

# Marginalization And Discrimination In Mahasweta Devi's *Water*

Dr. Basavaraj Tallur  
Assistant Professor  
Government First Grade College  
Kumareshwar Nagar, Dharwad

## Abstract

Marginalization, also known as social elimination, is an occurrence where certain groups of people are left without access to certain aspects of society due to different factors such as historical bias and lack of funding. These marginalized individuals do not unavoidably belong to any specific demographic but are often at a drawback when it comes to obtaining healthcare, decent education, and employment that would improve their well-being. Marginalization can effect from intentional campaigns or accidentally due to structures that benefit some members while making life challenging for others.

Causes of marginalization include discrimination and bias, structural disadvantages, poverty, and limited talent pools. Discrimination and bias can lead policymakers or community members to create structures that keep certain groups from taking part fully in society, such as apartheid and institutional boundaries like the prohibition of marriage among people of the same sex. Poverty is a major provider to marginalization, as poor people often lack the time or resources to advocate for their wellbeing. Structural disadvantages can also be a factor, as society denies them the space or accommodations they need to advocate for their needs and make their voices heard.

Marginalization harms society as a whole, but marginalized people shoulder the main encumber of that impact. Limited talent pools, criminal activity, and mental health issues are some of the ruinous effects of marginalization. Gate keeping institutions and workplaces produce conditions where only certain people from precise backgrounds advance and have a voice, leading to homogeneity and the breakdown to bring new perspectives and fresh ideas to decision-makers. Marginalized people may also run into seemingly insuperable challenges when pursuing legal means of earning a living, inspiring them to turn to illegal means.

Take political action by getting occupied in social justice initiatives, which requires both organization and allyship to build coalitions of people who can bring attention to cause and effect change. Learn about marginalization and its impact, which creates understanding and a better understanding of marginalized groups and dispels misinformation about how and why certain groups get disqualified from society. Invest in transportation and public services, which are often lacking for marginalized groups, to remove some of these domineering barriers.

Marginalization is a broad issue touching many people with different needs. To address this issue, it is essential to take political action, learn about marginalization, invest in transportation and public services, and learn about the forces that persist to impact everyday life.

Key Words: Marginalization, Exploitation, Maghai Dhome, Santosh Pujari, Dam and Charsa

Mahasweta Devi was an Indian writer and activist who worked for the rights and betterment of the tribal people especially Lodha and Shabar tribal community of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh states of India. She was a leftist who worked for the rights and empowerment of these tribal communities. Devi was honored with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award, Jnanpith Award, Ramon Magsaysay Award, along with India's civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan. Devi wrote over 100 novels and over 20 collections of short stories, mainly written in Bengali but often translated to other languages. Her first novel, *Jhansir Rani*, was published in 1956 and she toured the Jhansi state to record information and folk songs from the local people for the novel. She specific in the studies of Adivasi, Dalit, and Marginalized citizens, with a focus on their women. Devi lived in the Adivasi villages in West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh years after years, befriending them and learning from them.

In 1964, she began teaching at Vijaygarh Jyotish Ray College, an organization for working-class women students. all through that period, she also worked as a journalist and original writer. Devi often depicted the impious oppression on the tribal people and untouchables by powerful demanding upper-caste landlords, money-lenders, and venal administration officials.

Devi raised her tone several times against the intolerance suffered by tribal people in India. Her 1977 novel *Aranyer Adhikar (Right to the Forest)* was about the life of Birsa Munda. In June 2016, the Jharkhand State Government finally saw to the elimination of the manacles from the figure of Munda, which had been part of the commemoration sculpture of the prominent young tribal leader due to its having been based on a photograph dating from the era of British rule.

Mahasweta Devi spearheaded the pressure group against the industrial policy of the earlier Communist Party of India (Marxist) government of West Bengal. She criticized the subtraction of large tracts of fertile agricultural land by the government, which then ceded it to industrial houses at incidental prices. She supported Mamata Banarjee in the 2011 West Bengal Legislative Assembly election, which resulted in the end of the 34-year long rule of CPI(M).

Devi is known to have helped noted writer Manoranjan Byari come into prominence. At the Frankfurt Book Fair 2006, she made an impassioned inaugural speech, moving the audience to tears with lines taken from the famous film song "Mera Joota Hai Japani" by Raj Kapoor.

Mahasweta Devi's play, *Water* discusses the complexities the populace of Charsa village has in getting access to water. It draws concentration to untouchability, mistreatment, and autocracy in addition to the conflict for water. The Dhomes' uprising is eventually the consequence of this unbearable exploitation. In the theatrical production, Maghai Dhome is a diviner of water. When a well has to be drilled, the local landowner, Santhosh Pujari, calls him since he is amateur water diviner. Even if his services are used and he is a part-time water diver, he and his family still have to struggle for even a cupful of water. He is not allowed to use the wells to get water only because he lives in the Dhome neighbourhood. Therefore, his wife and other ladies from his stratum must take the danger for the purpose of water. They had to go and dig in the Charsa sands for a cupful of water, and after scraping the water off their fingertips, their fingers hurt so much. Santhosh receives a demand from all of the Charsa's untouchables asking him to distribute all of the government-given relief stock proposed for them. In adding, they want Santosh to drill a well for the villagers. However, Santhosh discards their demand to drill a well. He consents to provide just sufficient food for a week.

As a result, Santhosh usurps the rescue efforts, and his nuisance and exploitation escalates to a great degree. Then, with Jiten's support a schoolteacher who is a true supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and who, to his credit, served as a freedom fighter in jail during the war for independence—Maghai begins construction the dam over the Charsa River. In the rainy season, the decision is submerged by the Charsa River, and in the summer, the river dries up totally, leaving no trace of water. Consequently, the instructor Jiten Maitey teaches the villagers and Mahai not to waste the water during the flood but to store it by building a dam using the stones. He has for that reason imparted to them the awareness of conserving water and using it sparingly. In order for it to be realistic amid the summer's intense heat. So, the villagers have determined to build the dam using their combined labor, which is a bold move. Nevertheless, Santhosh is not fond of this idea. He gives the cops the task of demolishing the dam. Next, everyone under Maghai's command makes a valiant effort to fend off the cops. Nevertheless, the cops used all kinds of cruel tactics, such as striking the instructor in the head with the gun's butt, causing him to collapse onto the ground unconscious. And Maghai is shot in such a manner that he begins to bleed. "Kill the bastards!" yells Dhura fiercely. Take Santhosh's life! The idiot had to send the cops after us because he couldn't tolerate the Dome creating a dam on their own. Santhosh, unable to bear the idea of utilising even Charsa's water, so puts down the uprising of Maghai and the other villagers with great brutality. Ultimately, the flood carried Maghai away. There are several examples of the in this play. The discrimination and exploitation that the underprivileged Untouchables endure, as well as the means by which they try to rise up in rebellion. In actuality, Mahasweta Devi's life's work is to advance the status of India's indigenous people. She has selected the cause partly because a large number of tribal people support her, representing the most iconic suffering in contemporary India.

It highlights the importance of water as the primordial necessity of all living creatures and the hegemony of caste is structured around its availability and harnessing. In India, caste practices are interwoven with water issues to keep the status quo hegemony of certain castes, preventing them from progressing and keeping them at the helm of oppression.

The water emergency that pushes their lives to the periphery is particularly poignant for women of untouchable castes, who face the accountability of collecting water, waiting at the village well, and digging at the sand beds of the river Charsa. Phulmani, Maghai's wife, demonstrates the heavy price they pay for water crisis, highlighting the daily hardships women of the village undergo. Santhosh, the helm of managing associations of the village, resorts to numerous strategies to keep the water politics successful.

In the Charsa village, feudalistic landlords have reserved a majority of untouchable communities at their behest, denying them all facilities that government provides. Santhosh is the one who pulls the string in all situations, ration government relief for drought or flood, hoarding food grains, fodder, fuel, medicine, and other equipment in his godown, controlling the village administration school, and hoarding textbooks, notebooks, and writing boards meant for school children. He uses replication, another rhetorical device, to assure people that he is platiful them though the ambiguities need no retelling.

Santhosh is not only unfair through the position of power but also a diplomat of the institutionalized system that augments his supporting power. His strategies amplify the mechanisms of an age old system stepping up to the trends of modern times to create updated systems of oppression renewed in its modus operandi to subjectively marginalized to its dominion. With each passing age, the system fed by gluttony and vested interests becomes inflexible to be repellent of any ingrowths of confrontation to its power.

Authoritative strategies like non-recognition of injustice and violent methods of state repression efficiently demoralize people whose daily battle includes struggling for the basic requirement - water. Santhosh's devious narrative is deliberately employed to deceive villagers that there is no water crisis in the village Charsa just as there is no practice of untouchability. His open defense about the perseverance of caste-based practices by situating it on religious grounds is another tactic to dethrow the beliefs of the populace about his betrayal.

The SDO, as a administration representative, is reluctant to act on political will or to look into the serious consequences of the issue, claiming that the district has a load of problems already. This portrayal of the Dalit understanding highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the Dalit community in India.

Jiten, a school master, accuses Santhosh of mismanagement of relief materials and caste discrimination to the SDO. The government official uses denial to make the charges seem flimsy and downplays his role, portraying himself as a victim of the system. Santhosh's insincerity is a powerful symbolic tool to tackle corruption charges. When asked to build a well for his community, Santhosh evades all possibilities, using rhetorical

strategies such as denying water and dismissing caste questions involved in the treatment meted out to the people.

The oratory of denial masks the language of domination by directing arguments to the other end of the spectrum. Deductive reasoning is used to reduce the problems, uncovering the calculating language of oppression and its logical fallacies. It highlights that a colonial system perpetuates itself by inducing the colonized through socio-economic and psychological rewards and punishments to accept social norms and cognitive categories. Discrimination grounds are recognized on the psychological notions that individuals are inferior due to their food habits and lifestyles. Maghai is made to believe his inadequacy due to his caste ancestry, as the foundational practices of the caste system rest on "othering" people based on their birth. Caste criteria at the center structure notions of dominance and inferiority, manipulating subjects to exist in apartheid and creating disjunctions at multiple levels: cultural, physical, and psychological.

In the drama "Water" Maghai's belief in the ancient legend about the nether Ganga, his submissive discharge of duties, supernatural faculty handed down by his forefathers, fascination for the river Charsa, and deep-seated respect for water divining occupation form the basis of water poetics.

Maghai's association with water is perhaps the most organic and rational of all romanticized portrayals of water in literature. He sees the river as his consider, the nether Ganga, and his mother, the Charsa River. Water holds physical power that provokes him out of his dreariness for water. The full flowing river is an intoxicating spectrum that pulls him out of the spell of droughts.

Maghai spends long hours watching the river when it floods in the Monsoon season, which provokes delight and jealousy from Phulmani, who teases him calling the river a mistress. Maghai calls the river a whore and goes on flirting with it, but also chides it for its inconsistent flow and scarcity in summer.

The idea of the river that denies him and his people access to equality, civilization, and self-esteem is the same outlet for his imaginary ideas. The poetics of water in relation to the river Charsa contrasts with the politics constructed around the convenience of water by Dalits in the village. Maghai understands the insincerity of Santhosh but does not prevent himself from offering his service of divining water for his wells.

Maghai's vision about divining wells seeps deeper through beliefs that have roots in animism and synthesize a mystical sacred view of the world. His feelings for the Charsa River border between flirtation and adoration, as he sees it as a playful mistress who overflows in Monsoon and denies them during winter. This pattern of domination and exploitation is not exclusive to the hierarchy of people but expands to the natural order of the world.

Maghai, a lower caste man, is constantly approached by Santhosh to provide water for his wells, which are made to appear superfluous to create scarcity for the takers. This is done to preserve the status quo and protect vested interests. Maghai's poetic vision of water, even at the cost of being oppressed by the same things he loves, is the source of his misery. Santhosh, a landlord, uses his power to build wells for his family, relatives, caste members, and others, except for the people who struggle for it for their nourishment. Maghai requests Santhosh to build a well for their community to overcome their daily struggle for drinking water. The community well is used by upper caste people, while the other well is unfriendly as it is also the place where upper caste people wash their cattle.

Maghai is shot in a skirmish when the police try to thwart their efforts of building a dam. The ultimate sight of water poetics culminates in the last episode when the river Charsa breaks loose, and Santhosh exclaims, "O Holy Father! Haven't ever seen a sight like this!" Maghai wishes to be carried away by the water, and the fight culminates in his death with the river carrying him away as per his last wish. The poetic ending may justify Maghai's metaphysical connection with water, but it leaves unsettling questions about caste tyranny and its perpetual legacy.

## References

1. Devi. Mahshwetha. *Water*, Fabre and Fabre, London, 1990. Print
2. Das, Narayan. *Dalit Literature: Contents, Trends and Concerns*. Centrum Press, 2014.
3. E. Satyanarayana, *The Plays of Mahasweta Devi* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000) 127.
4. Barbara Harris White. *India working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambride: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
5. Ambrose Pinto, "Rights of the Collectives: Human Rights Violation in India"
6. [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/25843/12/12\\_chapter%207.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/25843/12/12_chapter%207.pdf) 176.
7. Deepesh Chakraborty. *Rethinking Working – Class History: Bengal 1890 – 1940* (Princeton University Press, 2000)