

The Tone of Subaltern in Selected Stories of Mahasweta Devi

Mrs.L.Sofia

Assistant Professor, Department of English

Gonzaga College of Arts And Science for Women, Krishnagiri

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Mahasweta Devi was a discriminate writer in Bengali language. She was born on 14 January 1926 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her father was a remarkable poet and novelist whereas her mother was a writer and social worker. Mahasweta Devi showed her interest in social and political activity in an early age. She was graduated from Santiniketan in 1946 later she did her Masters in English from Santiniketan in 1967. Devi's work represents two hundred years struggle of tribal people for human dignity is seen through her various fiction and non-fictional works. Her works such fiction, essays, plays, Journalistic writings showed the themes of caste inequalities, class contradictions, and gender discrimination. Mahasweta Devi writes in *The Hindu* "There is so much unrest in India because so many millions below the poverty line, including the tribal have been cruelly neglected". The term subaltern was first used by an Italian essential thinker, Antonio Gramsci. The word subaltern means the groups who are subjected to the domination of the ruling classes. They do not have political power and therefore no voice. "The only subalterns of this country are the tribals. (G. N. Devy) The word was taken up by postcolonial studies from the subaltern studies group of histories who discussed to promote a subaltern themes in South Asian studies. The group consists of Ranajit Guha and Shaheed Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyan Pandey.

As Jaganmohana Chari refers

"One can credit Mahasweta Devi with the clarity of Vision which comes to an historically informed realist with a concern for the marginalized people in the world, the indigenous and disenfranchised or the disprivileged".

(Jaganmohana Chari 12)

The Outcast: Four Stories is the anthology of Four short story of four subjugated women, who are the main protagonist of the story. The story revolves around the four women such Dhoul, Shanichari, Josmina, Chinta. The first story is named, Dhoul. She is the main protagonist of the first story. Dhoul is a 19 years fair and young widow and beautiful girl. She is a Dusad's daughter. Dusad means low caste untouchable.

Misrilal is a 23 years Brahman boy Misrilal represents higher class. Whereas Dhouli represents the lower class, adivasi. The setting of the short story begins in northern part of India. In the beginning she hesitates to accept his love but Misrilal tries to convince her. Dhouli is pregnant, he is happy he informs his mother about Dhouli bearing his child. Shanichari played a minor role in Dhouli as medicine woman and also gossip mongers. "The men of our family have planted their seed in so many dusad and ganju girls. You're a hot-blooded young man. Even Jhalo three sons by Kundan.

What will she do? She has sinned. She'll suffer for it. They'll both starve to death, mother and daughter. How is she to blame, Ma? It's always the fault of the woman. For not considering a brahman's honour, she's even more to blame". (Devi, Outcast, 13-14) Misrilal's mother said these words to Misrilal because she wants her son to think that he is not first one who ruin the life of untouchable woman there are many others such Kundan, elder brother of Misrilal. Kundan also ruin the life of many untouchable women's life. Through this Misrilal's mother represent higher class community.

At some position Misrilal's family forced Misrilal to leave the village Taharr, he goes to Dhanbad. Misrilal is in love with Dhouli, she is pregnant now they doesn't need Dhouli to be their daughter in law, the untouchable girl so they forced him to Dhanbad. The sufferings of Dhouli started. Dhouli and her mother suffered in the hands of Brahman family.

Dhouli expecting his arrival from Dhanbad. She even decided to swallow insecticide but she wants to see the traitor face at least once. Dhouli gives birth to a boy baby, since she becomes the mother of a child now there are three in a family it is very difficult to survive without money. Her mother goes to earn for their living. Dhouli's mother gets only food not money. Mother promised his son Misrilal that would take care of the Dhouli family. They get food but not recognition. The sufferings of Dhouli made her into prostitute.

The wretched condition of Dhouli is, sometimes they started to eat roots and tubers in order to lead their life. This is miserable condition of downtrodden people most of the people use them and throw them away these people forget to realize that they are also the human beings. Devi projects the sufferings of oppressed woman. These higher class people forget to value the lower class people as human beings. She is forced to accept the prostitution in order to survive in the dominant society. "The fate of such a woman in her own community depends on the attitude of the Brahmin family. If the Brahman family takes pity on the victim and hands out doles she is left in peace. Otherwise she is made an outcast and is compelled to become a whore". (M. Asaduddin, Of Rape and Marginalization, 238)

The story based on tribal people who are forced to migrate to Kolkatta. The second story is about Shanichari, she is 12 years old, an Oraon girl from Rata. She goes with her grandmother to Tohri she travelled by train to reach the destination. Her grandmother is Thakuma. She narrates some story to her granddaughter, Shanichari. On her way she sees a Hiralal he has a harmonium around his neck. The character called Gohuman Bibi is a strange character. The purpose of her visits in this village is to grab twenty thousand girls, each for twenty rupees. Malik is another character who is owner of brick kiln, as Gohuman uses all sugar coated words to take few girls from this village; she needs some people to work in rejas. Which means woman labourer, these girls have to work for Malik as a return they would get money, for four hours they would get 10 rupees and she gives 50 rupees in advance to their parents. Gohuman is compared to cobra. Since cobra is very powerful and vermon snake. Likewise her character and cunning attitude is equal to cobra, the author said "She's as poisonous as a cobra". (39). That four girls never returned for the village. Years passed on Shanichari is 16.

After few days Gohuman enters the village and planned to grab some more girls. Shanichari is one among them. Adivasis are driven to forest. They all suffered without food and shelter. Gohuman makes this pitiable plight of people as her vantage. The people with no other means to survive have become the victim of exploitation. The author depicted the other side of the world, in one part people live happily without any worries, at least these people get food, shelter, and clothing and more over they are recognized as a human being. In other part people are marginalized by dominant society, and they haven't been recognized as human being. This is the pitiable condition of this second story.

The author projects superstitions and beliefs in the first story. This shows the plight of helpless women like Dhouli who suffers due to such false beliefs. "After becoming a widow, a randi, you were not supposed to look at yourself in the mirror. Not supposed to look at yourself. Not supposed to wear shellac bangles, a dot of sindoor on your forehead, .."(7) Dhouli goes to her home to polish her brass plate she sees her own reflection on the plate she has fear for her mother because in those days widow and prostitute are not allowed to see their face in the plate. They aren't supposed to wear bangles, sindoor on their forehead and also anklets. As Mahasweta Devi says, big projects involve exploiting the landless poor and the tribal communities and the evicted tribals are on the increase "becoming rootless and swelling the number of migrant workers". (The Hindustan Times 18) In an interview with Minoli Salgado, she says that in the tribal people she has found "an endless source of ingredients for writing"

To terminate, Mahasweta Devi depicts the subject matter and style, story and structure in which she was portrayed as pioneer and path-breaker. She has taken common stories picturing with folk material, ballads and songs. This shows her individuality in world literature. These stories Outcast show the upper class domination towards the lower class.

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