class citizens’ in a patriarchal society.

Applying this to “Giribala”, it can be argued that Giri and all her daughters are treated as peripheral women and are victimised by the common practice of selling the daughters by their own fathers to get bride-price from the grooms. The story provides various glimpses of Giri’s shattered experiences and makes her quest for agency, laudable. As a child her distinctive capabilities are seen in ‘her eyes’ described as ‘just an ordinary girl but her eyes are full of life. She would catch your eye because of those eyes’. After taking eighty rupees, her father gets her married to a drunkard and ‘ganja fiend’ Aullchand by endowing him with gifts: ‘silver’, utensils, ‘mats’, and a ‘cartload of bamboos’. But Aullchand easily rejects Giri on the pretext of his hut being burnt and demands bamboo from her father to build a house. It is here that Giri’s capabilities are realised. She dares to come back home as an act of resistance. Devi makes an ironic comment on the fate of the lower caste women and makes a loud alarm of the socially constructed subaltern role stating, “a daughter means a female slave for someone else’s house” (64). It is portrayed that marriage among the tribal is commercialised and merchandised for woman-trafficking and men like Giri’s father, Bangshi Dhamali, Mohan, and Aullchand are share-holders of it. The city, Murshidabad becomes an epicenter that houses the flesh-trade racket. The misery of these women are recorded by Radha Chakravarty in “Introduction: In the Name of the Mother” to In the Name of the Mother:

‘Giribala’ presents the plight of an innocent village woman whose daughters are sold into the flesh trade by their own father, to pay for the house he dreams of building.
The rhetoric of gender discrimination rationalises the exploitation of the girl-child: a daughter, after all, is dispersible, lost if she’s dead, lost if she’s wed. (xi)

The above statement supports the idea that Patriarchy in Indian tribal society is the most powerful force to exploit women. The story explains how Giri rises through her inner struggle to revolt against her subjugation and at the age of fourteen goes back to her husband’s house to take care of him. Giri’s voice of resistance empowers her and so she chooses family-planning by resorting to sterilisation after the birth of four children. But her choice has a rebounding effect on her; she is made to pay penalty for not producing male-children when her husband takes control over her as an act of retribution and sells his daughters to brothel owners in Bihar. Giri takes on the power-relations as a challenge and awakens from her marginalised condition to fight for justice.

Devi’s portrayal of the subaltern world is to expose the root cause of the problems that are embedded in the cultural system where young girls are forced into the flesh-trade. Giri’s daughters, Belarani and Paribala, are the victims of exploitation. At the age of eight, Belarani’s drudgery is to run a thousand errands in the Babu’s (landlords) “house for a meal wage” (“Giribala” 67) and at twelve years she is sold in the marriage-market- “the girl-trafficking business” (72) for a hundred rupees. Giri is overwhelmed with rage and rebels against her husband. After the shattered experience she is not downcast but continues her daily chores bearing pain in her heart and alerts the second daughter after leaving her to work in the Babus’ house saying, “If your father comes to get you, I’ll chop you to pieces if you go to him” (74). It depicts her inner strength to cope with the daily trifles and continue her social responsibility as mother and wife. Resistance becomes an ennobling power in Giri when she loses her second child Paribala. The inhumane men Aullchand, Manohar Dhamali, Bangshi
Dhamali, and Mahan sell Paribala to flesh-traders on the pretext of an arranged marriage. Aullchand knows that there is a great demand for ‘nubile young girls from West Bengal’. The rich clients and the traders are fond of tender girls. A ‘well-grown girl is fed and fattened to recover a good amount of money within a few years’. Alluchand gets a hundred rupees for Paribala. Giri’s resistance is expressed thus: “Her mouth is dry, Giri forces out the words, Please go back to your own homes. Giri continuously stares at the people who are gathered at her house and eyes are widened in surprise” (83) and shakes her head demanding justice from her husband. There are no tears in her eyes and she awakens her suppressed consciousness when she hears Babu’s aunt saying “Small sorrows make you weep but great grief turns you to stone” (83) and after taking her wage she revolts.

Giri’s persistent resistance helps her break free from Patriarchal exploitation and she walks out of the house to fulfil her duty as a responsible mother. She wants to safeguard the respect and dignity of her little daughter Maruni and taking her son and daughter she walks through the streets of the town, boards a bus, and gets down in Nishinda, looking for employment. As a wife she challenges her husband by resisting his man-power. The narrator records it in the following:

She’d told Bangshi Dhamali, tell Pari’s father, he can rot for all eternity in his house. Giri will work in the town as a maidservant, bring up her children…And walking through the streets in town, Maruni clasped to her bosom, Giri thinks to herself, If the heart’d mustered up courage earlier, I’d have left then, long ago. Would Pari have been lost to us then, or Bela?” Tears stream down her face as she remembers. But she walks on. (84-85)

Giri’s resistance to create her own space within her ‘no-space’ social system is remarkable. It is her act of resistance that helps her to subvert gendered discrimination
and sexual exploitation. As a responsible mother she exercises her own authority by becoming the decision maker for her children by rejecting social restrictions and overlooking the criticisms of her neighbours. It explaines that Giri is a Native woman who realises her authentic motherhood by resisting imposed roles of a mother and exercises her freedom as responsible mother.

Analysing the women characters of the five stories of Devi in the Chapter, it is argued that they resist Patriarchal distortions on the image of women and realise their innate desire for social respectability. The five stories revolve around women of the lower castes and lower class who are exploited according to different societal norms. They tell their own stories and histories collectively or individually by breaking the significant and unbroken upper caste tradition. It is how they dismantle caste, class, and gender inequalities. The voices of these women clearly express a need for a respectable social identity for the marginalised women which they have realised in the process of their subaltern-consciousness. The women issues addressed by them are from a subaltern perspective and reflect contemporary reality in tribal India that women have created their space by dismantling culturally constructed roles.

The women: Sanichari, Chandi, Dulali, Kamalini, Did’ma, and Giribala are not the subaltern victims. Rather, they are the women who have recognised their worth and have exercised their social responsibility to fight for their own identity and that of others. The voice of these women have expressed a need for social acceptability and economic mobility within and outside the tribal or egalitarian community. The awareness of the tribal women about their exploitation is expressed by every woman character of the stories. The subaltern-consciousness of these women is to resist every aspect of their exploitation. They are the women who “encompass a range of different positions which are not predefined by dominant political
discourses” (Morton, 45). Their experience is retold by Devi in the ‘feminist historiography’ of the subaltern in their different social experiences. Having discussed on the resistance of the Devi’s women, the study examines Lahiri’s stories to locate their similarities and dissimilarities in expressing their resistance.

Lahiri’s perception on women who struggle in their Diasporic familial constraints to assert and express their individual identities is seen in the middle-class Bengali woman, Aparna in “Hell-Heaven”. A. J. Sebastian in “Interpersonal Relationship in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Hell-Heaven’” asserts that Lahiri also records their distinctly individualised identity in their personal experience. He posits out that characters like Aparna try to establish their identity in their Diasporic family existence of loneliness and seclusion. It shows how women who are confused in their different location get connected to their friends for emotional support. Aparna’s struggle is to come out of her loneliness and enjoy happiness. It is seen in the way Aparna tries to relate to her family-friend, Pranab Chakraborty, an MIT engineer from Calcutta settled in America who helps her get-rid of “her nostalgic” (Lahiri, 66) experience. In considering Aparna’s positive response to nostalgia, her resistance is against her conjugal obstacles generated out of an introversion of her husband, Shyamal. The extravert Aparna contests, re-defines, and re-negotiates her conjugal relations for a happy existence with Pranab who addresses her as Boudi. A Bengali expression Boudi for sister-in-law is used to address her instead of using the first name Aparna. Lahiri’s use of Boudi as a register shows how Aparna has a deep connectedness to her family and her friends in her Diasporic existence which helps her define her identity.

Pramod K. Nayar points out in Post Colonial Literature: An Introduction, that there is “a conscious attempt to assert ethnic identity in terms of the homeland, while simultaneously seeking acceptance/assimilation in the new cultures” (190). In their
Diasporic existence women do assert their identity but do not always assimilate western culture. Pramod’s idea on the assimilation can be contested, because, Aparna as a first-generation Diasporic woman does not assimilate American culture but expresses her discomfort to live in the new culture by finding emotional support from her friend from Calcutta. Her ethnic identity is in wearing the red and white bangles, *Tangail* sari and thick stem of vermilion powder in the center parting of her hair, the full round face, and large dark eyes that are so typical of Bengali women which gives her a distinct Bengali personality in America. It helps her to resolve her conflicts in living in America and find her happiness. Resistance in Aparna is a cry for her personal wellbeing and to accomplish her role for social acceptability. She resists her personal conflicts by often recalling her homeland and discussing her ‘home’ culture with Pranab.

The resistance of Aparna is heard in the narrative voice of Usha, her adolescent daughter, from whose viewpoint, their family history is recorded and who addresses Pranab as Pranab Kaku -a Bengali address for uncle. Lahiri’s use of the word here is to express how women in divided location recognise their “self-concept formation” (DeLamater and Myers 58) which mean to explore their familial bond within their community members. In ‘self-concept formation’ Aparna recognises her true identity in socialising with her own community members like Pranab. Through her childhood experiences Usha tries to understand emotional discontentment that grips her mother as she tries to find meaning in her new surroundings. Aparna is the woman whom Simone de Beauvoir calls as one who shares “mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity” (“woman and the Other” 280). It signifies that Aparna expresses her resistance through fears, frustrations, hopes, and dreams as she contends with emotional challenges in her life as a Diasporic Indian woman. As a
second-generation Diasporic woman in America, Usha observes how an Indian woman like her mother who belongs to the first-generation of American Diaspora makes a numerous efforts to assert her individuality within the Patriarchal constraints of her family. It is in this limited space of her subaltern position where Aparna realises her identity as an active, outgoing, free, alert, and responsive woman. It is in her family within which she explores her personal life to find fulfilment. Her interrogation of domestic values becomes a resistance to realise her dignity and freedom within her family.

In Aparna’s personal space as an Indian woman she breaks free from Patriarchal barriers and loneliness from her husband in order to find joy. Usha’s voice is heard in her narration of the past life of her mother, and her inner or outer relationships with the people she encounters in the American space, especially, with her husband, her daughter, and the family friend. Lahiri records Aparna’s sensibilites from the viewpoint of Usha, who as a child is unaware of the secret affection her mother shares with Pranab nor does she understand Aparna’s loneliness in the Apartment in Central Square. As an adult, Usha recalls her childhood days, going out shopping with her mother around the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts Avenue, and Harvard Coop; going out to swim in the Volkswagen Beetle driven by Pranab Kaku to Walden Pond. Usha’s feminist-consciousness reflects on how Aparna resists her loneliness and finds joy as she overcomes her personal difficulties.

The feminist resistance is observed in Usha’s voice that probes the thoughts of her mother in an arranged marriage in which her parents have distanced themselves from each other since they are different in nature and incompatible. Usha’s father was nine years older than her mother and a lover of silence and solitude. He was a workaholic and always engrossed into his research which is arbitrary to her mother’s
extrovert nature. Lahiri reveals this binary opposition of Aparna and her husband to dismantle gendered binary thoughts that impose silence behaviour on women and to see how Aparna as an authentic individual contributes herself to the well being of her family. Aparna resists gendered construction of woman as a silent being and is confined within the four walls by celebrating her extroversion and expresses her authentic self.

The argument of Beauvoir in “Woman and the Other” is taken to support that Aparna is not a ‘relative being’, ‘Other’ ‘negative’, or ‘sex’ but a ‘human being’ and ‘equal in difference’ to her husband. Lahiri draws a contrast between Aparna and her husband to portray the struggle for identity of Indian women and their determination to find it. An elaborate description on the uniqueness of Aparna in the story reflects that she is positive, open, free, enjoying Indian film-songs, cooking a variety of Indian foods, going out shopping, sightseeing, and enjoying discussions with Pranab. It shows that Indian women constantly struggle to break free from loneliness and the constraints of their marital lives, and by doing so they recognise their freedom and liberation. Aparna’s loneliness gets resolved when she finds a companion who becomes an ‘unanticipated pleasure in her life’. The entire story speaks about Aparna’s search for freedom which she finds in her companionship with Pranab. It is posited in the following:

Pranab Kaku’s visits were what my mother looked forward to all day, that she changed into a new sari and combed her hair in anticipation of his arrival, and she planned, days in advance, the snacks she would serve him with such nonchalance. That she lived for the moment she heard him call out “Boudi!” from the porch and that she was in a foul humour on the days he didn’t materialise. (Lahiri, 63)
The above passage describes Aparna’s anticipation of Pranab and the way she copes with her difficulties to live with her husband. Lahiri’s articulation of the woman’s voice of resistance through Usha is concise and lucid, condensing it within a short story. Aparna’s resistance towards her restricted marital life and her search of her identity is contextualised in the narration of her daughter to examine the universal experiences of Diasporic Indian women. Aparna’s identity as a homemaker has conditioned her to fit into the moulds of dual familial experiences namely Indian and American. It is in this hybridised identity that she finds her individuality and decides to live in happiness.

The experiences of women: Usha and Aparna reveal the hidden consciousness of Diasporic women in search of their identity. Usha offers alternative ways to live and accept dual identities in American life. As a child of America and a daughter of her mother, Usha resolves her conflict by accepting her identity as a second-generation woman. This is how Lahiri’s women take the unbeaten path to find their self. If Usha breaks free from cultural and familial ties to define her, Aparna copes with seclusion in stoic endurance and making do with the company of Pranab Kaku. Usha records every movement of her mother in America that gives her an identity which is different from her husband. She had lived with her husband in ‘Central Square for three years’ before that in Berlin where her daughter was born. She traces back to her parental homeland, India where their marriage had been arranged. In Central Square she recalls an Apartment where Pranab Kaku accompanied her mother.

The feminist resistance revealed in Usha’s voice draws a sharp contrast between her father and Pranab Kaku to evaluate how Diasporic women re-define their identity. Usha observes her father as a person who dislikes conversation which he
considers a chore. He does not eat with the reckless appetite like that of Pranab Kaku. The temperament of her mother blends with that of Pranab Kaku and finds fulfilment in their platonic companionship. It is in Aparna that Lahiri gives a perfect example of Diasporic women to elucidate the sense of loneliness in Indian women that creates an identity crisis in them. She resists the stereotype roles of Indian women as submissive wives. Resistance as an ennobling power helps Aparna to live in comparative freedom sharing her joys and sorrows with Pranab.

The friendship between Aparna and Pranab is discussed to evaluate how collective ‘cultural identities’ can promote growth and enhance personal integrity. In *Text Book Social Psychology*, DeLamater, John D, and Daniel J. Myers posit out that collective cultures emphasise values that promote the welfare of the group and its associated identities. Similarly, Aparna’s ‘cultural identity’ helps her get closer to Pranab to find her unique identity and social respectability as a person from same locality of North Calcutta. She uses different strategies to assert her strength despite her socio-cultural, marital, and geographical constraints in America. Aparna by changing into a new sari and combing her hair, she anticipates Pranab’s arrival daily. She plans for the snacks she would serve him. She would roll out dough for *luchis* (Indian food) and displays new curtains that she had bought from Woolworth’s. Pranab would appear without informing her with a knock at the door as people did in Calcutta. Aparna shares common interests with Pranab like enjoying music, songs, films, politics, discussions, and poetry. Aparna’s identity as an out-going person is seen in the way Pranab would play courtship songs from Hindi films. They would discuss and argue about Hindi movies and actors like ‘Raj Kapoor and Nargis singing under an umbrella in the rain or Dev Anand strumming a guitar on the Goa beach’. Aparna finds fulfilment in her interpersonal relationship with her Bengali friend.
Lahiri emphasises the voice of Aparna that is overtly heard in her Diasporic efforts to realise her potential. Evaluating the characteristic features of Aparna’s personality, it reveals that resistance in Aparna helps her to accept her ‘self’ as a unique person.

Lahiri’s concept of feminist resistance is unique in her short stories. Sudha’s resistance in “Only Goodness” is seen in her awareness of her sensibility as a student of Philadelphian University, seeped in American culture. Identity crisis caused by Diasporic issues confuses Sudha but she re-affirms herself by exploring her relationship with her brother Rahul and assessing the limitations of her Indian parents. Sudha is a second-generation Diasporic daughter of her Bengali parents and gets assimilated into her life in America by acknowledging her personal quest for freedom. So, there is a constant effort to resist the Indian traditional identity imposed on her by her parents and to lead an independent life. Shahnawaz Begum in “Generations in Diaspora: Perspectives of Child Characters in Jhumpa Lahiri” states, “They cannot appreciate the cultural nuances of the earlier generation and generally distanced themselves from it” (107). The cultural conflict between Sudha and her parents is relevant. The narrator records it in the following:

She began drinking, something her parents did not do. They were prudish about alcohol to the point of seeming Puritanical, frowning upon the members of their Bengali circle—the men, that was to say—who liked to sip whiskey at gatherings. In her freshman year there had been nights when she got so drunk that she was sick on the streets of the campus, splattering the side walk and stumbling back to her dorm with friends. (Lahiri, 129)

Sudha as an adolescent girl extends her personal experiences to include experiments for a life of freedom despite the restrictions imposed on her by her traditionally stringent parents.
Sudha’s identity formation is seen in her American space of high school days when she introduces Rahul to drink beer on the weekends when their parents go to Connecticut overnight. Here Lahiri portrays how in a specific experience, Sudha as a teenager explores her identity by using the situation to enjoy the taste of freedom. Initially, Rahul is reluctant to drink and later both drink cans of beer bought from the local liquor shop in the absence of their parents. She feels a new bond with her brother, after years of regarding him as just a kid that they finally become friends. Jagadish Batra in *Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake: A Critical Study* states, “any process of acculturation, the possibility of change exists at all moments of life, so we get hybrid characters rather than pure subjectivities” (68). Sudha’s American identity with her Indian parents exposes her to a life of conflict. Sudha waits for freedom until she enters college. Her quest for freedom and for a social life gets satiated on going to Philadelphia. Merging with the western culture, her life becomes interesting with weekend parties with her boyfriends and going to pubs. She resorts to drinking, something her parents do not accept as it is against their Bengali culture. It is because Sudha wants to explore her individuality. Helen Cixous in “Laugh of the Medusa” supports this aspect of identity in a woman and states: “She had been secretly haunting since her early childhood. A world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the systematic experimentation with the bodily functions.” (292) Sudha’s quest for identity is to that of ‘searching’, ‘experimentation’ and a desire for ‘knowledge’. In these sentiments she finds her life.

Sudha’s ‘self knowledge’ is a form of resentment that she expresses to her parents who show greater preference for their son, Rahul as is typical of the Indian mentality. It is depicted in their attitude in celebrating Rahul’s graduation with a party by inviting nearly two hundred people and buying him a car. Sudha’s silent resistance
is seen in her stoic endurance of the discrimination and in her realisation of her responsibility as Rahul’s elder sister. Being six years older to Rahul, she exercises her power as the elder sister by taking a keen interest in him. Initially she develops a strong bond with him that leads to friendship and care. The anxiety with which she dotes on her brother is to protect him from the childhood she experiences as an Indian American. As an adult, she wishes to change things like the traditions imposed by her parents and their gendered bias in preferring their son. Her positive outlook makes things normal between her and her brother even though she constantly feels she is drifting away from her parents. She over-protects him by getting him out of trouble and placates him by comparing his life to that of her parents. Despite Sudha’s protection, Rahul brings disgrace to his parents by drinking and failing in his college studies. It is articulated from the narrator’s viewpoint in the following:

Other Bengalis gossiped about him and prayed their own children would not ruin their lives in the same way. And so he became what all parents feared, a blot, a failure, someone who was not contributing to the grand circle of accomplishments Bengali children were making across the country, as surgeons or attorneys or scientists, or writing articles for the front page of the *The New York Times*. (Lahiri, 151)

The comment quoted above indicates that Indian parents have an American dream for their male-children by way of education and career.

Lahiri contrasts the Indian Diasporic siblings, Sudha and Rahul through the ‘binary oppositions’ to portray the attributes of her women. Despite the gendered inequality, a woman like Sudha is successful in her Diasporic context. Sudha does well for herself despite her struggle for identity within her family. Lahiri portrays an identity of Sudha which is unique and specific. Sudha becomes a double-major with
Economics and Math. She has a Master’s in International Relations and a double Master’s at the London School of Economics. Lahiri portrays Sudha as the empowered woman who finds her job to realise her goal. When she is qualified, her parents are willing to send her to London to take up her assignment with an NGO. At the end of the story, she becomes a more progressive and successful woman. Sudha is the woman whom de Beauvoir identifies as “a free and autonomous being like all creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other” (*The Second Sex* 173). She has earned her dignity through a promising job as a project manager. Later her married life is also successful due to right choices in life. As a liberated woman, Sudha has many qualifications to marry Roger Featherstone.

Sudha’s status increases when she marries Roger a Ph.D. in art history and an editor of an art magazine. Though he is of Indian origin from Bombay he remembers nothing about his place of birth. Roger’s courtship with Sudha is a new found joy from the agony he has from his first girl who had forsaken him. Sudha’s sense of freedom is seen in her decision to marry the man of her choice which she readily expresses to her parents when she comes home. She becomes a faithful wife to Roger. As an empowered woman she wants to move to London permanently with her husband. Thus, Sudha’s resistance is an ennobling power to recognise her potentials despite the challenges from her parents. Inside her Diasporic life, Sudha seeks to find her identity in the midst of trust and mistrust which is asserted by A. J Sebastian in his essay “Human Relationships in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Only Goodness’”. Her experience of being unwanted and secondary to her brother does not subdue her. Rather it spurs her on to bring out her inner potential to accept the fullness of her womanhood. On examination, the story reveals Sudha as the protagonist who is an empowered
Diasporic woman. Her resistance is not revenge but a realisation of her capabilities as a responsible woman.

Lahiri’s unique portrayal of resistance can be noted in “Nobody’s Business”. Resistance as a power to rise from inner struggle helps Sangeeta Biswas to define her subjectivity in a changing human relationship with her Egyptian lover, Freddy Farouk. The story with its precise and lucid style penetrates the emotions of women to examine how a Diasporic woman like Sangeeta faces unfaithfulness in a love relationship by combating its challenges. As Simmi Gurwara points out in “Jhumpa Lahiri’s Unaccustomed Earth: A Critique”, stating, “Nobody’s Business reflects on the vulnerability of a woman who is independent, educated but still gets trapped in a relationship with a cheat” (16). On the contrary, Sangeeta does not remain in her fallen state but makes efforts to assert her individuality with confidence. She is a thirty year old, smart good-looking Bengali unmarried woman who has dropped out of Harvard after a semester and works part time at a bookstore on the ‘square’. Lahiri portrays her as a successful woman who creates her own space to be happy despite failures. She is an example of a Bengali Diasporic woman who is aware of her marginalised position and is able to get empowered despite her academic failures.

Sangeeta’s identity reflects her assimilation into American life as a second-generation Indian who has a westernised nickname, Sang. She is economically independent and lives in a rented Apartment by paying her share with her housemates, Paul and Heather. Her identity as a Bengali woman is noted when there are a number of phone calls from her Bengali suitors from as far away as Los Angeles and as close by as Watertown who are interested in getting married to her. Sangeeta’s complaint is that these men always are confused about her identity and about her studies that they presume her to be a physics student but in reality she is a student of philosophy. They
assumed that she was getting a Ph. D. at Harvard, when she was a first semester drop-out. Paul as a narrator of the story gets confused that half her suitors think she is a Japanese and recognises her identity only when he sees her full name in her ‘security deposit’, ‘on her mail’, ‘on the labels of Vogue Magazines’, and on her ‘electric bill’. Paul observes that she was always polite towards her suitors and accepted to go for occasional rides with them. If they came to propose she would excuse herself with her usual white lie that she was busy with her classes at Harvard. Her love relation with Farouk is revealed through the observations of Paul and his telephone conversation with Deirdre Frain.

Lahiri depicts in Sangeeta a woman who is shaped by her sensibilities and human relationships in different forms of love affairs as stated by A. J. Sebastian. In his essay “Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Nobody’s Business’: A Study in Type of Love”, illustrates human love by applying Strenberg’s theory of love and states the different kinds of love lets individuals to understand and communicate the types of emotional behaviours they express. He refers to Strenberg as, “consummate love is the ideal and complete love which has intimacy, passion and commitment” (65). Considering the definition of Strenberg and Sebastian, it can be argued that Sangeeta is genuinely in love with Farouk who rebels when she does not find him reciprocating. Sangeeta’s revolt against Farouk is delineated in the story through various incidents. Farouk visits Sangeeta in her Apartment in his BMW car ignoring the other men. He is a demanding, accusing, bullying, and hurting lover. Often, Farouk makes her cry due to trivial matters. Once when she had baked a cake for his birthday, he had thrown it into the trash bin. One evening, Paul finds them in a heated discussion. Farouk does not spend nights with her and drops her off in a taxi. His love affair with Deirdre is clandestine and revealed to Paul when she once phones Paul to find out if Sangeeta
and Freddy were cousins. Paul reveals that there are exclusive friends. Realising his shady character, Deirdre talks to Paul about his behavior:

That’s what he does to women. He depends on them. He asks them to do a hundred things, makes them believe his life won’t function without them. That was him this afternoon when you called, still wanting to see me, still wanting to keep me on the side. He doesn’t have any friends, you see. Only lovers. I think he needs them, the way other people need a family. (Lahiri, 210)

Sangeeta is caught between her genuine love for Farouk and his betrayal. Thus her resistance is to face the challenge courageously by finding a solution. She does it by articulating her inner strength to combat the obstacles in love relationships. In Sudha, Lahiri records the discomforts of Diasporic women who are victims of sexual exploitation. The story narrated by Paul reveals women’s struggle for emotional fulfilment and faithfulness from a male point of view. Lahiri has devised a new strategy to speak about the marginalisation of Sangeeta in her entanglement with Farouk. Paul looks at Sangeeta as an Indian Diasporic woman, who is gullible to male gaze but Sangeeta outwits him.

Sangeeta’s challenges in realising her potential are viewed in a number of incidents. Firstly, when she drops out of Harvard, she is able to find a job at a bookstore ‘running a cash register and arranging paperback books in pyramid configuration’. Secondly, when she experiences Farouk’s unfaithfulness, she gathers courage to go with a trusted friend Paul, to Farouk’s Apartment to clarify her doubts. She pleads with him and pardons him but when he is incorrigible she expresses her discontentment stating: “How many times? How many times did you do it? Did you do it here on the bed?” (213) Finally, her resistance is approved when she walks out on him. After returning from his place she is devastated and keeps sobbing. The
following day she is off to London to be with her sister and never to return. It is how she expresses her discontentment and forgets her past and moves in a new direction to recover her social respectability by being with her sister and taking care of her sister’s new-born baby in London. The narrator breaks Sangeeta’s silence and empowers her to break free from male-domination and subjugation. Sangeeta confronts the vital truth of her sexual marginalisation by Farouk and his lovers; Deirdre and the new woman with a dog are not gullible women. But Sangeeta moves beyond sexual manipulation and faces her life with all its reality. In Sangeeta, Lahiri records the voice of women in love relationships to see how they reconstruct their fallen identities.

In “Once in a Lifetime” the protagonist, Hema as a married woman gives voice to her hidden childhood experience which is clearly imprinted in her memory ever since the age of six. Lahiri explores the unheard voices of the Diasporic women in the women narrative to locate various emotional challenges faced by two Bengali women that is revealed from Hema’s viewpoint as a little girl. The women’s resistance to an alien culture is seen in the retrospective memories of Hema’s mother and the mother of Kaushik as recorded by Hema as their untoward un-spoken history. “The cultural conflict between two societies is a hard reality that cannot be glossed over” (Tripathi, 251) by these women. The mothers express the different challenges of their families in their Diasporic existence as Bengalis in America. Hema’s voice distinctly delineates how her family and Kaushik’s family were connected for emotional and economic support. The resistance of Hema and her mother help them to discover their identity as Bengalis in the American culture.

The first person narrative voice of Hema projects her inner most sensibilities in searching for her identity as a child who belonged to the Indian Diasporic family in
America. She recalls the day when the family looked forward for the arrival of the Choudhuris (the parents of Kaushik) with a lot of anticipation by “polishing the furniture”, setting the table with “paper plates and napkins” and “cooking lamb curry and pullao” and spraying perfume on Hema’s “pajamas” and “a turquoise kurta” (Lahiri, 223). The narrative voice of Hema explains how Indian women express their joy in family reunions in a Diasporic cultural context. Lahiri makes the story very interesting with a single plot and a single theme on the two families of Hema and Kaushik living together in the same house to discover their identity as Bengalis in America. It is to depict how women in hybrid location get connected to the other Bengali women for emotional and moral support. By narrating her past, Hema discovers her distinct individuality as a second-generation Indian Diasporic woman.

Lahiri has employed clarity, precision, and lucidity in the story to record the voice of Hema who narrates her childhood with Kaushik, when they meet after many years. The first person narrative voice of Hema says that she was introduced to Kaushik ever since Nineteen Seventy Four as his family came to live with them in Inman Square from India after returning to India from Cambridge. Hema examines her family history as a person of Indian-origin belonging to one of the Bengali communities in America. Most often Lahiri records time, date, and chronology to examine the struggles and the identity problems of her women. A. J Sebastian supports this aspect in, “Hema and Kaushik in Emotional Tangle” by stating, “Following strictly the time location, Lahiri builds up her setting very vividly with the geographical location, time, weather conditions, social conditions and the atmosphere”. (118) It shows Lahiri creates a ‘historiography’ of the Diasporic women to write their un-spoken and un-recorded history.
Nostalgically, Hema recalls her family’s lasting roots of Bengal, specially, Calcutta. Her recollection reflects how Lahiri examines the inner feelings of Indian Diasporic women through the narrative voice of Hema who unfolds the lives and social background of their mothers. Hema narrates it in the following:

My mother had more pressing concerns. In addition to the quality and quantity of the food, she was worried...Our mothers met when mine was pregnant. She didn’t know it yet; ...They became instant friends, spending their days together while our fathers were at work. They talked about the lives they had left behind Calcutta... They knitted together, switching projects when one of them got bored. (Lahiri, 224-25)

The passage reflects on how Diasporic women like Hema’s mother and Kaushik’s mother draw sustenance from each other by being conscious of their indigenous social and familial environment in an Diasporic culture. They celebrate their power to recall their lives in Calcutta and discover it in their divided location. It is in that situation they express an urge to survive in the traumatic condition of alienation by becoming ‘instant friends’. It is reflected in Hema’s mother as a ‘young Bengali woman in a sari, wearing vermillion in her hair’ escorted by Kaushik and his mother to go home. During their evening walks, they have their own space to share stories of Kaushik’s mother’s beautiful home in ‘Jodhpur Park, with hibiscus and rosebushes blooming on the rooftop’ and Hema’s mother’s ‘modest flat in Maniktala’, ‘a grimy Punjabi restaurant’, ‘a convent school’, and ‘Saturday Club’. As Diasporic women in America, the mothers find solace in sharing their personal challenges in facing the constraints of American culture. It supports the argument that Diasporic women search for their identity by resisting alienation, loneliness, and constrains of Diasporic familial lives. Resistance examined in the mothers is against their Diasporic culture. They become vulnerable when they come to America due to the unfamiliarity with a
westernised way of eating by sitting at a table and the use of commode. They share that in Cambridge they were lonely, went shopping, and spoke about their husbands. An intimate relationship is established between the women while doing various household chores: knitting together, dividing the groceries, arranging for family parties, and cooking elaborate meals on either of their stoves. Lahiri depicts a unified force of the women to bond them for familial harmony and personal fulfilment.

Hema’s narration of every vignette of her childhood days makes her record the past with nostalgia to Kaushik when she tells him about it after they come together. It is revealed in the parallels between her father and Kaushik’s who was better off than the other Bengalis in America since he had a car, a Ph.D. Degree, and was employed in an engineering firm. Hema had shared her room and baby-furniture: the high chair and an old pram as kids with Kaushik. It was only when he is sixteen that they were separated. Hema realises her happiness in the company of Kaushik and states:

I continued to like you, was happy simply to observe you day after day. And I liked your parents, your mother especially; the attention I got from her almost made up for what I didn’t get from you. One day your father developed the photographs from your stay in Rome. I enjoyed seeing the prints, holding them carefully by the edges. (246)

Hema recalls her pleasant memories with Kaushik’s mother as a woman who had lavished a lot of affection on her. She expresses her unhappiness when his mother’s illness was kept as a guarded secret from Hema’s parents. Kaushik’s revelation about the death of his mother to cancer disturbs and saddens Hema. Later she expresses her angst, “I was furious that you had not told me, feeling at once burdened and betrayed, hating you all over again” (251). When Kaushik’s family shifted to a newly bought
house on the North Shore she is nostalgic. This is how Lahiri dwells on the emotional turmoil of her women characters.

The emotional turmoil in defining the identity in Diasporic woman can also be seen in “Going Ashore”. Lahiri, as an omniscient narrator in the story momentarily unites Hema and Kaushik in Rome after twenty years of childhood separation only to keep Hema’s memory alive till the end of her life. Lahiri portrays a unique feminist concern by giving continuity to her stories: “Once in a Lifetime” and “Going Ashore”. It reflects how the quest of Diasporic women for love, friendship, and harmony is a lifelong struggle and yet a woman like Hema goes in search of it from her childhood days and finds it.

A. J. Sebastian in “Hema and Kaushik in Emotional Tangle”, states “Life moves on with Hema, for unfulfilled in love, with a foetus growing within her, giving meaning to life through ‘Going Ashore’ to new Places” (132). Lahiri portrays it in the different experiences of Hema in Massachusetts and Rome to locate how women in their Diasporic existence struggle hard to find their self respect, dignity, and freedom. Hema’s friendship with Kaushik and Julian is an agonising and a shattering experience, yet at the end of the story Lahiri portrays how Hema wants to survive undaunted and determined to take care of the child that is in her womb. It shows her desire for survival as a responsible mother in Diasporic life. In this respect it can be stated Lahiri also records various concerns of Indian mothers.

Hema’s acceptance of her identity is seen when she comes to Wellesley as an economically stable woman to work as a professor of Latin. Her parents and her husband-to-be, Navin are unaware of her life in Rome. The narrator states, “her scholarly life was a mystery to them, something at once impressive and irrelevant. It
had earned her a Ph.D. and a tenure-track job” (Lahiri, 294). Hema has impressed them as a woman who has economically empowered herself and can freely move to any part of the world. Beneath her success there is an unexpressed sorrow and emotional turmoil which she experiences after disconnecting from her lover Julian, a married man with wife and daughters. Hema’s stoic endurance helps her overcome her emotional attachments and the challenges they brought in its wake.

Lahiri evaluates Hema who has the freedom to step into any walks of life with her education providing her an empowered status. Hema breaks free from the traditional life of the first generation women like her mother who accompanied her husband to America for household chores. The story delineates how Lahiri’s second-generation women are empowered and have moved towards freedom and independence. Although Hema is economically free yet the Diasporic issues continue to trouble her; Hema’s friendship with Kaushik and Julian do not last. Hema’s challenge is that as a Diasporic woman, she could never go deep into any relationship either with Kaushik or with Julian. She experiences betrayal and unfaithfulness from both of them. Lahiri depicts friendships and human relationships in the lives of Diasporic women as transitory where the women experience turmoil and disappointment. Despite this, Hema challenges loneliness and mental trauma by taking up research. In her deep loneliness she realises that as an independent woman her ‘heart did not belong to Navin in the same way’ and she feels ‘something dead about the marriage she was about to enter into’. Lahiri probes a woman’s heart at a deeper level to explore how despite the brokenness she continues to live. It reveals that Indian women in Diasporic space are able to cope with their personal problems to realise their identity. Hema’s struggle as an individual helps her to be familiar with her potential.
Hema’s unfulfilled love with Julian gives a new turn to her life when she meets Kaushik, a photo-journalist and her childhood friend. She finds happiness in his passionate intimacy and tries to release her emotional traumas. The narrator states “She stayed awake, listening to his breathing, craving for his touch” (314). Hema spends a lot of time with him in the nights, ‘surfing his net’, looking at the ‘pictures of the corpses of war victims’ which he had click during the wars. She goes out with him to restaurants, bars, and abandoned streets, city parks sitting together like teenaged couples kissing each other and making love. Soon the relationship is shattered and lost when Kaushik leaves for Hong Kong. After her marriage with Navin she reads in *New York Times* that Kaushik had died. In the intimacy between Hema and Kaushik, the writer draws a clear picture of a woman who is caught between the world of Diasporic sensibilities like love, memory, and loss. Despite this she struggles to handle her personal problems. After several unhappy love affairs she finally accepts her identity and opts for an arranged marriage with Navin.

Hema’s struggles continue to exist even after her marriage with Navin because of the cultural relationship and her emotional entanglement with Kaushik. She recalls it stating, “I was repulsed by the sight of him, not because I had betrayed him but because he still breathed, because he was there for me and had countless more days to live” (332). She recalls her childhood life with Kaushik and now it has forced them to live on different shores. Hema’s cultural identity is connected to the memory which is delineated in her gold bangle, a traditional link with her mother and her Bengali friends. It was symbolically hooked to Kaushik’s “finger through the first night, drawing her to him” (323). She had left it at the security check while boarding the plane. After losing it she feels that she had lost a part of her body and she remembers
her mother’s words “losing gold is inauspicious” (323). The gold bangles become an arena of memory and identity of her past life that helps her to survive.

Analysing the women characters in the five stories of Lahiri, it is seen although they are culturally and sexually marginalised in American society, their quest for survival is constant and continuous. A closer examination of their lives reveals a similarity in their way of asserting their individuality that is unique and yet varied depending upon their cultural context. They narrate their authentic stories with its challenges and cultural constrains. Lahiri makes a conscious effort to narrate their discontentment that helps them reconstruct their identity. Each woman has unique experience whereby she expresses her resistance to discover her unique identity.

It is been discovered that Lahiri’s short stories have a single and unique effect concentrating on the Indian Diasporic women and their struggle to discover their identity by resisting cultural ‘moulds’. It is achieved by the woman character of each story in a single scene, an episode, an experience, an action, a meeting, a conversation, and in the expressed or unexpressed voice. Each woman character discovers the world around her to realise her positive contribution to assert self. In the process there is a subject formation by means of transformation and evolution. The study reveals that the experiences of women are mundane and ordinary but have great significance in recognising their individuality within the family and outside. Indira Nityanandan in Jhumpa Lahiri: The Tale of the Diaspora asserts that Lahiri’s stories are “basically peopled with ordinary, average individuals; people who have lived ordinary everyday lives, a humdrum existence like most common people” (22). Lahiri considers feminist theme is greater significance. All the stories have resistance to cultural stereotypes and Lahiri has presented a variety of facets of resistance of her
women. A constant struggle for their selfhood is motif in all the stories but their challenges are diverse, complex, and varied.

Aparna’s challenges in “Hell-Heaven” are totally different from Hema’s in “Going Ashore”. Similarly if Sangeeta in “Nobody’s Business” experiences unfaithfulness from her lover Farouk, Sudha in “Only Goodness” is exposed to gendered discrimination. All these women face Diasporic challenges with un-daunted courage and determination. As discussed at the beginning of this Chapter, their resistance is not for rebellion or revenge but to exercise their womanhood as responsible social individuals. They counter Diasporic issues in order to assert their individuality and move away from their victim position. They help themselves to fulfil their specific roles in their families. They reflect the literary creativity of Lahiri to portray success stories of Bengali women who walk out of their ill-fitting roles and assert as triumphant women. A feminist resistance discovered is an ennobling power that helps the women to examine their identities in their Diasporic existence.

Having discussed the success stories of the women characters in the ten short stories of Devi and Lahiri, it is argued that both make an attempt to theorize the ways in which elements of creative language reflect and represent social systems of domination and distortion on the image of Indian women in the Native and Diasporic cultural contexts. As Indian women writers of short story, Devi and Lahiri have exposed socio-culturally and economically generated stereotyped images of Indian women as submissive and marginalised by emphasising the need to record their unheard voices. The resistance of these characters to define their identity is discussed from different cultural backgrounds and established in their efforts to re-construct a space for themselves. Therefore, the study has revealed that their women have
experienced the worst form of victimisation and exploitation which they have overtly defied. They have dared their diverse contexts and gone beyond limitations.

A recurring theme in Devi and Lahiri in these stories explored is that of the individual woman trying to find her own space within and outside the community, society, and country by defying stereotype images of women. The well-crafted precision in the stories allow for the examination of the exploitative cultures and their efforts to express their resistance. The stories rely on the telling details and nuances in the first person narration or omniscient narration to locate the various challenges of Indian women from different cultural contexts. The writers record their short stories with consistent precision to free the women from domination, oppression, and sexual stereotypes. A single story like “Rudali” or Lahiri’s “Hell-Heaven” serves to conjure the entire world of the marginalised women either due to caste differences or gender constraints in their respective families. The survival strategies used by the women express the way they seek empowerment and social acceptability.

It is summed up from Devi and Lahiri’s viewpoint that Indian Native and Diasporic women overcome their marginality through their personal effort despite the experiences of displacement, alienation, loneliness, and exploitation. The women have defied their distortions based on a cultural construct and traditional bias. Devi places her women in Indian tribal and dalit poverty-stricken rural communities to examine their caste, class, and gender ‘Othering’ whereas Lahiri’s women are the middle-class Bengalis placed in American society. They try to negotiate their issues in the given situation despite their identity struggle and find a sense of belonging to their respective social contexts. Even though Lahiri’s women suffer from geographical and cultural separation yet in memory they re-construct their personal and communal history. The common features of Lahiri’s women living as subalterns due to cultural
issues are similar to the marginalisation imposed by caste, class, and gendered issues in the short stories of Devi. Lahiri’s women belonging to the first-generation Diasporic Bengali community experience frustration and anguish but find fulfilment in their interpersonal relations. Their Diasporic existence has created a peculiar form of seclusion who challenge their relationships with their family, home, and alien environment to fight against sexual stereotyping.

Devi and Lahiri share a common platform to empower women and to undermine their marginalisation as the weaker groups. An example can be drawn from Sanichari and her unconventional mode of organising widows and prostitutes to retaliate their oppressors by becoming mourners at funerals. It indicates how they defy familial, traditional, cultural, social, and religious codes to assert their identity. The writers critically examine social institutions: marriage, family, motherhood, community, society, education, and religion as compelling forces that have led Indian Native and Diasporic women towards marginality through ill-fitting roles. As a result, many Indian women living in marginalised positions are targeted for displacement, alienation, exploitation, and violence. From the subaltern women’s prospective, the writers explicitly examine the yearnings and anxieties of their lives in their complex surrounding and their courage to walk away from cultural codes of submissive conduct. Although their presence is dispersal, a scattering, and a flight but they are fight it out through their inner potential, confidence, and assertive nature. It depicts Indian women continue to search for self despite their subaltern experiences in their surroundings.

In the context of these social biases, the subaltern stand of the writers becomes significant in their short stories. The writers review the cultural, historical, and geographical location of their women either in the Native or in the Diasporic context
to examine their cultural, the ‘Othering’ experience. It reflects the efforts of these women to resist cultural stereotypes in a diverse and heterogeneous culture. The writers critically re-examine the conditions of women from their marginalised status inorder to draw them to the center while taking into consideration India and America as cultural settings. The women characters do not belong to prosperous Indian families or to the American ‘mainstream’. Most of them are Bengali women of different caste, class, and ethnic groups depending either on rural India or America for their daily sustenance as labourers, homemakers, professionals, clerks or students.

The study reveals that the short stories of Devi and Lahiri have reformulated cultural Discourse by questioning traditional values and opposing dominant cultural codes. The stories continue to expose existing cultural practices that continue to marginalise Native and Diasporic women. Devi’s elderly women, bonded labourers, the outcasts, and the sex workers struggle for their empowered status within Patriarchal society. The stories deal with the traumatic history of the Indian rural women. Seeing the inhuman conditions of these women, Devi’s interrogation can be restated, “Why Independence? Why say we are a free nation? What right have we to do so?” (Dust on the Road 259) It indicates the need for social improvement of women through their empowerment. The questions from Devi’s women mentioned above signify that women are aware of their position in society and have created their subjectivity. It helps in their effort to move from their marginalised status and to get empowered and to become responsible human beings to help other women.

The viewpoint in the stories as expressed through different types of narrators highlight the plight of subaltern women in different types of communities. They experience gender exploitation through violence, domination, and sexual abuse. The marginalisation of subaltern women due to caste, class, and gendered inequalities in
Devi’s stories is different from the cultural ostracism in Lahiri’s stories. Devi’s subaltern women undoubtedly stand apart from the traditional women protagonists of Lahiri’s stories with their feminine qualities but all walk towards empowerment by resisting their cultural constructs. Devi envisages this aspect of empowerment which she articulates through the voice of Bedanabala, “So I tell you today, each prostitute, each sex worker, has the right to light, to break free of the darkness. They must know this. They must earn this for themselves” (Bedanabala 76). Devi exhorts Native women to break free from age-old traditions and cultural myth to walk towards freedom and dignity. After recognising their potentials they have exercised their power to celebrate their individuality. The writers use their literary ability to expose their women who break free from traditional bondage and sexual violence. The study has revealed that both Devi and Lahiri have recorded time, date, space, and chronology in the ‘feminist historiography’.

The striking contrast between the subaltern women of Devi and Lahiri is that the latter places them in America to examine their ethnic, national, cultural, and Diasporic existence and it has helped to evaluate their tensions and ambivalences. This aspect will be discussed in the next Chapter to examine the parallel and distinctive literary features of Devi and Lahiri in depicting the subaltern-consciousness of Native and Diasporic subaltern women. It will be discussed how Diasporic issues have oppressed women with ethnic discrimination, nostalgia, betrayal, loneliness, cultural conflict, and alienation. Yet Lahiri’s women as Iwona Filipczak points out in, “The American Dream in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Unaccustomed Earth and Only Goodness”, “adapt to the American space...they are involved in the processes of acceptance and resistance which are constitutive of the fluid immigrant identity” (1). It indicates that her women show an act of resistance in realising their
inner abilities as Bengali women. The examination conducted in the Chapter reveals all the aspects of struggle and triumph in the Native and Diasporic women in Devi and Lahiri.
Works Cited


---. “Telling History.” Interview by Gayatri Charkavorty Spivak. *Chotti Munda and


Kumar, Jeevan. “The Predicament of Poor: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s Rudali.”


---. “Human Relationship in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Only Goodness’. ”*Dynamics of*


Tripathi, Sharaddha. “Cultural Conflict in Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Lowland.”

