

ABSTRACT OF THE MINOR PROJECT

ELEMENT OF SUBALTERNISM IN MAHASWETHA DEVI'S WRITINGS

This project was intended to analyse the element of the subaltern in Mahaswetha Devi's writings. Importance has been given to her work "After Kurukshetra". Archaeological evidence regarding the Mahabharatha war has been looked into. The different re-readings of the epic *The Mahabharatha* have been assessed and it has been noted that Mahaswetha Devi has built up the gaps in the epic in order to bring out the feeling of dispossession felt by the people who belong to the lower strata of society. Other writings of Mahaswetha Devi have also been considered and looked into. Some of the other novels which have been mentioned in the project are *Hazaar Churasir Maa*, *Bedanabala*, *Baayen* and *Rudaali*. The epic "The Mahabharatha" has been followed by millions of people through the ages and it has served as guidelines to many. Considering the fact that the society of yore gave importance to women and also that the women of the royal family have been great decision makers and have created history as it were, to represent them as people who were restricted to the four walls of the palace, has been to modify their status from strong to subaltern. This might in itself be detrimental if not for the fact that the intentions of Mahaswetha Devi have been to stress on the woes of the marginalized. These presentations have helped the subaltern to voice themselves and also have helped others to be aware of the difficulties which the dispossessed have endured through the ages. Subalternism is in itself negative but to belong to the class of the gendered subaltern is worse. Mahaswetha Devi's *Rudaali* has been looked into for this aspect. This particular sub-sect of women have cried for others. Their tears have been suppressed for so long that when they decided to commercialize their tears, they started crying genuinely for all those sorrows they have suffered from time to time. This is the story of Shanichari and those of her ilk that have not been able to cry because

they have had life-long challenges and have survived on the basis of sheer mental strength. The same is the case of Bedanabala in the novel of the same name. Stolen and brought up in a family of prostitutes, her surrogate mother, the head of the prostitutes, develops a weakness for her and decides not to sell her into the trade. With the backdrop of the fight for independence, the revolutionaries decide to do something new and a zamindar who is a revolutionary marries the prostitute girl. As soon as she enters her new family, she chooses to distance herself from her old one. She thus develops an identity of her own pushing aside the ones who have first stolen her and left her bereft of her real family as also inducted her into self-respecting society by refusing to introduce her to the flesh-trade. In all her writings, Mahaswetha Devi has brought out the feelings of the subaltern and has paved the way for further writing in this field. Her writings have also been instrumental in highlighting the deep feeling of sorrow suffered by the marginalized.