

## Conclusion

India is home to people belonging to diverse castes, communities and religion. Several factors have contributed to the integration of these dissimilar entities into a composite whole. It is a challenge to maintain unity amidst such kind of socio-cultural diversity. And there has been occasional instances of dominance of one race over the other. Exploitation of the lower classes by the upper caste members have always been prevalent in society, which has been reported from time to time by various agencies. One such platform which has always protested against such treatment of the subalterns is literature. And writers down the ages have taken initiative in projecting the plight of the subjugated class in their works.

Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy have painted the canvas of their creative life in highlighting the traumatic experiences of the subalterns in various social settings. The two writers have constantly scanned the tribal areas of the northern and eastern states of India in accumulating their tales of constant struggle for survival. It would not be an exaggeration to state that their interrogation of the social taboos have gone a long way in eradicating irrational beliefs from the consciousness of people. Their intervention have been helpful in alteration of the society in terms of notions and prudence.

Both Devi and Roy have instilled a sense of security in the hearts of the poor and the destitute. They wanted to amalgamate the story of the marginalized people in the process of historical renaissance and they also managed to provide a ground for them to speak. Subaltern studies group attempted to narrate the history of India's tribal people who are the aboriginal dwellers of the land. The persecution of these tribes by people inhabiting mainland is addressed by writers of the subaltern group. The common phenomenon of presenting urban stories no longer appealed to the writers.

Mahasweta Devi has developed a new trend in writing novels for the socially distraught people. In most of her novels, Devi expresses her own opinions with regard to the condition of the subalterns. In the Victorian period, there were many writers who reported the evils of the post-industrial England. Writers like Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope and Thomas Hardy have showcased the problems of the have-nots, in a society which was basking in the glory of Industrial Revolution. It created the problem of

class struggle as industrialization resulted in the formation of the employers and the working classes.

Mahasweta Devi also writes in similar lines. Her anthology entitled *Dust on the Road*, covers articles that underscore diverse issues like “deprivation, degradation of life and environment” (25). Her works have been translated to several languages including tribal languages of Santhali and Ho. In telling stories of the ethnic people, she critiques the system which subjugates them. She is very skeptical of the promises made by the governmental agencies in making a hassle-free world for the marginalized section of society. She has managed to raise their issues in national as well as international platforms.

She relates the way in which the entire administrative system comprising of Police and politicians that turns deaf ear to their problems. Her fictional world comprises of the class struggle in rural and urban areas, the destiny of their sympathizers, police violence, and ecological problem of the tribal areas and isolation of the members of aristocratic class who refused to adhere to the ways designed by their peers.

Devi was an activist in true sense of the term. Her Bengali periodical named *Bortika* was a revolutionary step where she gave a platform to the subalterns like peasants, laborers, adivasis, industrial workers, could relate their problems. *Bortika* is one of its kind, as there are negligible instances of such an opportunity being provided to the deprived classes. Here they express their concern for their present and future. It helped the authorities to take note of their problems.

It was edited by Mahasweta Devi from the early 1980s. The publication was remarkable and it is one of the rare journals, as it deals exclusively with the tales of the underclass people like bonded labourers and the persecuted ethnic communities. The sagas of violence and maltreatment is portrayed nicely in the periodical. The editor left no stone unturned to commemorate the adventures of the unsung heroes of tribal regions.

It gave a platform to the penniless farmers, various tribes and industrial labourers. The journal is a unique venture as it invited articles from the tribal people, who were subjugated by the upper class society. They could write about their experiences of the urban world, which searched happiness at the expense of the smiles of the people inhabiting the periphery.

She was also a mediator between the government officials and the marginalized members. She has written some letters on their behalf for redressal of their problems relating

to exploitation of any kind. She tried her best to convince them to consider their case. Mahasweta Devi believed that the subalterns should proceed with their purposes. She believed that they should never compromise for their poor economic status, rather they should focus on the creation of a better world for themselves.

Arundhati Roy also has constantly written for the downtrodden section. Her debut work is one of few novels that addresses the audience directly. It captures the potboilers of a post-colonial Indian caught in the web of political upheal. The work has been translated into several languages and has turned out to be one of the best-selling novels of all times. Here, she states the way in which minority communities are suffering in India.

Her second novel is a politically charged work, which analyzes her contemplations of the past two decades. It narrates important events relating to the nation's disturbing contemporary history. The novel tells the truth behind the political discourses that tarnished the image of the country. It is as hard-hitting as her first novel which aims at promoting cause of the subaltern people.

The stories of these minority groups were included in the larger history of the nation. Subaltern studies group attempted to narrate the history of India's tribal people who are the aboriginal dwellers of the land. The persecution of these tribes by people inhabiting mainland is addressed by writers of the subaltern group. They make every possible effort in maximizing the comfort level of people inhabiting the periphery. They report any kind of violation of the rights and privileges of the subalterns.

Writers across time and space have hugely influenced the scope of Human Rights by projecting societal realities in their literary pursuits. They have made persistent efforts in protecting the rights of individuals against the institutions of hegemony and this concern is thoroughly echoed in the works of Indian English writers as well. Human Rights refer to the rights relating to life, equality, liberty of an individual, guaranteed by the Constitution of a nation irrespective of caste, community, religious beliefs, gender, etc.

Human rights are the natural, social, economic and political rights of human beings, guaranteed by national and international law. These rights are authenticated by authorities in order to promote civil liberties. The reason behind designing the charter of human rights is to impose a sort of obligation on the part of social beings to respect the rights of others. The Constitution of a nation is responsible for the preservation of these rights of its citizens. It ensures that the people of a country are not deprived of their fundamental rights. They are

meant for safeguarding the interests of human beings, irrespective of caste, class, race and gender.

But the efficacy of upholding human rights is not limited to the confines of national boundaries alone, as it is highly influential with global institutions as well. Transnational organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Red Cross Society work tirelessly for preserving the values of humanity. The scope of human rights is very vast as it encompasses a wide variety of issues like liberty, equality, egalitarianism, individualism etc. The commissions maintain a watchful eye for protecting people against atrocity of any kind.

The concept of human rights which originated in the West at the time of enlightenment, was developed during the French Revolution and later on helped the African-American community in abolishing the evil of slavery from American society. But the modern argument of human rights and the foundational ideas relating to the formulation of laws and their subsequent implementation was laid down by the United Nations. It is a world body which is committed towards the protection of international community and was formed in order to contain violence after the Second World War.

This world body was formed after the League of Nations failed in its purpose of maintaining world peace and tranquility. The United Nations framed a charter called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, which tells about the way in which the union believes what human rights are. In addition to this, there are many treaties signed by various organizations for the promotion of the rights of human beings. Its member nations meet every year to renew the resolution of preserving the ideals enshrined in the charter.

India being a multi-cultural nation has emphasized the importance of preserving rights in her constitution by formulating six fundamental rights for its citizens. And a National Human Rights Commission was formed in 1993 in order to defend these rights of Indian civilians. But it has been observed that the efforts made by the authorities are not sufficient in providing enough security to public life and property as they are found to have been violated on many occasions.

And such rejection and repression of human rights have always been found to be reflected in the literary pieces across centuries. Literature upholds the way in which basic rights of the general public are disturbed. Writers have made substantial efforts in sustaining these rights by constantly raising their voice against their annihilation.

Although the National Human Rights Commission was designed to ensure that the people of the country are not deprived of their fundamental rights, but it has been observed that the rights of women are not amply protected, rather they are ruthlessly violated. This type of destruction done to their privileges finds reflection in the works of Mahasweta Devi, who has been working tirelessly for ameliorating the lot of women. She has dealt with matters concerning protection of gross violation of their Rights.

Her short story “Draupadi” is a strong statement against the atrocities directed toward women. Its discourse is built around a tribal-rebel girl named Dopdi who was brutally raped by the authorities of the state without been given a proper trial. It is a case of acute violation of the right of a gendered individual against exploitation. Devi draws from the tradition of Draupadi cult in Mahabharata in order to show that exploitation of women is a continuous process.

She has vocalized the sufferings of the protagonist in a poignant and appealing way in her acclaimed work. This story will be considered in order to evaluate the magnitude of destruction done to the civil liberties of a tribal woman, who became the victim of grave atrocity.

Mahasweta Devi’s *Draupadi* appeared in her celebrated collection of short stories named *Breast Stories*. Here, she portrays the way in which fundamental right of an individual is tarnished. Here the protagonist is Dopdi, a peasant-rebel girl who along with her husband Dulna, revolted against the atrocities of the privileged classes. They revolted against the people belonging to upper strata of society who exploited them. Their war was against those village proprietors who violated the rights of people belonging to the periphery and oppressed them because of their socio-economic condition. The ensuing quote from the text explains the situation well:

Dulna had said, I’ll have the first blow, brothers. My grandfather took bit of paddy from him and I still give him free labour to repay that debt. Dopdi had said, his mouth watered when he looked at me. I’ll put out his eyes.  
(Choudhury, 37)

Here the reference is made to Surja Sahu, an upper caste landowner who used to abuse his subordinates. The extract ratifies the kind of torture he used to inflict upon his

domestic helps. It is a violation of the fundamental right cited in the Article 23 and 24 of the constitution which says: “Right against exploitation, prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour and traffic in human beings.”<sup>1</sup> Both of them were at large before Dulna was killed and Dopdi was captured by the forces.

After apprehending her, they inflicted unbearable torture upon her. The armed forces punished the defenseless Dopdi by brutally gang raping her, which is an absolute violation of the right mentioned in Article 11 (A) of Universal Declaration of Human rights, which says that “everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.”<sup>2</sup>

Mahasweta Devi writes for the emancipation of those people who are disregarded by the ruling classes. *Draupadi* is a story which highlights police atrocities upon the vulnerable tribes. It describes the way in which there is a gross violation of the fundamental rights of its nationals, which are laid down by the constitution of this nation. The story brings to light the brutal face of police personnel which doesn't show any respect towards the fundamental rights of its citizens. The following line from the text supports the account:

Then, leaving Dulna's body on the stone, the soldiers climb the trees in green camouflage. They embrace the leafy boughs like so many great God pans wait as the large ants bite their private parts. To see if anyone comes to take away the body. This is a hunter's way, not the soldiers. (Choudhury, 31)



- A Scene from the play Draupadi.

Courtesy: [http://oneindiaone people.com/ the drama-of mahasweta devi/](http://oneindiaonepeople.com/the-drama-of-mahasweta-devi/)

It shows that the soldiers are operating with total disregard to work ethics. They behaved like predators who were after their targets. Real warriors do not act in such ruthless manner, rather they have reverence for their opponents. But in this short story, the writer depicts their vicious face. They are devoid of compassion, which led to the subsequent mistreatment of Dopdi.

Mahasweta Devi creates the character of Dopdi in the lines of Draupadi featuring in the great epic, Mahabharata. She shows that violence against women has been a recurrent process. In Mahabharata, Draupadi was publicly disrobed of her honour, before Lord Krishna came to rescue her. But this modern day Dopdi is so powerful that she manages to counter the Senanayak<sup>3</sup>, when he comes to question her after his men brutally raped Dopdi. The concluding lines confirm the fact, “Dopdi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts,

and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid. (Choudhury, 43)

This kind of police autocracy can be seen in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* also. Roy is also a true champion for the subalterns. Her debut novel also speaks on behalf of the marginalized classes. She captures the minute details of mutilation of human rights by the police officers. She calls for a more secure world for the generations to come. Roy pitches for a more comprehensive society which will include everyone regardless of their ethnicity. She wants an equal culture where everyone, including the convicts will be given a fair chance of trial.

The novel shows how innocent Velutha became the victim of police violence. When Mammachi came to know from Vellya Pappen about her daughter Ammu's romantic involvement with the lower-caste Velutha, she chalks out a plan with Baby Kochamma to rid themselves of him. They decide that he has to go away before they are destructed. "Tonight before it goes any further. Before we are completely ruined." (257) He was thrashed to death by the policemen on the false charges of rape and abduction of three children.

Gross violation of human rights is present in all the consulted works. Violation of natural rights of human beings raises serious questions related to vigilance and security. Trampling of these privileges makes the authorities rethink the loopholes that are prevalent in the system. And these myriad propensities of keeping people deprived of their rights find presentation in the novels of the two writers of the nation.

Although there are several national and international agencies which work for the protection of the natural rights of man, yet it is not very easy to uphold their preamble for the selfishness of some individuals. Many institutions are offering degree in Human Rights and it has emerged as a strong discipline with the passage of time. Many students are enthusiastically pursuing this area in order to assess the implementation of laws that are framed for mankind.

Proper knowledge of the provisions and regulations will empower the native people in standing up for their rights. They will know that it is not possible for anybody and everybody to trample their rights. The subalterns will be able to question their proprietors, who violate their life and property. The subalterns of class, caste and gender have faced persecution and their induction into the knowledge system will prohibit others from tossing with their rights.



IndianEnglish literature has always been a true prism, which has refracted every light that penetrated deep inside the system. It has enabled the world to know about the Indian way of life. The writers have scripted experiences of the marginalized communities with sincerity. They have maintained a loud voice while speaking about those people who were neglected by the mainstream.

The writers have portrayed the traumatic condition of the subalterns of gender, who suffer endlessly due to their affiliation to a less powerful sex. Trauma, which developed as a mode of critical inquiry in the 1980s, has pervaded numerous realms of studies like literature, critical theory, psychology etc. Trauma theory first appeared in Cathy Caruth's *Unexplained Experiences* (1999), where she argues that to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event. A traumatic event occurs too immediately for consciousness to record but its images keep coming back in the form of dreams, flashbacks etc.

The concepts of caste, class and gender has been used as a hard-hitting source of trauma, where painful ordeal results from the violation of the rights of a person on the basis of societal or sexual orientation. Trauma occurs from stereotypical treatment of individuals which leave permanent scar in their psychosis. It is a sort of fiction "that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels"<sup>4</sup>.

Mahasweta Devi depicts the suffering of a mother who wakes up in the morning to discover the demise of her son, who laid down his life for his values. Sujata, the protagonist of *Mother of 1084*, faces the traumatic condition due to her son's loss of trust in the system, which eventually led to his end. In the same way, Arundhati Roy also shows the trauma of Ammu, who could not save her love from the clutches of the powerful authorities.

A reading of Dalit, African-American and Latin-American literature along with the works of Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy reveal many similar and diverse aspects leading to their compositions. The position of the subalterns have been underscored by making a comparative analysis of the novels of the writers. Finally, class struggle has also found space in their writings. Works chronicling the Victorian to the present times show that class struggle pervaded throughout history.

The general aim of Subaltern Studies was to destabilize the existing discourses related to the national history because of its non-inclusive nature. The construction of master narratives was done by the socially progressive intellectuals who did not include the peasant

struggles in the larger history of the nation. Subaltern Studies Group wanted to create a much required space for the secluded class in order to accommodate them with dignity and honour.

The whole work has shown instances of mutilation of the desires, wants and anticipation of the subalterns. The various chapters including the introduction and conclusion have shown the various ways in which the characters faced oppression. It has been established that the archival realm of Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy has been devoted to the cause of the subalterns. An extensive survey of their lengthy careers ascertain the fact that there are many similar traits in their works that put them in the same pedestal.

## Notes

1. [www.testbook](http://www.testbook.com) blog.com.
2. [http:// www.un.org/overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html).
3. Hindi word used for the English word army chief.
4. Balaev, Michelle. "Trends in Literary Theory". *Mosaic* 41.2. 149-66 Proquest. Web. 12 Feb. 2010.

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