

Gender Subaltern as a Theme in Select Plays of Mahaswetha Devi

KALPANA B.

(17PEN005)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,

Coimbatore-641 043

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

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Mother of 1084 and Bayen

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Signature of the Supervisor


Signature of the Head of the Department

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The term subaltern was first coined by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, through his notable work on cultural hegemony. The word 'Subaltern' mentions the group of people who are excluded from the society's established institutions.

According to *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*, the term 'Subaltern' may be defined as people with a low ranking in a social, political or other hierarchy. It can also be referred to as someone who has been marginalized or oppressed. Ranajit Guha, from South Asia was greatly influenced by the subaltern studies. He defines 'Subaltern' as 'of inferior rank' which was stated in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Guha 1982:1).

In postcolonial South Asia, the *Subaltern Studies Group* gave voice to the marginalized people, and to the subaltern women in the society. In other terms, opposite to subaltern is the dominant or the elite group of people in the society. According to Gramsci, "wherever there is history, there is a class and the essence of socio-cultural interplay will be present in the society". This socio-cultural interplay was fought between the rulers and ruled, the dominant, elite or hegemonic class and subaltern class in the society.

In the Indian context, the condition of subalternity is identified through class and caste. It refers to the people who are tribals and who belong to the lower castes in Indian social hierarchy. Throughout the history, subalterns in the Indian society are subjected under the roof of the dominant classes in various ways. The structure of the oppressed group of people's lives is designated by the principles of elite, upper class ideologies and it reinforces the thought of inferiority. Caste system which is present in Indian culture determines the class system in the social hierarchy. This creates the

problems in the marginality against the background of caste which debunks the myth of power in the Indian society.

Indian history is straightened out by the matrix of subjects like raising the structure of class, caste, gender and religion. The Subaltern Studies mediates the anti-upper caste movements in India and postcolonial resistance of hegemony. The marginalization of subalterns in India is introduced by the history of caste system in the society. Marginality and subalternity which was generated by the caste system fled to question about the dominance and subordination in the society. Since caste is the chief determinant in India, it is necessary to examine the works which are based on the subaltern people in the society, who did not come out from their state of marginality in the hands of anti-upper caste people.

On the other hand, postcolonial theory and subaltern discourse which concentrates on the suppressed and submerged cultures show the way to the experiences of the marginalized and dispossessed. This helps the marginalized people to raise their voice for their empowerment in the society. In recent years, Indian government is interested in the marginalized community in the country. Subaltern people began to obtain their position in the society, with or without the concern of the elite people. Thus, postcolonial theories gave more importance to the affairs of hitherto for voiceless and dispossessed section of the society. The critics evoke a multitude of questions in connection with the different ways through which subaltern are represented within the elite discourses.

Subaltern voices were unheard by the people because there is eliticism which was present in the society. The elite make the voice of the subaltern into muffled cries and make them suffer in the hands of dominance and suppression. In recent years, many illegal incidents took place in India. Those incidents were based on the class

and caste system. Indian Vedas talks about the caste system which was present in olden days. There are four classes of people in the Vedas. They are Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (skilled traders, merchants) and Shudras (unskilled workers). The Shudras belonged to the marginalized or subaltern class in the society during the ancient period. These people were dominated by the other three castes people in the society. Through this, we can conclude that caste and class system that was aroused in the present period of time was formed through the old belief system which was present in the Indian culture and society. During those days religion made the people to suffer because of dominance in the elite society, but in recent years class, caste, religion and position of people in the society determines their subalternity in the socio-cultural hierarchy.

Subaltern classes which include peasants, workers, women and other groups of people were denied accessing the highest power in the society. When it comes to the gendered subaltern, women come under this to set off from the hegemonic society. Spivak uses this term to mention particularly Indian women who come under the gendered subjects in the subaltern studies. Throughout the history, subaltern writers witness the suffering of women. Earlier times they were treated as slaves and objectified. We witness changes which are happening in the world and the social system of life, but we cannot deny the fact that still women come under the marginalization in the society. In India, people worshipped women in the form of *Kali, Durga, and Shakti*, but our patriarchal society forces the systems like sati, child marriages, denial of education, and people put restrictions on the political, social and in education levels. Thus, people in the today's world diversified them from the actual world. We talk about the history and women's emancipation but close our eyes to the sufferings which are faced by women. The people in the world need to know what is

happening in different places like rural, semi urban, and in backward areas. These are explained in the literature which spoke only the truth that is happening in the society.

Ranajit Guha is the founder of subaltern studies which prevailed in India for the last twenty years. This new trend gave a new way to the traditional writing of history. The Indian point of view of subaltern writing is similar to the trend of England. Guha played a vital role in establishing this subaltern study institute. Guha and other historians determined to study the new point of view regarding the revolt movement during the period of British rule in India. He was inspired by the writings of Gramsci. He edited the collection of articles related to Subaltern Studies and it was published in the year 1982. Guha tried to write about the subaltern people from the perspectives of subaltern in the history. Through this only, one can notice the majority of the people who are submerged in the under developed state where they are predominantly oppressed by the elite people.

On the other hand, Dr. Sumit Sarkar who contributed to the subaltern studies, used the term “subaltern” for the tribal and low caste agricultural labourers, share coppers, land holding peasants, generally intermediate caste status in the Bengal and the labour in the plantations mines and industries. Along with Guha, he had taken the new trend regarding the subaltern. He wrote books like *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1973)*, *Popular Movements and Middle-Class Leadership in the late Colonial India (1979)*, *Perspectives and Problems of History from Below (1985)*. He states that the subaltern study is the basis for the varieties of eliticism, colonist, nationalist or the Marxist who mainly focuses on the lower-class society and its indicatives towards the breakdown of the history in the world. He never neglects the view of the leadership of organic middle-class society in the history.

The subaltern studies found the new form of writing which is based on the history of India. Most of the history only showed the partial world buried and did not show the remaining part which belongs to the low-level group in the society. A particular group of people is deprived for the proper position in the society. Thus, subalterns became an original site for new kind of history from below, a people's history free from the national constraints. The history provides the justice for the people who are victimized in the oppression state of society. The Subaltern Studies helped the critics and scholars to deal with the new kind of history which focuses on the low-class people.

The other major figure in the Subaltern Literature is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who is an Indian scholar, literary theorist and a feminist critic. She is the founding member of Institute for Comparative Literature and society. She is considered to be an influential person in both postcolonial literature and the Subaltern studies. Spivak is known for her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* where she deals with the women, who are submerged in between the social constrains. Through this work she speaks about the history, geography and class system of those women. This work speaks about the *Sati* practice, which leads to reflect whether subaltern can ever speak. Spivak's other works are *In Other Worlds* (1987), *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993), *Death of a Discipline* (2003), *Other Asias* (2008). She has also translated the works of Mahasweta Devi, such as *Imaginary Maps* and *Breast Stories* in English. In 2012 she received the award Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy for being a critical theorist and educator who supported the humanities against the colonial rule. She received Padma Bhushan in the year 2013 for being a highest civilian in India.

Another important figure in subaltern literature is Partha Chatterjee, an Indian political scientist and anthropologist. From 1997 to 2007 he was the director of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and a professor of political sciences. He was also a professor at Columbia University and a member of the Subaltern Studies Collective. In 2009 he received the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize. He published collections of essays in Bengali. He is a joint editor of *Baromash*, a biannual Bengal literary journal which was published from Calcutta. His famous books are *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* in 1986, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* in 1993, *The Present History of West Bengal* in 1997, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* in 2012.

Dipesh Chakrabarty is a major contributor to subaltern studies and postcolonial theory. He is the Distinguished Service Professor in history at University of Chicago and he received Toynbee Prize in 2014 for his continuous contribution to humanity. He was an important member in Subaltern Studies and a contributing editor for *Public Culture*, which was published by Duke University Press. He received PhD in history from Australian National University in Canberra. He revised his earlier historical work on working class history in Bengal, which recently made important contributions to the intersections between history and postcolonial theory. His major works are *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal, 1890-1940* in 1989, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* in 2000, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* in 2002, and *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth* in 2015.

Contemporary dramatists of Mahasweta Devi gave voice to subaltern literature, the much-neglected area in the field of literature. They try to draw on

history, ancient epics, psychological conflicts, religion, philosophy and contemporary problems. Major contemporary dramatist of Mahasweta Devi is Asif Currimbhoy. His works are exclusively in English language compared to other dramatists. He wrote and produced thirty plays in several genres. He used monologues, chants, songs, mime, slide and choruses in his plays. When he studied in University of Wisconsin, he developed a love for Shakespearean drama, which influenced him to write dramas in English. *Goa* is the two acts play which deals with a story of passion and violence of the period of the Indian take over of Goa. His other plays are *Refugees* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *Doldrummers* (1960), and *The Dumb Dancer* (1960).

Currimbhoy seems to have evinced much interest in the exciting and thrilling themes.

Another major figure is Girish Karnad, who is the leading figures of modern Indian theatre. His plays deals with the pleasures of retelling the Indian myth and history. His protagonist tries to strive hard to find fulfillment in an imperfect world. Rajinder Paul mentions that “In the public or private domain, his characters want to prolong the reign of youth and beauty and defy the conventional bonds of morality and loyalty” (Modern Indian Theatre, 41). His major plays are *Tughlaq*, *Yayati*, and *Hayavadana*. Karnad interestingly makes use of the popular folk forms in his dramatic output to tap their springs of vitality with splendid results.

Vijay Tendulkar is another important contemporary figure along with Mahasweta Devi. His dramatic writings have an element of sex and violence about the innocent people. His works explored the complexities of human existence which earned him fame of being a controversial playwright. As Veena Nobel Dass points out, “he does not consider the occurrence of human violence’s as something loathsome or ugly as it is innate in human nature” (Modern Indian Drama in English

Translation, 91). His major works are *Silence* and *Sakharam Binder*. Tendulkar has dealt sympathetically with women and their problems in most of his plays.

Badal Sircar is a real promising dramatist who seems to be nearer to Mahasweta Devi in his depiction of the sufferings of the oppressed people living in the urban and the rural areas of West Bengal. But his early plays show an influence of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. His play *Evam Indrajit* deals with the existential dilemma of a non-conformist urban middle-class youth of the 60s who is ultimately forced to compromise with traditional morality. Another play *Baki Itihas* dramatizes the perplexity and bewilderment of some middle-aged intellectuals who failed to do anything useful to the less fortunate ones. In *Bhoma*, Sircar deals with the life of rural Bengal.

Mahasweta Devi is a spirited writer in the history of Indian writing. She has been a powerful person in the field of socially relevant literature. She is one of the rare writers who always aspire to find and explore something challenging and new and never accept the existing ideals. Her creative writings were characterized by an unflinching commitment and passion for the underdog. Her humanistic vision in her works made her to become a remarkable person in the present literary scenario. Her courage and sensitivity helped her to provide hundreds of literary works to her credit including novels, short stories, plays, books which was written for children and various articles for magazines, newspapers and journals. Her works has been translated into English and in many other languages like Assamese, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Gujarati, Kannada, Telugu and in tribal language Ho.

The English translation of her works became popular and shot her fame in the international literary arena. Her major works which was translated into English includes plays, short stories, novels and essays. Some of her translated works are

Mother of 1084, Titu Mir, The Queen of Jhansi, Rudali and Operation? - Bashai Tudu, Breast Stories, Old Women, Imaginary Maps, Bitter Soil, Till Death do us Part, Outcast and a collection of plays which was named as *Five Plays*.

Mahasweta Devi wrote a collection of activist writing which has been called as *Dust on the Road*. She was a major postcolonial figure during her period of time and she is acknowledged for her postcolonial theory, that is subaltern studies. Her writing was important in the modern times and she mainly focused on the major burning issues which was genuine in the society. Her works are mainly preoccupied with the marginalized and downtrodden in the society. She included the two classes of characters in her works which are the most dominated characters in her stories and novels. The major characters are people who lived in 1970s where mothers are forced to bear the brunt of social and political oppression. The other is the impersonal dehumanizing experience of exploitation that the people community endures. In her intertwining of history, she brings out the spirit and position of community in the way of sentimental romanticization, which is in the form of proper flexibility. In one of her interviews with Samik Bandyopadhyay in April 1983, she mentions why she became a writer?

Once I became a professional writer, I felt increasingly that a writer should document his own time and history. The socio-economic history of human development has always fascinated me. But some of the greatest political happenings of my times, like the Tebhaga revolt of the Bengal peasants or the Partition and its aftermath, had passed me by before I had become a writer. So I chose to resurrect older periods in history in their immediate physicality, as if they were nothing less than contemporary. The Naxalite movement between the late 1960s

and early 1970s, with its urban phase climaxing in 1970-71, was the first major event after I had become a writer that I felt an urge and an obligation to document. (Five Plays, viii)

The above quote which is said by Mahasweta Devi explains why she wanted to start a journey of writing in her life. The Naxalites and Partition of Bengal are the two events which made her to start writing about history in the form of literature.

In her writings, there is no difference between the creator and artist, because she has empathy for the indigenous people. Her main activism is a struggle against the existing socio- political norms, traditions and customs, which keep the marginalized people in the particular distance, and disturbs their growth and development and alienating them from the original world. She determined to raise the power of common men and women and their heroic commitment through the realistic viewpoint. She documents the marginalized people's lives, sufferings, joys and sorrows, hopes, their exploitation and oppression which was explained by her in the form of history. These people were trapped under the poverty where they can't come out of their poverty level. With her unbounded zeal, she tried to reach those people who are in need of help; she reached those people without any tiredness. Her activism on subaltern needs much hard work, which was mentioned by her as,

I am often asked how long am I to bore my readers with the same themes. My answer is, as long as hunger, poverty, naked exploitation by the rich and the landed, oppression by the government machineries continue, I will continue to write the same things. (Rakasi Kora)

Thus, she gives voice to the people with suffering multitudes, who are helplessly caught between the feudalism. She refers to the victims whose cry and protest are

unheard by the elite class people. Her works comment on the life of human beings who are being masked by the society.

Mahasweta Devi, a writer of rare sensitivity was born in Dhaka in a family which belongs to litterateurs, film-makers and actors. She studied her Bachelor degree in English from Shantiniketan and Master's degree in English from Calcutta University. She married a playwright Bijon Bhattacharya, a communist leader and later she divorced and married the writer Asit Gupta. She was dismissed from her job in postal department. She struggled to gain money through different jobs like selling soaps, dyes and exporting monkeys to the United States. At last she decided to make new adventures in her life. Then she started to work as a school teacher, a lecturer, an editor, a reporter and she finally made her destiny as a writer and activist.

A magazine named *Bortika* contains a lot of articles which is related to the oppressed community in India. Magazines were major platform in that period of time where people can share their opinion and share their grievances and problems in the form of writing. The above-mentioned magazine is the first important ventures in the field of Bengali literature. She wrote for newspapers and journals such as *Basumati*, *Dainik*, *Bartaman*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Yojana*, *Aajkal* and *Yogantar*. In these articles she wrote about social relevance. She mentions about the denial of education and facilities such as drinking water to the dispossessed people and the need for effectively monitoring the government programs which will not only be benefitted to the selfish people but also to the people who live in the underprivileged as well.

Mahasweta Devi's first work is the short essay on Tagore's *Cheley Bela*. This was published in the journal Rang Mahal (1939). In 1956, she published the novel *Jhansi Rani (The Queen of Jhansi)*. This period of time is considered to be a landmark

in Mahasweta Devi's literary career. In this novel she portrayed the life of Queen Lakshmi Bai, who is the leader of soldiers and at the same time a mother who is concerned about the wellbeing of her son. This novel is the valuable contribution to the historiography. In 1957 she published her novel *Nati*. After these two works, she began to gain more strength in her literary career.

In the years 1960 and 1970, Mahasweta Devi wrote a series of novels. In the first novel *Kavi Bandyoghoti Gayiner Jivan O Mrityu (The Life and Death of Bandyoghoti Gayin)*, she portrays about how the low caste boy struggles for human rights. In the second novel, *Andhar Manik (Jewel in Darkness)* she portrays the upheaval in Bengal's social life during Bargi raids in the mid eighteenth century. The third novel *Hajar Chaurashir Ma (Mother of 1084)* deals with the Naxalite movement which happened in the seventeenth century. In 1976 and 1985, Mahasweta Devi produced creative works like *Aranyer Adhikar (Right to the Forest)*, *Agnigarbha (The Womb of Fire)* and *Chotti Munda O Tar Teer (Choti Munda and his Arrow)*. She received Sahitya Akademy Award for the work *Aranyer Adhikar*. In this work she acknowledged the life and struggle of Birsa Munda. She stole the scene of the writer with the social purposes. She involved herself in the society without any reservation and she seeks to reveal in her works the predicament of the world around her. Right from her childhood she observed her surrounding and she was brought up in an environment where compromise was regarded as a taboo.

Mahasweta Devi's grandfather chose to fight against the imperialists and he spent his life as a freedom fighter. Her literary career was started from her family members. Her father Manish Ghatak was a poet and novelist of reputation who wrote about the suffering street beggars and destitutes who were accorded sub-human status in the society. Her mother Dharitri Devi was also a writer and social worker and she

has addressed various social issues. She was also inspired by her uncles, Sachin Choudhry and Ritwik Ghatak. The literary and sensitive environment in her family made her to focus on the social issues. She witnessed the horrors of the British oppression and agony of people during the Bengal famine of 1943. Kavi Kankan Mukundaram Chakraborty was a major source of inspiration for Mahasweta Devi. She had a great perception and power that is reminiscent of great writers of the world. Mahasweta Devi is able to capture the inner turmoil of man's mind like Chekhov and Dostoevsky and has the sensitivity of Maupassant. She resists any labeling and categorization.

Mahasweta Devi is a spokesperson for suppressed humanity, and she questions everything i.e. our obsession with religion, history, ideals, ideas, mythology and tries to bring out people from their oppression state by stirring their conscience. She depicts India as a country which has been a victim of colonial intervention and whose suffering have increased many folds due to abuse and exploitation by the local elements. Her works reveal her concern for the nation which needs to be redefined. Mahasweta Devi is a crusader for the dispossessed sections and she presented it in her works like the predicament of women who is another vulnerable prey to the rigid and patriarchal social order. She is more conscious about the marginalization of women in the patriarchal society which is dominated by the class and caste. Therefore, she cannot ignore the forces contributing towards the women's subjugation. She resists being labeled as a feminist yet her devotion to women's causes is unmistakably conspicuous. So, she attacks the social attitudes which hold a woman solely responsible for all ills and misfortunes. She raises her voice against the social and cultural prejudices that affect the poor as well as upper class women. In her works she depicts the injustice piled upon women and highlights the seriousness of gender

inequality and imbalance in our society. Her works portray the accurate details of the lives of men and women, their pains and sufferings, their problems and the social hurdles they confront.

Female empowerment is the main theme found in Mahasweta Devi's works. She considers women as a symbol of an unspoiled purity, dark and beautiful; they symbolize the earth, they spring from. But they remain helpless beings and eventually emerge as strong individuals. The women in their works assert themselves and have the potential to reshape their lives. They emerged as a source of strength and indomitable courage. They symbolize power and motherhood. The plays by Mahasweta Devi like *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen*, deals with the theme of gender subaltern.

We can consider Mahasweta Devi as a committed dramatist because her works stand poles apart from other contemporary dramatists. She has the spirit and passions to explore the life of Adivasis and she never includes sentimental romanticism in her works. Most of the critics try to evaluate Mahasweta Devi's thoughts in their criticism. Her five plays- *Mother of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi O Johnny*, *Bayen*, and *Water* are translated and brought out in the form of anthology entitled *Five Plays* by Samik Bandyopadhyay. Besides, she has to her credit many novels and short stories which earned her the reputation of a progressive writer.

The anthology of five plays is a significant exploration of the impact of suppression and oppression on the working-class people living in both urban and rural Bengal. The protagonist in these plays are victims of the repressive social system which clashes on the truthfulness of the weak and the poor. Mahasweta Devi seeks to show how these five sensitive individuals grow into hardcore insurgents by breaking down all the boundaries which are devised by the vested interests to strip the former

of its right to live a life of an equal human being. The characters in this book seem to question about the existing values. They march ahead with an indomitable will of the rebel and embrace martyrdom in the pursuit of their identity which forms the core of Mahasweta Devi's entire dramatic creation.

In the book *Five Plays*, the first play *Mother of 1084*, deals with the traumatic experiences in the life of a sensitive mother, Sujata, who loses her favorite son in the holocaust during the suppression of the people's movement. The second play *Aajir*, deals with the poignant tale of a slave, Paatan, who unlike his forefathers, craves for independence. The third play *Urvashi and Johnny*, explores in depth the realities in the life of people who live on the pavements of the so-called developed city of Calcutta by making ahead the beggar, who is a ventriloquist by profession. The fourth play *Bayen*, tells again a moving story of an innocent mother who, branded as a witch, has been separated from her son and family. In the fifth play *Water*, Mahasweta Devi attempts to show how the rural folk, being ignorant of the ways of the world are subjected to exploitation and oppression.

The selected plays *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen*, deals with how women are suppressed based on their gender. This oppression happens in the life of women who belong to the middle-class family and they live in the subaltern society. Whenever it comes to gender subaltern women are forced to face discrimination from the society and from their own family. These incidents are happening in the life of women in the above-mentioned plays. But those characters raise their voice against the oppression and for their independence in the society. Through death they raise their voice against oppression. Character like Nandhini in *Mother of 1084* tries to raise her voice against the patriarchal society through her active participation in the social movement.

Through these two plays we can analyse the theme of gender subaltern in the society.

These plays always present the society's original nature in the dramatic form. Being a woman, Mahasweta Devi not only raise her voice for the women but she also raises her voice for the subaltern people who are living in the subaltern society which are dominated by the older beliefs.

The play *Mother of 1084* is a moving story of an apolitical mother. The protagonist Sujata, has been a witness to the horrifying situation during the suppression of the Naxalite uprising in which her son, Brati, the corpse number 1084, takes part and becomes a martyr. Unable to free herself from the clutches of the male dominated society, Sujata fails to realize her own being. But after her discovery of Brati through the confrontation with people like Somu's mother and Nandhini who are outside Sujata's respectable existence, she does not remain a passive sufferer unlike Somu's mother. She feels punished for not knowing her son, Brati. She decides to carry out what he left unfulfilled. Exactly two years after the brutal killing of her son, she becomes not only aware of the need for a sacrifice to defend one's right to live but also her inner urge to protest against the patriarchal authority represented by her husband. So, in the end of the play, she exhorts the audience to be active and revolt against the establishment that aims at reducing the young rebels to the level of a mere number which is given to the dead only to be identified by their mothers.

Other characters like Somu's mother and Nandhini are different from Sujata. Somu's mother never stands against the patriarchal society because of her lower-class status. On the other hand, Nandhini stand against the political rules and regulations of the male-dominated society. Only through these two characters Sujata discovers her own self and tries to defend the society which was controlled by the political parties and spoiled by the corrupted people. Nandhini raised her voice through Naxalite movement which was considered as a rotten movement by the political parties.

In this play there are many concepts which leads to the theme of gender subaltern, where it focuses on the women who live in the patriarchal society. Emancipation of women is one concept where women are suppressed by the male-dominated society based on their gender. Characters like Sujata and Nandhini tries to raise voice against the corrupted society. The concepts like betrayal, power structure in the society and differences between the lower and upper middle- class society led to the gender subaltern theme in the play. The corruption, poverty and unemployment in the society made young persons like Nandhini to stand against the corrupted society. Motherhood is also a main concept which helps to analyse the concept gender subaltern in the life of Sujata and Somu's mother in the play. Through the above-mentioned concepts, we can understand that sometimes it helps the women who are submerged in the society to raise their voice through their suffering.

Another play *Bayen*, presents a powerful tale of harsh reality of a women's life in rural India. Chandidasi Gangadasi, the protagonist, is put against a powerful exploitative mechanism, that is in force in the rural India. She is a professional gravedigger. She buries the dead children and guards them at night. She carries on with her work to please the souls of her forefathers. As she is engaged in the humanitarian work, Chandi is branded as a witch by the superstitious people and separated her from her son and family. However, Chandidasi is relegated to the level of a beast, she is still a human being. She exhibits the essential qualities as she dies averting a train accident which would otherwise have resulted in great death toll. In the end, her son, Bhagirath, defies the tradition by acknowledging the witch as his mother.

The plays *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen*, are a fine study of the effects of the exploitation- political, social and economical and on the other hand psyche of the

sensitive mothers and women who are essentially humane. Justly, the action of both the plays ends with protagonists throwing defiance in the teeth of immoral social values. Brati in the former play and Chandi in the latter become martyrs in their confrontation with the dehumanized social forces. However, Mahasweta Devi seems to suggest that sacrifice on the part of the victims of oppression is not only inevitable to defend their inalienable rights as members of the human family, but it is a mark of the ultimate victory of the human values and an unmistakable pointer to the defeat of the inhumanity of the oppressor. Through this two plays Mahasweta Devi brings out how death of protagonists tries to raise their voice against the patriarchal society. Women are always muted or silenced by the patriarchal society, but the female characters in the play raise their voice through their death.

The main objective of this research is how women try to raise their voice against the patriarchal society by standing against the corrupted and superstitious society. Women are always considered as an oppressed one based on their physical and mental appearances. But Mahasweta Devi always focuses on the social issues and oppression of women in the society. Devi tries to raise her voice for the women through her women characters and through their suffering. After their death they gain their respect from the patriarchal society as a mother, women and as a person who tries to give new life to the women who can live happily without male-domination in the society. They provide independence to their own self and to the women who are living in the oppression state.

The second chapter deals with Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*. This play mainly focuses on the themes like power structure in the society, differences between the upper middle class and lower- class people, suppression of women in the patriarchal society, politically corrupted society, identity crisis, emancipation of

women and motherhood which leads women to live in suppressed society. The protagonists in this play always tries to discover their own selves and tries to gain independence from the male dominated society. These characters not only raise voice for their own self but for the women who are dominated by the men and neglected by the society.

The third chapter focuses on Mahasweta Devi's *Bayen*. This play mainly focuses on the theme of superstitious belief of the Dom community people who try to dominate the women who live in the patriarchal society. The society and superstitious belief are the main reason which made the protagonist to live away from her son and family. The main themes like superstitious belief, motherhood, male domination and identity made women to suffer more in the patriarchal society. Death is the only concept which made the protagonist to regain her original position as mother in the society. The author tries to raise the voice for the women through her women characters in the patriarchal society.

The concluding chapter deals with the themes like women identity, oppression of women in the society, discovery of women, superstitious belief, politically corrupted society, movements which are against the rules and regulations of the society, power structure, motherhood, suppression of women inside the family and differences between upper middle class and lower- class people. These led the women to suppress their voice against the society. But in the end women realised about their society and community and they try to raise their voice against the gender subaltern. They stand for their freedom in the patriarchal society not only for their own self but for the future, where women can live without any dominance in their life. The women characters attain death at the end of the play. Their death denotes that no other women in the society should not face the same gender subaltern in their future. Through these

two plays the author tries to tell the society that gender subaltern should not pass from one generation to another generation when it comes to women. Women should be treated equally without any suppression or oppression in the patriarchal society.

Chapter 2

Self-Discovery Against Patriarchal Society

In post-colonial period, the subject of gender has been of much debate, and many works were based on it. Different societies have treated women as others, colonized, deprived and as the fairer sex. These people, again and again, suffered from the politics of oppression and repression. On the other hand, men who are against the political rules of the society were killed and faced the cruelty of the real world. Of the late centuries the concept of gendered subaltern has been of consequences which implies that women have been subalternized first by nationality; the other, by gender. The men were subalternized by their behavior against the political rules. Many influential works came up with women point of view where they divorced from the male vision. But in recent years gendered subaltern has begun to be theorized and found a voice. In this viewpoint, the works of Mahasweta Devi and many women writers brought the change and awareness on the issue of subalterns.

Through position and identity, people differentiate oppressed and oppressor, ruler and subject, privileged and marginalized human being in the society. People can recognize this human being with their level of consciousness and unheard voices. In French Feminism in an International Frame, Spivak remarked the identity of the subaltern group as "the silent and silenced center." Subaltern was able to identify their position which rooted from the postcolonial location. Gender subaltern studies lead to the different mode of education where it looks at the binary position of male and female in a different aspect. Subaltern has a more comprehensive method of discussion. It tried to make the justification for the oppressed identity. But it failed in its attempt. For example, Mahasweta Devi's play *Mother of 1084* was unable to give the voice for the subaltern people in the patriarchal society.

The play analyses the occurrences of the failed Naxalite insurgency in Bengal in the 1970s; it shows the tremendous problem of gender subaltern, where voices of many characters were unheard by the society because of suppression and oppression. Mahasweta Devi writes about everyday life and focuses on the problems of tribal folk. When it comes to gender subaltern, she focuses on the plight of women, victims of male discrimination, ill-treated wives, dependent wives, and unwanted sons or daughters whose bodies can fetch a price. They are adequately represented in this play.

Women in society live according to the rules and regulations which are imposed on them. “Angel in house” is a myth which idealized women and their innocence in a way that made them separate from the domestic sphere. This quality caused them to become restricted women inside the home and converted them to become voiceless creatures in the patriarchal society. In the play *Mother of 1084*, we can pinpoint various instances of women suppression under the patriarchal system and male-dominated society. The patriarchy is found on the prejudice and male superiority, which guarantees the superior status of the males and inferior status of the females.

Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* depicts the suffering of Sujata, a traditional apolitical upper-middle-class lady and she is the mother of Brati Chatterjee. She is the embodiment of love. In this play, Sujata played the role of a sensitive wife and a mother. She develops an aversion to her children and her husband's attitude. She couldn't change her children's perspective and their way of living and thinking. One early morning she hears the shattering news that her youngest and favorite son Brati is lying dead in the police morgue bearing the corpse number 1084. Instead of recovering the dead body, the whole Chatterjee family tries to save the honor of their

family through money and power. Except Sujata, remaining members of the family only focused on their reputation in the society.

DIBYANATH (*oblivious of Sujata's presence*). Jyoti, there may still be time. Isn't there a relation of your mother-in-laws in the police?

JYOTHI. A maternal cousin.

DIBYANATH. Ring him up. Chaudhuri must help hush it up. He had warned us.

SUJATA (*uncomprehending, in a panic*). What will you hush up? What are you talking about? (4)

In the above conversation, Dibyanath and Jyoti doesn't consider Sujata as one of the leading family members in the play. Sujata around whom the play revolves is shown as a helpless creature being fully aware and unaware of her surroundings. So she tries to find the mystery about her son. In this process, she understands her son's revolutionary process which led her towards the alienation, loneliness and elimination from the society.

The death of Brati brought havoc and ill reputation to Dibyanath in the society. Sujata is well aware of her husband Dibyanath's corrupt and degenerated values. She fails to fit herself in the particular frame and ideology of Dibyanath and his elite society. Dibyanath's rules led Sujata to alienate from her husband and from her own family, who is well versed with the doctrines of Dibyanath. Hence, the noble sacrifice of her son is not considered as a valuable one in the family or society. The search for her son made her realize as a mother, women and a human being. In search of her son's real-life character, Sujata meets Somu's mother. Sujata brings out the

crisis that envelop the society they come up. Somu's mother informs her that her son also has taken a plunge into the revolution. She expresses her grief over the death of her son.

SOMU'S MOTHER. Quite, sister? How can there be quite with the mother's hearts burning like bodies on fire? My daughter too burns. It's not easy to give tuition and earn enough to feed two souls, mother and daughter. What can I tell her? With all the attention we paid to Somu, we never had time to look to her schooling. And Somu has to leave us behind, all at sea! To think of that... (12)

On the other hand, she appreciates the true commitment of Brati in his mission he had opted. When Brati comes to know that Anindya has leaked the information about the movement, he went to them to warn about the threat they are going to face in another few hours. Alongside his efforts, the police killed the boys in mere seconds. Somu's mother loses her husband in this revolutionary process. She is also affected by her lower-class status. Her daughter doesn't get a proper job because of her son's participation in the Naxalite movement.

Compared to other women characters in the play, Nandhini stands for her bravery, and she faced the cruelty of the human world when she was locked up inside the jail. When Sujata visits her, she gets clear perspective about the movement in which her son Brati played a dynamic part in the campaign. She finds the anguish of Nandhini towards the corrupted political structure in the society. Many young people were tempted by money, power, and job and these factors influenced them to start the revolutionary movement which led to the death of many youngsters. Some people like Anindya betrayed Brati, Somu, and Nandhini in the revolutionary movement.

NANDHINI. Betrayal was rampant but hadn't been taught to be

suspicious. When we began to suspect and could analyze our past experiences, only then we could become more confident of ourselves. (26)

Because of betrayal, many young people were forced to die in the revolutionary movement. Among them, Nandhini faced the cunning world after the death of Brati and Somu. Nandhini narrates how she was taken into the custody of police and put behind the bar in the solitary cell. In prison, she was subjected to various tortures like physical, mental anguish even to the extent of sexual assault. She lets Sujata to realize that she lived a tragic life. She was exposed to the extreme savage treatment by Sarojpal, the so-called representative of the corrupted government.

NANDHINI. (*takes off her dark glasses, and places them on the table, as the lights begin to dim on this part of the stage*). They carried out their interrogation in a dark room. Alone, in the solitary cell. Then, one day I was called up to a different room. (30)

The police officer Sarojpal puffs the cigarette and presses it again on Nandhini during the interrogation. Even though she is from an upper-class family, she was forced to face the tortures which are imposed by the cruel and hard-hearted person Sarojpal. After these incidents she became vulnerable, but she was ready to oppose the corrupted political rules and regulations which made people become suppressive in the society. This context provides good evidence of the state government's repressive methods to suppress the movement. She was more depressed because of the wicked world. It can be understood when she utters the following words,

NANDHINI. I sometimes wonder, shall I forget Brati too someday? I

wonder, all those deaths, all the bloodshed, were they all
 useless? I wonder, all the arrests, the killing and the bloodshed
 that continue, all that for nothing? (34)

Through the characters Sujata, Somu's mother and Nandhini, Devi showed the picture of how patriarchal society considered women as second sex since the dawn of civilization. Men has acquired superior status in the community. Women's decisions, needs, and wants were always misinterpreted by the society. Sujata's love for her son is misunderstood by her family members. Somu's mother is suppressed because of her lower-class status. Nandhini's political ideas and thoughts were betrayed by her group members. From these characters we can find that as a woman they are neglected, suppressed, ill-treated and marginalized in all forms, in the male-dominated society who consider women as an object of sex, only to reproduce, bring money when needed and does not possess even a voice to express their concerns and demands in the society.

Another issue which is related to subalterns is the power structure of institutions, that is the class and caste, political parties and government. This institution has a higher power in the social milieu. In this play, the government officials and political parties were willing to showcase their power of authoritativeness by dealing with the marginalized section of society and capitalized landlords. The control of institution pointed out in the play views the unseen force which drives Brati into danger.

There is a particular incident where Brati receives a call from his friend Nandhini saying that, Somu and his group members returned to their locality. Because of this, he planned to meet them in their region. Sujata observes her sons behavior, and she asks him about what had happened. He ignores Sujata's question, and he says

he has some important work. He says he will be late. Therefore, he plans to stay in Somu's house. Brati never confesses the underlying danger, but his mother pointed out the alarming situation prevailing in Calcutta.

BRATI (*on guard*). What d' you mean by danger?

SUJATA. How would you know? You never have time to read the papers. All that's going on in Calcutta! Young men from one locality aren't allowed these days to visit a different locality.

They get killed if they do. Ronu's is a safe neighborhood. (19)

Here, it seems upper-middle-class society thinks that violence also takes part all over the world. It may not affect their routine life. But in the other context, they didn't believe that violent force can also enter into the upper-middle-class society. They were not aware that it could also affect them like the average middle- and lower-class society. So, the unseen violence affected the middle and upper-middle-class family members, and it haunted them and it kept them conscious towards the invisible power structure present in the society.

In this play, we can find another instance where power structure played a crucial role in the middle-class society. A mob consisting of neighborhood people who are guided by the political officials and government authorities or college students for the sake of financial assistance, are forced to become an instrument to provide information about the Naxalites to the police in disguise. When Sujata meets Somu's mother to know about the activities in which her son Brati was involved, Somu's mother shares the elaborate conspiracy to kill youngsters including her son. Even the police did not come to save the youngsters from the mob. They sent their vans to collect dead bodies of the people who were killed by the crowd. After this incident, the people who murdered the youngsters came and threatened the family members for meeting Sujata,

SOMU'S MOTHER (*diffident*). They threaten my daughter because
you come here.

SUJATA. Somu's elder sister? Who threatens her?

SOMU'S MOTHER. Those who killed Somu and his friends. Who
else?

SUJATA. The same crowd?

SOMU'S MOTHER. They tell her, Why does she come to your house?
Forbid her. It'll be dangerous otherwise. (23)

From the above words, it is clear that power structure also acts against the middle-class society as well as those who belong to the marginalized section of the organization. The mob consists of those people who are poisoned by the thoughts of political parties as well as police to fulfill their needs like financial assistance, and unemployment. The mob blindly follows the rules and regulations which are given by the politicians and government authorities. So the middle class and marginalized section of people cannot complain about the behavior of the mob. This leads to few questions like who is going to support the middle and marginalized segment of society? Who is there to fulfill the requirements of these people and their family? But there is no one to help the middle-class family. From the above questions, we come to know that people sometimes support the faulty system and political parties.

The middle and upper-middle-class people were submerged into the dominance because of their good nature and unaware of what is happening around them. They were forced to mute their voice by the political parties and government authorities. The power structure also plays an essential role in suppressing the marginalized and middle-class section of the society. Likewise, Mahasweta Devi gave

importance to the power structure present in India after the independence of the nation.

Another incident which is related to gender subaltern is the contrast between the middle class and lower-class society. This led the youngsters to question about the constitution of India through the Naxalite movement. In this context, we can find that Sujata and Somu's mother face the discrimination based on a class basis. Somu's family meets the class discrimination in the play. While Sujata, who searches for her son's true identity, his activities, and reason for his death, discovers her own self. In this process, she meets Somu's mother. She shares brutal incidents which happened after the death of Brati and Somu. She also says that most of the youngsters from local areas who belonged to lower class lost their home and families. She points out the inhuman activities happened after the attack on Brati and his friends, which made their family and homes disorganized in the society.

SOMU'S MOTHER. Even now. There're thousands of them, young
men, all homeless. All those families banished from the colony.
It leaves one sick at heart even to think of them. I can't think
any more. (12)

The corruption, poverty, unemployment in society put the middle-class family into the lower grade, from where they could not come out. Somu's family couldn't lead a proper life because of Somu's participation in the Naxalite movement. The Naxalite movement created great havoc in the middle-class society. Their day to day life started to degrade. They were unable to get daily requirements for their survival. Somu's family expects to bring transformation in their pitiable condition. But it was all shattered because of their son's involvement in the Naxalite movement. Their expectations have remained unfulfilled. Middle-class society people cannot raise their

voice against the large system, i.e., government system working for the people. This leads to the loss of family and also expectation to bring transformation in the middle-class society.

Likewise, we can find the condition of Somu's family through the conversation of Somu's mother with Sujata. Brati is the only person from the other locality regularly visiting Somu's house. Still, Somu's mother didn't know how a person from upper middle-class society came to join in the movement and in their family. She always points out how youngsters from different localities take part in the Naxalite movement, and how Sujata didn't know what is happening around their location,

SOMU'S MOTHER (*draws a breath*). You're a working woman,
 you've a rich home, I wonder why Brati chose such a course!
 Didn't you ever realize what your son was up to?

SUJATA. No. (*A disturbing memory*) I didn't know. He was home the
 whole of the day. I realized later that he had been waiting the
 whole day for a call... (15)

From the above conversation between Somu's mother and Sujata, we can find the contrast between the middle class and upper middle-class society. Here the middle-class society was forced to face the cruelty of the world in every sphere. After the death of Brati and Somu, they were not able to find a proper position in the society. Their daily requirements were unfulfilled. They were forced to question about the democratic society. The middle class was moved from their wealthy level to the lower grade, whereas upper-middle-class families led a proper and luxurious life. They were not affected by whatever incidents took place in the human society. These people became the part of the corrupt system as political parties, and government authorities

in favor of the capitalist. So, this made the rich people from the elite class to question about the power structure which splits the bondage between the middle class and upper middle-class family.

Motherhood is a fundamental part of our Indian society. Mahasweta Devi has portrayed motherhood in many of her works in all its grandeur. Her mother characters are very much part of the social milieu. Most of them considered Indian mother as consecrated and marginalized at the same time in the society. They are forced to maintain silence about serious affairs in the community, and they are expected to bear every pang of society without any grievances. Another critical issue related to women is the socio-economic position of the country which considered women as an inappropriate creature in the community. Devi wanted to change this perception of motherhood where she mentions “is defied, but paradoxically, the myth mother’s quasi-divine status is premised upon the capacity for voluntary self-sacrifice” (*In the Name of Mother- VIII*). She portrayed a wide array of mothers in her works such as; the deprived, loving mother, pious mother, professional mother and manipulative mother.

Women come to understand the outer world and its evils in the society when they discover unrevealed truth. This discovery made them to become a stronger one, and they can sustain themselves and fight for justice even against the most stringent conditions of human being. Motherhood made them bear the pain of institutionalized oppression and power abuse for the sake of their children and being a second sex in the society. When a woman faces challenging events, she is forced to maintain specific growth and stability in her life. She uses all her strength to fight against the evils of the world. But in this play, mother characters are unable to see the harsh reality of the human world. Sujata who is craving for her son's love, is searching for a

particular cause which turned her son Brati into a mysterious person towards his mother. Whereas Somu's mother has seen the cruel world, when she lost her family and her status in the society. She led a miserable life after her son's participation in the revolutionary mission. She lost her class status and forced to live a worthless life much cruel than her marginalized state of being.

Sujata is a conventional woman who belongs to the upper middle-class family in Calcutta. She works as a bank employee, and she is married to Dibyanath Chatterjee. In the thirty-four years of her married life, she gives birth to four children two sons, and two daughters. In the eyes of the society, all of them are leading a perfect life, but in reality, they are not happy inside their home. Only after the sudden death of Brati, her younger son with whom she shares a special relationship discovers what is happening in the world. Sujata's husband is one of those wealthy elites who look down upon women and consider them as poor who fight for the rights of the marginalized sections of the society.

After hearing the death of her son Brati, instead of recovering the dead body the whole Chatterjee family tries to hush up the news using their money and power. On the other hand, Sujata longs for her son and no one asks her what a mother wants in her life. She is usually abused because of one reason or the other. She has never been thought appropriate to furnish suggestions about serious family matters. So, this time when Sujata demands his son's dead body, others in the family do not care to listen to her.

SUJATA. (*as she comprehends*). So that's why your father has to rush to Chaudhuri? But Brati? Who'll go to Brati?

JYOTI. We'll go there, Mother, a little later. (5)

In the above dialogue Sujata's son Jyoti fails to listen to his mother's words. Along with his father, he tries to hush up the news of Brati using power, money and their class position in the society. Among the other four children, Brati is the favorite of his mother whereas other children love their father, money, prestige, and boyfriends more than their own mother. Her husband Dibyanath loves the material status and social fame more than anything. Only her close relationship with her son Brati made her explore more about the mission and motives of Brati's life.

Sujata loves and believes in her son to the extent that she never suspected something in his activity or his character. She is shocked when she is suddenly called upon to recognize her son's dead body in the morgue, but she is denied to see his face and body by the officer in-charge of the morgue. During that period, she realizes that her son's identity as a human has been erased and now his dead body is given another dehumanized identity as corpse no. 1084. A mother's heart is torn apart when she saw such a miserable condition of her dead son. She considered him as a soul mate.

The sentence- 'No. You won't get the body.' - reverberates in different voices, in different pitches, each time striking Sujata's face like a whiplash, as Sujata kneels, her face staring upwards, shocked... (7)

Sujata is an excellent example for those urban Indian women who want to bring up their children with care and affection. Her association with the upper-class society becomes torturous, and she is not given ample opportunities to mourn for the death of her son. Her attachment towards her son grows stronger and stronger after his brutal killing because she sees that her son was like her, like a mother who cares for everyone, who wants to carry humanity a little ahead by demolishing the various walls between the people. The death of Brati awakens his mother from the illusion of upper-class cultured life. She wants to discover the mystery that has happened to her

son and comrades on the night of their brutal killing. During that time, she tries to read his books, notes, visits his friends' houses and talks to Nandhini. Through Nandhini, she finds a revolutionary who goes beyond her problems and becomes an uncompromising fighter against the atrocities of police and other government machinery.

Somu's mother also bears the pangs of her son's death. The death of Somu has proved to be an inseparable loss for their family as the whole family was looking towards him for their future survival. In scene 2 Somu's mother looks at her son's body and wails and longs to hold towards her heart, "Bring him back to me. Let me hold him close to my breast for once, and I'll weep no more. My Somu..."(6). Through these words, we come to know that the expectations and future of Somu's family are destroyed because of his participation and his commitments towards the poor people.

The way, both the mothers wail the demise of their sons is quite contradictory in the play. This contradiction brings out many layers of the class system which were unfolded by severe issues related to humanity. Somu's mother comes out from her past and never tries to go back to her past, that is her son's death in front of her own eyes. She never tries putting herself into her past life. She was forced to live a damaged life where she didn't have the proper position in the society, no home and no job for her daughter in the society. She was forced to travel from her lower-class section of society to the marginalized part of the community.

Sujata, to some extent, can hold her feelings in which she has been trained since her childhood whereas Somu's mother does not know about these complexities and she cries loudly at the loss of her son. Her loud cries were turned into muffled sobbing for life in the society. She has to fight with the harsh circumstances after her

son's death. Her problems are far more profound than those of Sujata's life because she has to fight for her survival together with her daughter. For Somu's mother, there is no time to live in the past, a comfort which Sujata can avail.

Through these incidents we can find that the play mainly serves two purposes; first it represents the atypical journey of the mother from demure, thoughtful, adoring to angry, confident, almost rebel who now seeks justice for all. Sujata's way to find out the reasons of her son's death and his commitment for revolutionary causes; she gets an opportunity to see the outer world where it is corrupted by the power structure and money. We can understand the exploitative systems of society and come to know that mother characters were alienated as a housewife and as a mother on account of the prevailing social and cultural values in the contemporary society of urban Bengal. Secondly, it depicts the principles of women concerned. The oppression and exploitation of the tribals, the landless peasants in rural areas and women didn't know what is happening in today's world.

On the other hand, the play also focuses on the psychological and emotional turmoil of the mother who awakens one morning to the horrifying news that her beloved son is lying dead in the morgue. During this time, the mother character Sujata under goes various transformations. Sujata played the role of a dutiful wife and a woman who tries to raise her voice for oppression and a loving mother, who takes the responsibility to consider all youngsters as her son along with her son Brati. The real fact is that the unfortunate mother finds hard to accept the death of her son. Sujata took the side of Brati, and the rest of the family members in the house formed another group. She failed to notice the changes and developments that are happening around her. Through this, we can find that the play *Mother of 1084* powerfully examines the mental and emotional crisis of a mother undertaking the journey of discovering her

son's revolutionary movement and in this process, she identifies herself at the end of the play.

After the death of her son, Sujata travels back to the past and undergoes a process of self-introspection. In this introspection of events she finds that her family members, including herself and the society around her are the main reason for the death of her son Brati. She finds that her son lost his faith in a system where the administration and the police forces were under the clutches of immoral people, and there was no one to care for moral and human values. Being an apolitical mother, she is confused to understand the prevailing situations. Sujata is a graduate, and a woman from upper-class society who knows about the divided society around her. With the unknown power in her hands, she moves to discover the philosophy of her son. It is two years after her son's death, she tries to find out her son's path in the society. During this period, she entirely comes to know about the developments around her. The more she discovers many things she travels closer to her son.

The silent scream of Sujata is unheard by anyone. Her desperation of the perpetual mourning gets shared with Somu's mother, because in her own home no one tries to console Sujata when she was mourning for her son's death. Her son becomes an unwanted person in the family. Brati's family members fail to notice his service to the society. Unlike his family members, he inherited the character of his mother who always worries about the people around her. It is crucial juncture where we come to realize the significance of his sacrifice. She never neglects her son taking the side of those who fought against the cruelties and atrocities of the influential class. Her analysis and discovery of Brati after the latter's death help her discover herself. She comes to understand her role as a mother, as a wife and as a responsible human being. Hence, Sujata is bounded by the sense of moral responsibility. She participates in all

the rituals and ceremonies connected with Tuli's engagement and in her family functions. She maintains stony and silence during the party. Her insistence of wearing white saree for the party plays a significant role in the play. The white saree symbolizes that she is not interested in the party and functions. In the last scene 12, we meet the transformed Sujata, one who is more self- assured, morally confident and politically sensitive.

Dibyanath is a man of the concept which is exclusively explained that, responsibility of the women is to bear and rear the children. But it is general that mother and father play an important role in bringing up the children. It is ridiculous that when the child is spoiled, complete blame is thrown on mother. Likewise, Sujata faced this serious issue where she is treated as a mother who raised her son Brati in a wrong way. She implemented good values in the mind of Brati, but his truthfulness towards the society made him become an unwanted person in the organization and his family.

Sujata's husband Dibyanath's accusation that she is responsible for Brati's death accelerates the process of recognition of her psychological moorings. She now feels relieved from the burden of bearing guilt for nearly two years. In such attention, what pains Sujata is the indifference shown by the people to the cause and the sacrifice of youths like Brati, Neetu, Somu and other youngsters in the revolutionary movement. She points the audience and says,

... (*Pointing to the audience and the dancers*) Corpses, stiffened corpses, all of you! (*Pointing to herself*) And I myself? Did Brati die so you could carry on in your cadaverous existence, enjoying and indulging in all the images of the world... Do you living die, only to leave to the dead to enjoy? No! Never.... Let this No of mine pierce

the heart of the city... to every nook and corner. Let it set the past, the present, and the future tremble. Let it tear down the happiness of everyone cooped up in his own happy happiness. (42)

With this outburst, Sujata collapses on the stage possibly forever as the appendicitis of her body and her mental anguish is burst; she can no more cope up with the stink that overpowers throughout her life. Her mental agony is the main reason which made her think nothing but about her son and other youngsters who died along with her son. The play starts with a flashback, the pain of childbirth and ends with the pain of ruptured appendix. We can understand that ruptured appendix is nothing but the psychological outburst which made her realize her discovery about life; the pain of the appendix symbolizes the end of her journey.

At the end of the play, the plight of Sujata can be preserved as the Universal Mother, and psychological and emotional trauma of Sujata leads to consider as a person who wants to eradicate the happiness of people who believe their happiness more important than the other people's enjoyment. She wants to face death and wants to join her hands with her son. She wanted to live a happy life with her son. This psychological turmoil of Sujata made her not to live in the fake world. Instead, she wants to live a world where she can be happy and join her hands with her son to serve the community. She longs to be away from the oppression, fake political affairs and away from the selfish persons who consider their happiness more important than the others. At last in the end of the play, Sujata thinks that death brings her Brati closer to her through her quest and leads the mother to a journey of self-discovery and then she realizes the cause of her son's rebellion.

Another vital element in the play is the wake of the Naxalbari movement in Calcutta. It is the other event which is related to the gender oppression, social class

and marginalized section of the society. Mahasweta Devi sets this play in the backdrop of Calcutta of the late 1960s, and early 1970s and is sensitive and thoughtful. Through this play she probes to explore the Naxalite movement where thousands of people died when they fought against the political rules. In the play, mostly youngsters who are studying in college took part in the Naxalite movement like Brati, Nandhini, Somu, and Neetu. But everyone faced the cruel world, and they fought against the corrupted government, which has the power to destroy the good things which are gained by our ancestors and freedom fighters. The political skills want a corrupted society around them. They never cared about the people who are living in the marginalized section of the community.

Nandhini is the only person who reveals the importance and progression of the Naxalite movement. Nandhini's narrativization with Sujata at the restaurant explains the main aims and causes present and the condition of the campaign. The change symbolically represents the Naxalite movement. She mentions in scene 9, "Money, jobs and power didn't mean a thing to us. But these were the temptations that seduced those who had joined us only to betray us" (25). It provides the testimony that the state's main program is to betray and another one is targeting the weakness of the human loyalties. She also mentions media betrayal in scene 9: "The worst reactionists make avowals of their sympathy" and they "spoil" the Naxalite's "image in the public eye" (27). The misinterpretation caused by the media doesn't provide any opportunities to explain their grievances and the reason behind the movement. Its primary cause is not a motive born out of hatred towards the state, but their love for the nation. She also voices the politician's ignorance towards the poor people. As consequences of the state betrayal, Naxalite movement become repulsive in the society. Nandhini's behavior during the revelation of events demonstrates that she is

ready to expose something secretive, something which might disturb the authoritative state. Thus, she is under self- observation. This self- damage in a public place signifies the torture a living Naxalite have to undergo in the 1970s. Nandhini's consciousness of her position under the state's surveillance results in her self- scrutiny: she becomes complicit in her subjugation.

The action at the restaurant is shifted to the flashback demonstrating an encounter between Nandhini and Saroj Pal, the police officer, in an inquiry in the police station. "*Nandhini fidgets from time to time, trying helplessly to rise to her feet, making it obvious in the process that her hands and her feet are tied to the chair*" (30). The spectacle of tying Nandhini to the chair alludes that she, as an untamable beast shows how she is brutalized and dehumanized. These lines show that Nandhini and others endure violence in the police station before the arrival of the verdict. This medium provides testimony on- stage to the extent of the torture of the state and representing the state's exertion to eradicate the Naxalite movement because when applied indiscriminately torture is used as a tool of repression against rebellion and Naxalite empowerment.

In this play Nandhini discloses how thousands of young men and women are arrested, tortured and how corrupted people take their fundamental human rights in the society, before the legal judgements. The people who participated in the Naxalite movement were imprisoned without any legal systems. Thus, the people involved in the Naxalite movement were rotting in the prisons without any trial, and they were considered as the unclassified beings in the society. They are subjected to the state's cruelty. Thus, people who participated in the Naxalite movement were interrogated and faced many tortures, and it affected them both physically and psychologically.

On the other hand, Nandhini's conversations with Sujata, where she screams on- stage also functions as a metaphor of resistance which is present in the youngsters. In response to Sujata's comment in scene 11, "it's all quite now" (34) Nandhini screams, startling the audience, and with this authoritative power reaches the positive peak in the stage and the audience,

No, No. No. No! It was never quite, nothing's quite. Nothing's Changed. Thousands of young men rot in the prisons without trial, they're denied the status of political, and yet you say it's all settled down again? Torture continues with greater sophistication and more secrecy, and yet you say it's all quite? All quite? What do you need to get it into your heads that nothing's quite? (34)

The play provides a space for Nandhini to freely voice her accusation for the youngsters who are killed by the state and also against the country which tortures her on bail. During this point of time, she possesses the traumatic experience, and expresses her voice for the voiceless people who died because of their participation in the Naxalite movement. She poses a rhetorical question in scene 11, "how can you be smug and complacent?"(35) This question about when Naxalites have been brutalized, what the people in the elite class did for the young people and society? This clearly states that elite class people never considered lower class people and revolutionary people as human beings. Their status and their position in the society were more important than the people's life. In the other note, she mentions the same thing that "some day you'll learn that I've been arrested again" (35) is Naxalites unbroken ideology and confrontation, in the wake of the brutality of the state. This Naxalite movement is the role-reversal of the state's power and an affirmation of marginal and suppressed voices against modern biopolitics.

The play *Mother of 1084* can be read as a play that attempts to explore the suppressive method employed in the home, society as well as state level. It covers all the elements which are the leading causes for the suppression of the voice against the political powers, gender oppression, class discrimination and political influences on the marginalized section of the society. In some places, the character like Nandhini only raises her voice for the voiceless people and against the political state even in her confused state. Sujata raises her voice when she nails truth from various persons, and psychological and physical turmoil's make her raise her voice at the end of the play. On the other side Somu's mother who cannot raise her voice because of her social class status, is forced to move from the lower-class status to the marginalized state in the society.

Other characters like Dibyanath, Saroj Pal, the police officers are known for the cruelty of the corrupted world, and for using power and money to buy anything in the world. The play is controlled by the corrupt government and false accusations. They only try to suppress the, voices which are heard minimal in the society. At the end of the play, everything around them was corrupted, and they only considered power and money which can bring everything under their feet. The other characters like Brati and Somu who only work for the wellbeing of marginalized people and rights for the lower-class people questioned the corrupted society which only led them to death. Thus, people who are focused on the wellbeing of humans face the cruel world.

The significant elements like power structure and a contrast between the middle and upper-middle-class society focus on the faulty systems. Everyone around the world were forced to suffer because of some people's defective activities. Thus, the play can be labelled political at the operation of power that was unseen or unheard

by anyone throughout the play. Even the operation of the dominant ideology of capitalist towards middle-class society and even marginalized status of family and gender in capitalist society made people not to raise their voice against the corrupted systems in the play.

In this play, gender subalternity played a main role. Many characters fail to raise their voice at the beginning of the play. But at the end characters like Sujata and Nandhini planned to raise their voice through oppression and suffering. Sujata raises her voice for the better world through her death. Nandhini also fights for gender stability and betterment of human beings in the corrupted society, through her revolutionary movement. Other characters planned not to raise voice for their society. Because of lower class status, Somu's mother cannot raise her voice for her future. Brati and his friends fight for the gender subalternity in other ways. But they failed in their mission. Dibyanath, Saroj Pal and Sujata's family did not raise their voice for anyone in the society because they themselves corrupted their own life by considering status and money which are more valuable than anything. The characters Sujata and Nandhini raise their voice for the wellbeing of other people in the subaltern and in corrupted society. Other characters cannot raise their own voice themselves and for other people. The play *Mother of 1084*, raise voice for the better future of the people who are submerged in the corrupted and dominated society at the end of the play.

Chapter 3

Superstitious Belief Vs Gender Oppression

A gender study is the field, which is devoted to the study of gender representation and gender identity. This term in literature made many astonishing changes using feminist movement and feminist thought in the society during twentieth century. This field of study mainly focused on the women studies and it concerns with the women, gender and feminism. Often this term is used in the academic debates because of women's responsibility in the society. Gender is classified into masculinities and femininities in our community based on social and cultural construction in the world. The gender roles are valued, and it also depends on the biological status. Based on this, many different disciplines approached the gender studies in different manner. The transformations in this field made great impact in the subaltern studies. Through this, many writers tried to reflect the same idea in their writings which was successful in their career and it is carried out by the people from one generation to another generation.

Earlier subaltern writings mainly focused on the discrimination, suppression and oppression between the higher and lower-class society. Now it includes the new concept same as other concepts which is called as gender, where the voices of subaltern people are muted and unheard by the surrounding because of their gender. Whenever it comes to oppression and suppression in the society, it focuses on the class and caste system. But in today's scenario the concept is slightly changed from the earlier concepts. It focuses on the oppression within the same community, where their own people will dominate their community people without any mercy. Gender discrimination is the main idea where many researchers try to focus gender subalternity in the current period. All the researchers provide the same concept with

the help of different works which are written by various authors. For example, Bama's *Sangathi*, provides the same concept by focusing the class and caste discrimination and gender oppression within the community. Who ever faced gender discrimination in the society are forced to close their eyes, ears and mouth, because these three elements in the human body observes everything around them. They cannot raise their voice for the wellbeing of their community and in the society.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is the influential work when it comes to gender concept. This book was published in the year 1990 and it has been contributed a lot to the feminist thoughts and issues related to gender. It is a canonical text of feminism because most of the gender issues were explained using the ideas in *Gender Trouble*. In this book Butler distinguished about the sex and gender and she pointed out that sex is the biological factor and gender is a culturally constructed character in the society. Considering these factors by Butler we can refer Mahasweta Devi's play *Bayen*, where the protagonist Chandidasi is culturally constructed one in the subaltern society. Comparing this play with the other plays by Mahasweta Devi, the play *Mother of 1084* where the gender subalternity happens outside the community is based on political, class and caste system. But in the play *Bayen*, the gender subalternity happens within their community because of their superstitious belief system which is followed from their ancestors and social norms which are created by the patriarchal society.

Gender differences arise between men and women over the time and across the culture. These differences will create many problems and it arises when women are separated from the community and family and even from the position of being a mother to their children. The custom of witch craft also played a main role in the rural areas of India. The people in the rural areas believed witch craft blindly. Based on

these, many writers tried to raise their voice for the women in their writing. One among them is Mahasweta Devi whose works were greatly influenced by the gender issues and tribal people. She also focuses on the superstitious beliefs, political and power influence in the patriarchal society. She never tries to connect herself with any school of thoughts, but she is considerate about the suppression of women in the society and she adds a feminist dimension in her works. Her women characters are stronger than the male characters in her works. Her works like *Draupati* and *Mother of 1084* possessed the stronger women characters. Her works became famous in academic spaces because it concentrates on the subalterns. Often, they are associated with the lower economic classes too.

Mahasweta Devi's plays underscore the stem of complex social relationships which is endlessly transferred from one generation to another generation, caste and gender nexus. This play examines the gendered subaltern as a space, where many differences are produced by the community, caste and gender discrimination and deep-rooted superstition. It is considered as violence in the play. So Mahasweta Devi pointed out these elements in her play, because she lived along with the subaltern people and learnt about them. Her experiences were expressed in her works and these works bring out the specificity of the subaltern and specificity of gendered subaltern. It is explained in Mahasweta Devi's *Bayen*. It pointed out the patriarchal society and its power which made the life of Chandidasi more miserable in her own community. She is forced to become a bayen with supernatural powers and the economic and social factors that lead her life into a miserable one in the society. In this play the protagonist gives strong answer to the male dominated society, where oppression of the women is continuing without any full stop in the history. In this play Devi particularly mentioned the Dom community which follows a very violent custom and

witch custom that still exist in many other communities. Through this Mahasweta Devi spotlighted Dom community in this play.

Self-identity is always attached with women, because most of the time women's identity is explicated by the society rather than herself and that society is most probably led by men. For example, we can refer Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine*, which follows the identity crisis where the protagonist doesn't have any identity. At the end of the novel she finds her own identity as Jasmine in the novel. When it comes to patriarchal society women are living without any identity. They made women to believe what she is. In this play Chandidasi is struggling to identify her own self-identity. But her identity is not a permanent one in the play. It changes according to the demand of the society. Her own identity is transformed according to the social circumstances and eventually her individual identity is reestablished by her son Bhagirath. Before her marriage she was a free independent woman without anyone in her life. When she introduces herself to Malindar, she uses her identity as self in front of him in scene 1,

MALINDAR. I'm Malindar Gangadas, used to be at the cremation, now an attendant at the morgue. (*Beats his chest*) It's a government job, and permanent. I do my duty and pocket my salary, ha! (*Pause*) Anyone at home?

CHANDIDASI. It's me for myself. (105)

In the above conversation, Chandidasi is prouder of her identity being alone in the society. After marriage she is caught between the new identity as a wife to Malindar and mother to Bhagirath. But she never tries to erase her old identity with the arrival of new identities. She never fails to forget her former identity, that is burying the children. We people think that after finding the new identity we will be happy in our

life, but it is not possible in Chandidasi's life. Her former identity as burier of children clashes with her new identity, mother and wife. During this period, she is caught between the ancestral accountability and mother responsibility. In this process Chandidasi wanted to continue her ancestral duty and on the other hand she wanted to become a child bearing mother. Whenever she does her ancestral duty of burying the dead body of the children, she sees her son Bhagirath in those dead bodies. It's not her own self to consider her as a bayen, but the society around her gave the new identity because of her job. She planned to get rid of her job, because her job didn't provide any respect to her. First, she opposes the evil thought of becoming Bayen. Eventually she accepted that new identity, because of social structures which made her to accept the ruthless rights and norms of the patriarchal society. In scene 4 where she remarks,

BAYEN. (*Clearing her choking throat*) Let the Gangagutta's son go home.

BHAGIRATH. (*his eyes riveted on the reflection of Bayen in the water*). I... I'm in school now. I'll compete for the district scholarship... I'm a good student.

BAYEN. It's forbidden to talk to us... I'm a bayen. (117)

To prevent her husband and son, Chandidasi hides her face in front of them. Chandidasi gives up all excuses and explanations that she considered and accepted herself as a Bayen in the play. Thus, her motherhood and womanhood are always insulted and tortured by the society. Till her death she accepted her social identity instead of accepting her own original identity. But she is not pleased with her social identity, and she searches for her new identity. In the search of her own identity, she is clashed between constructed social identity and quest of her self-identity.

In this play Chandidasi is forced to wear new identity as a Bayen because of her social norms and her community. In other words, our human society is made up of men and women. But the human society is following the norms which are created by men. Women are forced to admit their new identities, which is given by the patriarchal society. Women cannot change those norms which already exists in our community. Following these thoughts and ideas, the human society considered women as a second sex in our community. Following this, men are constructing the social norms, customs and tradition and these customs are deconstructed and reconstructed in our society according to the social requirement of the patriarchal society. Similarly, in this play the protagonist Chandidasi's identity is always constructed and then deconstructed and reconstructed in this play. Being a woman, she cannot refuse her social identity in the male dominated society.

The differentiation between the gender happens when women were kept outside the society. When they were kept outside the society, they couldn't reach their everyday requirements very easily. This incident happens in the life of Chandidasi, where she is forced to live in pain and resistance because of her patriarchal society. Chandidasi lives in pain, because she is enforced to live away from her son Bhagirath. Her sexuality and affection are seen through her physical appearance. Her warmth for her son is seen through her emotions. In scene 1, Mahasweta Devi pictured the melancholic Chandidasi, who is singing for her son.

The curtain goes up on an empty stage, with a lullaby droning offstage, till Bayen enters, singing. She looks utterly exhausted and despondent, at the end of her tether, dragging her reculant feet like some condemned ghost debarred entry into human society. (97)

From the above narration we find that the character in the play deliberately tells the audience and reader that the mother is singing a song for her son and at the same time her mind is filled with the thought of hopelessness and her voice is worn out while she is singing. The canister is tied at the end of her saree which is used for the rattle and it is clanging along the floor. This shows that her community keeps her away from any social interactions with her own community. Even though Chandidasi is kept away from her community, she doesn't seem to care about anything and she is oblivion to her environment. She sings lullaby without understanding her surroundings in scene 1,

BAYEN. (*sings, off*). Come, sleep, come to my bed of rags,
 My child god sleeps in my lap,
 The elephants and horses at the palace gates,
 The dog Jhumra in the ashleap... (*Stops singing*) I don't
 Have anybody anymore, nobody. When I hadn't
 become a bayen, I had everybody. (97)

When she is detached from the society, she faces psychological turmoil within her own self. She is not treated equal with her husband and she believes that her dog Jhumra is still alive. Her inner self made her to believe that she is living her life as a bayen, and she never tries to forget her past life with her husband and son. When she lived with her family she was treated well by her family and by the society. Apart from this she cannot forget her motherhood after she became a Bayen in the society. Her motherhood is portrayed in a different manner because when she is separated by her family, she used to sing lullaby for her son and she says that in scene 1, "I used to rock him like this, suckle him, all that milk, a real flood, the milk from the breast split on the floor, and that's why..."(98).

The influence of motherhood and the physical affection for her son is expressed in the above line. Facing these types of oppression in her life, Chandidasi tries to understand the culture and cultural constitutes of gender in her community. In the article ‘The Cultural Constitution of Gender’, the author says “One of the main problems that still trouble the researchers in this area is the variation that is prevalent in the cultural understandings of the categories mentioned as a man and woman and also about the meanings of these two terms.” From the above line researchers need to understand the value of being human in the society. They cannot differentiate their gender based on male or female. But in the play, it is different. The social situation of Chandidasi’s motherhood is dissociated by the society. The society doesn’t consider her maternal fondness for her son. They never respected her motherly position in her community. So, she emotionally sings a song for her lost son. Being a mother, Chandidasi wants to talk and play with her son, but it cannot happen in her present life. The society kept her away from everything. As Bayen she cannot refuse the norms of the society, so she controlled her emotions within herself. Her son Bhagirath also never tries to find his own mother. When she finds her son Bhagirath, she cannot wait to see his face, but she remembered herself as a bayen and she refuses to see his face. In scene 1,

BAYEN. (*turns around, in yearning disbelief*). Bhagirath? My
Bhagirath? Bhagirath?

MALINDAR. (*ferocious in his fear*). Stop it, you bitch! Turn your face
away. (*Bayen dutifully turns away.*) you want to kill me? Is that
why you’re here? Eh?

BAYEN. (*covers her eyes, shivers and cries*). No. No. No. (99)

In the above conversation, her husband who is the part of Dom community tries to throwaway Chandidasi from the society and family. The anxiety and terror they had for Bayen is evident in the play. The superstitious acceptance is not in the society but it is naturally present in the tribal community. We cannot deny it. These superstitious beliefs are more prevalent in the tribal communities of subaltern group of West Bengal. These cannot be erased from their tradition and culture. Whenever it comes to superstition and feminism, it is considered as a public issue because women have a great impact on the society and in the construction of the social notions of structuring the position of women and her role in the society. These are used to silence the women in our community and make them powerless and voiceless. In this play, Chandidasi becomes voiceless and in the above quote we can find that world of Chandidasi is blurred, because she is considered as a Bayen. It leaves the permanent mark in the psyche of Chandidasi where her traditions and customs are controlled by the male- dominated society. Chandidasi is restricted to reveal her identity and herself in front of the society.

Chandidasi's present life is terrific but she tries to memories her memorable moment from her past life with her family. When she used to live with her family, she was never been alone in her home. But in the present, she worries to live alone without any one in her life which is expressed in the scene 1,

MALINDAR. I'll buy for you, buy everything for you today, pick it up
at the foot of the tree. Be gone now.

BAYEN. (*a dry, plaintive wail*). I can't bear it alone through the
night. (100)

The dominance of superstition in the society made Chandhidasi to separate from her son Bhagirath. The society neglected her motherhood and dissociated her happiness

with in herself. In scene 2 and 3 we can find that Chandhidasi was the part of the family once in her past life but now at present she is alone without any family and happiness. She cannot regain that family and happiness from the male-dominated society. But the contemporary motherhood, which created the uncertain relationship between the mother and child is extreme in the play. Concepts and rules created by the male point of view is only focused on the male realism and the women is absent in that concepts and regulations. The development and understanding of the mother in the outer world are considered as the other in the society. We need to notice that mother is the caretaker of the child from the infant and another feministic perspective explains that mother is the primary person in the life of the child. Mother need to preserve her selfhood when it comes to the life of her children. In the other words, power of motherhood is expressed in the same lines again in the scene 1 in present and in scene 2 in the past,

Bhagirath, your father hasn't two minutes to spare to listen to my woes. Won't you listen to all that hurts within me? (*She strokes the sleeping child*) Before you were born, I never knew I'd feel like this. Now it hurts so bad when I bury the little ones under the Banyan tree.
(106)

Chandidasi is glorified in the play because she fulfilled the duty of a mother in her past life. She put her jam-packed effort to take care of her son Bhagirath when he was a child. She gave up her ancestral job and her responsibility to take care of her family and her son. In the play the society cannot remove her mother identity. After considering her as a *Bayen* by the society, she was still lactating her son. The society cannot break the relationship between the mother and son. At the end of the play, Bhagirath declares Chandidasi as his mother.

The bridge between society and Chandidasi is portrayed in the play and it played a crucial role in embracing bayen in the society, who longs for her identity in the patriarchal society. The socio-political environment made her to impose negative thoughts in her mind. Following this pessimistic view, the society as well as the economic situations also had a great role in creating the complicated environment for Chandidasi. This happens when gender identities, culture and economics of the community is constructed by certain social structures. Considering this norm, the women's cultural aspects constructs the environment for her in the patriarchal society.

BHAGIRATH. I'm sure I'll win the scholarship. But will you promise to send me to send me to high school? Teacher tells me, I'm sure to win the district scholarship. Isn't it a lot of money, Father?

MALINDAR. A lot. You think you're going to get the scholarship?

BHAGIRATH. Yes, Father.

MALINDAR. You have to ride the train to get to high school. There's no other way to get there, and now there's a spate of train robberies. This place has grown evil. They pile up bamboos on the track to stop the train, and then they raid it. Damn them!

(98)

The above-mentioned lines reveal the socio-economic situation of the Bengal Dom community, in which Bayen belongs to. The economic condition in the life of Malindar family is worse. Here Malindar cannot provide money for his son's education. So, he tries to persuade his son Bhagirath, when his son wants to do his higher education far away from his home. The political condition allowed him to continue his education, but the economic condition didn't allow him to pursue his

education. His father remarks about the evils in the society which tries to harm the people. The whole human society is corrupted by the evil creatures. So, he is not willing to send his son to the town. Even in such situation Chandidasi is kept away from her family. She is not able to make any decision and contact with her family. Chandidasi is kept away from the society and from her family because she is a witch. The society allowed Chandidasi to live alone in a pyre. At the same time, we can notice that even though his child is a boy, Malindar is very much concerned about sending him away for education. He is reluctant to send his son for education. From this we can understand his attitude towards education and the value they preserved for their society.

MALINDAR. Why have you come then? Eh?

BAYEN. I've no oil for my hair, it's all matted and I can't comb it.

There's no kerosene at home to light a lamp. (99)

From the above conversation, the society made Chandidasi to depend on the same society where she is treated and considered as a witch. She doesn't have any proper food and home to live. The helplessness of Bayen without anything in her life is a critical issue in the play. Before marginalizing and considering as a witchcraft, she used to complain about everything to her husband Malindar when she had a family. Again, she cannot forget her past. When she didn't have proper oil and kerosene, she complains it to Malindar. In her past and present life, she is only dependent on her husband. This brings out the socio-political condition of the Dom community and their society is explained in the above lines. The above conversation between Malindar and Chandidasi reveals that, they both try to neglect their sentiments and individuality in their family.

Malindar's socio political society made him to avoid his wife in front of his community. He also considers her as a bayen and didn't give any respect to his wife. In scene 1, he doesn't give any value or admiration to his wife and along with the society he tries to dodge. Instead of using the word wife, he uses "Stop it, you bitch!" (99). Another incident which explains the social situation of the Chandidasi is in the scene 1, where Malindar himself remarks about his adoration for his wife,

MALINDAR. (*covers his face with his hands, and cries bitterly*). How could I do it? I hurled stones at her body? It used to be a body soft as butter. How could I be such a beast? (*He cools down after a while, lights a cigarette and speaks more calmly*) Go home, Bhagirath. I'll go to the market, buy her the things that she needs and leave them at her house. She's been starving since Thursday. It's Saturday today. (*Bhagirath waits*) Go away. Don't tell your stepmother anything about what you saw here today, what you heard. Hey, why don't you go? (101)

The bridge between the society and Chandidasi's life is quite evident in the above lines. The lines mention that after many years her husband Malindar is showing sympathy towards his wife or Bayen. Earlier he doesn't care about his wife and doesn't consider her as a human being. He is afraid of his socio- political condition. So, he never took any initial step to help Chandidasi. He even asks his son Bhagirath not to discuss about helping Bayen in front of his step mother, because Bhagirath's step mother taught him that it is a sin to talk to bayen, and she can kill anybody with her evil eyes. From the above lines we can understand that still Malindar remembers his wife because he is remembering only good old memories. Even though Malindar is part of the male dominated society, he is trying to keep distance from Bayen in his

life. But he tries to control his emotion in front of his wife. He didn't want to show his venerable and affectionate side before his community. Malindar doesn't have any courage to declare that Chandidasi also belong to the humanity. But his patriarchal society made him avoid and treat Bayen in the cruel way. The gender stereotype of the aggressive male community takes control over everything. This created a situation where the gap between Chandidasi and the community cannot be filled by anything.

The economic and social construction built for Chandidasi, supports the gender oppression. This gender oppression cannot be taken from the life of women. Chandidasi's community never tries to understand her situation and never tries to make her life better for her, because of her ancestral job which was burying the dead children in the cremation. Another issue is about her community people's beliefs in superstition. The world can change according to the development, but old principles cannot be removed from the people, because people are living along with that superstition. The best example in the play is,

BHAGIRATH. Isn't the living man who speaks to the Bayen doomed to die? My second mother tells me, Bhagirath, come back straight from school and run whenever you hear the canister clanging. Otherwise she'll suck life-blood. And you spoke to her? Won't she kill you off? (101)

The above-mentioned lines express how people still believe in superstition. From these lines we can understand that Bhagirath is brought up without knowing the truth that the witch is his real mother. His stepmother tries to inculcate negative thought about the Bayen. Even Bhagirath never tries to learn about the truth. He blindly believes superstition which was explained by his stepmother. When Malindar hears the truth from his son that whoever goes near to the Bayen will be doomed and she

will suck blood from the human beings, Malindar didn't know how to confess the truth. These are the main thoughts which is predominant in the subaltern community. They carry their ancestral superstition beliefs from one generation to another generation without researching about the truth. The political and social situation made Chandidasi to become a Bayen in the society. It is believed that king Harichandran gifted the cremation ground to the Kalu Dom community. So, people belonging to Dom community is taking all the cremation process till their death.

VOICE. All the cremation grounds of the world are yours...

MALINDAR. *(smiles, as he explains to his son)*. Yes, that's how it happened, Bhagirath. Then Kalu Dom danced, like this. *(He raises his arms, and dances, streaming continuously)* The brahmans, the sadhus, the sanyasis get cattle, land and gold, and we all get all the cremation grounds of the world. All the cremation grounds of the world for us, for us, for us, for us only. *(Stops, turns, pauses, then in a different tone together)* Your mother was a descendent of Kalu Dom. Her name was Chandidasi Gangadasi, she used to bury children.

BHAGIRATH. She buries children? (103)

For the first time Malindar reveals the truth about Bhagirath's mother. He confesses that Chandidasi used to do her ancestral job of burying dead children and guard their cremation from the vultures. He also makes it clear that Chandhidasi is not a witch and she never did any fault in anyone's life and she never had an evil eye. From the above lines, we can understand that women don't have any power to kill children. Their community only believed fallacies that made Chandidasi to become a Bayen in the Dom community.

MALINDAR. She had everything. When she was your mother, my wife, I gave her striped saris to wear, and silver- nickelled jewellery. I fed her, I rubbed oil in her hair, her body... (102)

The above lines mention the life of Chandidasi before becoming Bayen. She had everything, and it changed when she became a Bayen. The society around Chandidasi discarded her happiness and life and made her to suffer more in her community. The above and below mentioned lines will express socio and political influence in the society. This also explains how socio-political issues tried to control the women with their power.

MALINDAR. They set up a hovel for her beside the railway track, every Saturday they leave a hamper of food for her at her doorstep. Once a year they give her two saris and two gaamchas. (110)

Another issue which is related to oppression of women in the play is where Chandidasi is considered as a witch. Chandidasi belonged to the Gangaputta's band where people believe that superstitions are followed from one generation to another generation. She continued to do her father's ancestral job, burying the dead children. It is at this point where she is caught between the motherhood and her ancestral job. The society allowed her to do the ancestral job and they separated her from her son Bhagirath. In the beginning of the play in scene 1, she weeps and says that "I don't have anybody anymore, nobody. When I hadn't become a bayen, I had everything." (97)

Judith Butler explains that women are considered as another and their autonomy is considered as illusionary. Women are well-thought-out to be as the stable notion in the society. It is also expressed through the construction of the society

because their patriarchal power plays an important role. We, human beings also consider women as a female based on sex or gender distinction. But this concept is not possible in the play because new fact is believed by the society that she was not considered as women and they neglect Chandidasi's feminine character and they believed her as 'other' in the society. Hence forth, here the life of Chandidasi is measured as Bayen, where it refers to the subject of the person. It also represents the male dominated society around Chandidasi.

BAYEN. Gangaputta! Gangaputta! (*She stands with her back to them.*

Malinder stops in his tracks and instinctively covers his eyes.

He covers his son's eyes too, and draws him closer to himself.)

Gangaputta! I'm not facing you. What's there to get scared about?

MALINDAR. (*in panic*). O Holy Mother! You had to call me at this hour of the day when the wind goes crazy?

BAYEN. (*a tired voice, she is tired of the superstitious terror that she carries with her*). Tie knots in your hair and in what you're wearing. (*Malindar ties knots in his hair and his dhoti.*) Spit on the head of the child. Tell me when you've done it. (99)

The problem arises here, when there is a situation where the original gender identity is considered as identity of interpreted one. The identity which was given by the society is only represented as the interpreted identity and not the original identity. From the above lines we can understand that the society has failed in considering the fact that women are equal to men. One cannot easily adopt to the new identity which was given by the society as a witch and this cannot be accepted by the person within a short period of time. But Chandidasi didn't have any choice to deny her original

identity because of the patriarchal society. Whenever it comes to the identity of the women, men are the only persons who decide the identity of women in the society. The male dominated society tries to silence Chandidasi in the society through their superstitious belief. These are the incidents which are more prevalent in Chandi's community.

BHAGIRATH. My mother? The Bayen's my mother? What sort of a mother?

MALINDAR. You were born of her womb, my son. There was no one as beautiful as she, no one with such grace.

BHAGIRATH. Then why did you tell me my mother died while I was a baby? Why did you tell me that?

MALINDAR. (*miserable*) There's the rub, my child, why I have to lie. she held you in her womb, she showed you the world, she suckled you, and then she became a bayen. (102)

In the above lines Malindar discloses before his son Bhagirath that Chandidasi is his mother before becoming the Bayen. Bhagirath cannot believe the fact that his mother is a Bayen in the society. He is in trouble believing that his mother is not a Bayen because bayens will have supernatural attitudes. These supernatural attitudes are absent in Chandidasi. Sometimes later Bhagirath started to accept the real fact that his mother is a Bayen. Occasionally the representation of the women character provides the legitimate position in the society. But it is missing in the life of Chandidasi. In Gender Trouble, Judith Butler explains that "If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way, taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (10). This is

applicable in this play, where the 'body' that is physical appearance is still a sexed body and it naturally represents the culturally sex body of the bayen. But the word Bayen in another way around is considered as witch. It is still sexed body of Chandidasi which is lactating. The difference between the gender and sex bring the distinction between the sexed body and culturally constructed body.

In scene 2, we can see clearly about the distinction between masculinity and femininity. In the beginning of the scene itself we can find how Chandidasi is controlling general sexual and parenting skills, because these two cannot be separated or isolated. Whenever it comes to parenting and sexuality, we find very hard to separate. Each parent cannot give their parenting skills, because it gives power to share their own problem with their closed ones. Likewise, in this play Chandidasi shares her darkest fear and emotions with her son Bhagirath.

CHANDIDASI. He's asleep, my darling one. (*She outs the child to bed*) Bhagirath, your father hasn't two minutes to spare to listen to my woes. Won't you listen to all that hurts within me? (*She strokes the sleeping child*) Before you were born, I never knew I'd feel like this. Now it hurts so bad when I bury the little ones under the Banyan tree. O my son, do you feel your mother's woe? Men in general are so insensitive. Their children die. I bury them. And they say I have the evil eye- if I stare at a child, it's sure to die. (*Smiles sadly*) The other day in the dark someone hurled a stone at me...! (106)

In the above lines Chandidasi emotionally shares her complexities in her job and how she is caught in between many responsibilities. Whenever it comes to women, they are forced to do their domestic work and childcare. Likewise, Chandidasi is caught

between the domestic and childcare duty. In this way Chandidasi doesn't know how to overcome her oppression position in the society. On the other hand, her duty to the society that is her ancestral job made her life miserable, where she cannot even express her suffering to her husband. The differences between men and women are culturally considered to be a biological one. But we, human beings only consider women to belong to the lower position in the society. We need to find why society decided to consider Chandidasi as Bayen and witch instead of considering her as a women and mother or a normal human being who wanted to live her life with happiness. She also tries to raise her voice but she became voiceless in the society. In the above conversation mentioned by Chandidasi, she talks about how men lack in their responsibilities when it comes to their family. Her pain is unexpected in the play. After she becomes mother to a child, she suffers more pain and she shares this pain and suffering with her son when he was a child.

There are many incidents in the play where Chandidasi's husband Malindar avoids her. One incident is where she complains about discontinuing her ancestral job and difficulties and unwillingness in balancing the responsibility of a mother and her job. This situation is more common in the human society. The same hopelessness is mostly common in women, where they cannot even take their own decision, because their own life is categorized by the men in their family. This is common in the subaltern and in rural community. Along with decision making men also wiped the identities of women in the society. From this we can understand that patriarchy only have the imaginative concept to implement oppression against the women. In different cultures the universal concept patriarchy overrides or it reduces the asymmetry of the gender. The new concept is necessary to differentiate 'me' and 'not me' in order to learn human beings. Following this thought we can analyze the play where the

protagonist Chandidasi can be considered as a human being who can differentiate her identity and individuality in her life. She can easily differentiate herself as a witch or Bayen or Chandidasi or mother. She never accepts or believes herself being witch or the person with evil thoughts. There are certain incidents where the society tries to force Chandi to accept herself as evil and trying to keep her away from the society because of her evil powers.

CHANDIDASI. They say I have the evil eyes. The little ones die of summer heat, winter's cold and small pox, don't they? And is it fault of mine?

MALINDAR. They're doomed, these fools. Ignorant idiots, is there anyone among them who can sign name? Is there anyone with a government job? Idiot, all of them.

CHANDIDASI. Why can't you see it, Gangaputta, why I think of throwing up the job again and again? When I guard the graves through the night, my breasts bursting with milk ache for my Bhagirath back home, all by himself. I can't, can't stay away from him. (108)

The difficulties of Chandidasi is explained in the above lines. The society around her considered her as an evil and death of young children in their community took place because she laid her evil eyes on those young children. Another reason is that she is continuing her ancestral job after marriage. In the beginning her husband Malindar started to support her and helped her continuing her ancestral job. Believing her husband, she started to do her job without considering any negative vibrations from the society. When society around her started to blame her for the death of the children and mock her calling bayen there was some changes in her husband's attitude. After

this she is shocked by her attitude towards herself. It was at that moment where she realized that her husband started to blame her and called her as a witch identity.

MALINDAR. ... How can you be a witch? Those who bury children turn into bayens, when they are possessed, not witches.

CHANDIDASI. (*screams*). What's that you said? So you call me a bayen? Me, a bayen? That's what you said, didn't you? So you say I dig up the graves and raise the dead babies? Kiss them? Suckle the dead children? How could you say it? (109)

The above lines express how Malindar also have second thought regarding his wife when society started to blame her for the death of the children. It may be a difficult situation when she didn't find proper position in the society. When she could not find a support from her loved ones, she becomes alone and didn't find any proper position to fight against the patriarchal society. She can't even raise her voice against the violence that are happening to her and other women characters in *Mother of 1084* are forced to face same situation in their life.

Chandidasi tries to neglect the attack from the society, "Go. I'll come. And let the community know that this will be the last time that I'll do this job" (112).

Chandidasi's preservation of her job for the society is not appreciated by the society.

So, she tries to avoid doing her job of burying the children. Denial of her job and responsibility made her to become a dependent to independent one in the society.

Without realizing her feelings, the evil people like Gourdas and other people made Chandidasi to suffer miserably in the society. The original gender of the human beings was always considered through the appearance of the body. But in

Chandidasi's life it is a different concept. Whenever it comes to the life of women their original identity is always questioned by the society and same situation happens

in the life of Chandidasi. She is forced to lose her original identity as a mother, and there is a great gap between her original identity and the situation of the bayen which is constructed for her by the society or by her Dom community people. The gender in the society need to perform certain duties and then only both men and women can create their own identity without any disturbances. The below lines will show how the patriarchal society blames Chandidasi for being a Bayen in the society.

MOB. (*rising above their awe to savage violence*). Yes, you're a bayen.

CHANDIDASI. No, no, I'm no bayen.

MALINDAR. Then who was it with whom you were so lovey dovey?

(*His voice mounts*) Why is your sari dripping with milk? Whom were you suckling? For whom was the lullaby?

CHANDIDASI. (*pleading for mercy*). I'm no bayen. I've a suckling child, and that's why my breasts ooze milk all the time.

Gangaputta, you know it's true. Why don't you tell them? (115)

The appearance of the body by the society and Malindar is mentioned in the above lines. The society formulated the new rule for Chandidasi where she should not eye anyone in the village because she has an evil eye which will kill everyone around them. Chandidasi's inability to see the eyes of anyone in the society also explains that she follows the rules and norms of the society. Her trauma in her personal life also made her to become a Bayen in the community. Denying the duties and her personal responsibility shows that Chandidasi has changed from the mother to a Bayen and dependent to independent person in the society. Bhagirath, after finding his real mother, went to visit her but Chandidasi denies to meet him and she asks him to return to his home. "The Gangaputta's son should never again come to the tracts in

the evening... Let him go home and swear that he'll never, never come here again even to look upon the bayen's shadow" (118).

These are the situations where Chandidasi is forced to become a bayen and consider her identity which was constructed by the society. At the end of the play only her son Bhagirath gives her original identity as a mother. The Dom community which was immersed in the system of superstition belief may disable to provide any position to the women in their community. The society made her suffer and suppressed her from all the problems. She was not able to raise her voice against the violence in the society. Thus, gender subaltern may be present still in some tribal and in other subaltern communities. These subaltern communities only focus on the suppression of women in the patriarchal society and never tries to implement newer thoughts in their community. Sometimes it may cause loss of some worthy persons and women rights in the society.

Mahasweta Devi has expressed her experiences in her plays, which made her to write many works related to subaltern people. Likewise, this play is also concerned with the gender subaltern and where the main protagonist voice is unheard in the male-dominated society. The plays *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen* focuses on the gender differences in the society. But the play *Bayen* only focuses on one particular character compared with the other play. She stands for her identity and independent women but the society made her become a witch with an evil eye. Her death only brings her value to the people who are immersed in the olden beliefs. If women want to raise against the patriarchal society, they can only raise it through their death. From this play we come to understand that whatever happens to the women can be solved through raising their voice against the violence.

In this play *Bayen*, we focused on the position of a woman and the identity crisis within literature. Sometimes gender studies offer with the study of sexuality and engages to study gender and sexuality in the field of literature. The findings of this research will help us to understand women in the male dominated society by considering their individuality. This play examined the ways in which society constructs the life of Chandidasi and she is forced to give up her innate identity and bound to accept the imposed identity. This play turns out to be a genius masterpiece as it adds to the layers of literature related to women suffering in India.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Researchers or scholars always try to explore how to describe Mahasweta Devi as a writer. This is because, most of the time writers are often cited as a critical observer of the prevailing human conditions. Through their work authors try to reflect the society which is mirrored by some social situations. Some writers use the power of their written communication to bring out the struggle and suffering of the exploited people in the society. But few writers are forced to act as a mere reporter and spectator in revealing human conditions. Mahasweta Devi is one such writer whose literature and activism only focuses on society.

Mahasweta Devi was considered as a significant figure among Indian writers, and she is recognised as one of the courageous female Bengali writers in 1950s. She contributed not only to Bengal literature but also to the Indian literature and the literature of the world at large. It is for the reason that one could discourse that Devi's writings cannot be stereotyped. Mahasweta Devi herself confessed that as far as her books are concerned, editing journals and newspaper reports, be it literature, her active work for the poor, and her activist writing will try to satisfy the society in the human world. Each work of Mahasweta Devi bears an umbilical link with the other as it coexists all the time. She made many contributions to the society; people could mention that her works are not branded or categorised in particular genre in the literature.

Mahasweta Devi plays a diversified role as a great dramatist, a fictional writer, a historian and an excellent narrator. She gave voice to the subaltern people and exposed a different kind of exploitation which is happening in the country. She is a truly committed writer who portrayed the social evils in her writings. Her works are

concerned with the marginalised group of people and empowering tribal people who are fighting for their environmental rights and cultural rights. These issues were documented in the form of plays, fiction, and non-fiction. Her works are deep-rooted with her own experiences with the people, and she wrote about them in her works. She focused on the theme subordination where she not only focused on underprivileged people in the society but also class, gender and ethnicity in the community. When we consider her plays, we learn that how underprivileged people try to gain facilities and attention which are taken away from mainstream society.

Mahasweta Devi's writings specify her concern for the main problem in the tribal community and modern India. After independence, India is changed into the modern nation and some progressions were created for freedom. But social relations are still unchanged in the society. It brought gains to the people who are living in the cities and who belong to the higher social status, privileged and dominated category of people. But the cost provided for the poor, marginalised and subordinated people were low. These people didn't receive their necessities since modern development were not moved or processed to the lower class. So Mahasweta Devi focused on these marginalised people who are mirrored by the illegal political rules and by the corrupted society. Devi not only focused on these issues, but also the class, gender and caste system present in the community.

Being a female writer, Mahasweta Devi cannot be considered as a feminist but also, we can believe her as a social writer who fought for the rights of underprivileged people in modern society. Even though she has passed away, her works can be considered as a solution for contemporary problems. We can say that Mahasweta Devi created her works with the motive of preventing social issues which are going to arise in the future. Some way she tries to save the innocent people from the corrupted

society. Through her successful writing career, she emerged herself as a great writer with the purpose of social issues.

We can easily place Mahasweta Devi's works in the contemporary period, but we cannot put her as a first present writer to focus on the subject of tribal life in the Bengali literature. Her inspiration from various writers like Kavi Kankan Mukundaram Chakraborty, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra has made her to understand the experience of common man in the society. In the introduction part of the book *Five Plays*, Samik Bandyopadhyay mentions how Mahasweta Devi concerns about the people who are groaning under hunger, landlessness, indebtedness and bonded labour. He also mentions why Devi choosed class, caste and gender issues in her works in order to bring out what happened after independence? and what made most of the contemporary writers to write about the sufferings of people in their work? Mahsweta Devi justifies violence in her works to bring out justice for downtrodden people. Wherever the system of justice fails, she tries to raise her voice through her actions. According to that, she worked herself towards creative writing where she can create a solution for the unsolved problems in society. So, we should place her writings and works in the contemporary period.

Contemporary writers of Mahasweta Devi focuses on the issues like transgender, oppression, male domination in the society, downtrodden people, history, religion, psychological conflicts and contemporary problems like caste and class system in the community. Along with Mahasweta Devi writers like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Asif Currimbhoy proceeded how every human being in the society should stand for their despair, their longings, and their secret shams in their writing. Because of political influence in the ordinary people's life made above mentioned writers to outlook on life and literature to show reality about the human

being in society. This political background forced these writers to create another branch of literature in the world. We know that a woman passes through many phases in her life with or without the male. Women play as a mother, sister, daughter, wife in human society. Wherever she goes, she carries these identities in her life. Sometimes these identities were spoiled or eradicated in the life of women. This happens when she becomes an illiterate, when the patriarchal society dominates her and when superstitious belief and political oppression are substantial in the society. Most of the time patriarchal society misuses this role as an instrument to subordinate women in the world. So, women are forced to raise their voice for justice in society.

In the collection *Five Plays*, Mahsweta Devi produced two great plays to bring out the above-mentioned issues and ideas. The plays *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen* brings out the aspect of gender subalternity that is practised by the political and superstitious society. In these two plays, we can identify the status of women in patriarchal society. Mahsweta Devi tries to portray the stories of women characters bearing the substance of social and political oppression and enduring and resisting the indomitable will in the community. Both the plays include the theme of identity, witch, marginalisation, abuse, humiliation and they are laid by the vested interests.

Sujata, the protagonist in *Mother of 1084*, played the role of an affluent and sensitive mother. She is trapped between a sympathetic mother and a silent protestor against the immoral life which her whole family stands for. Even though she is literate and a working woman, unlike Somu's mother, she failed to notice the evils present in the society. She failed as a mother, who didn't know what her son Brati was doing before he was killed by the corrupted society. According to her, her whole world is surrounded by her son only. She failed to notice what is happening in the society when people like Somu's mother longs for a better life in the society where the

suppression and oppression were created based on the class and male domination. Sujata is suppressed by her family and by the corrupted political society. When she discovers the truth about her son's life, she recreates herself by knowing the truth from Nandhini and Somu's mother.

We cannot say all men are the same in the society because dominating characters are always with them from their birth. They try to control everything which they own and wanted to live a lavish life in the society. Dibyanath, Jyothi and Sajorpal come under one category. They try to dominate women in the society. Dibyanath is a person who tries to dominate or suppress his wife Sujata in the play. On the other hand, Sarojpal brutally mistreats Nandhini for her participation in the Naxalite movement. When Sujata tries to raise her voice against the corrupt world, Dibyanath misleads her voice and says that she is suffering from a disease. Sujata's silent protest or voice for her son's revolt movement was unfulfilled by her corrupted and dominated patriarchal society.

In the play, Sujata finds a moral rationale for her son's revolt movement, and she feels punished for not knowing about her son. Alienated and suppressed from her husband and other corrupt children, she finds herself drifting towards the ideology of her dead son. Her identification, that is her identity as a mother with her son is complete. She tries to defend her son's sacrifice and has no regrets about his participation in the Naxalite movement. She feels satisfied when she finds in his revolt a parallel to her silent protest against her own corrupt and dominating household. Another women character Nandhini, stands against the corrupted and suppressed society. She takes part in the Naxalite movement to provide freedom and independence to the lower-class people. But patriarchal society treated her as a person who is spoiling the society. She has the power to raise her voice for the poor, and she

is willing to sacrifice her life for the subordinate people. Her boldness in the play made her face the brutal world where she is physically tortured by Sarojpal. This cruel world and the physical and mental torture made her stand against the patriarchal and suppressed society. Both Sujata and Nandhini were literate, but they both stand poles apart in the play. Sujata is a silent protester against the immoral society whereas Nandhini is a protester with a bold attitude who took violent procession in the play.

In the play *Bayen*, Mahasweta Devi focused on the remote village in Bengal unlike the city life in the play *Mother of 1084*. *Bayen* is endowed with an authentic rural atmosphere; the play depicts the effects of superstitious beliefs in innocent people. Notwithstanding the so-called scientific enlightenment, there is still a large part of Indian life which is sunk in ignorance and superstition. Besides, the agents of the corrupt feudal system which is still in full control of the rural life worsen the situation further in the life of Chandidasi.

Chandidasi the protagonist of the play, like Sujata, is a loving mother and a sensitive wife. She belongs to the Dom community in Bengal which is dominated by the superstitious belief and male-dominated society. The seeds of conflicts within herself between a committed mother and a professional gravedigger as well as the broader confrontation between the womanhood and the forces of male-dominated society are sown. Fed up with the awful work which doesn't befit a woman with a tender heart, Chandidasi pleads her husband to relieve her from the obligations and take her away to a place where she can lead a happier life looking after her son. But her husband Malindar misunderstood her protest and encouraged her to go on with her work. But she hates her job all the time because she finds her son's image in the dead children. Her tender heart and motherly love aroused to act when she hears the cries of the jackals in the graveyard.

In the play, we find that human action that proves to be a threat to Chandidasi's existence in the community. The act of victimisation and suppression is crucial in the play. The gullible people are deceived into a belief that Chandidasi is responsible for the death of the children in the community. Later she is pathetically defenceless when her insensitive husband becomes a party of the victimisation. All the forces that are patriarchal seem to have intrigued against her to deprive her of the status of a human being. She is branded as a witch or Bayen, and her presence is considered as inauspicious in the society. Even though she is suppressed and separated from humanity, she is not devoid of human qualities. The banishment serves as a catalyst which accelerates the realisation of the higher social values that are quite often ignored in the society.

The human values in the society are sometimes charged with the spoilers who are living in the humanity. The fundamental commitment in the play which binds a mother Chandidasi and her son Bhagirath together is impossible to be ignored by any human establishment for a long time. Chandidasi is a victim of male domination, and superstitious belief is seen again in action in the play. She is killed averting a train accident which would otherwise have proved fatal. And it is the nature of transformation which is undergone by Chandidasi as a mother. Her heroic death is in itself an act of protest against the suppression and inhumanity of superstition.

Both the plays *Mother of 1084* and *Bayen*, analyses the effects of the corrupted political rules, social, economic issues and how patriarchal society played an influential role in dominating the women in the society. The plays end with the action of both protagonists throwing the defiance in the teeth of immoral social values and governing male society. The protagonist in these plays becomes the sufferer of male

domination, and they both try to raise their voice against the gendered subaltern and for their proper position in the society.

We can compare this play to the contemporary period because we see many incidents which are related to women. For example, women are exploited because of their attitudes, education and their power to stand against the immoral society. Still, domination and oppression of women are present in the contemporary world. Women in the community try to raise their voice and stand against the patriarchal society through their identity as mother, daughter, wife like Sujata and Chandidasi in Mahasweta Devi's plays. Education raises them to the higher position in the society. So, women need to know what are the things that are trying to suppress them in the society. When women understand the society, they can create their own rules and regulations with the support of proper education and moral values. Through this they can create a new world where they can become owners of their own life with praiseworthy identity.

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