

# **Deconstructing the Marginalized Female: a Reading of Mahasweta Devi's Short Stories**

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## Abstract

Women's positions in society, particularly those of marginalized/ peripheral ones positions are very preoccupied with the sense of docility and negligence. Marginalized<sup>1</sup> women, the tribe or the poor women and the outcast or the rebellious women, do not have any 'decent' or 'proper' position and identity in society. Their sufferings have long been avoided, and were not even considered as 'wrong' but the usual consequences of everyday life. Every woman does not belong to the upper class or face the fate of misery or not, every single woman has the same tragedy to endure but many of them have similarities. They have similar stories indifferent pronunciation and different situations. Mahasweta Devi's stories speak of this unspeakable truth of women's misery and their power of enduring and resistance. In her stories, readers get the linear story which is derelict in mainstream literature. Her fiction offers an array of female's figurative situation/ position in society as well as their materialistic use of the body for the social and economic purpose. In my thesis, I am going to discuss some of her short stories such as, "Breast-Giver", "Draupadi", "Dhouli", "Shanichari", "Chinta", "Giribala", "Ma from Dusk to Dawn" and "Sindhubala" in order to explain the paradoxical position and representation of women in society as well as their fragmented voices. I will also look at their endurance and resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'Marginalized' used as the substitute of poor/ tribal/ peripheral.

## Introduction

The experiences and spaces of marginalized-dominated women are subversive and have multiple shades of formation and understanding. The marginalized women are those who are living in the peripheral line of living in terms of their gender discrimination, class differences and caste position, particularly as indigenous woman. These kinds of women are usually are unseen in the 'common' society. Their sufferings are long been avoided and do not consider as 'wrong' but the usual consequences of everyday life. Additionally, these women do not have any voices in regard of their authority on their own body and everyday life of living. This body authority is controlled by her superior male partner. Even, the act of mutilation of the female of body is considered as the part of the normal act in case of marginalized women.

In Anup Baniwal Vandana's word,

The colonial and patriarchal discourses that are largely premised upon a series of binary oppositions, such as colonizer/colonized, imperialism/nationalism, man/woman, public/private, centre/periphery produce a violent hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the colonized, the marginalized culture, the women are branded as a deviant/disruptive group both socially and culturally. In such binarism, one term forcefully governs the other (2007, 6).

So, the positions of women are basically binary based and more seemingly the positions of marginalized women are more, and are living on the edge of domination and suffering. However, their stories do not follow the *binarism* or the postcolonial binary theory, but deal with paradox and also fall into the dilemma of gray-space: in between of marginal living/ centered

living, man/woman, dominated/ dominator of binarism. Moreover, these women are also dominated as indigenous women. They are neglected in all terms of living in a society. In a word, they are subjugated not only in one layer, but also in multiple shades of oppression and domination.

In this phenomenon, Mahasweta Devi's stories do exemplify the minor details of these women living, suffering and enduring suffering. Her stories tell us this unspeakable truth of women's misery and their power of enduring and resistance. In her stories, readers get the linear natured story which is derelict in mainstream literature. Her fiction offers an array of female's figurative situation/position in society as well as their materialistic use of the body for the social and economic purpose. Moreover, her stories exhibit the subverted gender role and consequences of this subversion. It also apprehends the vivid layers of domination and resistance.

As Vandana explains in her thesis,

Mahasweta's fiction aims at inverting such hegemonic, over-privileged, ever-signifying system of relationships and attempts to bring low what was high through the strategies of subversion and reversal. Her stories come across as the post-colonial, subaltern, gendered responses that serve to topsy-turvy such hierarchical structures, generating aesthetics of opposition in the process (2007, 6).

Not every woman belongs to the upper class or faces the fate of misery, still every single woman has the same tragedy to endure but many of them have similarities. They have similar stories in different pronunciation and different situations. Additionally, their resistance provokes the

different set of ideas from each other. Such as, Dhouli's walking out is completely different kind of resistance than Dopdi. The story of Jashoda evokes an array of motherhood than Chinta's motherhood. On the other hand, all these stories, in all together raise the issue of women's voices in terms of social, caste and class division as well as their individuality particularly their right to their own body.

On the other hand, these women characters do not have their own voices. They receive a 'given' voices by the narrator/ writer of the stories. Similarly, Mahasweta gives the voices to the characters. She speaks the 'unspeakable' truth of these characters. These characters' voices and authority of voices are held up by their superior, the narrator. Additionally, Mahasweta Devi is mostly known as a social activist among the contemporary Bengali literature and literary artists.

As Sadhana Sharma says in her text,

She [Mahasweta] "penned [her] stories to render and reveal to our [readers] gaze the charade and duplicity of the democratic set-up in [...] [a] country and to give a picture of the fates of the marginalized women experiencing and undergoing untold miseries within and without their own communities" (2014, 454).

However, her voice is limited within a certain territory. People who are from Bengal and understand Bengali language and also people who are known to tribal- indigenous life, marginal life of women are mostly her readers. This territory expanded through the translations and criticisms of Gayatri Charavarty Spivak, a [west] well known critique in contemporary literature of the world.



Through an analysis of Mahasweta Devi's short stories such as "Breast-Giver", "Draupadi" from *In Other Worlds* (1987), "Dhouli", "Shanichari", "Chinta" from *Outcast: Four Stories*(2002), "Giribala", "Ma from Dusk to Dawn" and "Sindhubala" from *In the Name of the Mother*(2011), I am going to explain the paradoxical position and representation of women in society. I will also look at their endurance and resistance as the linear part of society. I will also look at and discuss the material meaning of the female body and their manipulation in different ways.

In first chapter: Female Identity and Subject Formation, I will discuss two things. Firstly, the development of female identity as woman and as character of the story. Then I will focus my concentration on subject formation in terms of female writer and characterization of female characters. In this discussion, I will also include the female voice and the possessor of this voice.

In second chapter: Female Self and Body as a sight of Abjection, I will confer about the exploitation of female reproductive body as well as her casting away from her own community. I will use the Abjection theory of Julia Kristeva to explain her (female character) resistance as woman in marginal society.

In third chapter: Female Self and Body as a sight of Resistance, I will look at the protest of woman and using their body as a sight of resistance. It also includes female's voice in making their own decision. I will also go through the issues of women's empowerment in making her own decision as well as her authority on her own body.

In Conclusion, I will sum up the whole argument and briefly explain the powerful aspect of women's voices and the power of their physical attribution.

## Female Identity and Subject formation

Social restriction draws the limits of 'permissibility' for women writers. Creative arts like literature have been believed to play an active agent in deconstructing the oppressive political issues and social systems. However, this same artistic expression/art form becomes unacceptable when used by women to dislocate the oppressive behavior of home, family, marriage and motherhood. The voice that subverts the very foundations of the hypocritical traditional social order must be controlled and truncated. The limitation of a woman's voice is a consequence of the paternalistic society's need of invoking the disciplinary and institutionalize the female agency. In order to do so, women need to be 'invisible' and this objective is achieved through the hierarchical division of roles and spheres of activities. The isolation of women in the 'private' domain has been approved women's exclusion from the 'public' space in different layers, in order to explain the power relation and gender prejudice of society. This does not end up here, but this dissecting of women's movement and belonging in a certain place become so much prominent when women enter the 'public' sphere. And there the act of writing exists. The very act of writing by women not only become an act of 'identity' and 'empowerment', but also a gesture of defiance, subversion, resistance, transgression (Vandana, 03) and that identifies women's voices in various ways. Here, I will look at female narrator; female writer and female protagonists and their role in discursive formation.

In literature, woman possesses a space which is made *by* them and *for* them. This space is always subverted and narrowed for social restrictions. However, within this restricted space women do express their thoughts and raise their voices in various circumstances and these circumstances

explore the possibilities of women. In some cases, women narrator does show the most specific matter in social changes and others. With the use of artistic expression and style, woman writer present the unseen truth of 'private' sphere which lead to 'public' sphere also. By the word 'public', I mean the political and social discourse both.

The major questions I would like to address are: who is speaking, for whom she is speaking or by whom she is speaking? And for what cause one ever tries to speak or speak? And finally whose voices we are listening?

The formation of female narrator or female protagonist or voice of female persona is complicated as in most of the cases mostly the female narrator speaks through characters. This character speaking and writer's voice gets mixed up because of social scenario. Which means the voice of female persona is influenced by circumstances effectively. In most cases female writers write about their life stories. These stories are related to sufferings, happiness and so on. Some stories become their platform to raise the voice and assert their identities.

As a result, these characters do represent or re-voice what the narrator wants to say. On the other hand, the narrator says about the condition, about her surroundings as well as what she sees in her surroundings and beyond. So it is a reverse process of constructing the story for both writers/narrators and characters.

Mahasweta Devi's stories are not only about her surroundings rather it reciprocates marginalized women's voices. It tells the grand narrative of the unspoken story of a peripheral woman in

existing society. For constructing the authentic narrative, Mahasweta Devi travels to remote tribal areas of India, gets an empirical understanding of the harsh living of these indigenous masses. Moreover, she also ‘forms’ and ‘leads’ a number of ‘grassroots’ organizations to fight against domination for justice. Additionally, in roaming around these remote places she is able to connect herself with the roots and that helps her to understand the root level situations and thus comes to the arena of ‘subaltern discipline’ to discuss.

To refer to Vandana again,

“[Devi’s] journalistic reports on exploitation and expropriation, deprivation and degradation, edits journals carrying subaltern voices and translates the issues and the people she is concerned about into the narratives and characters of her fiction” (27).

As a result, re-voicing the suppressed voice or an act of ‘ventriloquism’ raises the question of subject formation. As a mean to explain that who is giving the voice and the process of taking the authority to speak on behalf of these marginalized women and who are taking these given voices as their own?

Mahasweta Devi’s writing stands out as a powerful tool that subverts the authority of upper caste in tribal society, particularly marginalized women’s subjugation by society. Her writing questions the whole discourse of caste prejudice and women's suppression; by suppression I also mean the objectifying of the female reproductive body for material purposes. She chooses the tribal women who are in many ways are submerged by society and economy. Their positions in society are being exploited for the benefit of others. Not only this, but also their female body is being mutilated in the benefit of others.

I agree with M.N. Chatterjee who thinks,

Women, according to [Devi], are much stronger than men. But, in the poorer class their suffering multiply not only because of their belonging to this class but also because of their bodies. They thus suffer double oppression. No wonder, the most common stories of victimization revolve round their falling a prey to the male lust (240).

Female characters as subject/protagonist in the stories mean unlike/ paradoxical interpretations. Such as, Dhouli as the female protagonist in “Dhouli” shows the underlying situational result of tribal custom. Dhouli becomes pregnant because of Misrilal, who belongs to both upper caste and upper class, but does not get any attention while Misrilal leaves her. Later, while she starts prostitution without having any choice of different livelihood, thus it comes to the knowledge of the so called good society; that time Misrilal becomes the social instrument to cast her away from the society. They called a *panchayat* to summon a notice or particularly to justify their decision that Dhouli has to leave the village and can do prostitution in any other places. While leaving the village Dhouli’s mother asked her to stay with Misrilal’s brother in law, as they [“so called local level ‘rules-framing’ body”] mutely proposed her to become a personal product of sexual pleasure to brother in law, in return they will offer the immunity. Dhouli denies that, but why? Dhouli’s position in the village becomes narrowed for her docility and profession which has occurred because of the situations of the village. Moreover, she is not married to Misrilal so Misrilal’s brother cannot be her legal brother in law. Rather, it becomes a de-humanizing for her.

As Devi narrates,

But now she was about to become a professional *randi*. When you are a kept woman, you're all alone. But now she would be a part of a community. The collective strength of that society was far more powerful than [an] individual's strength. And those who had forced her to be a whore were the ones who controlled the society. They were the most powerful! (Outcast: 2002, 32)

This event leads to a final consequence where Dhoulī becomes a part of the community. And here Mahasweta Devi holds the distinctive power of representing the suppressed class. She picks the turnover point where Dhoulī enters a professional world of prostitution. As a docile and dominated character in the story, Dhoulī becomes powerful while she became a part of a larger community. She knows that her caste discarded her, but at the same time she becomes someone else in another 'caste'. Devi explains her situation by upholding her in different environments. She dissects her movement from the private domain to the public domain by capturing the very moment of riding on the bus and leaving for Ranchi. She gives an exposure of Dhoulī's transition that also explains the marginalized women's acts and results. In other words, it explains that Devi is actually giving them a voice.

Beck and Bose aptly put it in their article,

Voicing and articulating the muted and the silenced, representing the gender margins within that of caste, the cause of the gendered subaltern, empowerment and radical feminist realism, and an attempt for subaltern speaking have been attributed to her fictional texts (1995, 441).

Devi as a narrator is not only exposing the female condition, but also 'giving' a voice to voiceless women. It is to say that she is holding a power to maneuver the context as her own.

On the other hand, Gayatri C. Spivak has translated her works which opens a wide range of criticisms and readings. In this stage, Mahasweta Devi's writings become an 'object' which gets a voice to the world through Spivak's voice. The 'speaker' of the stories is changing and so thus the 'subject' formation.

Ramesh Tibile explains this in his article titled, "Gayatri Chakravorty- Spivak: An Indian Literary Theorist"

Her [Spivak] translations and commentaries on Mahasweta Devi's work emphasize the importance of Devi's work to articulate the unwritten histories of tribal, subaltern women and to at least to begin to imagine an alternative to contemporary social, political and economic oppression (2012, 9).

In this situation, the question arises again that, who is representing what and for what purposes? The 'self representation' becomes an undoubtedly issue because of the subject formation. Gayatri Spivak asks whether the subaltern can speak or not speak? After reading Devi's story we can say that subaltern can speak, but within a certain territory and within a restricted audience. Moreover, this marginalized speakable voice is heard because of the double articulation of their stories through Devi and Spivak's writings. The stage of the subject or the narrator or the writer is enhanced in order to adjust the narrative conscience.

Alternatively, the fictional narration also emphasizes the axiom of self representation that

“Laura Kipnis has called the “hypervisibility [of the] ideological category of the subject” (Kipnis, 158). This hypervisibility has its flip side where the fractured voices seeking simultaneously to speak for and as cannot double back to address the gaps occasioned by the omissions produced because of such self conscious practices of representation” (Ray 2009, 8).

The representation of the characters subsumes the main voices and in this process the narration becomes muddled with narrator’s perspective. So thus, Devi’s texts voiced the voiceless and give an understanding about the caste, gender and class system. Then, Spivak’s translation makes it to one step ahead, re-voicing the texts to the world. A ‘lower caste poor woman’ is being deprived, suppressed and altogether tormented in all ways. In Devi’s stories these incidents are well written as well as well explained. Her story also determines the subject, refers subject as ‘I’ and formation of textual subject. In altogether, subject formation in Devi’s stories and the subject who is holding a voice are interchangeable and are mixed up in many shades. But for the record and to estimate, these voices are backed up with multiple accents and tones.

Furthermore, Mahasweta Devi’s stories deal with ‘scattered sexuality’ very optimistically. She is relating the peripheral sexualities with the power of domination and indicating the repressed sex of female. Chinta leaves her husband because she realizes the power of female sex. She takes her own decision and faces the consequences. On the other hand, this female sexuality is always being used as the repressive tool that exemplifies in Devi’s stories. As Michel Foucault explains in his chapter “The Repressive Hypothesis” from The History of Sexuality,



It is acted by multiplication of singular sexualities. It did not set boundaries for sexuality; it extended the various forms of sexuality, pursuing them according to lines of indefinite penetration (47).

In Devi's short stories women are about to reject the social restrictions, move forward by eliminating the ostensible liabilities of being a woman. These protagonists from the short stories make a form of resistance that is subversion of repressive sex and sexual attribution.

## **Female Self and Body as a sight of *Abjection***

The discussion on the female body is not easy to narrate in a situation where women are considered as nothing but ‘marginalized’ or ‘peripheral’ who do not have any voice to speak for themselves and for others as well as have no right to their *body*.<sup>2</sup> The same is true where women are considered just as an ‘object’ about trading and exploiting. This discussion does not end with the idea of right or wrong, but create ‘in-between gray space’ of debate to narrate the conditions of women.

In Mahasweta Devi’s stories we observe a wide range of women from tribal women to upper caste women, from rich to poor who are dealing with the hypocritical behavior of the family and society. The dualism or multi-behavior of society just not only ruined their lives, but also set an example of despotism where women and their physical attribution are only considered as a product to ‘consume’ and ‘mutilation’. Besides, their appearance is submerged and their bodily body is regarded as a subject of reproduction without their proper consent.

The Second Sex of Simon de Beauvoir helps us to understand this condition of women. Beauvoir mentions that, men, particularly society believe that, it is “best to keep women in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as Other” (Beauvoir 171). The process of ‘othering’ women is a part of a discourse to discuss where women should not have any voice to raise rather they will be subjected to become the ‘object’ of naivety and exploitation. I am also using Julia Kristeva’s “Approaching to

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<sup>2</sup> By the word body, I mean the physical attribution as well as the part of whole body means the society.

Abjection”<sup>3</sup> as to explain the matter of the female body in terms of defining their power, resistance and rejection.

i) **Women as Mother vs. Mother as Women**

Women’s role in species reproduction has rendered ‘natural’ a process that is deliberately constructed in order to dominate them (Jasodhara Bagchi, 1)

In “Breast-Giver”, Devi is telling a story of a subaltern woman Jashoda, who has been appointed as a professional mother of ‘Haldar family’, in post independent Bengal, after the accident of her husband Kangalicharan. She agrees to do the job in order to support her family. As a Brahmin woman she is portrayed as “goddess” (Spivak, 228) and “a portion of mother” (Spivak, 233) however, in the long runs her position has changed due to her inability to continue the job. She becomes like other maids in the family. She does not belong to the class of ‘goddess’. In her story, she ‘becomes the infants’ suckling mother’ (Spivak, 228) to save the ‘figure shape’ of the daughter-in-laws of Haldar family. It is very ironic for me that, Jashoda is sacrificing her own body, to support her employer in return for nothing only a good amount of food. She demonstrates that how a subaltern woman’s reproductive body is employed to create economic value. As Spivak argues, quoted in *Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak* by Stephen Morton,

Jashoda’s sale of her maternal body to the household of a wealthy Brahmin family to support her own family effectively reverses this traditional sexual division of labour between men and women (2007, 126).

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<sup>3</sup> Kriesteva, Julia (1982), *Approaching Abjection, Power of Horror*, Columbia University Press, NY, pp: 1-31.

Moreover, she also points out the economic exploitation of women's work. In her view women's reproductive body is always exploited through many forms. A woman, whether a mother, daughter, wife, is always subjugated physically and mentally. Her womb, a maternal feature, is also used as the materialistic reproduction for economical purposes.

In Spivak's perspective, a woman particularly a marginalized woman and,

The protagonist subaltern Jashoda, [whose] husband [was] crippled by the youngest son of a wealthy household [after the husband tries to rob the household], becomes a wet-nurse for them. Her repeated gestation and lactation support her husband and family. By the logic of the production of value, they are both means of production (2007, 126).

Ranjit Guha mentions this as the 'exploitation of productive labour' (Guha, 5) in his analysis of subaltern studies and also said that this is the part of a system to subjugate the 'other' or 'subaltern'. He said that these conditions of exploitation come within the domain of elite historiography in which,

the subaltern classes were subjected in varying degrees of domination [...] [particularly in the sector of] productive labour [in which] workers and peasants [do not have any voice to arise] (Guha, 5).

Similarly, Shanichari's story from "Shanichari" by Mahasweta Devi says the same thing. She becomes a brick lane worker where she is both sexually and economically exploited. She has driven out of her village purposefully and then forced to work in brick lane. Then, she is used as low paid worker where she has to work all most whole day and at night she becomes a sexual product.

Furthermore, after feeding 50 children (20 own and 30 in the master's house), Jashoda was attacked by breast cancer which has been ignored at the beginning stage. For example, the head of Haldar's family said,

Yah! Cancer indeed! That easy! You misheard, all she needs is an ointment, I can't send a Brahmin's daughter to a hospital just on your word (1987, 235).

She spends her most of the life for her family and for her master's family, but in return she does not receive anything from them. Even in her dying situation nobody from Haldar family receives the phone call from the hospital. She is ignored and erased as if she does not exist and ever existed. She is manipulated in two or more layers, first as a woman and second as a subaltern. She is Brahmin but poor that determines her as 'other' or 'marginalized' in society. On the other hand, her cancer represents her 'abjection' means rejecting the burden of her circumstances that grows as a parasite in her body. Her disease can be referred as hatred towards the manipulation of her reproductive body. Her hatred magnifies through her bearing the deadly disease which is the result of a continues domination of her reproductive body, and become a,

Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abjects. It abjects. (Kristeva, n.p)

Consequently, Jashoda is dominated by the society, by her husband and right now she is being dominated by her own body. This point is different from the outlook of western feminism and as Spivak outlined this as 'Third Worlds' Women Feminism'. Once her body glorifies her position in the society and later, this body snatches her down. Her position becomes subverted and

changed. Moreover, Spivak also focuses on the last phase of Jashoda's dying. She especially centers the phrase, "The sores on her breast kept mocking her with a hundred mouths, a hundred eyes" (Morton 84). Her female body symbolizes the exploitation of labor that constantly, Spivak wants to say. It seems to me that subaltern sacrifice is never been told. Their story is hidden and can never be the part of history. Her experiences cannot tell everything about subaltern women, but can demonstrate brief scenery of their life. Besides, Devi presents, "Jashoda as constituted by patriarchal ideology" (Spivak, 265) who barely speaks and even she speaks her story comes out from this ideology. She does not reject to intercourse with her husband and bear children, even if it is a burden for her because it is her husband, who is like god to him, wants to do. Her image is made up through this ideological feature as the "Divine Mother" (Spivak, 264) who bears anything. The generalize feature of woman has come out from the thought of 'patriarchal domination' and that actually construct the 'self' of the woman.

ii) **Women as Women**

In another story named "Dhouli" represents woman's suffering as sub-caste and sub-class which lead to an objectification of the female body. Dhouli falls in love with Misrilal, an upper caste Hindu, whereas Dhouli herself is a *dusad*, an untouchable. Her marginalized position does not allow her to express her 'love' rather it becomes a sin to commit. She bears Misrilal's son, but does not get any recognition for it. She manages her family by force prostitution, which in the latter part of the story becomes an unacceptable issue for Misrilal. He neither accepts her as his wife, nor allows her to stay in the village. He makes an issue of it and calls a *salis* in order to confiscate her from the village. It is to notify that in few times before he was in love with her as

he also mentions that he is ‘the slave’ of Dhoulī, but in a moment when society strikes them for caste ‘miscegenation’ he simply discards her and forcefully from the village.

Debasish Chattopadhyay explains:

Misrilal gets rid of the responsibility of the newborn child and its mother by marrying another woman belonging to his own caste become and by settling in Ranchi. When Dhoulī begins to sell her body in order to earn bread for her son and for herself, Misrilal returns and becomes ‘instrumental in forcing her to leave her village’ and move to the city to become a prostitute (106).<sup>4</sup>

As she is a *dusad* woman, she is poor and bores a un-fathered child which makes her position more vulnerable. Only for daily needs she is forced to sell her sexual attribution to others. As a matter of fact, her psychological world is susceptible due to the social restriction and so called value of the class and tribal dilemma. Her body becomes a product that is objectified through sexual usage. On the other hand, Misrilal is just a material product/ instrument of his caste who does not bother about the consequences of his own deed. And as a matter of fact, he does not get the blame but more specifically, they charge the other ‘other’ for the consequences which Misrilal is solely responsible. So, ultimately Dhoulī, the *dusad* subcast woman, becomes the ultimate victim for his flaw and finds no other way to counter back.

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<sup>4</sup> Chattopadhyay, Debasish (), Frames of Marginalisation in Mahasweta Devi’s Outcast: Four Stories.

Url:<https://www.google.com.bd/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fsh.diva-portal.org%2Fsmash%2Fget%2Fdiva2%3A212630%2FFULLTEXT01&ei=70NvVIrdKqj4ywOi34KQDg&usg=AFQjCNF-kqWSSYsdFCahRfRj9YFEDJVYYQ&sig2=bEJRO0iBUUju9DimDyuLsA>

In Chattopadhyay' words,

the plight of these women who usually have no one to turn to, nothing to look forward to, and have only a few to lend them a voice--- women who are regarded as sub-human and treated as commodities both without and within their own communities (105).

Moreover, Dhoulī as the female protagonist in “Dhoulī” shows the underlying situational result of tribal custom. Dhoulī becomes pregnant because of Misrilal, who belongs to both upper caste and upper class, but does not get any attention while Misrilal leaves her. Later, while she starts prostitution without having any choice of different livelihood, thus it comes to the knowledge of the so called good society; in those times Misrilal becomes the custom/ value saver. He denies his responsibility and motivates others in the society to cast her away from the society. They called a *Panchayat* to declare their order:

Dhoulī cannot practise prostitution in this village. She can go to some town, to Ranchi, and do her whoring there. If not, her house will be set on fire and mother, daughter, child will be burned to death. Such sinful activities cannot continue in the heart of this village. This village still has Brahmans living in it (2002, 31).

*Panchayat* summoned a notice to justify their decision that Dhoulī has no right to live in a village with her prostitution profession and thus she has to leave the village and can do prostitution in any other places.

While leaving the village Dhoulī's mother asked her to stay with Misrilal's brother in law, as they [“so called local level ‘rules-framing’ body”] mutely proposed her to become a personal



product of sexual pleasure to brother in law, in return they will offer the immunity. Dhoulis denies that, but why? Dhoulis position in the village becomes narrowed for her docility and profession which has occurred because of the situations of the village. And same position is reversible and will be 'agreeable' if she agrees with the *panchayat's* decision. She can live in the village if she becomes a private gratification product of Misrilal's brother in laws. Moreover, she is not married to Misrilal so Misrilal's brother cannot be her legal brother in law. Rather, it becomes a de-humanizing for her. They are selecting her options of living without her consent and knowledge. However, Dhoulis refuses to choose their option and make her own decision.

As Devi narrates,

But now she was about to become a professional *randi*. When you are a kept woman, you're all alone. But now she would be a part of a community. The collective strength of that society was far more powerful than [an] individual's strength. And those who had forced her to be a whore were the ones who controlled the society. They were the most powerful! (2002, 32)

On the other hand, if she stays with Misrilal's brother in law "she would have been a *randi* in her private life" (2002, 32). She will be alone and isolated from the outer world. She will be confined in a restricted place where she will be able to have a life but will not be allowed to have a dignified life. Dhoulis will live as the desire of somebody else's which she clearly rejects. In comparing this situation with Julia Kristeva's idea of *abjection*, I draw a situation where Dhoulis rejects the idea of male support to live her life. She abjects the social customs and restrictions and moved to urban area to find herself.

As Kristeva states in her article, entitled “Approaching Abjection” that,

“I” want none of that element, sign of desire; “I” do not want to listen, “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. But since the food [in Dhoulis case it is her imposed circumstances which in her society believes an ‘essential authority’] is not an “other” for “me,” who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself (Web: n.p).

In other words, Dhoulis finds her banishment as blessing because she finds her liberty to live and have the power of her own body. She now is able to decide about her future and particularly she becomes a part greater community.

In “Shanichari”, the story is slightly different, but oppression is the same. The mutilation of the female body in the name of works is one of the main issues of this story. In “Shanichari”, the writer acquaints the reader with a young tribal girl, Shanicharis status in the social hierarchy. Shanichari, in the company of her grandmother “enjoyed the train ride to Tohri, sitting on the floor of the compartment” and is having a good time picking the lice from each others hair (34). This statement refers to the subaltern status of Shanichari and her grandmother where they are ‘settled’ as marginal and allowed to sit on the floor only. On this journey, the grandmother’s unconscious story of a girl also implies the gender difference of Shanichari and other women. In the story, as grandmother presented,

Don’t you know the one about the carpenter who carved a girl out of wood and became her father? The weaver who gave her clothes and became her brother? The goldsmiths

who gifted her jewellery and became her uncles? Didn't the *sindoorwala* bring her to life by giving her sindoor? (35)

Shandha Sharma explains this foreshadowed story as the,

[... ] reminiscent of the myth of the birth of Eve. As Eve was brought to life from Adam's rib, so too was this girl carved from wood by a man and brought to life by the sindoor of another man, the Sindoorwala, who finally owned her" (456).

However, I find it as the ambiguity of structuring/ forming an identity. A woman's identity depends on a man. She becomes 'someone' when a man recognizes her, whether as wife, daughter or mother. It will be the man who will recognize her as 'someone' but not she herself. This is the exploitation of her rights as human beings.

Shanichari is sold off to the brick-lane owner in Barasat where she faces economic and sexual exploitation and that leads to pregnancy. Gohuman, the human trafficker, sold her to the brick lane owner Rahmat, who makes her as *reja* in working hierarchy. Unlike her, the other girls also have to work seven days a week and earn money, which never has given to them. Moreover, they are taken as 'sex-slave' who has to perform at night as well.

As Devi says,

At the end of the day, when you're too tired to keep your eyes open, the head *mastaan* will call out your name in the daily auction. Today you go to him, tomorrow the driver, the day after the munshi (2002, 51).

They become the part of the trade. An object, that is used to multiply the income sources, but with great cost. They are exploited in many terms, by their class, caste, economy and more

importantly, by their gender and this makes their lives a relentless struggle for survival. Additionally, in my view, they have fallen in between the place. Neither their clan nor their oppressors want them. However, both parties have the power to decide their fate. In the long run, we assume that Dhouli becomes a professional prostitute in 'other' land in order to maintain the harmony in her own tribe. Her tribe rejects her or does not accept her as its own because Misrilal does not accept her. Misrilal belongs to upper caste who all of a sudden starts implicating tribal prejudice and custom. I see it as his lack of the sense of responsibility as well as his fear to his own upper caste. He is not the man of action rather he fails to establish his right as well as Dhouli's right. I find him inferior to Dhouli.

Additionally, Misrilal does not face any fatal consequence as he is a man where Dhouli has to take every burden and leaves the society. She is being dominated twice, first: the so called caste as Misrilal belongs to the upper caste and second: by patriarchal society as she is margin and a woman.

Similarly, Shanichari is sold off to a brick lane owner by another woman *Gohuman* in the name of saving her. Her own or same gender people sold her off because of money. She probably knows the fatal consequences, though she does that. Additionally, in brick lane Shanichari becomes the *reja* who only has to carry the bricks, but at other times she becomes the mistress of the brick lane owner. However, in the later part of the story she is released from being so called mistress because she gets pregnant. She comes down from the 'mistress' position of a 'normal slave' in the lane.

As Devi says,

Lug bricks, lug bricks, Shanichari. You would wonder where you are, where you've been brought--- you can't quite figure out where this place is. With Rahmat's child in your womb, you stare blankly at the paddy fields stretching to the horizon. The endless fields beckon you to freedom, but you know you're a prisoner. You don't know the local language, nor do you remember the way here (2002, 52).

As a matter of fact, her womb becomes a burden to her as well as for her community. It becomes an 'other' [unwanted] within self [I: Shanichari] and letting the loathsome experiences to Shanichari. In other words, her womb signifies a space of abjection where Shanichari becomes the unwanted to her own body. The conflict initiates of mind with her body as well as with society. Neither she *abjects* her child, nor she accepts her as her own. She faces the dichotomy of self and other and *otherness*.

In Julia Kristeva's words,

owing to the ambiguous opposition I/ Other, Inside/ Out-side --- an opposition that is vigorous but pervious, violent but uncertain--- there are contents, "normally" unconscious in neurotics, that become explicit if not conscious in "borderline" patients' speeches and behavior. Such contents are often openly manifested through symbolic practices, without by the same token, being integrated into the judging consciousness of those particular subjects ("Approaching Abjection" n.p).

Her dehumanizing situation gets worse and she does not have any proper way to reciprocate the surroundings. Rather, she sent off to her village with the unborn child. But what happens there?

Do They accept Shanichari as their own people? “No, Shanichari Linda wasn’t accepted in their village” (52). They cannot accept her with an unborn *dikus*’s child. However, Shanichari’s father wants to pay for ‘repentance feast’ but still she is counted as an outcast. They never accepted her rather they are unable to accept her. Their mentality is so much bound with social norms and restriction which never allow thinking beyond the way. And most importantly, the society never accepts women’s contribution or their effort to change the situation rather they are always criticized. She has offered to perform a tribal custom in order to become pure again and however that is not enough to her to get back her community. She remains an outcast and unconscious décor of her community.

Later, the question arises that whether they will send the girls to brick lane or not. As, Chand Tirkey’s brother asked “we should think about this as a community. There could be more Shanicharis in the future. Should we cast out our own women? Will that benefit our society?” (2002, 54) But the *naiga* replied “We’ll think about it if it happens again. Not now. This is a new problem” (2002, 54). The conversation indicates the minimal treatment of these marginalized women who are deprived and oppressed in many layers. They are needed in economical and biological purpose, but when the problem arises or the situation comes to give them importance, society tends to withdraw them self from everything, even considering their women as their women. Such as, Shanichari’s own community does not want to secure her or any other women from her clan. Moreover, they are acting as blind agents, who behold the leading position of a tribal society, but do not take any steps to protect their women.

Furthermore, in these stories women are being outcasts in several levels. Their positions are subverted due to the social ignorance and rigidness. They are treated as the clay - doll of society and that make them more vulnerable to another. These women do not have their own identity and whoever wants to make an accessible identity is being counted as an outcast.

In another story, “Chinta” reveals the unburdened sadness and repression of a widowed lady. Chinta’s story evokes the terrific sorrow that is not wholly done by her. For her disastrous situation both society and she are responsible. But is it really?

Widowed at a young age, she is lured to Calcutta by her lover, with promises of marriage. However, after years and two children, he leaves her. The proposed of marriage has never been taken place. Chinta is forced to work at the peoples' house as a maid for a living. Sooner, her relatives from the village come to take her back as she has to take the responsibility of her son’s marriage ceremony. The relatives are tired to bring him up and now it is a Chinta’s headache to get married off him. But is that so easy to go back? If it is, then she can go back earlier. No, for her it is not that simple. She is an outcast. She ran away with a man and will the society accept her so easily? After all, she is a sinner. Relatives from her village suggested her to get rid of her daughters. Then they will organize the repentance rites.

As Devi explains in her story,

Chinta had to now spend two hundred rupees as penance for having sinned. She had to feast the people of her village on rice and *pithy*. She also had to forsake her two daughters. Only if she passed all these tests would she be accepted back by her community (2002, 90).

Ultimately, she has to return to her native village because now she has to get married of her only son by giving up her daughters, as these daughters have no legal father. Chinta's relatives have done the most important task and an auspicious responsibility; they sold off the girls to the flesh trade. But who blames to be responsible for this job??? Yes, Chinta is responsible. As neighbors said,

What a sinner that woman is! She's given away her daughters! To somebody near Jagubazar. What kind of a mother is she?! *Chhi Chhi Chhi!* (2002, 91).

As if, "that the other maids and servants were feeling very righteous in the light of what Chinta had just done" (91). Nobody takes the blame, no one blames the society. It is only Chinta who is utmost responsible for her downfall and the other consequences.

Being a Brahmin, she does not get any "protection against the harsh social structures and the unending class, caste and gender exploitation" (218). Rather, it makes her life more complicated. Being a wealthy widow with an infant, she is targeted as weak and docile. However, she refused to give the custody of the lands to the relatives and thus they made her life miserable. Those times no social custom was able to rescue her. Then she met Utsab who has exploited her as well. And even then no society was there to save her. As a result, these all events in a woman's life make "a relentless struggle for survival. It is not at all unusual that it is the women who are always at the receiving end of such suffering" (Chakraborty, 218).



## **Female Self and Body as sight of *Resistance***

I always compare women to matchboxes. Why? Because the way matchboxes are - even though they have enough gunpowder to set a hundred 'Lankas' a flame, they sit around meek and innocent, in the kitchen, in the pantry, in the bedroom, here, there, anywhere - women, too, are exactly the same! (The Matchbox, Ashapura Devi; web)

### **i) Women as women**

In "Draupadi", Draupadi or Dopdi Mehjan is a revolutionary activist. Her husband and she, Dulna Majhi played a vital role in the revolutionary movement (Naxalite movement) in India. They were the part of *Operation Bakuli* in 1971. They are wanted by the government and thus they are hiding in underground. Dopdi, the protagonist of the story was running away from the police, but unfortunately caught by them. Two members of their group have betrayed to them and thus it happened. But why Dopdi is so important?

Devi draws this character as the counter-representation of epic character Draupadi from *Mahabharata*. In the epic, Draupadi is the wife of five brothers that gives an idea of only polyandry example in any religious text as Spivak said. However, the manifestation of Draupadi is only limited in religious rites, but not in human life. Her first husband lost the dice-game and stalked what he owns. Draupadi is one of them as the 'material property' who/ what can be sold or exchanged. It is also a matter of fact that her presence in their life is not at all important and

thus the enemy chief gets the opportunity to strip her. However, in religion the enemy leader was not able to strip her completely. The enemy chief is not able to strip her as Krishna plays a miracle; “Draupadi is infinitely clothed and cannot be publicly stripped” (Spivak, 183). Her story represents the upper-class story where so-called God is present saving her. However, her position among her husband gives the reader a strange idea of her “legitimized pluralization in singularity” which is completely limited.

Spivak maintains:

Mahasweta’s story questions this “singularity” by placing Dopdi first in a comradely, activist, monogamous marriage and then in a situation of multiple rape (Spivak, 183).

In Dopdi’s life, no God can save her. She is brutally gang-raped and leaving carelessly on the floor. Later, while Senanayak wants to see her, she steps ahead without any clothes. Her uncovered body stands upright in front of Senanayak which makes him uncomfortable. He asks for her clothes, but she denies wearing and said “What’s the use of clothes? [...] There isn’t a man here that I should be ashamed” (Spivak, 196). Her naked body symbolizes the power of marginalized that stops Senanayak to move ahead. But why is this paradoxical representation? In myth, lord Krishna helps Draupadi to be saved where in reality Dopdi cannot be saved rather her uncovered-ravished body protest against male supremacy. She performs the both roles, as marginalized and as a woman. As a woman she becomes the active agent in performing the protest even giving away her ‘body’. Similarly, as a marginalized, she becomes an alternative voice to stand out. It is true that her course of action was instructed by Arijit, the leader of a movement; however, it is she who stands against Senanayak. Devi’s portrayal of Dopdi is not

only as an activist but also as an agent who asserts her own story that challenges the general thought of Indian history.

Moreover, the story of Senanayak constructs the different story. He is an army officer, captures the degraded Dopdi in order to fulfill the law. Devi portrays Senanayak as “a pluralist aesthete” (Spivak, 179) and Spivak counters him “as the pluralist aesthetes of the First World”. He maintains and believes what he is taught and follows his duty without any hesitation. In him the ‘Third World Complexity’<sup>5</sup> lays as an essential aura that he never can erase from himself. Spivak compares him with *Prospero*, who comes to a land and found uncivilized people. And it is his soul's duty to civilize them even by killing them.

Dopdi, on the other hand, a Santal woman is considered as marginalized. Her actions made Senanayak and his government uncomfortable, so that he operates the hunt mission. His role in the story is assumable. He willingly wants to participate in so-called civilizing mission because for him it is his duty and only truth to deal with. Spivak mentions, “He follows the necessities and contingencies of what he sees as his historical moment” (179) that exemplifies his character clearly. He constructs his own story from his point of view where his counter Dopdi has a different version to tell.

Dopdi's position in the story is the position of a marginalized who will never speak or who cannot be spoken. However, she breaks this thought and raises her voice. She stops Senanayak to move further and let him know the ‘unspoken’ voices of a woman. Her struggles to become

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<sup>5</sup> Here I mean the superior complex of white people who believe that they are the ‘only’ civilized people in the world and it is their duty to civilize ‘others’ in rest of the world.

independent or liberates her country gets a shape while she stands upright in-front of Senanayak and scared him. As Devi said,

Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid (Spivak, 196)

Dopdi's last action takes her

“in a place where she will finally act *for* herself in *not* ‘acting’ in challenging the man to (en) counter her as unrecorded or misrecorded objective historical monument” (Spivak, 184).

She (Dopdi) rewrites the story that tells the story of marginalized woman who instantly turns herself into ‘subject: I’ from being ‘object: her’.

Additionally, her female body projects the idea of materialization of marginalized women that counts as resistance. She breaks the customary belief of womanhood or womanly behavior and stand against this believe. Through her physical presence, she projects the figure of the mother that is assembled with motherhood, but not in a motherly way. She is not as simple as the reader cannot similarize/ non-similar her with ‘mother’ or ‘wife’ or ‘daughter’ but her body represents “the last instance in a system whose general regulator is still the loan: usurer’s capital, imbricated, level by level, in national industrial and transnational global capital” (Spivak, 112).

Moreover, her naked-mutilated physical appearance draws a picture of a bold protest of being ashamed because of gang rape. She does not consider any man as a man because she is brutally gang raped and when Senanayak asks her to get dressed, she objects and then *abjects* as she is

resisting/ refusing to take the essential needs of human being of being cover up. She totally refuses to become a part of subservient or docile, but proposes herself on a different level. Her abjection of shame and hesitation as women reveals her strength. She defies the docility of being poor, tribal and or a woman.

In addition, Mahasweta Devi presents her as the repressive female whose body is mutilated and at the same time becomes a dispute against oppressor. She authorizes the female voice by presenting the female body as dispute of domination and suppression. Dopdi's action is "a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities [...] that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts" (1990, 49) which becomes a repressive response to the superior power. Michel Foucault entitles it as 'instrument- effect' which explains the reverse mode of protest against perversion of [male] power. It also projects that Dopdi's consumed body becomes an instrumental strike back against the suppression of superior authority.

## ii) Women as Mother

This part of the chapter starts with a concept or a question that whether a ‘mother’ is marginalized in any form? Or a mother’s action can be questioned in the discourse of ‘marginalization’? Or does her physical attribution become an issue in this discourse?

The underline distinction between motherhood and the idea of motherhood, as Devi refers the juxtapose emotions of motherhood with the constructed notion of motherhood:

“These works demonstrate how the traditional deification of motherhood can often conceal a collective attempt to circumscribe women within socially prescribed roles while denying them the right to articulate their individual needs and desires” (Chakravarty, I).

Women are always subjected in defining their vulnerable position no matter whether they are mother, daughter, or wife. Devi explains this matter effectively while referring to women as goddess and mother like. In her story “Sindhubala” Sindhubala is portrayed as dark skinned with “bulging forehead, snub nose” (*Sindhubala*, 38) by her mother, however, at the same time her feet are attributed as auspicious because it entered the first world. As Devi narrates, “Sindhu, it is said, had entered the world feet- first. Ever since, Sindhu’s feet have been deemed very auspicious” (2011, 37). Additionally, Radha Chakravarty describes that,

‘Sindhubala’ describes the anguish of a woman forced to play the role of a divine healer, called upon to save the lives of other people’s offspring while suppressing her own physical and emotional needs (*In the Name of the Mother*, xi).

On the other hand, her physical beauty is not well enough so that she is thought to be a burden to her family. Later, she gets married to Sanneshi but it does not work out. Being rejected by her husband, she is thought as an outcast with the possession of supernatural power and vice-versa. This thought is made up by her mother and Manudasi, a tactical step to earn their livelihood. Eventually, it works out until Sindhubala realizes that this goddess like act “premised upon hollow self-denial” (Chakravarty, xi). She urges to become a mother, a real mother, but her barren body does not allow her to become biological-mother and this harsh truth become the ‘other’ matter or a matter of laxity and so thus she is not allowed to think about it. On the other hand, her divine feet become the source of livelihood which is also a part of the exploitation of the female body. It is her situation that makes her more resistance and asceticism. Actually, this so called supernatural power depends upon her self-denial of mothering.

Additionally, being a spiritual mother, her position is being dignified but she also has lost the social contacts. She becomes a super ‘I’ by escalating and eliminating herself from ‘normal social or domestic life’. She has bound to earn her livelihood through creating a sensation of become a goddess like or *devangshi* (goddess) otherwise she might remain as poor. She was forced to leave her in laws house because she does not look fair and beautiful. Paradoxically, this physical feature becomes her only instrument to earn her livelihood. Her birth story and physical appearances escalate her position as goddess in the society. Her body becomes divine, so thus people come with their children for a blessing. Even her husband’s another wife came with her son for her blessing. The ironic phase is that she is discarded for her physical appearances. She lost her domestic life for that. Her barren body becomes a symbol of purity in nature in order to become an idea of supernatural power.

However, Mahasweta Devi compares this whole supernatural business and becoming a goddess with another incident of nearby. As Manudasi, a female character of the story, talks about,

One of them lived in this very neighbourhood. Nobody knew who she was in her prime.

When she died, they found her house full of only cockatoos and parrots (2011, 43).

The comparison sheds light on Shindhubala's mental condition. All through her life she is driven by other forces. Even her supernatural figure develops based on her mother's perception of living life. She merely faces the consequences of all these events. Rather, I get to know her by reading the incident where she feels lonely and urges to become a real mother. She compares herself with the neighbourhood lady. She feels that she will die alone in her empty house. She compares her physical bareness with social emptiness, her surroundings. She never gets proper treatment from the society. Society always criticizes her as she is not able to give a birth of a child. She remains alone and deserted from domestic life. It proves her marginalization within her own community.

Moreover, it also explains that unlike her surroundings, she is all isolated and deprived. Later she withdraws herself from supernatural act in order to calm her own mental trauma. She releases herself from social bondings and responsibilities because society is not able to give her anything. It is not able to fulfill her wishes, her desire to become a mother. She realizes and let the readers know that,

If you're human, you must burn. If you're holy, then too you must burn. If life has the same end for both, then why should the woman Sindhu spend her days pretending to be a goddess (2011, 49).



Her story implies that women in both ways are docile and isolated, whether she is a goddess like or as a normal human being. In many situations, she is not considered as human beings rather she is treated as untouchable because of her physical appearance. “Her divine status is premised upon hollow self-denial” (Chakravarty, xi) which is rendering her exploitation as well as the consequences of multiple shades of Women’s’ position in society.

In another story, “Ma, from Dusk to Dawn” tells about a woman, from a nomadic tribe, propelled by her circumstances into the role of a divine/ spiritual mother whose so-called mystical power depends upon her denial of maternal affection towards his son during the daylight hours. Radha Chakravarty in her introduction to “In The Name of Mother” observes

Ironically, she is exploited in both roles: as the holy Thakurni, she must provide succor to all those who cast themselves at her feet; and as Sadhan’s *shanjh shokaler Ma*, she must supply the rice to feed his insatiable hunger, even after her death (2011, xi).

For Mahasweta Devi, the truth lies in between the ““hypocrisy so latent in discourses of maternity” and the values of love, care and responsibility... traditionally associated with the maternal role” (Chakravarty, ix). In fact, motherhood/mothering, often forms the central experience through which her women are awakened to a greater understanding of society and its evils, and it provides them with the strength to sustain them and fight for justice even against the toughest odds. Devi exposes a wide variety of mothers - from the poor, yet, caring mother - the stereotype of ideal motherhood - the spiritual mother, the exploitative mother and even the professional-mother. The relationship that each mother shares with her child is also unique. This

mothering is also referring the impose customs of society and at the same time their sacrifice towards society. Jati Thakurni does not become *thakurni* in one day or according to her wishes. She becomes a spiritual figure to sustain a life and to raise her son. She is from a nomadic tribe named *Jaara*, who were unwanted and untouchable from the beginning as they performed a sin like attempt to kill Krishna god. They roam around from places to places and live by their community. Conversely, Jati is married to Sadhan's father, from another community and become cast off. Jati comes out, but eventually, in the long run her husband dies and she becomes all alone except her only child Sadhan. After the death of Jati's husband, she cannot go back to her own community. And so thus, she becomes a spiritual mother who lives for people from dawn to dusk, but for her son, she becomes a humanly mother from dusk to dawn. Her spiritualism has been constructed upon the denial of her of being humanly mother. It also represents her denial of domestic life means rejecting the normal life in order to survive.

The violation of herself makes the abjection exists in order to place Jati in a position in the society. Her cremation becomes sacred and ceremonial, but while I look closely, I find out that her existence defines a person "who places [herself], separates [herself], situates [herself, and therefore strays instead of getting [her] bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing" (Kriesteva n.p). Her whole life depends upon her abjecting the self desire and private life. She accepts the *devangshi* life to secure her son in a social life.

Another story of Devi, "Giribala" demonstrates the traditional rule of paying the money for the bride's hand as in the text, it is "even now, [a] ... [Custom] to pay for the bride's hand in marriage" (2011, 61). Giribala is hardly fourteen years when her father gives her in marriage to Aullchand who pretends to be well employed. But later turns out that Aullchand is a fraud. Not

only a fraud but also a spineless creature who does not mind to sell-off his own daughters in the name of building a house and get drunk. However, his sweet talks convinced Giribala's parents and so thus "at the age of 14, Giri goes to keep house for her husband" (64). In there, she sees the real picture of her husband's condition. She takes the household job at Babu's place and works hard as domestic help "for a meal wage." She knows that leaving her husband is not an option as "a girl's by fate discarded, lost if she's dead, lost if she's wed" (64). Later, Giribala gives birth to two girls and a boy within five years. A third daughter is born a few years later. When her daughter Bela is ten years old, Giribala starts thinking of arranging her marriage, but the drunkard and drug addict Aullchand sells Bela and their second daughter Pari into prostitution. Following this, Giribala walks out with her youngest daughter Maruni in her arms; grasps the hand of her son Rajiv. However, the community criticizes Giribala for this valiant step,

The news amazes everyone, sets their heads shaking in disapproval. What happened to Bela and Pari was common practice these days. But why leave your husband and go away? What kind of woman was that? Everyone is convinced that it's not Aullchand but Giribala who's at fault. An indescribable relief fills them, all of them, when they reach this conclusion (2011, 84).

These stories demonstrate the resistance of women, whether she is mother or daughter or wife or woman. Giribala left her husband with her only son and last daughter because other people will not think about her daughter anymore. Nobody will take any steps to protect her daughter as "nobody willing to give much thought to a girl-child. She, too, should not worry. She, too, is female" (2011, 73).

However, Giribala's story explains the materialize use of the female body in order to gain object. Aullchand's daughters are not as precious to him as his desire to construct a house. His thought resembles the conventional view about women. His actions show a varied field of exploiting women's body. By selling them, he initiates a concept that these women do not have any voice, any identity. These women are mass as products as they can be sold easily.

Additionally, there is an incident where Giribala's husband Aullchand blames her to get an operation for not having any more babies. The blames comes towards Giribla because for Aullchand, "the more daughters you produce, the more money you acquire" (2011, 83) and that suggests that Giribala does not have any right to her own body. Her reproductive body means a money source to her husband and by exploiting the body; he can earn more money to build houses.

On the other hand, Giribala resists and leaves her husband. She acquires a certain space within non-space society as her own. She rejects the social barriers and even overthrows the criticism of society because she feels that she needs to do that. She takes bold action to protect her only left a daughter and a son. She achieves an authoritative sense and power to lead her own life. She becomes the decision maker of her life.

## Conclusion

In the last three chapters, along with the introduction, I tried to explore two aspects; first, women and their voices and second, women and their bodies. I also explored the notion of feminism that informs feminism is social construct. It means that woman is not born but made of by society. In first chapter, I formed a hypothesis that women do have their voices, but these voices are mutilated and fragmented. I continued this debate as underline message in other two chapters in order to explain the meaning of Devi's stories. In this chapter, I also discussed the female narrative tone and the subject formation in terms of writers' aspect as well as characters' aspects of the stories. These two discourses are interrelated and interchanged in many ways. In order to form a narrative and strong voice these women have faced various problems in terms of their social (gender and caste) and economical conditions. Devi is speaking and holding the voices of subaltern in her narration. Then Spivak is upholding and making these voices to the world known through her translations and criticisms. So, there are multiple speakers at different levels whose voices are mingled as they spoke the unspoken stories. Mahasweta Devi's stories are giving voices to these marginalized women, allowing them to identify an identity.

In second chapter, I tend to explore the notion of abjection of women in multiple shades. It also relates the idea of 'womb as the sight of objectification and materialization'. Women do abject the core custom and stigma of herself as well as of society. They deny the social restricted custom and goes beyond the ages. Some of them are willingly part of this denial but some of them are bound to deny in order living. And among them, the 'mother' and 'daughter' are mostly mentioned. Dhoulis from the story *Dhoulis* becomes the part of urban prostitution community instead of becoming private prostitute in her village. She finds her 'I' in the larger community as

an alternative to her village community. In another story, 'womb' becomes a productive labor as Jashoda maintains her poor family by getting constant pregnant and feeding at least 50 children in her life. Her womb and breast became signifier of rejecting of own *self* from herself. She dies from cancer.

In third chapter, I focused on the concept of female body as a site of resistance. One of Devi's stories "Giribala", Giribala leaves her husband to save her only one daughter and her only son. She abjects the society and bears her pain as her power of living. On the other hand, Dopdi symbolizes completely different impression. Rather, Dopdi deconstructs the whole notion of womanhood. She was raped by several soldiers in the barrack. So, while, Sennayek asks her to be dressed up, she refuses. She rejects to wear as she does not have anything to lose. She does not have shame or embarrassment to hide her naked body because every one of the barracks saw her naked and particularly raped her. She does not care about them. She defends her body in front of Sennayek and protests against his move. She creates a wall against him so that he has to stop. Her female body becomes a symbol of voice or a symbol of protest. This incident deconstructs the naivety of female body.

To sum up, Devi's stories are giving a voice to these voiceless marginalized women. Her stories are explaining the exploitation of female body as well as forming a resistance factor of female body. After analyzing these texts, in my thesis, and reading the criticism, I have come to conclusion that these marginalized women do exercise a power within a restricted structure. This power is subverted and in some case is mutilated like her identity and body. This power has achieved through a long term suffering by suppressing her voice and sacrifice which is by

mutilating of female body. However, they possess a voice in many forms but ultimate goal is to be heard which is done by Mahasweta Devi, wonderfully. Therefore, Devi's stories are echoing the repressive power of resistance.

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