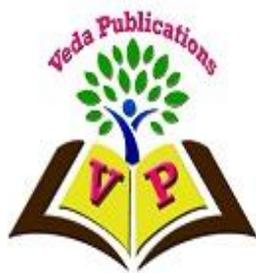


**QUESTIONING NOVELTY IN LITERATURE: MAHASWETA DEVI**

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*Independent Research Scholar, Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal, India.*DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9116>**ABSTRACT**

Mahasweta Devi enlightens the literature of the downtrodden people. She thinks that the history of India should be re-written. It is only the history of the people from the main stream of the society. The new history should be written focusing on the backward people. Throughout her life she makes documentation for the tribal people in her writings and activism. She writes and fights for the establishment of the rights for the Indian subaltern people. She thinks writing in a novel way. She dreams of a new society - a society for the underprivileged society.

Keywords: *Depressed, Denotified, Postcolonial, Subaltern, Hierarchy, Administration, Marginal, Detached,*



INTRODUCTION

Mahasweta Devi went to the forest and its inhabitants throughout her life. She loved the forest, she loved the tribal people. So she went to the depressed people repeatedly as their relatives, guardians and guide. She herself thought as the member of the marginal people. She said that she went to them to remove the sin of torturing them, tormenting them as the elite member of the society. The elite society finds everything- food, dress and shelter including education. But the voiceless, marginal people do not find anything. They are deployed, distressed in the society. So she tried according to her ability to bring them and highlight them in the society through her work and through her writings. She was inspired by the life style of the tribal people. She often visited their places and lived with them.

“As people visit places of pilgrimage, I have been visiting for a long time some places of India inhabited by the tribal and the marginalized peoples. I have never visited these places for any personal interest. It was because of such visits that I have tried my best to draw the attention of the administration to the appalling condition of the endangered tribal people. I would like to frequent these places in order to do penance. It is my conviction that the mainstream society from which I, too, hail from has kept these peoples marginalized and exploited for centuries. Our two epics bear glaring testimony to it. I have tried to devote all my thoughts and literary activities to do amends for the age-old exploitation and torture perpetrated by our mainstream society on these peoples century after century.” (Devi 7)

The creative writings of Mahasweta Devi expressed the mystery of life. Her writings are the chronological history of Indian society. She is not a votary of Art for art's sake doctrine in literature. Her writings expressed her social activities. She always maintained the social responsibilities in her writings. We find the social historiography in her writings. We find the voiceless and denotified people in her writings. Only Mahasweta Devi told the story of the marginal people in her writings. She really wanted a balanced society for all. She wanted freedom for all section in Indian society. So, her writings are unique.

Mahasweta Devi tries to highlight on the downtrodden section of the society in her writings. In the postcolonial period this down trodden people are named as the subaltern people. Devi was a social activist. For social welfare she had to go to the inferior section of the society. There she finds the subaltern people of Indian society. In a number of short fictions and stories, she shows how the people of different profession are humiliated in our society. They are the deployed section of the society. Devi shows the life style of the subaltern people for the development of the society as well as the whole human being.

Once Devi said that she wanted to see and stay more with the marginal people of our society. She also read a lot about them. She wanted to improve their life style. She wanted to destroy the hierarchy in the society. Every human being should be lived according to their right. As an activist Devi worked a lot for the marginal and voiceless section of our society. She also wrote on them. She made the marginal people, like- Droupadi, Dhoul, Chand, Mary Oraon, Jashoda, etc. as the protagonist of her stories.



In this way she became the representative of the deployed section of our society.

No newspaper, radio or television channel express the life of the voiceless section of our society. The elite people also are not habituated with the practice of hearing their problematic life style, and culture of suffering. The media always remain busy with showing political scandals of different political parties. The elite people also like to read these, or see these. They have no time to think about the voiceless marginal people of the society. Only when we read Mahasweta Devi, we became conscious about the depressed people in our society. Through practical experiences she made her writing perspectives.

A number of writers- like Manik Bandyopadhyay, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, Satinath Bhaduri, Adwaita Mallabarman, Anil Gharai, Kinnar Rai, Sushil Jana, Bimal Kar etc wrote on the marginal section of Indian society. They expressed their life style through their writings. But Mahasweta Devi wrote in a different way. She worked for them, she lived with them. So she knew them from her heart. She attacked the government and the administration for making plan about the marginal people through her writings. This is very rare in literary creation.

Mahasweta Devi was a conscious social scientist. She worked for the marginal people of the society. From her ethical sense, she thought that she should work for the deployed section of the society. The elite society depressed them from the main stream of the society by hierarchy. We find the history of marginal people in the charjapad of Bengali literature. After words Devi analysed in detail about

the marginal section of the society in her writings. In a number of stories, we find the story of the tribal people who live in the jungle without food, dress and shelter. She tried throughout her life to diminish the economical and political hierarchy of the marginal people.

From Rabindranath Tagore to the present day, a lot of stories have been written on the marginal people. But the writings of Devi for the marginal people is different from the others. She was not a votary of art for art's sake doctrine. She was a worker and writer. So her feelings for the marginal people is different from others. The contemporary writers like, Abul Bashir, Anil Gharai, Kinnar Roy, Harsha Dutta write with a sensitive feeling for the marginal people of the society. But if it is seen with an inquisitive eye, it will be found that Mahasweta Devi tried throughout her life for the upliftment of the marginal people. She brought the tribal people to a respectable position of the society.

Devi lived with the tribal people for years. So she knew them by heart. They shared their joys and sorrows with her. She also stood beside them at their side. She wrote to the government also about the different problems of the tribal society who remained detached from the main society for long years without freedom i.e. food, cloth and shelter. They are the voiceless section of the society. Devi raised the voice for them. It is her ethical sense. They can not speak.

CONCLUSION

Mahasweta Devi wanted to show through her writings that the subaltern people can speak according to their own way. They have their own



voice. The people from the main stream of the society should have understanding power to hear their voice. So, the protagonists of her writings are mostly from the downtrodden section of the society. This is the real history of India. She gave a new dimension to the Indian writings.

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