

**Tribhuvan University**

**Resistance of the Caste-Based Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh***

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**By**

**ManojDamai**

**Roll No.: 144**

**Symbol No.: 00006102**

**T. U. Regd. No.: 6-2-0329-0063-2011**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

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ManojDamai

## Abstract

*This research is an attempt to portray the resistance of the caste-based subaltern against the so-called upper-caste hegemony; the collective agency of the caste-based subalterns challenge the caste hierarchy and exist as rebellious subject that is what we find in Lachhima in Mahasweta Devi's The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh. Devi has told a life-like story of Lachhima, Rukmani, Haroa, Mohor and others in order to show how the ideologies of casteism treat Dalits, how the bonding of Dalits and their individual and collective effort of resistance plays an important role in questioning the traditions, cultures and customs which promote caste-based discrimination. As a theoretical perspective, insights related to caste-based subalterns have been applied from B. R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste. Overall, this paper attempts to extend the horizon of solidarity, equality and freedom for justice to all.*

**Key Words:** Caste-Based Subaltern, Exploitation, Kept-Woman, Resistance

Resistance of the Caste-Based Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*

This research analyzes Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* from the perspective of seeking resistance consciousness of the caste-based subalterns. Apart from subaltern historians and critics, the notion of annihilation of caste by Ambedkar has been applied while analyzing caste-based oppression, and the collective effort of *Dalits* to challenge and change the existing hegemony of caste hierarchy. The dominant characters from so-called upper caste, like, Medini Singh, Ganesh Singh, Nathu Singh and others dominate these so-called lower caste characters, like, Lachhima, Rukmani, Mohor Karan, Haroa, Bigulal, and others. The *Dalit* characters of this novel suffer at the hands of their non-*Dalitmaliks*. They are the free laborers for their masters. *Dalit* women are kept at their homes as their kept-women. They are raped and sucked up till they have puberty. At last, they are thrown like a living corpse. Sometimes, illegitimate children get birth and neglected. *Rajput* women also easily accept the 'culture' of keeping *Dalit* women. The oppression done upon all of them is taken as an inseparable part of their lives. But, their domination does not remain for a long time. They speak out for their rights, and freedom. They adopt some strategies to resist, and go through transformation which is studied through the theoretical insights related to the caste-based subalterns propounded by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, and others too.

Through this novel, the author presents the impact of caste system and discrimination done on the basis of it in its extreme form in India's rural areas called Barha and Nawagarh where the impact of India's Independence from Britain has not been felt. Mahasweta Devi questions those practices through the life-like incidents of fictional characters, such as, Lachhima, Rukmani, Mohor Karan, Haroa and others. The

questions that arise in the research are; what are the means used by so-called upper castes to dominate and exploit the so-called lower castes? Why and how do *Dalits* resist suppression and exploitation of so-called upper castes? Solving these queries will be the aim of this paper.

*The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* by Devi is set in Barha, Nawagarh, Tohri and other parts of Bihar. This novel is chaptered into seven parts. Its beginning chapter deals with the birth of our title character, Ganesh whereas the last chapter deals with his killing by the same people who were once his and his people's servants. It begins with the narration of Ganesh's birth and his mother's death. Medini Narayan, a father of Ganesh orders Gulal to bring Lachhima, a granddaughter of Gulal, to raise Ganesh up. Gulal and Lachhima are from *Dalit* community and Medini and Ganesh are from non-*Dalit* community. Medini takes Lachhima as his own 'property.' The duty of cooking food and serving is given to Medini's own caste elderly woman, Gungi, and giving oil massage to Sarju and Sita, brooming the yard, cleaning the sheds, washing clothes and the likes are given to Lachhima and Gulal. After few days, Medini starts sleeping with Lachhima to quench his manhood in his 60s too. In Barha, the male *Rajputs* keep the low caste women in addition to their wives at home to fulfill their sex hunger. Barkandaj also enjoys the secret company of Mori, a *Dalit* woman. Ganga is also the kept-woman of Nathu. It is common for the *Rajputs*.

During the marriage ceremony of Ganesh, Lachhima is told to be alienated from the ritual. She also wants to marry Mohor, but fails. Lachhima becomes a caged-bird of Medini for 20 years. Later, she gets released and married to Haroa with the consent of Ganesh after the death of Medini. Pallavi, a girl from city comes to help the *Dalits* of Barha. But, they help her to escape from there to save her from being raped by Ganesh and his people. Due to her escape, the *Rajputs* set fire on the

*Bhangis'* houses. Then, they start working and staying in the forest with the approval of Sub Division Officer, SDO.

Ganesh loses his interest in his wife, Putli. So, he suggests her to call Rukmani as her helper who is about to marry with KamuAhir. Rukmani is an illegitimate daughter of Nathu and his *Dalit* kept-woman, Ganga. Rukmani comes and handles everything as Lachhima did during her time. One night, Ganesh rapes her. It continues and she gets pregnant. She goes to her mother and one early morning, she commits suicide in order to turn everyone's eyes towards Ganesh and his devilish nature. All the *Dalits* join her funeral, tell and retell her suicide to every *maliks* by carrying her corpse. One night, Ganesh conspires to fire the forest to punish *achhuts* by blaming them for fire. It is failed when Haroa discloses it. Ganesh kills Haroa with his gun. After this, Lachhima starts living in the forest with her people. They all realize that their independency is only possible through their own effort and unity.

The SDO knows the killing of Haroa, goes to Barha and seizes the gun from Ganesh. Ganesh again plans to fire the forest and *Dalits* living in. At night, he runs out of his home through window to fire the forest but he is noticed by Ranka and his people. They chase him in the forest. He runs and reaches at the house of Lachhima. He requests her to save him from her people. She agrees and takes him inside of her house. But, she shouts loudly to tell about Ganesh's whereabouts, her people come to kill him and she also becomes one of them.

Devi was an Indian social activist, journalist and writer. She was born in 1926 in Decca, British India. She is more famous for her works which are related to the study of the tribal groups, the *Lodhas* and *Shabars*, *Dalits* and women. Most of her works are about the struggles of 'subalterns' in Bihar, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Her notable works are *Rudali*, *AranyerAdhikari* and *TituMir*. Because of her

works, she had been awarded so many times such as Padma Sri Award in 1986, Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997, Padma Vibhushan Award in 2006 and many more.

Once while talking about the source of her inspiration for her writing, Kalpana Bardhan captured what Devi said, “The reason and inspiration for my writing are those people who are exploited and used, and yet do not accept defeat. For me, the endless source of ingredients for writing is in these amazing noble, suffering human beings”(24). Devi is one of those who speak for voiceless. She gives more priority to ordinary and neglected people. She loves their struggle of not giving up. She writes for them, about them in order to inspire them to fight till they get their rights and equality back. She further accepts that there is no need to go away from them in the search of contents of her writing because they are so real and inspiring.

We all have lost this beautiful treasure, warrior on 28 July 2016. Realizing the loss of Devi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, “Mahasweta Devi wonderfully illustrated the might of the pen. A voice of compassion, equality and justice, she leaves us deeply saddened. RIP.” Modi has felt sorry for her death because she was the living example of power of pen, and her voice for justice, equality and love was also highly praised. The tweet of Modi was included in *The Hindu*.

Since the publication of this novel, it has received numerous appreciations and criticisms from different forum of critical scholarships. Different critiques have viewed their opinions differently. And some of them are mentioned below;

Firoz N., in his “Writing for/with Subaltern: A Study of Contemporary Indian Fiction with Focus on Mahasweta Devi’s Works” writes,

The text traces the symptoms of bonded labor, a byproduct of feudalism, and its dehumanizing effects on the underdogs... One day, suspecting Haroa’s absolute servility to Medini Singh as a result of a bond, Lachhima asks him...

Mahasweta elucidates the numerous ways through which feudalism, in nexus with caste system, attempts to subjugate the spirit of the subaltern communities, reducing them to slaves. (185)

Through these lines, Firoz N. depicts the plight of bonded people mentioned in *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* which is the result of feudalism. They even don't have right to deny the command of their *maliks* and the live example of this system is Haroa who just puts himself forward whenever and whatever Medini orders. And, Devi has picked up this issue and exposed it by showing how it turns human beings into slaves.

Similarly, Koyel Chakrabarty, in her "Women as Narrative Props and the Problematics of Women Rights in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*" writes, "The novel taken for study largely underscores the Human Rights problems both social and economic... the repression of the fundamental and human rights by the high-class society and its establishments, including the government machinery" (46). Koyel has pointed out the issue of human rights mentioned in the novel. Most of the people who enjoy them are from high class, and higher caste. People who do not belong to high class and caste do not get chance to enjoy the rights. In their names, upper dogs enjoy the rights and even they are denied to access fair justice by this or that.

In the same manner, Soma Gupta, in her "Resistance to Oppression: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's Selected Works" writes, "In the novel *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*, the landlords' wives are inflicted mental and physical torture particularly when they are unable to give birth to a male heir... [It] deals with the theme of child marriage as seen in the early marriage of Ganesh's daughters" (25-26). Gupta tries to show us some of the major issues Devi tries to depict in her novel namely, preference to son, child marriage and 'female oppression.' Gupta writes that this novel presents



the dark side of our patriarchal society where all the time women become the victims. Even the wives of landlords are tortured not only physically but also mentally when they could not 'give birth to a male heir.' Similarly, Gupta points out another important issue, that is, child marriage which is a kind of gender oppression.

This is what JyotiYadav in "Women Writers on Our Time: An Introduction to Mahasweta Devi with Major Thematic Concerns" endorses when she says, "Mahasweta Devi, veteran Bengali author is one among the appealing voices who question the so-called developing, democratic and civilized nation called India. Marginals are still deprived of their fundamental rights even after so many years of freedom" (158).Yadav shows the standing point of Devi, that is marginal, subaltern. She further says that Devi tries to question the concept regarding India. Though it is free from Britain, but inside it, there are still so many colonizers. People call India as a 'developing, democratic and civilized' but another dark face of India is violation of fundamental rights of subalterns. Devi dreams of better India where there is no exploitation, no discrimination and no violation of fundamental rights.

RadhaChakravorty, in her book *Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers: Rethinking Subjectivity* writes, "Mahasweta's current reputation as a writer rests largely on her own self-projection as champion of the tribal cause and decrier of class prejudice" (94). Here, Chakravorty,appreciating the contribution of Devi working for so many years for the tribal and back warded communities writes that Devi is a champion because of her way to present the plight of tribal and marginalized communities. In her writing, she calls for the end of class system where there is always domination on lower class, tribal and women. She tries to speak for those who cannot speak. And Devi successfully speaks for the betterment of their economy, politics and social security too.

Similarly, while reviewing Devi's works, Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose in "Dis-possession, Degradation and Empowerment of Peasantry and the Poor in Benglai Fiction" writes, "In the 1970s itself, Devi achieved a new construction of the poor in Bengali fiction and her view of society is subaltern and prompts change as she relocates power and redefines human worth" (442). Beck and Bose try to tell about the contribution of Devi in the field of literature and most importantly in Indian society. During 1970s most of the writers neglected the plight of poor in their fictions. They were busy in celebrating independency of India from Britain in their writings. But, Devi gives full space to the poor in her novels. She speaks for the subalterns. She feels an urgency to accept subalterns as one of the strongest contents of the fiction. She also accepts that the internal independency of subaltern must be written about. So, she writes for the subalterns. She retells how to distribute power and what is the value of human. She questions them who never accept the equal presence of subaltern.

Mahasweta Devi's skill of envisioning better world where there is a balance between vice and virtue has been appreciated by RadhaChakravorty. She, in *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives* writes, "One of the most notable features of Mahasweta's writing is the visionary, utopian . . . that acts as a counterbalance to her dystopian, 'forensic', critical perspective on the contemporary world" (108). Chakravorty talks about the writing style of Devi. Through it, Devi presents her dream land which is the place like utopia, heaven where there is no war, oppression, exploitation, rape, domination, and the likes. Chakravorty tells us about Devi's writing style through which she attacks on anarchy, dystopian.

Primarily, most of the aforementioned reviews are confined to the issues like, feudal system, human rights, gendered subaltern, and the tribal life. Some of the

reviews like Firoz N., KoyelChakrabarty, and JyotiYadav seem to be limited up to the Devi's presentation of the then India which is ruled by feudal, her voice for the tribal, human rights and her writing style. On the other hand, RadhaChakravarty remains limited up to Devi's voice for tribal and class prejudice seen in the society. On the contrary, other reviewers like Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose have intensively focused on the poor and their space in the society. They have reviewed on how the case of poor has become a central part of writing of that time which was particularly initiated by Devi. However, Soma Gupta, in some part of her review has attempted to bring out the issues like, child marriage, son-centered notion and women oppression. Their reviews, therefore, seem to be circumscribed up to the subject matter of feudal system, human rights, tribal, Devi's writing style, women oppression and child marriage system in the then India. These all reviewers have given credit to Devi for her dream to make India a better place to live in.

However, the above-mentioned reviewers have not analyzed this novel from the caste-based subalterns' perspective. They have forgotten to show the sufferings of *Dalits* and their persistent resistance to transform the caste-based domination. So, unlike these reviews, the researcher, in this research paper, is attempting to explore this novel through the lens of caste-based subaltern showing *Dalits'* role in the social reformation, and the significance of their collective voice for their own establishment in society with dignity. The researcher is going to use caste-based subalterns' perspective because it is a new perspective in the field of subaltern studies and for reading this novel too. Regarding theoretical insights to deal with Devi's novel, the researcher has brought theoretical insights from caste-based subalterns' theorists like Ambedkar, and others as well in order to talk about the issues of *Dalits* minutely.

This study has used the insights of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar from *Annihilation of*

*Caste* in order to show what *Varna* system is, how the figure of *Dalit* disappears in the world of non-*Dalit*, and how they are humiliated, silenced and put at the bottom of the society. Along with that, concepts like how *Dalits* should march forward to dismantle the caste system, what are the ways to be implemented in order to create a better society where there is no discrimination in the name of caste, have also been taken from Ambedkar.

Subaltern is someone who is tortured, neglected, ruled, forgotten, exploited, discriminated, and thrown away from the mainstream of the society. Now, the word 'subaltern' has become an umbrella term. Within it, there can be caste-based subaltern, religion based subaltern, geographical based subaltern, race based subaltern, physical based subaltern and so on. One of them is caste-based subaltern. Caste-based subaltern especially refers to those who are victimized, discriminated, and mistreated just only because of their caste. The term 'subaltern' was coined by an Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his celebrated collection *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*. While discussing about rural peasant in Southern Italy, Gramsci categorized them into the non-hegemonic classes— the subaltern groups. It indicates to any person or group of 'inferior rank' and status in the name of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or power.

Similarly, in the later phase, historians and theorists of Subaltern Studies Group do the work of resisting the voice against dominant group. Scholars like Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chattarjee, Dipesh Chakravorty, and others have inaugurated the debate on Subaltern Studies in South Asia, particularly in India. They have published a series of volumes on Subaltern Studies since 1980s. They possibly have attempted to quench the thirst of the historians who want to know the surface of the culture and existence of the subalterns in colonial as well as

postcolonial India.

In India, this school of thought has been founded by Ranjit Guha who takes independent India as a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state. In the course of introducing the first volume of *Subaltern Studies I*, Guha states: “We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography...for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project” (4). Guha talks about the direction of Subaltern Studies, that is, to speak for subalterns and provide them a proper space. In official history, there is no inclusion of subalterns. The proper space and credit is not given to them rather they are taken as the failures to create their own destiny. But, opposite to it, Guha and his projects try to give full space to the subalterns in order to prove that they also can design their own destiny.

Furthermore, pointing out the aim of Subaltern Studies in *Subaltern Studies I* which was published in 1983, Guha defines the term subaltern as, “The word 'subaltern' is a name for the general attribute of subordination ... whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way” (27). For him, subaltern means anyone who is discriminated in the name of class, caste, age, gender and so on. Where Subaltern Studies did not take up the woman issues separately up to the first three volumes of it, with the inclusion of Spivak in Subaltern Studies IV, it gets a new domain: gender subaltern. So, the credit of speaking for gendered subaltern goes to Spivak at first because she points out the loopholes in Subaltern Studies Project and tries to enlarge its horizon.

The movement of Subaltern Studies is also seen in Nepal too because in Nepal, we can find so many people who are out of hegemony and are always forced to be ruled. Regarding the emergence of the wave of Subaltern Studies and its history in

Nepal, Tara Lal Shresth in his *Shakti, Srashtara Subaltern (Power, Writer and Subaltern)* writes, “As Abhi Subedi used the term ‘subaltern’ for the first time in his newspaper article; it got space at the centre of discourse with the discussion of (Madhesi) subaltern character presented in a novel, ‘*Ghanchakkar*’ by Sanjeev Upreti” (3). By this statement, we come to know that Abhi Subedi is the first person who used the term ‘subaltern’ for the first time in Nepal in a news paper article. Later on, Sanjeev Upreti gives a space to the subalterns in Nepali literature through his novel, ‘*Ghanchakkar*’.

Furthermore, while defining who subalterns are, Shresth in his *Shakti, Srashtara Subaltern* writes, “... ‘Subaltern’ indicates the century long ruled by, voiceless and historyless class”(1). Subalterns are taken as the people who are being ruled, whose voice is not heard and they are not documented in the mainstream history too. Their presence is discarded and they are put out of any kinds of privileges. So, through subaltern studies, subalterns speak out for their rights and space in the hegemony. By indicating the power of subaltern studies, Shresth again writes, “Campaign of subaltern study is a model of power in unity” (30). Subaltern study begins from Italy. Then, it expands to India, Nepal and the whole world. This level of wave of interest and curiosity in subaltern study in itself is a model of power. And the works like doing research in the same field is also a revolution in the support of caste based subalterns of India and Nepal.

In the same manner, while talking about the creation of subalterns and their plight, Shresth in his *Shakti, Srashtara Subaltern* writes, “Hindu society is not run by the law, but by the religious rules. Therefore, *Brahmanism* is the source of casteism and fatalism. It is cruel and oppressive... Self-dependency and development of subaltern is not possible in *Brahmanism*. *Brahmanism* in itself is an exploitative,

feudal, and oppressive society where there is no space ever given for subaltern” (162). The majority of the population of India and Nepal follows Hinduism. It is felt and proven that they put their religious rules ahead of law. They still believe in *Brahmanism* which is the cradle of untouchability and predestination. *Dalits* are deprived of their rights only because of *Brahmanism* where *Dalits* are put at the bottom of the *varna* system and are only forced to be their servants.

While talking about who caste-based subalterns are, how they are made subalterns, who make them subalterns, and who the leading figures for their emancipation are. Before that, there may be a query related to whether ‘Subaltern Studies’ includes the issue of caste-based subaltern or not in its domain of study. To respond this query, Partha Chatterjee writes in her paper, “For no matter how we choose to characterize it, subaltern consciousness in the specific cultural context of India cannot but contain caste as a central element in its constitution” (1). Through it, it is clear that while talking about subaltern, caste gets a special space in its discussion. When we see the caste issue as the part of subaltern, *Dalit* is termed as the subaltern who is oppressed and discriminated just because of caste since a long time. So many terms are used to indicate caste-based subaltern, for examples, *Dalit*, lower caste, *achhut*, lower dogs, untouchables and so on. Here, the researcher uses these terms interchangeably, but, mostly the term, ‘*Dalit*’ has been used in this paper. The term *Dalit* was used by Jyoti Rao Phule for the first time. Later, Ambedkar popularized this term in India and Nepal.

It is accepted that caste system emerged from India along with its caste discrimination. While talking about emergence of caste discrimination in India, Ahuti, in his *Varna System and Class Struggle*, writes, “In the South Asian subcontinent, about 5,000 years ago, Aryans of white complexion entered the present-day India

from Europe through Iran. At that time, India had the civilization of Australoid-Dravidians who were blackish, yellowish, and reddish” (126). Soon after their arrival, they started invading them, and made slaves. Later on, they did the division of labor which was inviolable. Ahuti writes, “This system of inviolable division of labor is the *varna* system with four *varnas* of Brahman, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*... and *Shudra* were required to do the most difficult and service works. This *varna* system originated about 3,500 years ago in Indian society. First imposed by the rulers... later it was imposed on the whole Indian society” (127). It is clear that caste system and its byproduct caste discrimination started in India.

Similarly, GyanPrakash, in his “Becoming a Bhuniya: Oral Traditions and Contested Domination in Eastern India,” writes, “The natural metaphor of rank begins in the Hindu classics, where the four *varnas* were created from the body of the primeval man: Brahmans arose from his mouth, *Kshatriya* from his arms, *Vaishya* from his thighs, and the *Shudra* from his feet” (158). This is about how the origin of human with predetermined labors born from the body of Brahma where the highest position is given and gained by the Brahmins and the lowest position is given to *Shudras*.

Similarly, to tell us how cruel the ruling of Manu and his *Manusmriti* was, in their “Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India”, Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi write, “Women and lower castes are conceptually linked in the Hindu law book, *Laws of Manu* (c. 200 B. C. – A. D. 200): Untouchables and women are regarded as lifelong slaves until death...” (65). According to Hindu mythology, Manu is considered to be the first male to be created by Brahma who ruled this earth and set some rules known as ‘-*Manusmriti*-.’. This book was once burnt by Ambedkar and his followers in India because of its inhuman beliefs against women and untouchables.



Manu who is believed to be the son of Brahma is the sole responsible for implementing strict *varnasystem* in Hindu society.

As the title of this research has included the term ‘caste-based subaltern’ in the context of Indian and Nepali society particularly in Hindu society, regarding caste, Ambedkar, in his “-*Annihilation of Caste-*” writes, “Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from commingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of mind. The destruction of caste does not therefore mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional change” (286). Ambedkar defines it as a notion which has been implanted in our mind. And to annihilate it, we have to challenge and change our notion of caste which teaches us the brutal category of pious versus sinful castes. He blames Hindu religion for the successful implantation of caste and its byproduct caste-based discrimination.

Ambedkar again writes, “... the real method of breaking up the caste was not to bring about inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages but to destroy the religious notions on which caste was founded” (199). He suggests us to destroy the religious notion of caste in order to organize and moralize the Hindus and Hindu religion which is proven by his statement when he writes, “Caste cannot improve, and has not improved, race. Caste has, however, done one thing. It has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus” (241). So, we must destroy the caste which is based on Hindu religion, which teaches us which caste is pious and which is sinful.

Similarly, the credit of speaking for caste-based subalterns is given to Ambedkar. Ambedkar is taken as the epitome of *Dalit* movement. Here, the researcher does not claim that Ambedkar is the only one who speaks for the rights of *Dalits*, but it is accepted that none of other *Dalit* leaders lead *Dalit* movement as

much effectively as Ambedkar does. So, here, it would not be unfair to call Ambedkar as a pioneer of caste-based subaltern. Regarding who Ambedkar is, Rajendra Maharjan and Shiva Hari Gyawali in 'Buddha and Karl Marx' writes that he is the one "Who had led the *Dalit* movement against the Hindu caste system, *Brahmanical* values, and caste-based untouchability that had relegated millions of workers and artisans to "-*Shudra*-" and "untouchable"..." (6). By the help of this statement, it is also clear that Ambedkar is the leading figure of *Dalit* movement who speaks against the Hindu caste system and its byproduct untouchability.

Regarding the importance of Ambedkar for *Dalit* movement and choosing Ambedkar as an important theorist for any research, Maharjan and Gyawali again write,

The *Dalit* movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar has today become a major path toward people-oriented democratic transformation. Ambedkar's ideas, which have permeated from street protests to university classrooms, from parliament to rooms of research institutions, are not in a position to be ignored... Dr. Ambedkar- ... who was a huge source of knowledge; and who had a world of experience- deserves study, research, and discourse from many perspectives. (10-11)

Ambedkar is the one who has woken up the thousands of thousands *Dalits* across the globe for their emancipation from the strict caste system which treats them as less than the animals. He speaks for the voiceless *Dalits* whose voice has not been heard in the Hindu society, not only their voice but also their presence is also discarded. He takes a leadership for them. As he does a lot for them, he is and must be the part of discourse. He must be studied, discussed, written, spoken and listened. He must be given a special space in the world of academy. With this concept in mind, the

researcher has also chosen him as the most important theorist, and also given a special space in this research paper.

Ahuti writes, “Even now, it is common to burn houses of *Dalit*, to gang rape *Dalit* woman, and not to charge anyone for such crimes. Still now, many so-called high-caste people consider despising, oppressing, and disgracing *Dalit* as their rights and duties” (68). Through this, Ahuti has tried to expose the oppressive nature of so-called upper castes where they take the act of burning *Dalit* houses, raping *Dalit* women, beating *Dalits* as their by-birth rights.

The scenario of burning *Dalit* houses is presented in the novel too where some of the *Dalits* are trying to save Pallavi, a city lady, from the lecherous desire of Ganesh and other *maliks*, the *maliks* set fire on their houses;

‘Laloo climbed a tree without making a sound. Came down after a while.’

‘What did you see?’

‘They’ve set it on fire’ (92).

This event gives us the glimpse of how powerful upper caste is. Upper caste people are termed as the *maliks* which indicates the social status of them. When *Dalits* do something for good cause, they have to be the subjects to be tortured. The ‘ceremony’ of burning *Dalit* houses is their birth right which is shown in the following statement. The narrator narrates, “However, even though they did not compose songs about the *maliks*, the *bhangitoli* was burnt down” (85). Without any reason, the *bhangihouses* are burnt.

The *maliks* even don’t leave *Dalit* women without raping. They take it as their birth right. The narrator narrates, “Ganesh grabbed her hand. ‘Na... na... na,’ Rukmini cried out in terror, ‘Didi!’ Ganesh slapped her hard... ‘Na... na... na, *Malik.*’ Rukmani’s words turned into sobs, then moans. Then silence... Rukmani was

exhausted with weeping... Ganesh laughed, gave Rukmani a shove, said, 'Get out' (108). Rukmani is raped by Ganesh. She tries to save herself, but couldn't. For the upper caste people like Ganesh, raping *Dalit* women is not a big matter.

The sense of lawless is felt in another event as well when *Dalits* went to claim their land to the court, "The clerk is still the same man. He told us straight the other day, "Look here, the *malik* seizes land by ousting his *kharid* subjects and peasants. The court has never resolved the issue, never will" (152). These lines indicate the passivity of the court despite knowing the treacherous nature of the *maliks*. Whatever wrongs happen to *Dalits* that do not become the part of law and punishment, rather it becomes the rights of upper caste people.

Hindu society is in the need of reformers, but the cost of being reformers can be anything, even their death. To point out the same thing, Ambedkar writes, "A caste can easily organize itself into a conspiracy to make the life of a reformer hell... Caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reformers and for killing all reform... Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible" (258-259). Upper castes start conspiring against social activists. Even they plan to kill the reformers in order to withhold their outdated beliefs.

The same kind of event is also included in the novel when narrator narrates, "And Ganesh set eyes on this Pallavi. Ganesh and his ilk didn't recognize the Harijan Sangh Gandhi Mission at all..." (89). Pallavi comes to Barha in order to uplift the condition of *Dalits*, but, Ganesh sets his eyes on her. He demands her to be in his house and sleep with him. At last, she decides to leave and said, "I'll go away" (91). After leaving Barha with unbearable torture, she goes to Mumbai. She goes through mental instability. This is what the future of reformer in the orthodox caste

based society.

Similarly, Mohor wants to marry Lachhima. She talks to Medini to let her marry Mohor, but he denies. Mohor becomes very angry with Medini's decision, "The pain of not being able to marry Lachhima was still acute. Mohor said, "This is atrocious. Isn't there a way out" (48). He has a sense of rage against the *maliks*. He wants to challenge and change the system of his village. On the day of his marriage with Dhanpatiya, Medini charges him of stealing his utensils. Police come and beat him. He never comes back to village. This is what the future of *Dalits* when they try to show their anger against domination. These all the evidences show us the future of social reformers. The privilege castes only enjoy the rights and power whereas lower castes become victims all the time. If some of the *Dalits* and non-*Dalits* try to bring changes in society, majority of upper castes make their life hell.

Ambedkar writes, "Religious, social status, and property are all sources of power and authority which one man has to control the liberty of another... If the source of power and dominion is, at any given time or in any given society, social and religious, then social reform and religious reform must be accepted as the necessary sort of reform" (230). He talks about the means of domination used by upper caste people which are religion, social status and property. He talks about the challenge and change in these means, and the outcome of challenge must be accepted as a part of social reform.

The same type of events are also available in the novel too where religion, social status and property are taken as power to rule over *Dalits*. Ganesh becomes very angry when the bhangis sing a song to criticize their *maliks* in their festival. Then, Ganesh said, "I'll teach the bhangis a lesson... Law, government- all this is far from Barha village, and will remain so... The land is ours, we have the money, we

have servants who will wield *lathis* on our behalf” (76). By the help of Ganesh’s statement, we know that his social status as a *malik*, his land and money are his power. Land is also an important part of power for non-*Dalit maliks*.

When Ganesh meets Pallavi, a social reformer, he said, “I’m Ganesh Singh. In Barha village, what I say goes... Did you hear him call me “*malik*”? We *Rajputs* are the masters of these low caste people. For someone like you to stay with them is unacceptable” (90). Here also, it is very clearly stated that social status as a *malik* and his caste, Singh give him power to dominate *Dalits*. From where does he learn about who is upper caste and lower caste? Which is the originator of caste system? Isn’t that a society which runs on the basis of religion? Even Lachhima is brought to Medini when he promises her to provide land. Medini said, “I’ll give you three *bighas* of land” (3). Here, land is the powerful weapon to make *Dalits* work and control.

To talk about the nature of upper caste people, Ambedkar writes, “It is a pity that caste even today has its defenders...” (233). People of the present world also try to justify caste discrimination. They do it time and again in their life. Ambedkar again writes, “[A Hindu’s] whole life is one anxious effort to preserve his caste. Caste is his precious possession which he must save at any cost” (250). An upper caste Hindu is fully dedicated to save his caste at any cost. He does not like to see anyone going out of their caste boundary. Same as this, in the novel too, Medini, while defending his caste, said, “This is the way to keep the lowly in their place, firmly under your feet. You’ll be able to do it, won’t you” (58)? Here, Medini is teaching his son, Ganesh regarding how to act according to his caste. Medini tells him that lowly people, *Dalits* are the part of their feet, and need to be put under their feet. He tells him to act according to his caste, Singh, a *Kshetri* caste which has a right to rule and make *Dalits* obedient to his orders.

Similarly, an effort of Ganesh to preserve and protect his caste is exposed in the statement when he said, “I’ll teach the bhangis a lesson. They can make up their songs, their faces and clown around, but they shouldn’t bring the *maliks* into it. A *malik* is a *malik*” (76). Ganesh defends his caste which gives him a title of *malik*. His effort is also seen here to preserve his caste, Singh, an upper caste. In the same manner, Ganesh said, “As long as I’m here no violation of customary rules will be permitted, Chachaji” (71). Ganesh tries to continue the already set customary rules for the *Dalits* which include serving their *maliks* at any cost, doing low graded jobs, sending their women to their *maliks* and the likes. He defends such customs which deem one community and praise another.

DorBahadurBista writes, “[*Dalits*] are the victims of their own fatalistic beliefs, poor self image...” (29). Bista blames *Dalits* because they themselves believe in their fate which paves the easier way to upper castes to dominate them. When Mohor do not get permission to marry Lachhima because of an intervention of her *malik*, Bigulal said, “There’s no law-court-*katcheri* here, Mohor. The *maliks* here are kings. You’re a Karan...” (48). Here, we can see the mindset of *Dalits* who take the upper castes as their kings without challenging their reign. He insists on not to believe on fate and destiny, rather, believe in ‘self’ which is very stronger than anything else. With the concept of making Hindu society better, Bista writes, “Hindu caste culture contains negative elements which need to be identified, localized and, if possible, exorcized” (9). He motivates us to speak against the negative face of Hindu caste system where one caste rules another which cannot be accepted any longer, and must be challenged and changed.

In the same manner, regarding the continuation of caste based discrimination in Hindu society, Ambedkar does not blame *Dalits*, but more importantly to the

system in which *Dalits* are brought up. He writes,

[*Dalits*] have been completely disabled for direct action on account of this wretched caste system. They could not bear arms, and without arms they could not rebel... They could receive no education. They could not think out or know the way to their salvation... not having means of escape, they became reconciled to eternal servitude, which they accepted as their inescapable fate. (274-275)

*Dalits* are left without any arm to revolt against injustices done upon them. They are given no chance of getting education, and bearing arms.

In the novel too, BDO and other government officers go to attend *Kali Puja* hosted by the *Rajputs*. While returning from there, BDO said, “They didn’t want a school, a health centre” (78). In its response, Police officer said, “... the more backward a place, the more its folk- they remain obedient... progress spoils them. It annoys the *maliks*, and in turn we face problems” (78). Even the government officers feel like this and drag the back-warded community more back-ward. But, for the *maliks’* children, there is the facility of education, “[Medini] had set up a school at home to keep the boy within sight. Other boys came to study there. The *master* lived in their house...” (18). Medini knows the importance of education, so, he provides education to his child and his people only. He does not think about *Dalit* children who also wish to study, and make their life better. He does it in order to make them in the dark which gives him a full space to rule them without facing any kind of challenges.

Similarly, the event of acceptance of upper castes’ exploitation is depicted when Rukmani is raped by Ganesh, she does not feel fine, “Rukmani got up and left. Sat on the *verandah*. The elderly maid went up to her, said, “Come on, eat something, go to sleep. Why such a fuss? This happens all the time” (108). Here, elderly *Dalit*



woman tries to teach her to be silent. It has happened to all the *Dalit* women. It is the system. The elderly woman has accepted it as a part of her life because she is taught so. They are not given chance to know what a rape is and the legal provision on rape. They are not taught and allowed to speak against the misdeeds of their *malikstoo*.

Generally, it is believed that *Dalits* do not care about their honor which is not true at all. Mary M. Cameron with anger for those authors who only focus on upper caste people and their glory, claims, “One might (wrongly) conclude that honor has little to do with lower-caste groups in South Asia. Honor is of concern to lower-caste people...” (138). Cameron talks about the importance of honor in *Dalit* community too.

In the novel, Rukmani is raped by Ganesh and gets pregnant. She does not accept it and decides to take a strong step of her life because she feels, “I can’t go to Kamu with a child in my womb...” (110). Kamu is her would-be husband. She does not feel good to go to Kamu having Ganesh’s child which indicates the sense of honor in her. At last, she does something different which is not expected from her, “... Rukmani had hanged herself from a burnt-out amra tree in the abandoned *bhangitoli*”(116). She could not live with shame caused by Ganesh, an upper caste man. She puts her honor before anything. So, she chooses death rather than living with a bad name. Her sacrifice for her honor does not go in vein. All her people come and talk about the act of Ganesh in the whole village. They get a sense of awareness regarding the misdeeds of their *maliks*. So, in this way, “Not in life, but in death, Rukmani proved her strength. The *Rajputmaliks* were stunned by this unexpected turn of events....” (119). Her sacrifice for her and her people’s honor does not go in vein. So, the concept against *Dalits*’ honor is not true, they also do have a sense of honor in their life.

Similarly, Shreshth in his *Shakti, Srashtara Subaltern* writes, “When millions of million subalterns are forced to live voiceless and ‘without history’, limited elite class also cannot live in peace” (1). *Dalits* are forced to be the ruled by, but it cannot be forever. When they are made voiceless and without a space to speak, their *maliks* even cannot live in peace because of *Dalits*’ struggle to be heard. Similarly, Shresth in his *Baljihirahane Atit Aljihirahane Bartaman (Traumatic Past Stagnant Present)* writes, “Patience is not inactiveness; it is waiting for the right time” (420) to challenge caste hierarchy of Hindu society, and “There is a limitation of tolerance” (139) too. When the level of tolerance is crossed, everything gets annihilated and new form of society with equal status and honor is created.

The same kind of event is presented in the novel when *Dalits* carry the dead body of Rukmani to their *maliks*’ door to door in order to show them their devilish faces. While doing it, Nathu Singh gets into puzzle after seeing the courage of *Dalits*. His wife told him not to be in tension because the problem is created by Ganesh, and Ganesh has to face its consequences. But, Nathu said, “... it’s disaster for all of us. They’re going around saying this... What guts” (119)! The decision of carrying Rukmani’s corpse to the *maliks*’ doors threatens the status of their *maliks*. Not only Nathu, but also other *maliks* get into the state of tension after seeing the guts of *Dalits* which shows that when *Dalits* face torture of the upper castes, upper castes also cannot sit without being tortured.

Ambedkar calls for voice against injustice done upon *Dalits*. He writes, “You must make your efforts to uproot caste, if not in my way, then in your way” (316). He urges *Dalits* to annihilate casteism at any cost and any way. The last scene of this novel is the strongest example of his statement where revolt of *Dalits* is seen. That is also the strongest example of what happens when they are made servants, exploited

and tortured all the times, when they are not given space to bloom, and when their voice is not heard. Ganesh goes to fire the whole forest at night where most of the *Dalits* are staying after being banished from their houses by their *maliks*. But, he is chased by some of the *Dalits* when they see him coming to fire forest. He reaches at Lachhima's house.

He tries to pursue her to save him. In the initial phase, she seems to be agreed to save him holding Haroa's sickle, but, "Something exploded inside Lachhima's head. The explosion made her calm, violent, focused. Lachhima said, "Only I could have saved you then. Today, I shall save you again. But not, Ganesh Singh, in the way you want me to. Today, I shall do it my way" (164). So, "Lachhima brandished the sickle at him and screamed into the night like an angry kite. 'Wherever you are, come quick! Ganesh Singh had come to set fire to the forest, he's hiding in my hut...'"(165)!

All her people come together, "A tumult of voices. Then their scream-harrrrr!- leapt up to the sky in tongues of flame. Racing forward like an all-consuming forest-fire. A sea of armed people, voices raised, surged around the house in mighty waves. Lachhima moved aside, leaving the door free, and became one with crowd" (165). They have their arms, their collective voice and sense of unity. Lachhima also mingles herself with the crowd of her people. Do you imagine what might happen to Ganesh? To create the atmosphere of accepting 'justifiable violence', Ahuti in *JaatBarta* writes, "Rejecting the idea that the anti-caste movement should be absolutely peaceful, the option of becoming a part of a justifiable violent revolutionary movement as needed should also be kept open in principle" (212). If the peaceful way is neglected time and again, there is nothing wrong to choose a violent way to make subalterns' voice heard. In this novel too, when they are not given equal space, the caste based subalterns have chosen the way of violence which is justifiable.

With a very strong hope, Shresth in his *Baljihirahane Atit Aljihirahane Bartaman* writes, “As Nietzsche declares the death of God; one must decide his own deeds and fate now. Dalit activist must be a strong person... To expose the crooked rulings, he must be equipped with intellectual competence. Such a strong leadership is being born, somewhere, somewhere, someone, someone. Definitely” (406). He strongly believes that ‘Dalit activist’ is born with all the intellectual weapons he needs to change the hegemony of non- *Dalits*. The researcher is also in the state of surety that ‘somewhere, someone’ is being born and on the way to end this inhuman practice.

To make a ‘real civilized society to Hindu society’, Ambedkar gives us the way, and he writes, “The assertion by the individual of his own opinion and beliefs, his own independence and interest... is the beginning of all reform. But whether the reform will continue depends upon what scope the group affords for such individual assertion” (249-250). There is a need of a reformer in our society who is highly dedicated to change this society. But, for the success of his/her effort, dedication of group for the reform will decide. Ambedkar believes in collective efforts to end this evil system. As an aware member of this society where caste based discrimination is practiced, the researcher also feels his importance to join the path and group of *Dalit* movement guided by Ambedkar. So, he speaks against this devil system through writing. Now, the researcher requests everyone to support the campaign of creating Hindu society a better place to live where there won’t be any mistreatment to anyone because of his/her caste.

To sum up, Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* successfully delivers the need of change in a social system which is totally running based on caste based thoughts where *Dalits* are taken as the instruments to fulfill the desires of upper caste people,

where all the time the rights of *Dalits* as the human beings are challenged. This novel shouts for the world with rights, freedom, equality, socially justifiable convention, independence, transformation and sense of security of caste-based subalterns. It establishes its position as a mouthpiece of *Dalits* by raising the voices of dominated, exploited, tortured, raped, killed, chased away *Dalits*, and by documenting their difficulties and making them strong and rebellious against any type of dominations. It envisions such a society which is better place to live with self respect and dignity, where discrimination on the basis of caste is not practiced, where people treat one another equally.

The death of Ganesh is the victory of all the caste-based subalterns, and the death of Ganesh is not only the downfall of him, but also the downfall of all the upper caste people who practice casteism and take *Dalits* as their servants, and inferior to them. The God-like figure in his childhood becomes an animal-like figure at the end. The 'glory of Ganesh,' once glorified by all the villagers, is 're-glorified negatively' and questioned clearly in the novel. It can be linked with the glorification of ideologies which restrict the equal and independent existence of *Dalits*. Therefore, those anti-*Dalit* thoughts must be rectified as the once glorified Ganesh is killed. And as all the *Dalits* collectively took initiation to kill Ganesh, in the same way in the real world too, all the *Dalits* and non-*Dalit* social activists must work together to make a society free from domination, exploitation, torture and injustice being imposed upon *Dalits*.

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