

# WORDWEAVES

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Mahasweta Devi Memorial Issue

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The year 2016 saw the passing away one of the most iconic writer-activists of our times, Mahasweta Devi. Mahasweta's fiction and activist writings published in the Bengali periodical *Bortika*, chronicle the lives of aboriginal communities in India's tribal belt to whom the privileged entitlements of constitutional equality and citizenship are not extended. Her fiction remains charged with political urgency and is laced with anger. Mahasweta's fiction shows that India's "tribal belt" is still something that is "unknown" to the postcolonial, metropolitan Hindu subject. This edition of *Wordweaves* is dedicated to her political and literary legacy. The contributors in this volume have explored the diverse strands of her oeuvre be it the demonization of a woman cremating dead children or the quasi-divine status granted to a "professional" foster mother or a tribal woman facing retributive justice of the state apparatus. I would also like to thank the English Department Alumni for their contributions.

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The central character in Mahasweta Devi's, "The Breast Giver" Jashoda, is a pun on the name of the foster mother of Lord Krishna, Yashoda. Here, Jashoda is a foster mother who earns her living by suckling the children of the feudal aristocratic Haldar household. Her professional "mothering" begins when her husband, Kanganicharan is crippled for life. Haldar Babu provided for Kanganicharan and his family but the days of enjoyment of Kanganicharan soon come to an end when Haldar Babu suddenly dies of heart failure. The entire family goes without food. As a woman belonging to the marginalized class, Jashoda has no recourse but to find employment by adopting the profession of foster mothering to support her family.

She suckles the children of the Haldar family. Jashoda comes as a 'sigh of relief' for the daughter-in-laws of the Haldar household who were now free from the burden of suckling their children. This allows her an access into the domestic economy of the Haldars where men were dissolute and debauched and try to voyeuristically see her suckling. Jashoda's place in the Haldar household was semi-divine as she nurtured all their children with her milk. The people perceived her as a Goddess. Jashoda was literally worshipped and she was given the position of the 'chief fruitful woman'.

Devi's title suggests that in feudalism, a woman's body becomes commodified and fetishised as an object of transaction. Jashoda's breasts are no longer objects of self-pleasuring but they become sites of labour production, in this case milk production. Devi suggests that for such women, motherhood is not a pleasurable role but a labour based on demand and supply. The female breasts become objects of labour production and milk secretion. Motherhood, over here does not yield the privilege of physical comfort and emotional attachment. There is the commodification of breasts as it was Jashoda's breasts that enable her to sustain and feed her family. Her breasts become an instrument for her to take care of her husband and children.

However, things started going downhill for Jashoda when Mrs. Haldar died. With the death of the Mistress, the family broke up and the Elder Daughter-in-law asked Jashoda to leave the house. After being thrown out of the house, Jashoda goes to Kanganicharan, only to see the flip side of his behaviour. She perceives the arrogance of her husband when he remarks that it was only because he was crippled that she could enter the Haldar household. He thinks of himself as superior. This shows the deep-rooted sense of Patriarchy. She was ready to undergo the rigorous procedure of multiple pregnancies and at the end when Kanganicharan feels that he has got enough of her, he disowns her.

Jashoda is oppressed not only by the man in her life, but by the women as well, perhaps unconsciously. Oppression here is social, economic and psychological. She is oppressed economically in that she doesn't receive any money for her services rather she is given food, clothes and shelter. She is oppressed psychologically by the woman by whom she is employed. They treat her as a commodity rather than an actual human being. Jashoda, the "Breast Giver" is in most ways a powerful woman overcoming the oppression that womanhood can sometimes entail. Jashoda couldn't get over the feeling of Motherhood. Jashoda's good fortune was her ability to bear children. She suffered misfortunes as soon as that vanished. Mahasweta Devi talks about the idea of Utility. As soon as Jashoda's utility ceased, she was no more accepted in the household. Jashoda is diagnosed with cancer. Even at that time the eldest son of the Haldar household did not consider it necessary to admit her in the hospital. Jashoda believes that the Haldar children are her children but they forget her as she dies painfully suffering from breast cancer. Jashoda's mind revolves around her milk-sons even during her death. The doctor remarks, "She sees her milk sons all over the world", which shows her love for them.

The PARODY here lies that cancer is a parody of procreation, since cancer is abnormal production of cells within the body while normal procreation leads to birth. Cancer contaminates the very organs which are responsible for a woman's involvement in the process of biological reproduction and nurturing. The IRONY lies towards the end of the story when Jashoda's corpse lay in the hospital and was cremated by an untouchable. The lady once perceived as a Goddess had to meet the most undignified end.



## Recognizing the "Draupadi" behind *Dopdi*

MEHAK CHUTTANI

English (H), IInd Year

The works of Mahasweta Devi touch the realms of history, myth, fiction and facts. She has penned the text 'Draupadi' in a manner so that the readers can sense her ability to combine the real along with fictional. 'Draupadi' is associated with Hindu mythology. Her texts reveal that whenever a woman in history or in the present scenario has tried to rebel against something, she has faced terrible consequences.

The main themes which dominate 'Draupadi' are gender issues, the class issues and the postcolonial discourse. She weaves all these themes and forms a beautiful tapestry of feminism. According to Mahasweta, a woman's identity has always been at stake. In the text, the title and the titular protagonist parody the 'Draupadi' of Hindu mythology. The main idea of the text is that unlike the Draupadi of Mahabharata, who surrenders and submits herself to a divine agency to clothe her when she is disrobed, this Draupadi refuses any male protection and brandishes her naked body as a sign of protest thus shaming her victimizers.

The text begins with the description of Dopdi Mejhen and her husband Dulna Majhi, who are in the "Wanted" section of the newspaper. Two medallions are seen talking within themselves about the same. They speak about her tribe and why it is an unlisted name. This reflects the marginalization of groups in Postcolonial India. Mahasweta writes about a minority section, the tribals or adivasis. These are called the ethnographic minorities. The Dusaads, Bhils, Mahaar, Doms, Santhals are disenfranchised and not given the same constitutional privileges which we (Hindu literate metropolitan elite) enjoy.

Readers get to know further that Dopdi has murdered someone (Surja Sahu) and therefore she and her husband are wanted. The reason for this murder is the gap between the rich and poor. It is told that Surja Sahu had wells while the poor faced drought, which was not a trivial issue for Dulna and Dopdi. The role of the police and the state power are thereby introduced, which reveals the game of dirty politics embedded in society.

For instance, the tribal regions in and around central India such as Chattisgarh, Bastar, Palamau, Jharkhand etc. are talked about where the forests which are the original property of the tribal is being taken away from them and sold to multinational conglomerates.

The government is in collusion with these capitalist forces and this kind of colonization where the Indian government acts as a colonizing power and the multinational companies control the economy and together they marginalize the indigenous tribes is called neocolonialism. Illiteracy acts as a barrier for the tribals, who are often fooled by the men in power. Violence and use of weapons and a war like language can be seen throughout the text in characters like Arjan Singh and Senayak. Words like 'gun'; 'army handbook'; 'guerrilla warfare'; 'hatchet'; 'scythe' are seen in the text. Also, it is told that Dopdi and Dulna have practiced the use of weapons generation after generation despite being illiterate. In this war, Dulna was killed by the opposition as he was found drinking water from the source in which he, a Santhal was not allowed. Later Dopdi took control and rebelled against this unjust society. The text thereby reveals the passive role of the women and the consequences they face, if they rebel. Dopdi, because of her tribal belonging, was apprehended and molested just like the Draupadi of Hindu mythology. "Go, take her and do the needful" is the order given against her by men in power, Senanayak. Mahasweta shows us the plight of these tribals and the apathy of the Indian police and the position of women who are wedged in this war of the state and the Naxal radicals.

**The Witch and the Goddess in Mahasweta Devi's  
*Bayen*  
OSHI MEHRA  
English (H), IInd Year**

*The Bayen* by Mahasweta Devi is one of the finest paradigms of refined storytelling, where Mahasweta Devi addresses the sensitive issue of marginalisation of a woman Chandi who was robbed of her identity, individuality and her basic rights and was branded a Bayen, or witch by the village community. Chandidasi Gangadasi was a descendant of the Kalu Dom. Doms are a community of cremators having a glorious past of sheltering the Kshatriya king Harishchandra. Her father followed the legacy of being a cremation attendant and survived entirely on alcohol and drugs, thereby leaving his vocation as the only alternative of survival for Chandi. The genealogy of Chandi's descent was glorious and gave her pride and cultural legitimacy and she, despite being a girl accepted the male vocation gracefully and worked in a graveyard meant for the burial of children. Her vocation made her proud and independent and at the same time a pertinent threat to the patriarchal power structure. Her husband, Malinder Gangaputta was literate enough to have acquired a government job in a sub-divisional morgue. He loved and respected her. All this made people envious of the couple. Hence the misogynist Patriarchal society perceived Chandi as an easy target for their retaliation and carried out a witch hunt.

Chandi's previous vocation of working in a graveyard stimulated the superstition amongst the village community that she was a child hunter, and therefore branded her as a witch. In a single day, she was reduced to the status of an untouchable. What is ironical is that Malinder, being a man, attained a respectable position in his community for working in a morgue, while his wife was declared a Bayen for pursuing the similar vocation.

Also, Malinder despite being literate did not protest against the superstition that consumed his wife. On the contrary Chandi, an illiterate had the wisdom to work and earn a living for herself after her father's death against the conventional patriarchal norms. Chandi's son once asked his father "Who makes a Bayen out of a person?" It is the conservative and illiterate society that punishes anyone who goes against their decided norms. Mahasweta Devi gives her readers an emotional experience where Chandi, who has been dispossessed of her motherhood shows her maternal nature by guarding the dead bodies of children from marauding jackals. Mahasweta Devi also writes about untouchability that is still prevalent in the independent, Chandi's son Bhagirath is made to sit in the classroom floor, so that he does not pollute others. The supreme irony of the story is that Chandi, who was scornfully abused by the village community as a witch was later deified and worshipped as a Goddess for sacrificing her life in averting a rail accident.

**Reversing Roles in *The Hunt*  
Tanya Thakur  
English(H), Ist Year**

The emotional, sexual and psychological stereotyping of women begins when the doctor says, "It's a girl" according to Shirley Chisholm. Every woman can relate to the protagonist Mary Oraon in Mahasweta Devi's "The Hunt" as every woman is somehow bound to the shackles of feminine stereotypes.

Mary is unveiled as a desirable "diamond" of the Tohri coal halt in the beginning. Mary's physical attractiveness due to her mixed race heredity, her exceptional rigidity and non-submissive nature apart from her availability to the limited, makes her as valuable. She is excluded from the Oraon community due to her hybrid origin. She longs for attachment and inclusion within the community. But her alienation contributes to her uniqueness and thus adds to her desirability. This enhances her social value even though she still has to negotiate the barriers of prejudice.

Mahasweta Devi shows the subaltern women as negotiating and vanquishing patriarchy in her work. Mary stands as an epitome for transgression of patriarchal law. She doesn't want to relive her mother's fate. She is shown as dominating, assertive and resistive. The other weaponry she uses apart from her "machete" is her "razor sharp mind".

Mary is very different from her mother, she is not as submissive and unlike her Bhikni, she doesn't fall prey to the "Hunt" of the Tehsildar. Mary's mother can also be seen as victim of a similar sport of "Hunt" in which she was hunted and devoured by the Australian settler in Daltonganj. But unlike her, Mary reverses the role of prey and predator and kills the Tehsildar thus inflicting punishment on the colonizer of female bodies. To accomplish this she takes advantage of the Oraon tradition of the "hunt" and effectively uses its subversive nature to destroy Patriarchy.



# POETRY

## BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The king was spoiled, selfish and unkind,  
The cure of his curse came to his mind.

To see Beauty, his emotions got diverse,  
He started dreaming of them as Lovers.

Beauty admired the beauty of 'Rose',  
And the Beast admired her every pose.

He gave her a mirror in which she could see her family,  
To see her father ill, he sent her back happily.

Soon she realised, with the fall of the last petal,  
The Beast will die as a devil.

She ran towards the palace and saw him on the ground,  
With wounds and a groaning sound.

Seeing him in pain, she got melted,  
And with a kiss, she expressed how she felt.

Suddenly, the Beast got transformed into a prince,  
Their sorrowful tears turned into joyous screams.

At last everyone enjoyed the dance and the feast,  
And here ends the story of Beauty and the Beast.

Akansha (English, IInd Year)

## WILL KALAM COME BACK?

Shivani Arora

B.A (H) English, 1st Year

*Will Kalam come back?*

From a small village or from  
A big city

*Will Kalam come back?*

To stop cruelty and hate.

*Will Kalam come back?*

To give knowledge and teach us something great

*Will Kalam come back?*

For God's sake to stop inhumanity,

Talking bad or taking a bad step

*Will Kalam come back?*

After some years of break

*Will Kalam come back?*

## Scrutiny of my journey

I opened a book,  
Affixed something new to my outlook.

A unique journey started,  
And I took my coffee before I departed.

Went to a divergent zone,  
With that book in my phone,  
Encountered new characters on my way,  
Who made my world sway.

No pictures for references,  
But my imagination kicked in according to my  
preferences.

Confronted my own emotions,  
While I read those vivid confessions.

Got a fresh perspective,  
That made this society look a little more defective.

Even though it was a fiction,  
But it forced me to question all those real restrictions.

Mansi Bhandari  
English (H), II<sup>nd</sup> Year

## Life

I know she is fussing me,  
In a way over using me.

Every time I run away,  
Stupid life, catches me and asks me to stay.

I accused, "You are not behaving geezer"?  
She smirked and said because you are an  
unsystematic creature.

Damn! Life is clever and knows me palpably  
Even though I try to do everything secretly.

She knows me and my various layers  
I love her, but can't be crushed by the rules of hers.

RUBINA  
English(H), IInd Year

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## HOPE

*Hope* is like a sweet fragrance,  
when it comes, it brings joy in every sense,  
Hope lies within the heart  
it is like multiple stars,  
Everybody lives for a reason,  
because there is hope behind every reason.  
Always hope for the best  
you will never be sad,  
Hope is like a cute smile  
Real hope never dies.

Monika Gola  
English (H) IInd Year

## DILEMMA OF I

### *Who am I?*

The name with which you call me or the reason of my  
being Daddy's little girl or the woman who longs to  
achieve things .

### *Who am I?*

The distance I travel every day or the station I wish to  
reach. One among the crowd or the voice that speaks.

### *Who am I?*

The late night coffee I make or the heat that keeps it  
warm. The nights which I waste online or the days that  
get me to norms.

### *Who am I?*

The books I read or the ideas I contemplate .Movies I  
enjoy or the meaning they impregnate.

### *Who am I?*

The person I show to the world or the spirit I contain  
within .Things I reveal or the reality I conceal.

### *Who am I?*

The question everyone ponders, but only few find the  
answer.

### *Who am I, who am I .....*

Anshika Sharma (English, IInd Year)

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## SCAR

I looked in the mirror,  
And remembered that face,  
About which people said it had such grace.  
Then I recall the moment the grace departed,  
I wish I never had faced,  
That situation, when I lost my face.

*Now, I stare at the scar spitting my Cheek,*

Is this a wound on my psyche?

Is it what now makes me weak?

Is it all now that will be my identity?

Oh, can there be any hope of moving on?

*Was my mistake that I was beautiful?*

Or was it a mistake to be born a girl?

It is still my face, though heavily scarred,

Is this scar my badge of shame?

For I hurry to hide my embarrassing mistake,

When and how I mend my face?

I fight with myself, I fight with others,

*Yet a confidence within me I discover*

The beauty just in a face is nothing but a lie

I can have wings and I can fly.

My face, its features are not my wings

My spirit gives voice to my dreams!

Vineeta Tirkey (English Hons. IInd Year)



**Carpe Diem!**  
**A Play in One Act**  
**Mahak Chauhan(English( Hons.) IIIrd Year)**

**Act I**

**Olio** (*with an expression of tiredness*) :I may not be perfect Jacque; but at least I'm not fake like others. But...alas ,no one can understand me; what I really want is.....

**Jacque** (*Exasperated and as if struggling to communicate the meaning*) : But my.... friend Olio, why do you always care about such things? Just live your Life like others do. You should try to understand the ways of the world and try to outsmart the others; else you will be left behind.

**Olio** : Tell me one thing dear. Just think about it, if one of us will remain truthful and not capitulate, what will happen then? Why is it that the ones who beguile and deceive through cunningness rise up whereas the honest languish in anonymity and the abyss of failure? When the British colonised the natives; the colonial rule determined what was “truth” and what was “false”; they created the binary of “us” and “them”. By buckling to societal pressures and resurrecting the division between the “dumb and honest” and “cunning and smart”; aren't we perpetuating the same colonial hierarchy? **Jacque** (*With an air of passive resignation and despair*) : I do understand but society seduces us and lures us by the prospect of power and success and converts us. Do you want to remain unrecognised and be derided as foolish? Olio! You have to get a new perspective and instead of seeing these as binaries learn to see them as a new philosophy of succeeding in the world.

**Olio** : Oh....is that so? Jacque everything that's “New” forces us to challenge and demolish our old ideas; just because it's “New” does it have to be inviolate truth? Is everything old by definition false? **Jacque** if this “New” perception gives us a new perspective and insight into the workings of this world then I refuse to perceive the world through your “New” glasses.

How can I? Did you not hear that "kindness is the language that deaf can hear and blind can see. The language which you want to teach me is the language of violence and hatred; the language of divisiveness and binaries. I am talking about the language of oneness and dissolving binaries. Don't you believe that kindness in a harsh world is courage not weakness; to capitulate is easy, to deceive is easy but to resist is hard.

**Jacque** (*Remorsefully*) : Olio I tip my hat to you; you have endowed me with a new perception about life; I see that the world has become deaf through the noise of violence and bloodlust; what it needs is the music of kindness. Perhaps others don't see it right now but one day they will, one day they will.....

**Olio** (*triumphantly*) : The light of hope is present in each of us, we just need to be aware of this light within us; this cruel and ailing world needs kindness and love as in every living thing there is the desire to love. Acts of kindness and love might be perceived as foolish today but only through them can we find our redemption.

*Carpe diem!*

## Need for Change

*For how long*

Will we be oppressed?  
Under the dogma of  
"Bharat Mata Ki Jai".....  
If the real people of "Bharat" are  
Actually not allowed  
to be free?

*For how long*

Will we be treated like traitors?  
In our own country  
When we try to  
be expressive?

*For how long*

We will be caught by the police  
For the crime of  
Being silent protestors?

*For how long*

We will be tortured illegally  
By political groups  
For not acknowledging their views?

*For how long*

Others will decide for us  
What to think or what not?

It is about the game of power,  
The system of following others blindly.

But to have a change  
Be the change.  
Use your Pen  
Because it is the only instrument  
through which the world works...  
and on its tune everyone dances.

**Megha Garg (English( Hons.) IIIrd Year)**

## What matters more?

Why are you not listening to me?  
I am your mother. Come and do  
The household chores; otherwise  
I will cancel your picnic tours.

Why are you not listening to me?  
I am your father. Do as I am telling  
you. Marry this boy and say ' Yes' now,  
Else I will send you out there somehow.

Hey sis! I am your bro, I am feeling hungry,  
Prepare some food and don't tell my secrets to  
Mamma, otherwise she will be upset  
And will scold you as well.

Sis! Come and help me do my home work  
Fetch my bag and draw this for me.  
I am going out to meet my friend, please do my  
assignment  
Otherwise you are not a good friend of mine.

Why are you not listening to me?  
I am your future hubby. Come and  
Let us go for a movie show otherwise  
You are not yet prepared to be a good wife.

Why? Why are you not listening to me?  
I am your inner self, your sole companion.  
Do everything later; first think about your *Self*.  
Have some privileges for you also and  
Lookout for your pleasures.  
Be happy first and  
Then make others.  
Otherwise you are forgetting yourself.

Do this... or do that...  
As if I am a Robot and  
I don't have such endeavour, don't have any will,  
Now, I will listen to myself first  
Then to others  
Because I am what I am and  
'I' matters to me more than' them'.

**Nidhi (English (Hons.),IIIrd Year)**



## ANGER

Anger is a volcanic eruption,  
It is a reason of destruction.  
It needs no introduction,  
Makes the person a hysterical combustion.  
It is a seed of misconstruction,  
Has no room for discussion,  
Which leads to many repercussions.

**Naina Verma**  
**B.A (H) English, IIInd Year**

### A Silent Cry

Rapist rape people  
And not outfits. Rapists rape the soul  
And not just body.

A Rapist rapes and the  
society escapes...They rape  
Something more than  
just the social identity  
Something more than  
what society believes.  
Something more than  
the cultural values.  
Something more than  
what politicians always tend to assert  
Something more.....  
Which can't be framed  
in one definition of a sadhu or baba  
Something more  
Which can't be explained in words,  
but can only be felt. It won't stop by  
calling a rapist-Bhaiya or having a candle  
march. But to understand that -

Rape is Rape.....  
And rape victims are boys too...  
You need not to stop others first  
But stop yourself  
From being a silent spectator.

**Megha Garg [English Hons. IIIrd Year]**

## No longer a part of our life, Ideology

Ideology is a part of our life  
Which we can't change.  
But can reverse;  
Start questioning and also explaining  
The way, every possible way you think,  
You observe, you feel,  
And become a prey.

Ideology is a part of our life  
From the very beginning of our birth,  
When they name me something,  
Which is different from my inner self;  
I don't want to live  
Being a part of it.  
I want to expose  
The whole idea behind it.

Ideology is a part of our life  
We need to understand this.  
There is still hope to change it  
And a need to reverse it;  
I want your help to make it a success,  
To tell others the reason behind it.  
Government, Religion and Education,  
Everyone is there to impose  
The ideology, but not question anything.

But since we vow to remove it and  
To find the interest of the lower group,  
To wipe it out, we need a plan to fulfil  
Let us make a promise not to be a part of  
Ideology  
Will not aware falsely; will not exercise  
hegemony;  
Will make it surrender  
Under the feet of noble man  
Will destroy it with our rational faculty.

Ideology being no longer a part of our life  
We will live better than before  
The life of peace, calm and serenity  
In the darkness of reality.

**Nidhi (English Hons.,IIIrd Year)**

## An Exhibition and Workshop on Gond Art

**Mansi Bhandari**  
**English (H), IInd Year**

On 29<sup>th</sup> of September a group of second year students along with Ms. Anchala Paliwal and Mr. Rocky went to a workshop which was conducted by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, renowned Gond artists and the authors of the graphic novel BHIMAYANA. The workshop was on THE MAKING OF BHIMAYANA. GOND ART is a unique tribal Indian art form. The way paintings were showcased in the exhibition and in the book was admirable, tribal life was depicted in its true colours in the paintings. Local flora, fauna, supernatural machineries, festivals, folk tales, and myths were all epitomized in their art, making story telling a strong element in their paintings.

The discussion on the making of *Bhimayana* was moderated by Dr. Nandini Chandra. She introduced the Gond artists Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam. They were accompanied by their daughter Roshini Vyam, whose style of art is more of a contemporary one whereas her parents are inclined towards the traditional style. The discussion was enlightening as the Vyams not only spoke about the origin of the art form (which is from *dhingas*) but also about the future of Gond art in the mushrooming technological era. They shared their anecdotes about the making of *Bhimayana*. They also elucidated every aspect of the novel. They commented upon the importance of colours and its right balance in the novel. Durgabai Vyam disclosed that originally they used natural colours which they created from soil, she also enlightened us about her experience with artificial colours and how difficult it was for them to not only use different type of colours but also to squeeze their art form, from walls to small papers. The Vyams also confessed that they refused to be influenced by the traditional suffocating boxed art of graphical novel as they wanted their characters to breathe so they devised *dhingha* patterns for making panels.

## CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP AT ILL

**Tanya Thakur, BA (Hons.) English, I Year**

A capacity building workshop for English was organised by the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILL) on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016 which I attended along with my teacher, Dr. Nalini G. Kapoor. Prof. Shormishtha Panja talked about the working of ILL including its advancements of MOOCs. Around four lakh students are already learning from the website.

This was followed by a power point presentation by Ms. Davinder Mohini Ahuja, Former Fellow at ILL. Her presentation included the tutorials to extract information regarding English Literature from the website '*vle.du.ac.in*'. She also explained how the archive of the website was dynamic and meant to assist the teacher rather than acting as a supplement. She further described the authenticity of the text and their development over a period of time via the interaction between the writers and the readers, a blend of ideas. Ms Ahuja also invited people for content writing for the website.

In the end participants were asked to give their feedback so that the website could be improved. The session was concluded by the Director handing over the certificates of participation to the ones who attended the workshop.



**In Search of a new “F” Word - Feminism Misunderstood**  
**JENUSHA**  
**English (H), IInd Year**

Feminism is a simple matter of “social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women.” However, the preconceived notions of who feminists are and what their beliefs entail are complicating matters for the everyday feminist. The mere mention of this “f” word is enough to scare away even the most educated and upstanding members of society, who do, in fact, believe in gender equality.

This “f” word is inherently problematic. Perhaps feminists should unite to coin a more gender-neutral term to promote women empowerment as striving for equality rather than some sort of violent system that seeks to take advantage of men. In addition, the set of views espoused by feminism should be taught in schools and universities. As a required subject this will not only counter the patriarchal norms surrounding us at our homes, places of worship and on the streets but will also bridge the gap between the abstract idea of gender equality and the actual movement of Feminism.

In order to effectively begin our individual quests for gender equality, men and women together need to discuss the topic and have open debates. This will ensure informed opinions regarding the feminist movement rather than fear of the unknown “f”. The next time someone says this scary “f” word, please do not panic or feel threatened. In the modern world, especially in the Third World countries like India, the “f” word- “Feminism” is gaining grounds but mostly without being understood. In more cases than one, the feminist movement that is presently widespread in a way doesn’t speak about gender equality but everything against women, in some cases rightly so, is taken so seriously at times to the extent of being considered committing some major crimes. However the other side of the coin has also not lost its sheen. We are still in a patriarchal setup that ‘a whistling girl and a crowing hen never come to a good end’ is generally thought to be the norm of the society like ours.

The feminist movement basically began as a movement to give equal rights to women. But the real meaning of the word seems to have been misunderstood over the ages. On interviewing people some shocking ideas about feminism were revealed. A lawyer who was interviewed says that women take undue advantage of their gender. It acts as a shield to protect them from anything and everything. Another person who was interviewed confused Feminism with the Talibanisation, an inflexible ideology. Yet another woman could not accept being a feminist because the word ‘Feminism’ itself has feminine in it, then how can it be gender neutral?

People refuse to engage themselves in talking about feminism because if you talk anything against women you are branded as an ‘anti- feminist’, as someone who is anti- woman and does not believe in giving women the respect and opportunities they deserve.

“Women are already strong. It’s about changing the way the world perceives that strength.” Let us all recreate the original meaning and the ideology with which Feminism started, i.e., Equality and not Domination.

**The Might of the Machete**  
**URVASHI SHARMA**  
English (H), 1st Year

*The Hunt* is a part of *Imaginary Maps*, a collection of three stories and focuses on the subjugated woman, especially tribal womanhood. The tale revolves around Mary Oraon, a half tribal girl who lives in Kuruda which is “abandoned” because it is not resourceful enough to provide profits. Her mother was seduced by an Australian man who left them and returned to Australia. Later, this becomes the reason for her distrust in men. By choosing an Australian as the man who seduced Bhikni, Mahasweta Devi expands the boundaries of her work to encapsulate the predicament of tribal women across the globe, most of whom are reduced to subhuman existence.

The disclosure of Bhikni’s plight exhibits the vulnerable and helpless condition of tribal women, symbolizing gender inequalities. Even after independence, no major change has taken place in the lives of the tribes as they are still colonized. Being a tribal woman, Mary lives in the milieu of double vulnerability. However, she disdains the subordination that she would have been subjected to. She chooses for herself and ensures that her choices are kept intact. This serves as an inspiration for the woman readers to take hold of their own life and destiny. The “machete” that appears in the story has a strong and effective symbolism as well. Her machete is the threat to anyone who attempts to harm her.

*“No villager has been able to touch the fruit even in jest. Mary has instantly raised her machete. This is hers by right.”*

This machete resembles a woman’s awareness of her power and rights and also her demand for equality. It is this object and its symbolism that reinforces her belief of being no less than a man. As the story progresses we see the social, political and economic exploitation of the tribal women. The description of the hunting festival shows a celebration of the tribal rituals and festivals. She portrays the richness and idiosyncrasy of the festival of the tribes, thus making their festival as a medium of jollification.

The Tehsildar who chases Mary becomes a sexual predator and the hunt starts. This is the hunt that compels Mary to fight for her freedom. As the hunt goes on, Mary claims to be looking for a “big beast” rather than smaller ones which indicates that she is referring to the Tehsildar. Also, Mahasweta Devi uses the colour Red to symbolize the bloodshed that is going to take place. The red blouse of Mary, the reddened sky and the red flowers, all anticipate her future actions.

It is also important to note that the action of Mary is motivated by her personal life experiences. She saw the image of her Australian biological father in Tehsildar who, just like him, wanted to seduce her. She draws a relation between her father and Tehsildar for both were the outsiders to her community. *The Hunt*, thus documents women’s ongoing fight against forces of patriarchy and their firm resoluteness.



# ALUMNISPEAK

## **The Hunt that is not a quiet one !**

**KAJAL DAGAR**  
Batch of 2016

BEAUTIFUL, Ululated in a wild ecstasy and its each letter appeared to be made from some divine bone as if unearthed from their historical resting place. Believe it or not, but this word definitely harbours a malicious power, some jaw-dropping entity quite inaccessible to its very antagonistic UGLY. This word has gained prominence since antiquity and is still on an abominable hike as far as mortal eyes can see and an agile heart can feel. The hunt that I am talking about is being carried by this mere adjective and is not put to rest until and unless some girl weary of her looks and body frame decides to transmogrify her healthy body and robust face into a skeleton of bones devoid of flesh and blood. BEAUTIFUL then, is metamorphosed into a "giant" specifically hiding in its dungeon in the black mountains ready to pounce upon its victims the moment they are seen in vicinity. And the pangs of torture felt by an 'authentic and sincere soul' on being torn apart. This lust to keep pace with what is BEAUTIFUL, no matter even if it has taken down its road to infernal, has so corrupted the innocent heart of a girl that even existentialism no longer is available as a choice rather seems a forced delusion. And when I dared to situate this word in the present scenario, as long as my perception doesn't deceive me and my pen allows me to brag a little more, every nerve I had feared it and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when it came near. Nonetheless one may wonder at my frailty and can put a why to my assumption but I will remain content in my hypothesis as long as Shakespeare believes, "*Frailty, thy name is woman*". And Yes! I believe it. I have reasons to believe. Your mother's body broke in half, bones pulled apart and re-aligned to give you life and one day your body might do the same, yet in your face you see flaws instead of magic? It is time to paint the canvas of your emotional and intellectual depth with indefatigable colours. Colours that have the audacity to re-define UGLY, colours that are capable enough to chase BEAUTIFUL away to the caves from whence it first aroused and turned your natural smiling soul topsy-turvy. Who knows that gleaming black face has better stories to tell than the boasting white? Yes you can't be home to another being, until you are at home in your "own beautiful skin".

## **What College Meant To Me**

**SAUMYA TIWARI**  
Batch of 2016

Once upon a time there was a girl who lived in a family of people who made her believe that if she wants to prove to the world that she is intelligent and wants to get a great respectable job then she needs to pursue her career in science stream. Like an obedient student and looking down at people who don't study Maths, she very proudly chose Science in her +2. When everyone was telling her that intelligent students take up engineering, she finally decided to take a chance and pursue her love for books.

When the cutoffs for DU came, out of all, one of the best colleges she got was Gargi, but her father decided that his daughter who has never travelled alone should not go to a college so far. Therefore, the nearest college (which was by the way 17 kms. away) was Vivekananda College which had to take the burden of an inappropriately blunt girl. She thought she will always regret not getting into one of the best colleges of the university, but little did she know that this college was going to bring out the best in her.

For a girl of her background, it was the first step of freedom. Freedom through books, freedom through experiments in anchoring, debates, singing, dancing, theatre, anything and everything. This college never refused her any wish. She explored every possibility of her future here. What is next? Writer? Maybe; No, a Professor? Maybe. Why not a Script writer? Sure, you can try. Juggling between all these dreams, she realized that those who only have one dream; are maybe not dreaming enough. And just when she started doubting if she is able to achieve what she wants, she looked back and realized that in those 3 years, she had achieved everything she wanted, because this college gave her a chance. Insanely believing in this, she applied for her dream course, not knowing if she was even capable enough to pursue it.

Who am I ?  
PALLAVI ROY  
Batch of 2016

*I am* the candle who burns and melts continuously to be lost in the chaos of infinity, from where my visceral whistles and leaves an imprint of desire in my heart to know the map of an island, where there are different sunrises and sunsets. Where the redness of oceans clings to the heart of the verses sung by me. Where my curiosity brightens to conquer the hearts unrelieved and sometimes mysterious.

*I am* the sage who worships books, only to be lost in a dreamland, I am the food lover who eats because she has to take the joys of it unbound, *I am* the traveller who wants to be lost in the unknown path only to discover the true road. *I am* the memory who is alive that burns others heart's candles, only to brighten the feel more than before. *I am* the philosopher who guides her own soul by losing it every time. *I am* that sky whose image reflects on the ocean with its stars which brightens her identity. *I am* the few requited and many unrequited desire of my own heart and love which is always there, remains eternal, creating a web of beautifully, well carved feelings, only to be recognized. *I am* the storyteller who weaves and continuously weaves her own love and faith with moving tales. Good or bad you decide, draw me in your canvas, I am the same yet unique at every level, add me in your mesmerizing journey of knowing, Experiencing my persona. Last choice is yours, good or bad you decide, what is my place in your heart?



*"My Palamau is a mirror of India.  
After reading my work, the reader should be able to face the truth  
of facts, and feel duly ashamed of the true face of India."*

*-Mahasweta Devi*