

## Chapter III

### **Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*, Rudali and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* in the perspective of Gender**

The rank of women in society has not been promising during the course of history. They have been accorded inferior position in comparison to their male counterparts. They are regarded as 'second class citizens' (Buchi Emecheta, 1974) with minimum needs, desires and aspirations. It is even more appealing in the third world countries, where they are subservient to their husbands. Women have been facing patriarchal torment since time immemorial. They have been forced to maintain a steady silence in matters relating to societal, natural and didactic importance.

They have occupied the position of subaltern in every society across time and space. Women were rendered to a peripheral entity regardless of their contribution towards society. This kind of unequal treatment meted out to the females connotes gender discrimination. Women of every age and place have faced persecution owing to their subservient nature. It is a condition of biased behavior towards the fair sex for their biological configuration.

Though discrimination among genders is a common phenomenon that occurs in case of males as well as females, yet it is more pronounced against women. It means how individuals are differently treated owing to their sexual orientation. It is a common occurrence in the spheres of education, job, family, society etc. Gender discrimination occurs due to certain prejudices of the members of society. It is very common in this part of the world due to certain misconceptions that are prevalent in the traditional social set-up.

Individuals are entrusted with duties and responsibilities because of this pre-judgement and they are supposed to carry out prescribed gender roles. This kind of discriminating attitude is found pervading the domestic life, society, work place, educational institutes, social gatherings etc. Many deserving people have been denied their rights and privileges because of their association to a particular gender.

Gender is generally understood as a complex and comprehensive terminology which demarcates differences between masculinities and feminities. It is described as a variety of features relating to the biological inconsistencies between the sexes. But recent developments

in the academic realms have rendered a significant change in its traditional connotation. Gender is now understood as a social construct rather than a biological phenomenon.

In this project, gender will be analyzed from subaltern perspective. The concept of gender will be used to demarcate the hierarchies prevalent in the man-woman relationship, where males assume dominant position over their female counterparts. Gender is an imperative part of study in several disciplines, such as literary philosophy, theatre education, motion picture theory, enactment theory, modern fine art, anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics and psychology.

These disciplines sometimes vary in their methodologies in the study of gender. For instance in anthropology, sociology and psychology, gender is often studied as a drill, whereas in cultural studies representations of gender are more often examined. In politics, gender can be viewed as a foundational discourse that political actors employ in order to position themselves on a variety of issues. Gender studies is also a discipline in itself. It is an interdisciplinary area of study that incorporates methods and approaches from a wide range of areas.

The concept of gender has been hotly debated by many theorists of that time. They did not believe gender to be a biological state of being. They in fact added to the concept and came with a completely different perspective on gender. Among them one celebrated author is the famous feminist critic Judith Butler. She critiques the biased attitude of people towards individuals on the basis of their gender. She states the nature of gender in her celebrated work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or a natural sex is produced and established as prediscursive, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts (10).

Other areas of gender study closely examine the role that the biological states of being male or female play on the societal beliefs in a society. They give explanations to the manner in which male and female body parts, structure and nature of functions of body organs, genetic carriers etc. have influence on social constructs of gender. In literary theory also gender has occupied an important place over the years because of its growing demand.

Gender mutilation has become a universal phenomenon, irrespective of any geographical location. That is why the issues relating to gender discrimination has been amply addressed by the writers of contemporary world.

Resistance to this kind of destruction done to their identity has been debated endlessly in the literary texts of feminist origin. The institutions of patriarchal autocracy have found stiff confrontation from feminist movement groups which emerged towards the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the West. The feminist campaigns worked to promote the cause of women at various levels. It advocated equality in terms of scholastic prospects, financial autonomy, remunerations and disbursements, suffrage and procreation privileges. And feminist criticism is an extension of these ideological practices in the realm of literature.

Feminist theories try to interpret gender mutilations in contemporary society. It highlights the discrimination between genders in the literary texts on the ground of education, finance, health and services. Many theorists have emerged from time to time, who have significantly contributed towards developing critical concepts for interpreting texts. They have propounded many theories for the propagation of rights of women in society. The focal point of feminist criticism is to analyze gender inequality in the works of writers.

Mary Wollstonecraft is regarded as the pioneer of feminist movement in literature. Her monumental work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is widely accepted as the foremost document on feminism. It was written in response to many texts that were written by male authors. She maintains that women should be steered by a resilient sense of logic rather than abide by certain social rules dictated by men. She wants that women should be provided equal prospect in pursuing education.

She is of the view that for improving women's position in society there was an urgent need of reform in the educational system. It is only through education that women can develop into liberal, free and independent human beings. She has also outlined the inequalities that are palpable in marriage. She does not discard the institution of marriage altogether but hopes for a relationship based on equality, friendship and mutual respect.

She primarily wrote for the propagation of individual rights of women in a restrictive society. She dedicated her craft for the upliftment of women's position against the scintillating laws which prohibit their social growth. She espoused for a civilization based on equality, where rights and privileges of women will not be trampled by the more powerful authorities of the land. She is also known as a great reformer who promoted liberty of women.

She was largely influenced by The French Revolution (1789), which was based on the ideology of liberty, equality and fraternity. This struggle against autocratic rule for individual liberty had a lasting effect on Wollstonecraft and she came out with *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), proposing a number of changes in society including slave trade. In this essay she addresses the issues relating to human rights and her next essay is written in the context of women's rights and privileges.

Another eminent writer who was a reigning feminist author and critic was Simone de Beauvoir. She wrote novels, essays and pamphlets on various socio-political issues. She is best known in the literary circle for her seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949) which highlights exploitation of women in contemporary French society. It is one of the most remarkable works of Beauvoir.

In her novels *She Came to Stay* (1943) and *The Mandarins* (1954), she attempted to write inclusive history by introducing female perspective. She stated that women were deemed as the other and were always analyzed in relation to the male self. He is her savior and protector which she refuses to agree. She then studies history from ancient to the contemporary times in order to trace the emergence of male superiority.

She concludes that history is an alignment of some pre-conceived philosophies, conformist principles and societal taboos. She also states that motherhood robs the eccentricity of a woman. She then surveys the various stages of development of a woman from childhood to youth and comes with the result that "one is not born a woman, rather made"<sup>1</sup>.

De Beauvoir shows how women are made to relinquish their rights and accepted an imprisoned life. She is of the view that the subordination of women is because of the environmental influences rather than biological differences. Women are not passive by birth but she is taught to believe that good women should lead a prescribed life. She says that females are constructed by society and they are shaped by the upbringing that she received from her family.

Virginia Woolf was also a staunch feminist, who in her seminal book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) shows the unequal treatment meted out to women. In this essay, she emphasizes on the fact that in order to be creative women need to have space and money of their own. She determines that women can also produce good literary texts provided they

have enough monetary privileges. She was a novelist and essayist who came with the stream of consciousness technique which penetrated the psychological realms of her characters.

Before her path breaking essay, women were treated as objects of male desire and their character portrayal was not done correctly. In this key feminist work, she argues that women have suffered culturally and financially across the ages. She scrutinizes the British Museum through the character of Mary to find out that women have been misrepresented in history and literary texts. Woolf does not agree with the view that women are not capable of becoming good novelists, she rather believes that their social and financial position stopped them from pursuing a literary career.

Bell Hooks is the pseudo name of American writer and social activist Gloria Jean Watking. The focal point of her writings are gender and race oppression. She has published a good number of books describing her experiences in a racial nation. In her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*(1984) she argues that black women suffer more than white woman and that is why she pitches for a more inclusive theory where women of every society will be incorporated.

Another American writer who took the literary world by storm is Adrienne Rich. The growth of Rich as a poet was triggered by her strong feminist concerns, which were later directed towards lesbianism. She is recognized in all corners of the globe as a poet whose sole aim is to liberate women from the long standing persecution of patriarchal society. Her poetic and prose pieces have eliminated prevalent taboos with regard to the status of women in society.

In almost all of her poetic anthologies, Rich attacks these institutions and questions the existence of such agencies which limit the freedom of women. She has published more than twenty volumes of poetry and seven non-fiction works which include essays that appeared in celebrated collections. Rich writes for the emancipation of women in most of her works. Her acclaimed collections include *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law*, *Driving into the wreck*, *A Change of World* and *Twenty one Love Poems*.

Her strong feminist ideology is revealed in the title poem of her well-known anthology *Driving into the Wreck* (1994). The wreck that the speaker is talking about is the destruction done to female identity and existence by centuries of manipulation by the heterosexual agencies. She says “I came to explore the wreck” (10) and feels that she is all alone in her expedition as there is no one to guide her.

She embarks on the voyage down sea in order to salvage the remains of that destroyed structure. She makes an attempt to revive the remains of the ship which is symbolic of female existence. She makes a comparison between shipwreck and the condition of women in order to show the ruthlessness of the patriarchal system with which it has exploited the female world and has completely transmuted the original arrangement.

In another poem of the same anthology *From a Survivor*, which is utterly autobiographical in tone and treatment, Rich talks about her acknowledgement of the fact that her relationship with her husband was an ordinary affair which led to her realization of her increased movement towards a female partnership. She rejected the relationship with her husband after realizing futility of the affair.

On the subject of marriage, she said in *Poet and Pioneer* (2002) that 'I married in part because I knew no better way to disconnect with my first family'. Rich's third collection of poetry, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law* reflected her increasing tension as a wife and mother. Regarding motherhood, in her essay "Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity" (1994) she states that 'the experience of motherhood was to radicalize me'. So, it can be said that her experiences of marriage and motherhood brought out the existing rebel in her.

In *Living in Sin* Rich satirizes the institution of marriage which renders a subordinate position to women where they accept duties assigned to them as they are naturalized by heterosexual institutions. These poems established Rich as a strong feminist, anxious about the deliverance of women from the long standing maltreatment by the traditions of patriarchy. She has established herself as a staunch feminist with radical ideas of female liberation from patriarchal institutions.

With the publication of her celebrated anthology *Twenty One Love Poems* (2007), Rich came to be known as a lesbian poet. It is a collection of twenty one poems, where Rich explicitly describes her emotional, physical and sexual relation with her lifetime partner, the Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff. This is said to be the first work which so openly discusses same-sex relationship.

In this compendium, Rich confesses love for her partner and makes her relationship public for the first time. In poem no. ii, Rich wants recognition of her relation with Michelle Cliff and desires freedom to be with her loved one. There is an underlying desire to get acceptance of society and wishes that her partner were a poem so that she can show it to the

whole world. Poem becomes a metaphor as she compares her partner with a poem to be displayed in public. To quote Rich:

I dreamed you were a poem,  
  
I say a poem I want to  
  
Someone  
  
And I laugh and fall dreaming again  
  
Of the desire to show you to  
  
Everyone I love  
  
To move openly together  
  
In the pull of gravity, which is not  
  
Single  
  
Which car the feathered grass a long way  
  
Down the  
  
Upbreathing air (28).

In poem no. i, Rich wants an inseparable association with her partner even though the atmosphere is hostile and not conducive of the relationship. She is so passionately in love that she is unmindful of the discrepancies prevalent in society. She wants to remove this anarchy from her consciousness and seeks an eternal companionship of her partner. She uses the metaphor of tree in order to show her genuine feelings for Cliff with whom she wants to live like a tree which spreads out its leaves and branches even in turbulent weather conditions. She says:

No one has imagined us. We want to  
  
Live like trees,

Sycamores blazing through the sulfuric

Air

Dappled with scars, still exuberantly

Budding

Our animal passion rooted in the city. (29)

The feminist movement did not remain confined to the West alone. It travelled to the Indian subcontinent with much pomp and was redefined by the practitioners in pertinence to the native experiences. They have presented the vast panel of contemporary Indian women in their works, whose rights were violated owing to the patriarchal structure of society. The coming of the feminist writers eradicated the void that was there in the previous centuries. Their objective was to promote the causes of the female population. They wanted to create a space for the gendered subaltern.

Women in India have faced considerable disdain due to their gender. The status of women in India has deteriorated over time. The privileges enjoyed by them in the ancient times were taken away by the more powerful patriarchal society. A reading of the scriptures reveal a good position enjoyed by women of that era. But it started to degrade with the advent of the middle ages. Social evils like polygamy, dowry system, devadasi etc. made women victims.

Women's position thus declined drastically with the coming of such malpractices. And such type of gender biasness has been put forward by writers across generations. Many efforts have been made in projecting the appealing condition of the weaker sex. Many Indian writers have rendered irrevocable services to the cause of the subalterns. Indian women writers have chosen the problems and issues faced by women in male dominated world as theme of their books.

History of the world has always remained incomplete because of this kind of disregard to women. Their contribution to the building of a society has never been properly appreciated. Kamala Das voices her protest against the injustices leveled against women in traditional Indian society. Her growing dissatisfaction towards family life, owing to her husband's apathetic attitude made her the rebel that she is known today.



Her physical and emotional needs were never addressed by her husband and slowly but steadily she made poetry the vehicle for registering her grievances. She established an identity for herself in a society which treats women as subaltern. In her anthologies, she writes sexually explicit poems in order to make the world take note of the biological needs of a woman. She is not ready to accept sex as a passive realm for a woman. She rather actively participated in sexual activity indiscriminately with multiple partners but with little satisfaction as they also turned out to be loveless intercourses.

Her confessional poems are *The Freaks*, *The Looking Glass* and *Substitute*, where she makes candid confessions of her frequent sexual encounters. Her autobiographical works appear in a compendium named *Collected Poems* (1995). By doing so, she brings a shift in the position of a woman in matters of sex. She explores the other side of feminine experience which is aggressive and offensive at times. In *The Freaks*, she shows her dissatisfaction over her husband's inability to arouse her orgasm properly, whereas in *Looking Glass* she suggests how to derive maximum sexual satisfaction from a relationship.

Shashi Deshpande is another feminist writer who made desperate archival attempts to ensure the recognition of the voice of gendered subaltern in her works. Deshpande's novels center on the lives of their female leads. She seeks equal distribution of rights and opportunities for men and women. Her works challenge the gendered outlook that prevails in family and society. Her wide range of works has made her a much sought after writer of the contemporary times.

Women always occupy inferior position in society and have been dominated and oppressed. It has been observed that although vitality of women is stated, the historians of the subaltern assembly stopped to replicate upon numerous jiffies, where females can be understood as the solitary being with an obliterated uniqueness. In building a dissertation for the subalternity of the dissatisfied undertaking, these historians do not reflect it to be imperative to take feminine mindfulness into justification. They forget to include the posterity of the female sensibility, which formed an integral part of their existence.

Her works that speak for gender justice and equality are *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1990). She sets her novels against the traditional Indian backdrop. She has emerged as a pioneer explorer of women empowerment in the literary space of the country. Deshpande presents the upsurge of feminine rebellion against social conventions and parental authority through the character of

Sarita in *The Dark holds No Terror*. It traces the quest for identity of women who stand in the threshold of tradition and modernity.

It tells the miserable experiences of the protagonist Sarita, a lady doctor who had to face acute gender discrimination in her whole life. Here, the writer narrates parents' attitude towards the girl child and preference to the boy child of the family. In her childhood, she was always ignored by her family. From her very childhood, she is made conscious of her look, for which she was not allowed to play in the sun as it might worsen her already dark complexion. Sarita recalls talk with her mother:

Don't go out in the sun. you'll get even darker.

Who cares?

We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.

I don't want to get married.

Will you live with us all life?

Why not?

You can't

And Dhruva?

He's different. He's a boy. (45)

Kamala Markandaya is another prolific exponent of feminism in Indian literature. Her fiction presents the problem of identity encountered by native women due to the changing trends of Indian society. A woman finds herself in topsy-turvy situation due to the tussle between traditional Indian set-up and modern contemporary outlook. She is a postcolonial writer who deals with contemporary issues of the nation.

Her novels *Nectar in the Sieve* (1954) and *A Handful of Rice* (1966) reveal her concern for the rustic as well as urban populace of the country. In *Nectar in the Sieve*, she presents a new woman who is ready to take up the challenge of family life in every possible

way. She does not shy away from accepting her duties as a wife and mother. Like an evolved modern woman, she maintains the domestic as well as professional life.

Manju Kapur is a contemporary writer who takes up the issues of modern women as subject matter of her novels. She presents the transformed stance of Indian women, where they no longer adhere to the mores imposed on them. Rather, they contemplate and make changes in the outlook of the society in which they live in. Kapur situates her characters amidst the intricate areas of family values, where they question the beliefs of traditional set-up.

Her characters are sophisticated individuals, confined within the conventions of traditional society. For instance, Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* (1998) considered higher education as a means of emancipation for women. She broke away from the patriarchal codes of conduct to create a space for her. She proved that forty is just a number when she pursued her higher studies and established herself at that age. Kapur remains a stern explorer of modern native experiences in literature.

Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy are the two celebrated Indian writers who have shown great ingenuity in their portrayal of the problems of modern Indian women. Their feminine experiences find expression in their works. They delved deep into the psychological realms of their characters to create a more participatory role for their readers.

Their characters are not passive in their thoughts and activities, rather they have the ability to pose a threat to the existing order of the day. They don't accept defeat to the stormy circumstances but are able enough to create their own identity in a world which is ruled by the virile gender. The characters show amazing strength of character in challenging the world dominated by male supremacy.

In *Mother of 1084*, the protagonist Sujata deals with her pregnancy blues alone as her husband never accompanied her to the nursing home at the time of her delivery. She had four children and her husband Dibyanath was never present to take her to the health care center. The novel opens with Sujata dreaming the day she brought Brati into the world. She arranged her belongings in a bag as she was getting ready to give birth to her revolutionary son. Her husband never made any arrangements for Sujata when she was expecting. Even her mother-in-law also deserted her citing ridiculous reasons.

He never carried out his duties towards his new-born babies. He used to sleep in another floor 'lest the cries of the newborn disturbed his sleep' (3). And he never cared for the health of his children. He only noticed Sujata to be sure if she was ready to bear another child. It shows the attitude of apathy adopted by Dibyanath towards his wife. He deserted his wife every time as she prepared to bring a new life into the world. It is said that a woman needs her husband most during the time of her pregnancy and the irony is that Sujata never got that love and support from her husband.

In this novel, Mahasweta Devi shows the status of women in society, which is no more than a subaltern, who carries out her assigned duties without any complaint. The work can also be seen as a gendered text as it portrays the condition of women in patriarchal set-up. A woman can never come out of her gender. Sujata never had a good position in Dibyanath's household. It was managed by her husband and mother-in-law. She was only a mute spectator and a "subservient, silent, faithful and without an existence of her own" (9)

She started working in a bank when Dibyanath faced financial crunch at his office. But before that she was not allowed to work. She did not have a strong presence there and suffered from identity issue. She had a shadowy existence in the house. She was not important to anybody, neither to her husband nor to her children, except Brati. She maintained a low-profile and lonely life until she lost her son to his adherence of radical ideology of revolution for the cause of the subalterns.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* also we can see the subjugation of woman. The old matriarch of the Ayemenem family, Mammachi who had pioneered the Pickle-making factory was a victim of her husband, John Ipe's anger and frustration. The reason of his capricious behavior was that as an entomologist, his discovery of a moth was not given recognition by the Director of Department of Entomology. It led to the drastic change of mood and behavior of Pappachi which had to be tolerated by his family, especially Mammachi.

She was an exceptionally talented player of violin and took lessons from a renowned music teacher named Launsky, when they were in Vienna. When the trainer told him about Mammachi's talent, he wreaked havoc of his fury inspired by jealousy on his wife. He could not tolerate the fact that his wife was getting recognition in the music fraternity owing to her skill of instrumentation. He then tortured her physically and mentally in order to satisfy his male ego.

He slouched around the compound in his immaculately tailored suits, weaving sullen circles around mounds of red chilies and freshly powdered yellow turmeric, watching Mammachi supervise the buying, the weighing,. The salting and drying, of limes and tender mangoes. Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it in the river (47)

So it can be said that like Sujata, Mammachi was also a subject of her husband's furious mood. Both of them suffered relentlessly, while Sujata suffered mentally, Mammachi suffered physical abuse at the hands of her husband. In Roy's novel, Mammachi is a timid lady who becomes a victim of her husband's physical abuse. She endured it unlike her daughter Ammu who revolted against such criminal acts of domestic violence.

Mammachi had to tolerate such maltreatment until her Oxford educated son Chacko intervened in one of the beating sessions and stopped it forever. Roy depicts the envious nature of a husband who cannot tolerate the professional success of his wife. Pappachi was jealous of his wife's fame of a wonderful player of violin and 'the lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi's teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented, and in his opinion, potentially concert class' (50).

He was also not happy with his wife's business venture and never helped her with pickle-making in the factory. He considered it to be unsuitable for an ex-government employee. He neither appreciated nor helped her in setting up the business. His resentful attitude turned him into a violent animal as he indulged in wife-beating frequently. So, it can be said that there is instance of domestic violence in the novel.

Mahasweta Devi also explores the issue of gender subalternity in *Mother of 1084*, where the protagonist Sujata had a spectral presence at her home as "Dibyanath and his mother constituted the center of attraction in the home. Sujata had a shadowy existence. She was subservient, silent, faithful and without an existence of her own." (9) The issue of gender is thus a pervading theme in the writings of both Devi and Roy.

In both the novels we can see the family matriarchs exerting a kind of influence on the lives of their sons. They support their extramarital affairs as they believe it to be a mark of manliness. They don't consider such acts of infidelity to be immoral. They consider it to be quite normal for a man to venture out for satisfying his sexual needs. In *Mother of 1084*, Dibyanath's mother boldly supported her son in everything. She never questioned her amorous relationship with other women. She rather considered it to be a symbol of manhood. Dibyanath was involved in a carnal relationship with his employees, much to the knowledge of his mother.

She never confronted her son for cheating on his wife. Being a woman she should have been sensible towards another woman. But she maintained a steady silence over this scandalous matter. Likewise in Roy's novel, we can see similar attitude of Mammachi when she approves the erotic relationships of Chako with the women workers of his mother's pickle factory.

She never had a problem with the fact that her son was taking the advantage of the helplessness of the female workers of her pickle factory. In fact, it was Mammachi who commissioned the making of a connecting room so that Chacko can fulfil his bodily desires. So there is yet another instance of a mother's blind love for her son:

She was aware of his libertine relationships with the women in the factory, but had ceased to be hurt by them. When Baby Kochamma brought up the subject, Mammachi became tense and tight-lipped. He can't help having a man's needs, she said primly (168)

Dibyanath controlled the household affairs, including matters relating to his children. He denied Sujata the general rights of a mother. He dictated over the lives of his children. She slowly but surely drifted away from the family. Sujata realized that it would be better for her to keep away from the family matters. Soon her children also realized that their mother had a subaltern's role in their family. He never cared for Sujata's desires and believed that it was a wife's duty to respect her husband. In the similar manner Pappachi had total control over his family members.

It was he who decided that Ammu would not pursue higher education as it was not necessary for a girl. So, she moved back to Ayemenem from Delhi, from where she had her

schooling. As a government official, he should have harbored temperament of equality in matters relating to education of his children. It shows the attitude of an entomologist towards his girl child who is nothing more than a responsibility to him. He, like a male chauvinist cherished the ideals of traditional society which differentiated people on the basis of gender.

Another instance of women's subjugation of another woman is found in Roy's novel when Baby Kochamma and Mammachi victimize Ammu. They take the role of her oppressors and dominate her in every possible way. The hypocritical attitude adopted by them is revealed with their attitude towards Ammu-Velutha relationship. They didn't approve the relationship because of Velutha's affiliation to a lower caste but silently arranged for the 'Men's needs' for Chacko with low caste women. This is a picture of double standard of ideology practiced in traditional Indian society. They left no stone unturned to break their relation but never showed any displeasure towards Chacko for his amorous relationship.

Baby Kochamma even makes a conspiracy by misappropriation of events. She alleges Velutha of sexually exploiting Ammu and gets him arrested. This fabrication of events led to the apprehension of Velutha. He suffered inhuman torture in jail and finally succumbed to his injuries. She also blackmails Estha and Rahel saying that their mother will end up going to jail if they don't give evidence in her favour. This is how the relationship ended in smoke giving Ammu the greatest shock of her life from which she never recovered. She died after some years in a shabby condition with no one by her side.

Ammu was a lonely woman whose only crime was that she sought happiness in a world dominated by societal conventions. Her marriage to the Assistant Manager of Tea Estate of Assam broke off due to his drinking habit. He even agreed with his employer Mr. Hollick's demand of sending her to his bedroom to be 'looked after' for his promotion. He was highly dissatisfied with her for not giving consent to it. He "grew uncomfortable and then infuriated by her silence suddenly he grabbed her hair, punched her and then passed out from the effort." (42) Ammu also retaliated by throwing a book and escaped to her native place with children.

She showed great courage in not giving up to the illegitimate petition of her husband. But she could not fight for her love with Velutha because of the towering stature of her family members. Though Ammu worked more in the pickle factory, yet Chacko declared himself to be the rightful heir. "Whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary

engineers, he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles. Legally this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property.” (57)

Victimization of women has ample instance in Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* also. The prostitutes of Tahad are created by the landlords and upper caste people. They don't have any sympathy for the children that they had from their extra-marital relationships. Village man Dulan says that previously they did not have as many prostitutes. They are created by the landlord's lusty nature. But it has been considered as a feminist text because of Shanichari's change in social status. She emerges as an empowered individual who can take on the system which exploited her. The protagonist Shanichari emerges as an empowered individual who can take on those people who exploited her. She did not accept her fate as a subaltern but accepted challenges, created avenues for herself and for others.

Though the novel shows women who are subaltern to the males, yet there are instances which show that they can challenge the system. They are self-sufficient and can survive without the intervention of males. In the novel, Devi shows female bonding through the friendship of Shanichari and Bikhini. Though they meet after a long period of time, yet they show unmatched companionship with each other. They even tend to forget their troubles and worries for a while and describe their lives.

They found that neither of them had a fruitful life. Abandoned by her son, Bikhini decided to join Shanichari in her house. Both worked together to make a living. This close relationship between the two women who have passed their prime in lives is a very rare occasion. But this sort of integrity is not found in upper caste women who fought over trivial issues. The lechery of upper caste women is revealed when Nathuni complains to Shanichari how her co-wife has neglected her because she has given birth to a daughter.

The companionship of Shanichari and Bikhni is one of a kind, which is driven by emotional and material benefits. Forgetting relatives, both of them form a family of their own. Having bumped into each other, they shared their life stories and found comfort and solace in each other's company. They eventually found out that their socio-economic condition is similar and Shanichari invites Bikhini to join her in her house. After moving to Shanichari's home, Bikhini takes the responsibility of the household works. After that they became famous Rudalis, who cried their heart out in exchange of money and pleasantries. Together they became each other's support system.



Both the writers have tried to fill the void that was created by the non-inclusion of feminine experiences in postcolonial literature. Their works have been celebrated around the world for creativity of themes and techniques. Their concern for women populace finds expression in their works. Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy have directed all their efforts in making the subalterns feel represented. They have even gone to the extent of visiting the rural areas for collecting concrete information regarding the lives of women. Their genuine efforts have been recognized and rewarded in national and international events. They will always remain the nation's explorer of subaltern experiences in the realm of gender.

## Notes

1. Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage Classics, 2015. Print.

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