

Tribhuvan University

Resistance to Gender and Caste Subalternity in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Bhim Prasad Jaishi has completed his thesis titled “Resistance to Gender and Caste Subalternity in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from October 2022 to September 2023. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Associate Prof. Sharad Chandra Thakur, PhD

September 2023

Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Resistance to Gender and Caste Subalternity in Mahasweta Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bhim Prasad Jaishi has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Bhim Prasad Jaishi

Resistance to Gender and Caste Subalternity in Mahasweta Devi's

The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh

Abstract

In this thesis, I try to depict a picture of male and caste hegemony in Indian men and caste dominated society and the voice of women and dalits who speak out against it. To illustrate how patriarchal and caste-based ideologies treat women and Dalits, and how their resistance plays a crucial role in challenging the traditions that uphold patriarchy and caste. Mahasweta Devi chooses Barha, a real location in India, to tell a story of Lachhima whose sufferings are familiar to us because they are the events from the real society. In order to complete this task, I have drawn on the gender and caste Subaltern Studies presented in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by GayatriChakravortySpivak, "Politics of the Female Body" by Ketu H. Katrak andBhimraoRamjiAmbedkar'sAnnihilation of Caste. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how women and dalits can confront the patriarchal and caste-basedenvironment, and change it for the betterment of all other women and dalits utilizing a variety of strategies, such as resistance, internalized exile, spoken out and others. Therefore, this thesis attempts to broaden the horizon of alternatives for preserving gender and caste equality in the society to make it a better place to live in. It illustrates the social, economic, psychological, and political significance of the effort of genderand caste subalterns to oppose patriarchy and untouchability. The voice of Lachhima against patriarchal and caste hegemony should motivate other women and dalits for liberation and equality in the present society as well.

Keywords: Torture, Exploitation, Gender and Caste Subaltern, Realization, Resistance, Victory

This research entitled “Resistance to Gendered and Caste Subalternity in Mahasweta Devi’s *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh*” aims to analyze Devi’s novel for its representation of Lachhima, agender and caste subaltern and her defiance. The major male and upper caste characters of this novel, Medini and Ganesh oppress the protagonist of this novel, Lachhima. She suffers a lot from Medini and Ganesh. But, the suppression of them does not remain for a long period of time. She goes through a change which is minutely studied through the perspective of Gender and Caste Subaltern Studies pioneered by GayatriChakravortySpivak, Ketu H. Katrak and BhimraoRamjiAmbedkar. This thesis studies the pains and sufferings of Lachhima, and her challenge to the male and caste dominated society.

At the outset of the novel, Lachhima is subjugated by the patriarchal and caste forces that govern her life. Her *malik* and *chhota-malik*, Medini and Ganesh respectively dictate her every move and she obediently follows their orders. Yet, as the story progresses, a remarkable transformation takes place. Lachhima is no longer willing to accept the oppressive control of men and caste in her life and she boldly rebels against them. In a stunning display of strength, she becomes one among many to kill Ganesh and asserts her independence. Through Lachhima's story, the novel highlights the struggles of the subaltern women and *Dalits* in their fight for freedom from the domination of patriarchy and caste. This thesis seeks to answer the questions like, what are the causes which motivate gender and caste subalterns to rebel against patriarchal and casteist domination? And, how do they resist to patriarchy and caste in order to create meaningful change in their lives?

The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh by Devi takes place in Barha, Nawagarh, Tohri, and other regions of Bihar, according to the storyline. This novel tells the tale of how men and caste dominate women. The story opens with the birth of Tritirthanarayan,

later known as the Hindu god Ganesh. Chhotki, his mother, has passed away shortly after giving birth to him and observing him with a tooth in his mouth. In order to take care of Ganesh, Gulal is compelled to call Lachhima, the novel's protagonist. Medini begins having affairs with Lachhima. She attempts to wed Mohor Karan, but Medini refuses.

She has worked for him for 20 years. In the village of Barha, Ganesh weds Putli, a *Rajput* woman who is the daughter of the *Rajput* chief, Nathu. Lachhima is subsequently released from her obligation to Medini. Medini passes away a short time but Lachhima does not go to his funeral. Lachhima and Haroa get married in the middle of the narrative. He is Medini's slave who later belongs to Ganesh. Ganesh kills Haroa. Lachhima prepares a big funeral pyre for Haroa. She continues to live in the forest after leaving the village.

One night, Ganesh goes to the forest carrying kerosene, rags, and matches with the intention of setting the entire forest and the residents inside of it on fire. Some of his previous victims see him moving through the jungle and begins to pursue him. The fact that the former chaser is currently being pursued by his former victims makes this moment crucial. He knows that some people are chasing him after finding his intention. He runs and arrives at Lachhima's home. He asks her to defend him against her people. In agreement, she leads him inside her home. But she makes a big announcement about Ganesh's whereabouts, and her people arrive to kill him. She joins them as well. Ganesh's demise marks the novel's end.

Mahasweta Devi, an Indian social activist, journalist and writer, was born in 1926 in Decca, British India to highly educated parents; her father a poet and novelist, and her mother a social worker and writer. After she completed her M.A. in English at

Calcutta University, Mahasweta Devi married twice. Though both marriages ended in divorce. In 1964, she began teaching at Bijaygarh Jyotish Ray College, where the majority of her students were working class women. Her works, which focus on the struggles of subalterns in Bihar, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have earned her great fame.

She often portrays the brutal oppression of tribal people, *Dalits*, women and the likes by powerful, upper-caste landlords, lenders, and crooked government officials in her writings. Some of her most notable works include *Rudali*, *Aranyer Adhikari* and *Titu Mir*. For her works to benefit the oppressed, Mahasweta Devi has been recognized and rewarded numerous times, including the Padma Sri Award in 1986, Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997, Padma Vibhushan Award in 2006 and many more. She was passed away on 28th July, 2016.

While discussing the source of her creative inspiration, Kalpana Bardhan once recorded what Devi stated,

I have always believed that the real history is made by ordinary people. I constantly come across the reappearance, in various forms, of folklore, ballads, myths, and legends, carried by ordinary people across generations... 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. Why should I look for my raw material elsewhere, once I have started knowing them? Sometimes it seems to me that my writing is really their doing.

(24)

Devi is honest about where she gets her ideas in this passage. She is among those who give voice to the voiceless. She prioritizes the less prioritized and common people more. She admires their determination to persevere. She is devoted to them because they represent the purpose of her existence. As a result, she writes for them and about them in an effort to motivate them to fight for their rights and equality. She further accepts that because they are so authentic and motivating, there is no need to separate from them when looking for material for her creations.

This novel has got a lot of praise and criticism since it was published from various forums for critical study. Their opinions have been perceived differently by various critics.

JyotiYadav in “Women Writers on Our Time: An Introduction to Mahasweta Devi with Major Thematic Concerns” writes;

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. Devi has tried to expose the feudal system which is anti-tribal, anti-women, anti-poor and anti-tiller. (158)

Yadav illustrates Devi's marginal and subaltern position. She continues by saying that Devi seeks to challenge the idea of India. Even though it is free of British rule, there are still a lot of settlers within. India is often described as developing, democratic, and civilized, yet there is another, darker side to India: the violation of the fundamental rights of the poor. There is still the feudal system in place, which constantly tries to subjugate women, tribal people, the poor, and farmers. Devi imagines a better India without exploitation, prejudice, or feudalism.

RadhaChakravorty also writes in ‘‘Mahasweta Devi: A Luminous Anger’’ ‘‘Mahasweta’s current reputations as a writer rests largely on her own self-projection as champion of the tribal cause and decrier of class prejudice’’ (94). Here, Chakravorty claims that Devi is a champion because of the way she portrays the problems of oppressed groups like tribal people. She advocates for the abolition of the oppressive class system in her writing. She makes an effort to speak for people who are silenced. Devi also effectively advocates for the improvement of their social security system, politics, and economy.

In the same manner, 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 make an effort to describe Devi's contributions to literature and, most significantly, to Indian society. In their novels during the 1970s, the majority of writers largely ignored the misery of the poor. They were occupied penning articles commemorating India's independence from Britain. Devi, however, offered the underprivileged ample room in her books. She speaks on behalf of subordinates. She acknowledges subalterns as one of the fiction's most compelling themes. She acknowledges that it is necessary to write about the internal independence of the subaltern.

In ‘‘Resistance to Oppression: A Study of Mahasweta Devi’s Selected Works’’, Soma Gupta opines:

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. Child marriage is yet another form of gender oppression which Mahasweta Devi widely discusses in her works. The novel, *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* deals with the theme of child marriage as seen in the early marriage of Ganesha's daughters. (26)

Gupta attempts to illustrate some of the key themes that Devi seeks to explore in her novel, including the preference for sons and child marriage. According to Gupta, Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* illustrates the worst aspects of our patriarchal society, where women always fall victim regardless of their socioeconomic status.

RadhaChakravorty, in *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspective* 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). Chakravarty discusses Devi's writing style. Through it, Devi illustrates her ideal world, a utopian paradise free from oppression, exploitation, rape, war, and other such evils. Chakravarty describes Devi's writing style and audience in this passage.

The reviews such as those by JyotiYadav and RadhaChakravarty, seem to focus only on Devi's portrayal of the feudal India of the time period, her advocacy for the tribal people, and her writing style. On the other hand, critics like Tony Beck and Tirthankar Bose have paid close attention to the underprivileged and their place in society. Soma Gupta seeks to introduce feminist ideas in her critique, but she fell short of treating the gender subalterns with the respect they deserve. Therefore, it appears that the topics of their reviews are limited to the Indian feudal system, poverty, tribals, Devi's writing style, and the child marriage system. They all credited Devi for having the vision to improve living conditions in India.

Unlike the reviews mentioned above, I attempt to examine this novel through the lens of gender and caste subaltern studies, emphasizing the importance of women's and *Dalits'* voice for their own establishment in society with the same respect as men and upper caste people. I have employed gender and caste subaltern theorists' perspectives. I have used theoretical insights from gender and caste subaltern theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ketu H. Katrak, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and others in order to address Devi's novel. This research work makes an effort to diverge from the opinions of the reviewers mentioned above and add another critical perspective to the analysis of this novel. This critical insight may help future researchers better understand the growing consciousness and resistance among gender and caste subalterns in post-independent Indian society.

While discussing the development of the subaltern notion, Antonio Gramsci, Ranjit Guha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak must be mentioned. I do not assert that these individuals are merely the contributors to this topic, but rather they are the leaders of their era who inspire, direct, motivate, and guide other academics to open doors for people with an interest in this area. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci is credited with coining the word "subaltern" in his renowned book *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci divided rural peasants in Southern Italy into non-hegemonic classes, or subaltern groups, when he talked about them. In the name of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, it implies to any individual or group that they are of "inferior rank" and position.

Similar to this, in the later stage, historians and theorists from the group known as *Subaltern Studies* try to silence the voice of the ruling group. The discussion on *Subaltern Studies* was launched by academics like Dipesh Chakravorty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chattarjee, and Ranjit Guha. Since the 1980s, they

have released a number of books on *SubalternStudies*. They may have tried to satiate the thirst of historians who were curious in the subaltern culture and existence in colonial and post-war India.

This school of thought was established in India by Bengali Marxist theorist Ranjit Guha. Guha, who had previously belonged to the Indian Communist Party, was greatly inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s and later joined Indian Maoism, which views the independent nation of India as a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state.

Spivak deserves the initial credit for speaking in favor of gender subalterns since she highlights the shortcomings of the *SubalternStudiesProject* and works to broaden its scope. The first three volumes of *Subaltern Studies* did not address women's issues individually. However, with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's inclusion in *SubalternStudiesIV*, a new subfield of subaltern studies—gender subaltern—was added. While outlining the arguments for subaltern studies, Spivak made it obvious that the field has not adequately addressed women's issues as a language that speaks for underrepresented and voiceless groups. To make it more inclusive, she goes one step further.

In a similar line, Stephen Morton notes in "Learning from the Subaltern" that "[Spivak] expands and complicates the established concepts of the subaltern" (59) while also praising and thanking Spivak for her dedication to women and their rightful place in society. Morton has praised her for challenging and extending the preconceived notions of the subaltern. She demonstrates its deficiencies while also attempting to perfect it by introducing the idea of the gendered subaltern.

Guha opines, "The aim of subaltern studies is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies, and thus

help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area” (48). Guha wants us to write on subaltern issue because most of the writings are biased. So, writing from the perspective of subaltern is necessary in the field of South Asian Studies. So, this thesis is an attempt to address the issue raised by Guha.

Subaltern has become an umbrella term which includes so many aspects of the society. There might be a question whether gender comes under subaltern or not. As an answer to this query, in *Subaltern Studies I* which was published in 1983, Ranajit 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). With this quote, it is clear that subaltern indicates all kinds of subordination whether they are suppressed in the name of class, caste, age, creed, gender and the likes. So, gender and caste are parts of subaltern without which it does not become complete.

Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* has been used to demonstrate how *Dalit* disappears in the world of non-*Dalits*, how higher caste people mute them, and how traditions, cultures, norms, and values only elevate non-*Dalits* to the top of society at the expense of *Dalits*. He also describes how *Dalits* feel alienated from both society and from themselves. He also emphasizes the need for *Dalit* resistance. I am attempting to illustrate the non-*Dalits'* oppression of *Dalits* in places like Lachhima, as well as the relevance of the *Dalits'* unwavering opposition to such an evil practice.

Furthermore, Katak's *Politics of the Female Body* strives to illustrate the immense potential of the writer to confront the oppressive system of patriarchy that subjugates women. Through a captivating narrative, she demonstrates the

protagonist's various methods of combating her objectification, providing a relatable and realistic example to the masses. She writes:

A politics of the body involves socialization involving layers and levels of ideological influences, socio-cultural and religious, that impose knowledge or ignorance of female bodies and construct woman as gendered subject or object. Women writers present the struggles of protagonists to resist patriarchal objectification and definition as daughter, wife, and mother. (9)

Katrak demands female writers to write on the gender issues because there are a lot of writings which objectify the female body, and which valorizes the gender roles of women. With the same line, Mahasweta Devi has also created this novel with a female protagonist. She has done her part. And, it is our duty to work on it and spread the sense of equality in the society through writings.

David Ludden quotes Gramsci in his "Reading Subaltern Studies" where Gramsci says,

The history of subaltern group is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stage of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. (50)

Gramsci tries to explain that the history of subaltern groups is a complex and turbulent one, filled with moments of unification and rising up, only to be interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups. This cycle of activity is repeated again and again, with

no permanent victory in sight. The subordination of these groups is persistent, and only a complete and successful cycle of activity can break it. Subaltern groups are continually subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they are reveling in their successes. Only when a cycle of activity culminates in a permanent victory can their subordination be broken, and even then it is not immediate. For this, they have to revolt again and again till they get what they have been revolting for.

Ambedkar writes, “It is a pity that caste even today has its defenders” (233). Here, Ambedkar talks about the nature of upper caste persons who always defend their caste and seek for the chance to dominate *Dalits*.

The same kind of scenario of being interrupted by the male characters is seen in the novel as well. Once, Medini calls his son, Ganesh and, “He told his son, “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?” ‘Of course” (58). Medini teaches his small son to put each and everything under his control. He motivates him to crush subaltern if they go out of track and resist for rights and equality. Another similar event is also present in the novel, when Lachhima goes to call back Ganesh. The narrator narrates, “Lachhima waited. He would not budge until the animal was dead. The pig died. Now Lachhima called, *ChhotaMalik*” (24). She does not get courage to call him by his name or son. It is because his father holds a power to break her if she does not call him *malik*. This is how the subalterns are silenced when they try to raise their voice.

David Ludden quotes Gramsci where Gramsci says, “Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they revel and rise up; only ‘permanent’ victory breaks their subordination and that not immediately” (50). It clears that victory of subalterns cannot be achieved in a short time. They have to

struggle a lot without being misguided. Despite continuous suppression from the upper-dogs, under-dogs always strive to get rid of oppression tirelessly.

In the novel too, the voice of Lachhima is one of the examples of it when “Medini said, ‘If he won’t wait, let him go. I’ve given you three *bighas* of land, if it comes to that I’ll give you another two *bighas*. Ganesh will be the next *malik*. If you cling to his feet, you’ll get two square meals a day.’ Lachhima seemed to shiver with fear. She said, ‘No no, don’t give me any more land, *Malik*, you don’t have to give me any more’” (26). Here, Medini tries to convince Lachhima not to worry on Karan Mohor’s rejection of her. But she does not get into trap of such buttery words of him. So, she openly rejects his offers. So, it is shown that how much pain and traps the power-holders do that turns into vain because the subalterns never stop to get their rights. Her rejection indicates the continuous resistance of subalterns.

Anger of subalterns is seen in these lines too, “While talking to Mohor, Lachhima said, ‘I too was hoping to be free.’ In bitter, helpless rage, ‘Rotten old corpse! His son, his household, his daughter-in-law—anything that is his, that’s all that’s important. God knows, I’ve never cheated him, never will, but I feel like setting the house on fire and running away’” (31). She is angry because the torture of Medini and his family is out of control. Sometimes, she dreams to fire his house and go away as a free bird. This indicates that the subalterns are always in the phase of struggle despite being oppressed

When she is released from Medini’s house, she talks for her people who are also the subalterns. While criticizing the deeds of Ganesh, she says, “Just look at what he did, *chhi, chhi, chhi*. Took all the *maliks* along to burn down the *bhangitoli*. Suppose they hadn’t fled to the jungle in time? Oh Ma! He would’ve burnt them all

alive” (97). It shows that she is still in anger not only for her pain, but also for her people’s pain caused by Ganesh whom she has raised up. This somehow proves that subalterns never stop dreaming for their liberty despite facing threats from *maliks*.

Lachhima is not only caring for herself but also for her people who are subalterns like her once: “Suddenly Lachhima was auspicious, ‘Has he made you press your thumb on some paper’ (34)? She asks a question to Haroa regarding any kind of bonded-labor-kind of deal with Medini because he works for him without being paid. So, it indicates the level of awareness she has got in order to get freedom from Medini not only for her but also for her people.

When Haroa tells about the conspiracy Ganesh has made to jail Lachhima’s people for forest fire, “Lachhima went alone. RankaDusad was very surprised to see her. Lachhima called him out and told him everything. She also said that no one should mention Haroa’s name” (138). She goes to Ranka who is a leader of her people and tells him everything without any fear. It depicts that she fights for liberation of her people. She is no more the puppet of Medini.

Spivak in her essay “Can the Subalterns Speak” writes, “The ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant”(274).Spivak tries to show that all the times males dominate females because of ideological construction of gender. In the novel too, Lachhima is under control of males. Firstly, she works for Medini and follows his commands. The narrator narrates,“One day her permanent address would be Mohor Karan’s house. She would not lose market value by living in Medini’s house. She would not lose market value by living in Medini’s house. Because Medini had given her land” (16). When Medini would leave him, she would go to Mohor Karan’s which shows women are dominated by men.

Spivak in her essay “Can the Subalterns Speak” furtherwrites, “If in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (274). They even cannot speak and have no history. The worst part is that the subaltern woman is even more in problem where they cannot come out. The same kind of situation is present in the novel too. Once, Lachhima declares, “I’m dead, nothing but a filthy carcass” (67). It is said when Medini is not in the mood of allowing her to get married with other man, rather he is planning to make her a concubine till he lives in order to fulfill his lust. Here, the wish of woman is not given priority, rather male tries to see his benefit only which indicates ‘the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.’

OyeronkeOyewumi writes, “The very process by which females werecategorized and reduced to ‘women’ made them ineligible for leadership roles” (257). The concept of gender comes into existence on the basis of social and anthropological mindsets, not on the basis of biological difference. As long as our society runs with the social mindsets of gender, it does not accept women as leaders.

An event from the novel which shows how pathetic life a woman has is when Haroa and Lachhima talk to each other about their dreams and their hardships. The narrator remarks, “When Haroa asks her to plant some trees in her land, and she says, ‘Do that I won’t be coming every day. I’ll be a caged bird once again”(36). She has a land where Haroa wants to grow trees. She allows him to plant the tress. At the same moment, she tells him her hardship. She is not a free bird that goes wherever it likes, rather her life is like a caged bird which is always in the cage and never gets a chance to fly as it wishes. It also indicates the real picture of gender subaltern who is deeply in shadow and not taken as a free bird, a leader of his own way.

Further, Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” writes:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of women disappears ... Such would be the property of repression, that which distinguishes it from the prohibitions maintained by simple penal law: repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-existence and consequently states that of all this there is nothing to say, to see, to know. (304)

Here, it is said that the figure of women is rendered invisible, swallowed up in the oppressive forces of patriarchy and imperialism. Repression is a powerful tool, one that silences and erases, leaving nothing to be said, seen, or known. It is far more than a mere sentence of punishment; it is a command to disappear, a declaration of non-existence.

The similar situation is mentioned in the novel. When Ganesh is born he orders his maid, Gulal to bring her grand-daughter to take care of Ganesh. He says, “Bring Lachhima, you come too. Stay here. ‘Bring up the child.’ ‘People will talk.’ Medini’s laughter sounded bitter and fierce. People! I’ m the only human being around. The rest are all animals. Thoo !” (2). When Gulal tries to reject his proposal indirectly, he insists to bring her to duty disrespecting others calling them non-humans and less than the humans. Here, figure of woman has nothing to say further and to know.

Similarly, another example is there which also shows the same situation. When Gulal is ready to bring Lachhima in his duty, he says, “Yet even then Lachhima was my keep. I had given her ornaments for her neck, her arms, her ears.’ ‘Silver.’ ‘Good enough for people like you” (3). He boasts for giving her

ornaments for her neck, arms and ears. Gulal talks back they are made of silver. He rebuts back by saying silver is the right metal for women. Here, Gulal tries to speak but Medini silences her. So, there is no place to talk for women in the male dominated society. Even the figure of woman disappears when they try to speak.

Similarly, another event where she asks Mishir to talk to Medini regarding her release, Medini directly rejects his proposal. The narrator says, “So Lachhima had communicated her request to Mishir. After getting Medini’s reply, Mishir was in a fix. He told Lachhima, ‘Even if there’s a wedding, Medini Singh will not let you go until the *gaona*” (21). She cannot speak to Medini directly for herself which indicates the figure of women since there is no agency and space for them to speak and deal for themselves.

To show how the subalterns are tortured, the writer writes, “When Mohor Karan asks her to marry him, he says, ‘Will you run away with me, Lachhima?’ ‘Where will we go? He’ll finish us.’ ‘If we get married anyway?’ ‘He’ll burn down our huts, kill you” (30). Lachhima exposes Ganesh and his cruel manners. If they marry by eloping, he would burn their houses and kill them too. Here, it is clear that the figure woman has no choice of marriage and choice of being happy. It is because women have no place to appear, to talk, and to know. Another harsh reality is also mentioned in the novel where the law is only for the rich people, not for the poor. Lachhima says, “The law is only for the rich” (93). Whenever the justice is needed to the poor, justice is not given to them, but to the rich. This is also evident that the justice, and law is only for rich that is seen in the novel as well.

Similarly, Spivakin the same essay writes, “There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak”(307). In the male dominated society, there is no

space from where women can speak. The same scene is mentioned in the novel. When Lachhima and Medini talk about Ganesh, the writer says, “Lachhima held her peace then. But at night, pressing Medini Singh’s feet, she said, what *ChhotaMalik* is doing is not right... Lachhima swallowed her tears, with her eyes, calmed herself. Said, ‘Forget it *Malik*. I made a mistake. Forgive me” (24-25).Lachhima presses Medini’s feet at night and says Ganesh is not in the right track, Medini kicks her. She only cries because she does not have any other option. Though there is no mistake from Lachhima’s side, she says sorry for nothing. It shows that the gender subaltern has no right to express herself. She is silenced despite having many things to say.

Similarly, woman is, as Francis et al argue, “seen as naturally nurturing, sensitive, emotional and deferring” (141). In contrast, man is argued by Anne Cranny Francis et al, seen as “removed, rational and authoritative” (142). Our society has drawn the line between men and women’s roles.

Similarly, Ketu H. Katrak in *Politics of the Female Body* presents how tradition promotes patriarchy. In her book, she further states,

[T]raditions are often to control the female body . . . Both within the family and outside, tradition designates female roles within patriarchal frames and parameters: a woman as wife and mother is valorized . . . women's subordination is supported by family and perpetuated both in the private and public realms – whether it is unequal wages or gender discrimination in the family and the workplace. (157)

Traditions have long been used to dictate the roles of women within a patriarchal system. From within the family to the public sphere, women are expected to take on the roles of wife and mother, while their subordination is both sanctioned and

perpetuated. This is seen in the form of unequal wages and gender discrimination in the home and workplace. To this day, these customs remain firmly entrenched, creating a cycle of oppression that is difficult to break.

The same kinds of events are mentioned in the novel. It is seen that Medini starts valorizing Lachhima because of her body and her gender roles assigned by the society. Medini says, “Looked at Lachhima? Now that’s a real woman”(6).She is praised because of her tireless duties and her robust body structure. And, the people of the society even valorize her roles assigned by society and they say, “The child doesn’t have a mother. Who was that carrying him? That girl? ‘Medini’s kept her.’ The boy’s very healthy” (8). Her care for Ganesh is appraised as he is healthy and fit.

Similarly, Lachhima herself takes it easily to carry the roles assigned by society. She says, “Lachhima seized the opportunity to say, ‘I treasure the boy more than my life. I leave him with Nani when I go for a bath” (10). She is fully devoted herself to nurture Ganesh. She is very proud to declare her duty for Ganesh. It is because she is taught by tradition. Further, she says, “Didn’t let the boy’s feet touch the floor till he was two. When I put his clothes out to dry, I sat there and guarded them so that the wind from the wings of crows and kites couldn’t brush against them... he’s never caught a cold. Even a child who grows up in his mother’s lap catches cold, and runs a fever sometimes” (22). She has invested herself for Ganesh. It is the lesson taught to her by the society. This aspect of her is highly valorized by the society and herself as well. This is how women are treated and some principles are set for women.

Ambedkar mentions, “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). In the society, some people come to reform its negative aspects. But the concept of caste does not only stop, it makes a life of reformer hell.

In the novel, Mohor wants to marry Lachhima. She goes and talks to Medini to allow her marry Mohor, but he rejects. Mohor becomes angry with Medini, “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 feels vengeful toward the *Maliks*. He wants to question and alter the village's system. Medini accuses him of taking his utensils on the day of his wedding to Dhanpatiya. Police arrive and beat the man. He never returns to the village. When *Dalits* attempt to express their rage against oppression, this is what will happen in the future. All of these indications point to the need for social reformers in the future. While lower castes always suffer as victims, the privilege castes are the only ones who benefit from rights and authority. When non-*Dalits* and *Dalits* attempt to transform society, the bulk of upper castes make their lives miserable.

Ambedkar opines, “Religious, social status, and property are all sources of power and authority which one man has to control the liberty of another” (230). People are controlled by using religion, property and social status. In the novel as well, Lachhima is brought to Medini’s service when he promises her to provide land which is a property. Medini said, “I’ll give you three *bighas* of land” (3). Here, land is used as a powerful weapon to make *Dalits* work for non-*Dalits*.

RanjitGuhain his writing "Chandra's Death" from *Subaltern Studies VI* writes, “For the response of a *samaj* to sexual deviance was not the same for both

genders . . . the physical construction of women as well as their cultural construction as objection as objects of male lust...” (156). Here, it is clear that women are taken as the sexual partner of males. They are used to fulfill the lust of males. The same situation is presented in the novel too. The writer writes, “Medini was close to sixty, but he could put away two seers of meat, a bowl of ghee and twenty *rotis*. Ghee and meat excited sensual desire. Hence Lachhima slept with Medina” (21). Lachhima is not his wife. She is just a helper and maid of his house. But, he sexually exploits her in his old age. There is a huge age gap between her and Medini. But, he takes her as his means to fulfill his lust.

Similarly, when Medini knows that Karan leaves Lachhima and his village and goes to the unknown place, “Medini said, ‘Oh! I’m still as strong as a horse! Good thing that Mohor Karan’s left you. Can that barber’s son match up to me” (37). Medini talks to Lachhima and compares himself with a horse. He is happy because she would only be with him and he would get his lust fulfilled. So, male dominated society takes women as the means to fulfill their sexual desire.

Moreover, Ketu H. Katrak in her *Politics of the Female Body* talks about the importance of ‘internalized exile’ adopted by women and how it becomes the source of their power to speak against any kind of domination and one of the best ways to resist patriarchy. She opines,

Female protagonists undergo what I term ‘internalized exile’ where the body feels disconnected from itself, as though it does not belong to it and has no agency . . . The experience of internalized exile unfolds as a process that includes the female protagonists’ complicated levels of consent and collusion to domination. The unfolding, indeed the process of the body being exiled,

brings female protagonists to a 'liminal' state of consciousness . . . I interpret liminality as a space for the female protagonist to cope with, and at times to transcend exile. They resist domination and attempt to reconnect with their bodies and communities. (2)

The female protagonists experience what I call internalized exile, which means that the body feels out of place with itself and has no identity. The experience of internalized exile unfolds as a process that includes the female protagonists' complicated levels of consent and collusion to domination. In fact, the unfolding of the process of the body's exile brings the female protagonists into a state of liminal consciousness. In my view, liminality is a space where the main female characters can cope and at times transcends her exile. They are fighting back against power and trying to connect with their bodies and communities.

The similar scenario is presented in the novel where Lachhima applies this technique to strengthen herself. The narrator narrates, "Lachhima stayed in Medini's house as she had always done. But, somewhere, something had changed within her. She became a lifeless puppet in her works, in bed at night" (26). She exiles herself from her own body which indicates she is strong enough to bear all these pains and she is ready to bear more pain yet to come.

Indicating the pain of women,

Kamala Visweswaransays, "Women are not accepted as proper subjects . . ." (124). They are taken as inferior to men. The novel is full of such events where women are treated not like the human beings are treated. At night, Medini kicks Lachhima and the writer writes, "The force of the kick had torn off Lachhima's earring, causing the ear to bleed. Medini said, 'Wash the blood of your ears . . .'" (25). Can we imagine treating

women like this? Is it ethical and legal? Such events happen in our society because women are not taken as equal to men.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her *Feminism without Borders* says:

The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary social and anthropological universal. This for instance in any given piece of feminism analysis women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of shared oppression. What binds women together is a social sameness of their oppression. (22)

The category of women is not created on the basis of biology, but on the basis on social and anthropological mindsets. So, the oppressions faced by women is the same, so they unite easily because they have felt the same kind of torture in the society. So, they unite and fight for their liberation together. This kind of event also happens in the society where Lachhima is accepted in her society because of her sufferings similar to her people. The narrator narrates how people accept her, “After cremation of Haroa, ‘Everyone surrounded Lachhima and accompanied her slowly to the edge of the forest. Lachhima was now very dear to them’”(149). This is what we call being together because of the sameness in their sufferings. In the group of people who accept her, some of them are women. They can relate their pain with her. So, they easily accept her as their own kind.

Similarly, bonding based on similar painful experience does not only remain among women. It keeps on expanding its wings whenever the pain and suffering match. It is said on the basis of bonding between Lachhima and Haroa where “Lachhima didn’t mind these few days free of work. Freedom, freedom, though short-

lived, still freedom. She never used to talk to Haroa, but now she even forget that” (34). When she gets free for few days from her duty, she feels connected with Haroa because of his pain which is similar to her pain in Medini’s house.

Similarly, another event where Gulal and Lachhima talk about the reality of their lives and they plan for their future, “Since Gulal had Medini’s word, she was willing to do anything for him. She told Lachhima, ‘Let’s make hay as long as we’re here. As soon as the boy grows up, he’ll kick us out...’ (15). They both are oppressed by Medini. Gulal knows Medini better at that point. So, they build a kind of connection on the basis of their sufferings as well and plan for their escape. On the basis of this, we can say that the subaltern women build their relation with each other on the basis of their sufferings they have gone through.

In the course of introducing the first volume of Subaltern Studies in 1982, Ranajit 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 tries to state the essence of subaltern study. It is an effort to show that subaltern can create their own story and history by their own.

The similar events are presented in the novel where Lachhima tries to create her own identity and history. She tries to show that she can speak for herself and for others as well: “Lachhima did not like Haroa’s working for Ganesh. Haroa worked only for his meals”(80). Haroa and she work for Ganesh. As she gets released from there, she talks for the liberation of Haroa as well. She feels its injustice to make someone work for him without being well paid.

Another strong action is seen when “Medini had wanted to give bamboo poles and thatch for Lachhima’s hut. She did not take it. To Medini she said, ‘You pay me every month, that’ll be enough” (28). She denies his proposal, and when “Gulal said, ‘Have you lost your mind?’ ‘No, I shan’t take anything.’ ‘Why?’ ‘I won’t, that’s all” (28). Despite the pressure from Gulal to take whatever Medini is giving her, she keeps on denying without any fear. This can be taken as the bold and self-sufficient person who is a subaltern but never stops creating own history.

Most importantly, Javeed Alam in “Peasantry, Politics, and Historiography: Critique of New Trend in Relation to Marxism” writes, “However much the ruling classes may control the themes and content of politics or the sources of history, the subalterns, that is, the people, will always manage to make themselves heard” (43). Alam clearly presents that subalterns get liberation and themselves heard despite facing a lot of oppressions in their lives from the dominators.

Scene related to this can be found in this novel as well. The protagonist, Lachhima faces lots of torture in her life but at the end she presents herself as a strong woman who can raise her voice. When “Ganesh said, ‘Baba, the old woman’s taken a pot full of *pitha* with her... Lachhima said in an impassive voice, ‘The old woman is the *malik* of that pot. It’s hers” (52). Here, Lachhima speaks against Ganesh and his father. When Ganesh accuses Gulal as a thief, Lachhima rejects it.

Not only this, when Ganesh offers Lachhima as per his father’s wish, “Besides your salary of ten rupees- take whatever you want. Baba said he’ll give whatever you ask.’ ‘Nothing” (68). She openly rejects his offer. She is not in the mood of being under anyone’s shadow anymore. This also shows that subalterns can live by themselves.

Lachhima presents herself as a strong subaltern character when “Medina said again, ‘Money! A gold *hansli*...’ In a low, burning, unforgiving voice, Lachhima said, ‘Money! *Hansli*! You’ve ruined me, how can you undo that? How much money, how much gold, will it take? No, I shan’t take anything” (68). Medina is her master. He talks about his payment, a gold *hansli*. Immediately, she compares that ornament with her life which is ruined in ‘a low, burning, unforgiving voice.’ Speaking for profit and loss can be taken as an act of subalterns who are trying to make themselves heard.

Lachhima presents herself as a shield of Haroa: “When Ganesh comes to kill Haroa, Ganesh said, ‘Where’s that cur? I’m going to shoot him like a dog today.’ ‘Kill me first.’ Move aside Lachhima I’ll ...’ ‘No” (146). Ganesh comes for him, but he does not know that Lachhima has collected courage to challenge Ganesh. So, it is just a misconception that subaltern cannot make themselves heard.

When Ganesh comes for Haroa accusing him disclosing his plan to fire forest, “Haroa got a bullet in his thigh. He collapsed. Then Lachhima picked up the sickle. Ganesh stared at her. Lachhima said, Get out. Right now” (147). Ganesh is now a *malik*, but she does not feel discomfort to face him strongly holding sickle in her hand and ordering him to ‘get out.’ It indicates subalterns are not weaker as much imagined.

The protagonist does not remain up to herself. She speaks for other subalterns who are facing the same problems as she has faced. When Ganesh comes and tries to disclose the secret of Haroa, “Lachhima screamed, ‘That doesn’t count anymore. If he killed someone it was in the British period. All these years you terrified him and got so much work out of him, without wages, all worth so much money. Did he murder a

relative of yours? Was he your slave laborer? That you scared him into being your slave for so many years” (146)? She speaks boldly against the mistreatment of Haroa. She accuses Medini and Ganesh for exploiting him. In the name of keeping his misdeeds long time ago, they exploited him as much as they could and are still planning to oppress him. But Lachhima is there for him as she has also gone through the same level of suppression. She proves that she can speak despite being a subaltern.

Calling for voicing against injustice upon *Dalits*, Ambedkar writes, “You must make your efforts to uproot caste, if not in my way, then in your way” (316). He exhorts *Dalits* to eradicate casteism in any way and at any cost. The strongest illustration of his argument is found in the novel's final scene which depicts a *Dalit* uprising. That is also the clearest illustration of what occurs when people are treated like property, exploited constantly, mistreated, denied the chance to grow, and have their voices ignored.

Lachhima is growing as a strong subaltern character. When Ganesh tries to escape from the anger of the people whom he suppressed, he comes to the door of Lachhima. He tries to persuade her to save him this time as well. 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). She saves him in his childhood as there is no one to take care of him. But the one whom she has cared for becomes the main cause of her sufferings. So, she remembers that and declares she would love to go with what her instinct says, not what he says. Lachhima changes herself from the puppet of the males to a strong lady.

After that “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. Whenever you are, hurry! Ganesh Singh is hiding here. Come quick” (165)! She calls her people who are also tortured by Ganesh directly or indirectly. She is angry like a kite and indicates his hiding location. After hearing her call, “A tumult of voices. Then their screams-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 the crowd”(165).People from all the directions come ‘like all-consuming forest-fire.’ As they come, she moves aside allowing them to enter in house where Ganesh is hiding. She becomes one among them and marches forward to claim her victory over a person who makes her a subaltern and *Dalit*woman.

To sum up,despite the tremendous domination of upper caste men and, women have a voice. Their hardships have strengthened them, enabling them to make the proper decisions when they are called upon. Ganesh arrives at Lachhima's house after attempting to calm his rage by setting fire to the jungle and everyone within it. She summons her own people to kill him rather than save him. Lachhima joins the group as they all come together and become one. By slaying Ganesh, the oppressor, they all demonstrate that no matter how much men and upper caste people try to control and rule over women and *Dalits*, they always manage to make themselves heard by challenging and changing patriarchy and caste-based hegemony. Ganesh's demise is not only a victory for Lachhima, but also othervictimized womenand *Dalits*as well. In the same way Ganesh's death signifies the demise of all patriarchal men and lovers of

castes as they are superiors to others, who view women and *Dalits* as objects of lust, domination, exploitation and practice patriarchy and untouchability.

Devi's *The Glory of Sri Sri Ganesh* effectively conveys the need for reformation in a societal structure that is entirely founded on patriarchal and caste-based ideas where women and *dalits* are used as instruments to meet men's and upper caste people's demands and women's and *dalits* rights are constantly crushed. This thesis imagines a society in which everyone is treated equally. It screams for a world with rights, freedom, equality, socially reasonable norms, independence, and transformation, as well as a sense of security and dignity for women and *dalits*. Finally, it is a piece of art that supports Devi's belief in a just society, which can be upheld by using logic, protest, and uprising to destroy patriarchy and untouchability and their ideas which are to blame for the suffering of gender and caste subalterns. Overall, this novel asserts its stance as the gender and caste subaltern perspectives, raising the voices of people who have been exploited, tormented, raped, killed, chased, and kept in order to document their struggles and make them strong and rebellious against any form of dominance imposed on them. It imagines a place where people can live with more cooperation, collaboration, equality, security and dignity.