

Listening to the Echoes of *Ulgulaan* in *Chotti Munda Aur Uska Teer* and *Dhuni Tape Teer*

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ABSTRACT: Legacies tend to echo in the minds of the masses if they tend to inspire. It is inherited from a predecessor, an ancestor, or the past from various epistemes of knowledge. Indian history has witnessed numerous legends who are celebrated across cultures as metaphors of freedom. Some tend to be myths, some are real-life incidents, while some could be a brew altogether. What do these metaphors of freedom echo? How do they transmit their thoughts? This paper attempts to trace the stories of such legacies of the subaltern in the Indian subcontinent. This paper shall seek to perceive the legacy of Birsa Munda, who was oppressed yet resisted all injustices of society. Birsa Munda is now celebrated as a legend for all, tribals and non-tribals, who sing of his resistance against the despotic society. The paper attempts to listen to the echoes of *Ulgulaan*, The Great Tumult, in Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda Aur Uska Teer* and Hariram Meena's *Dhuni Tape Teer*. In the vast celestial space, how does Birsa Munda's arrow pierce through the distance to become the valency of protest?

KEYWORDS: legacy, *Ulgulaan*, Birsa Munda, memory, resistance, revolution.

Across cultures, societies document their stories of legends and their legacies that tend to leave an impression on the minds of individuals and the collective. Legacies reside in archives, in monuments, in shrines and cenotaphs, in chronicles and heirlooms; they live in the memories of the people, in their quiet recollections. Through oral traditions, recorded speeches, and enduring fragments of testimony, societies pass down the names and voices to the succeeding generations. Rather than remaining tethered to their anthropological history as a static inheritance, they engage in a dialogic¹ process with it, fusing historical memory with the discursive, intellectual, and political imperatives of the present that are narrated as stories across cultures and epochs.

Stories are not merely acts of narration; they are repositories of cultural memory that transmit values, histories, and identities across generations. The narrative functions as a "connective structure" that links past events to present consciousness, allowing a community to recognise itself in time (Assmann 2011). Through oral traditions, folktales, songs, and myths, stories keep alive the memory of struggles, victories, and ethical positions that might otherwise be erased from official history. These stories narrate the lives of those who have dared to question and defy the uncontested metanarrative 'the Word' not only as mythic recollections or historical records, but as essentially enduring symbols of transformation. Challenging this dominant discourse that alters reality is a disruptive act: it destabilises the authority that claims universality and exposes it as a human construct. The act of questioning opens up space for alternative voices, subaltern memories, and reimagining justice. But when 'the Word' is left unchallenged, it fossilises into dogma, making resistance seem futile and even unthinkable.

Icarus, borne aloft on wings of wax and feather, becomes a parable not merely of hubris, but of the yearning to escape constraint. His father's warning to "fly neither too low nor too high" (Ovid, trans. 2004) represents the voice of pragmatic caution, an echo of societal norms that seek to temper ambition. Notwithstanding the risk, Icarus resists. The myth of Icarus thus becomes more than memory within the imagination of those who follow, as someone who confronts the metaphysical limits of human ambition and transforms the legacy of a mere cautionary tale. Spartacus, a Thracian enslaved by the Roman Empire, in contrast, rises from the arenas and resists slavery and oppression. His revolt in 73 BCE, though crushed, resounds through history as a radical challenge to institutionalised dehumanisation. Icarus and Spartacus emerge to become the icons of their communities and beyond who resist dominant voices in profoundly different ways, nevertheless refuse to accept the terms of their containment. Their

¹ Mikhail Bakhtin defines dialogism as the principle that meaning is produced through interaction among voices, discourses, and perspectives, rather than by a single authoritative voice (*The Dialogic Imagination* 1981, pp. 276–77). Dialogism is the condition of all language: every word responds to what has been said before and anticipates responses.

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resistance, often a repertoire of personal anecdotes intermingled with the causality of the collective though resulting in death, enacts a different kind of victory: a revolution where agency is asserted in the face of unjust and defined control of life.

This paper seeks to explore the legacy of Birsa Munda within the Indian subcontinent, as preserved and reimagined through both archival traces and collective memory, particularly as represented in Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda aur Uska Teer* and Hariram Meena's *Dhuni Tape Teer*. It shall attempt to trace how iconographers of a certain space-time, rooted in specific historical and cultural coordinates, often transcend their physicality. The legacies that communicate across generations, spoken first to their immediate contemporaries and then to those yet to come, are not merely static symbols but evolving emblems of resistance that floweth. It shall try to find how the succeeding generations remember, reframe, and celebrate the legacy of Birsa Munda not merely as a historical figure, but as a living force in the memory and cultural imagination.

Resistance at its most primal level is tied to survival. Every organism, including humans, resists threats to life, autonomy, and agency. Over time, our ancestors had to resist external threats to survive, in due course of which, this biological resistance evolved to become psychological, cultural, and intellectual. Resistance in context to human beings, thereby is existential, emotional and epistemological praxis of life. While in religion and ethics, resistance is tied to moral fortitude, where martyrs, prophets, and saints resist worldly temptations or oppressive systems; in literature, resistance shapes the arc of narrative, where characters resist fate, injustice, or even internal doubts. Quite often, they question and challenge the authoritative change that feels unjust and threatens their familiarity. Resistance does not limit itself to existing just as a reaction; rather, it becomes a mode of being, a gesture of care, and often, an act of imagination that pulses through human experience, constantly in negotiation with systems, selves, and stories. Bashir Bhadra writes, मुखालिफ़त से मिरी शख़्सियत सँवरती है/मैं दुश्मनों का बड़ा एहतिराम करता हूँ (2) "It is in opposition that my being finds its shape;

I honour my enemies, for they help me grow." TM

Birsa Munda is remembered as one "made up of light, of smoke, of a still pond" (Neruda 364), a luminous figure who heralded the clarion call of *Ulgulaan*², the historic rebellion of the *Mundas* against entrenched structures of domination in colonial India. Mahasweta Devi, in her novel *Jungle ke Davedaar*, renders a fictionalised yet deeply political narrative of the subaltern, a perfect example of what Said calls a "text that resists the text". The narrative depicts the counter-discursive act of the *Mundas* of Jharkhand, who remain largely absent from official historical discourse except when they erupt into resistance. It bears witness to a space-time in Indian history when the "colonised populations whose voices and agency were silenced or misrepresented in colonial archives and nationalist historiography" (Guha 45). The subaltern of South Asia has been steeped in bonded labour, colonial oppression, and caste-driven violence during the nineteenth century, and this form of servitude has disproportionately targeted *Adivasis*, Dalits, and other marginalised groups, building a generational trap to sustain systemic violence.

Mahasweta Devi shows that colonisation was not just of land but of meaning; of what "forest," "law," and "justice" themselves meant. Before the advent of colonial intervention, the forest functioned as more than a physical space; it was a vibrant locus of culture, spirituality, and sustenance for the tribals. For the *Mundas* of the Chotanagpur region, the forest was a communal entity, integral to everyday life, providing food, fuel, medicine, ritual sites, and the space for shifting cultivation. The imposition of the Indian Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 radically altered this relationship by redefining the forest as state property. Through this legal and administrative act of naming, the forest was transformed from a shared commons into a regulated resource, subject to management, taxation, and policing. Mahasweta Devi's *Jungle Ke Davedar* captures the tragic irony of this transformation: those who had always belonged to the forest, and to whom the forest rightfully belonged, were compelled to petition and even rebel to reclaim rights that had never before required justification. Her narrative insists that the forest cannot be understood merely as an economic resource but as a political and spiritual commons that must be reclaimed. It unmasks the colonial myth of the forest as 'empty' and reclaims it as a living space of history and identity. The narrative also documents the historical and colonial displacement of the *Mundas*, and also how local agents, the *zamindars*, moneylenders, and bureaucrats who perpetuated their subjugation. She writes,

Birsa ke vansh ke adipurushon ne chotanagpur ki neev dali thi, lekin raja hue aur. Usse hamari dharti par, junglon mei bahar se logon ne aakar kabja jama lia, sab cheen lia. Doosri jaat ke, doosre desh ke aadmiyon ne. Jo aaye, vehi 'diku' the. (Devi 23)

The forefathers of Birsa's lineage laid the foundation of Chotanagpur, yet the crown went to others. Outsiders came and seized our land and forests, took everything away. Men of another caste, another country. Those who came were the *dikus*.

TM

Mundas referred *dikus* to all the non-tribal foreign intruders who exploited the *adivasis*, a term used for those who arrived from outside and gradually took control over their land, resources, and imposed their way of life. For the *Adivasis*, especially the

² *Ulgulaan* refers to the Munda uprising of 1899–1900, led by Birsa Munda in the Chotanagpur plateau. It was both a socio-religious and political movement against British colonial authority and exploitative landlords.

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Mundas, this meant a persistent cycle of dispossession that didn't end with the exit of the British. The *adivasis* have lived by the principle of "territoriality, a form of peasant and tribal consciousness in which they are bound by blood ties on one hand and local bonds on the other. They develop a sense of belongingness to a common lineage and to a shared habitat which overlap with one another that engenders a dual belonging: to a shared lineage and to a collective habitat which reinforces the other" (Dhanagare 56). The Munda community traditionally organised itself through the *khuntkatti* system, a collective landholding practice where clans cleared and cultivated forest patches that became their ancestral property. This system bound identity to territory, as a person's belonging was affirmed through ancestral participation in shaping the land. Such territorial rights provided both livelihood and security, through access to land and forest produce and social cohesion, by preserving shared ritual spaces and collective decision-making. Colonial interventions, however, dismantled this order by introducing individual land titles, forest reservations, and zamindari revenue systems, severing communities from their commons. This dispossession was more than economic loss; it fractured the spiritual and cultural connection to the land, prompting Birsa Munda's *Ulgulaan*, a rebellion demanding the restoration of *jal, jangal, zameen*: water, forest, and land as the basis of life and justice. (32)

The oppression of tribal communities demonstrates how this historical intrusion was not just a colonial imposition but was later sustained and intensified by local agents, the moneylenders, landlords, and bureaucrats who continued the project of displacement. Through inflated rents and predatory loans, they drove *Munda* families into bonded labour, dismantling the *khuntkatti* system and breaking their ancestral bond with the land. Colonial forest laws criminalised subsistence itself: gathering honey or firewood became illegal, turning tribals into trespassers in the very forests that had nurtured them for centuries. In a conversation with the people Birsa remarks,

diku ko apni palki chahiye, daam munda dega, phir kandhe mei dhoyega! Diku ko jo chhaiye -munda sab dega. Diku thekedar ko sahab ki adalaat mei jurmana hone par rupay jama karne munda log!" aur baad mein jabardasti rupayein udhar dega munda ko, aur bad mei use hi ukhad phekega! (57)

"The *Diku* wants his palanquin, we'll pay for it. But who carries the burden? We do. Whatever the *Diku* asks for, we give. Even when the contractor gets fined, we're the ones who pay. Then, when we've given all we have, he'll just cast us aside".TM

In the Indian subcontinent, caste, when tied with class, continues to structure society along the lines of exclusion and domination, making communities inherently vulnerable. The tribal communities are primarily rural, dependent on land and forest, and are increasingly caught in the grip of an exploitative agrarian economy. This economy is shaped by overlapping structures of caste hierarchies, class divisions, and feudal authority, making it difficult for them to claim either justice or representation. This dispossession was accompanied by cultural humiliation; their dances and songs were dismissed as "savage," their festivals derided, and even their drinking habits condemned as moral weakness—while landlords and officials freely consumed liquor without reproach. (Said 3) This is suggestive of what Edward Said calls the power of discourse, the ability of empire to represent the colonised in ways that justify domination: "representation itself is a form of power" (45).

The *Adivasi* were peripheral to the colonial project and postcolonial nationhood and were continually erased, displaced, and criminalised, bearing an ideological resemblance to the colonial logic of Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (Kipling 156). Birsa Munda's vision of *Birsait*³ can be read as the slow emergence of what Ranajit Guha calls "the small voice of history," a counter-narrative that refused silence and sought to reorder both the moral and political universe of the *Mundas* (53). In this sense, *Ulgulaan* becomes more than a localised peasant uprising; it becomes part of a larger ethical and historical continuum. Like Neruda's call to "rise with me against the organisation of misery," Birsa Munda sings the *Ulgulaan* against not just all the Mr Bounderbys of Coketown but also the Rai Sahabs of colonial India. (467) A call not merely for resurrection but philosophical as vibrant political thought which emerges and is representative of the people, by the people and for the people, by someone who is steadfast on the deck and even whilst the vessel of humanity sinks in the contemporary whirlpool of decadence. This reclamation resonates with Bhagat Singh's prison writings, where he declared, "दुनिया में सबसे बड़ा पाप है अन्याय को सहना और गलत बात को चुपचाप मान लेना" (42) ("the greatest sin in the world is to tolerate injustice and silently accept what is wrong").

Mahasweta Devi presents Birsa not as a distant, flawless messiah but as a leader deeply rooted in the struggles of his people, turning daily humiliations into a shared language of resistance. His call to action taught the *Mundas* that reclaiming the forest was inseparable from reclaiming their own sense of self and dignity. This uprising was not an explosion but a slow-burning fire built through small acts, songs, and refusals that gradually shaped a collective consciousness. Like Shakespeare's peasants in *Coriolanus*, who insist that the people are the city, Birsa's followers affirmed that *jal, jangal, jameen* rightfully belonged to those who lived with and cared for them, not to zamindars or the colonial state. The movement's millenarian dreams and occasional violence remind us that it was not an idealised myth but a living, human revolution, suggesting that cultural life, songs, dances, and

³ K.S. Singh, *The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and His Movement in Chotanagpur (1874–1901)* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1983), 215–220.

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prayers, remains a vital source of courage even in times of oppression. The call for *Abua Dishoom Abua Raj*⁴ frames *Birsait* as a revolution of consciousness, as Auden writes “the lights must never go out, the music must always play,” the struggle to reclaim land, food, and faith becomes at the same time a struggle to reclaim the dignity to resist, to make mistakes, and to imagine a future free from servitude. (Shah 34)

Birsa's *Ulgulaan* thus becomes more than a singular historical event; it evolves into a living cultural memory, sustained through song, folklore, and ritual practice. His resistance against the dominant and the dictatorial was reciprocated not just by the *Mundas* themselves but also *Oraons* and the Hindu outcastes, those who, too, bore the weight of casteist exclusion and economic exploitation. Aware of the consequences of being a ‘speaking subaltern’ in the Indian society, he dares to talk of a radical change in human sensibilities, invoking transformation. Birsa Munda's vision of *Birsait* can be understood as a project of transformative consciousness, an inner force that fuels collective resistance against colonial domination and feudal exploitation. Birsa's voice, though no longer physically present, continues to resonate among the *aawam* (the people), not as a distant command but as an intimate, affective presence. This is not merely “what the thunder said” (Eliot 36); rather, it is what one might call a “structure of feeling”, a lived, ongoing process of reinterpreting resistance through new generations (Williams 245). The *Birsait* thus circulates in the public imagination, finding new directions through indirections, continually revitalising the discourse of liberation and subaltern dignity.

Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda Aur Uska Teer* echoes the cry of rebellion and resilience among the tribals through the character of Dhani Munda. Dhani Munda carries this legacy forward, connecting Birsa's vision to the political awareness of the younger generation. Through Dhani's fight against exploitation, whether under British colonial rule, feudal landlords, or the post-independence state, Devi depicts that tribal resistance is not a single event but a “continuous negotiation with power”. (Guha 46) Through Dhani Munda, who recounts the memories of earlier uprisings, the text shows how Birsa's dream becomes more than a historical event; it becomes a living idea that circulates through stories, songs, and memory. Mahasweta writes of Dhani's words falling “like a parrot's chatter,” suggesting both repetition and transmission: a rhythm that carries the past into the present. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* traces its anthropological history and builds a bridge between the contemporary condition of the subaltern and their historical life worlds encompassing traditions, belief systems, and modes of social organisation which have been profoundly altered by colonial domination, feudal exploitation, and postcolonial interventions. Devi's narrative captures, through Chotti Munda and his contemporaries, how these structures of life were reshaped. The novel foregrounds not only the losses imposed on the *Adivasis* but also their creative negotiations with change.

Munda logon ki bhasha ki lipi nahi hai. Islie mahtavpoorn ghantanon ki kahani banakr ve kividanti bana dete hai, gana banakar rakhte hain. Iss tarah, kissa aur geet banakr Dhani Chotti Munda ke pass laut aata hai. (37)

The Munda people possess no written script for their language; thus, they transform significant events into stories that are preserved as legend and carried forward in song. In this way, through ballads and folklore, Dhani returns to Chotti Munda.
TM

The relationship between Chotti and Dhani underscores the communal nature of memory. Through Dhani and Chotti's relationship, a legacy of empowerment is sustained; an inheritance that is not bestowed but cultivated from within. It is through imbibing “the pastness of the past” (Eliot, 24) that Chotti learns of the struggle of his ancestors, their ways of sustenance and dignity rooted in soil, culture and collective memory. Dhani's storytelling becomes itself a weapon, sustaining the moral force of resistance across generations and allowing *Ulgulaan* to survive as both memory and possibility. The narrative depicts how, through Dhani's guidance, the younger generation is introduced to *Birsait*, the cultural and ideological legacy of Birsa Munda than dependence on the elites or colonial/feudal patrons. Devi writes,

Bhagwaan Munda-diku logon ki tarah bhaat khane ke lie lade the. Jin kaaron se lade the, unme ye bhi ek kaaran tha. Dhani use sare purane vidrohon ki batein tote ki tarah sunata. (36)

Bhagwaan Munda, like others, fought even for the simple dignity of having rice to eat. Among the many reasons for which he rose in defiance, this was one. Dhani would listen as he recounted the old rebellions, weaving their stories together like pearls on a string. TM

The people initially had “no resistance against the cultural invasion that took place. It was cultural, economic, it was connected with the land, with everything, they want to rob the tribe of everything” (Spivak 7). The clarion call that echoes in the lives of Chotti kindles a philosophical intent to mediate between the struggles and sufferings of life, meanwhile sustaining through the preconditions of survival. Beyond acts of boycott, abstention, or seeking alternatives to oppressive systems, Chotti actively

⁴ The slogan “*Aka Dishum Abua Raj*” (literally, “Our Rule in Our Land”) was central to Birsa Munda's *Ulgulan* movement (1899–1900), expressing the demand for autonomy against colonial and *dikus*' dominance.

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pursued pathways for both personal and collective empowerment by confronting systemic loopholes and aligning his struggle with Dhani Munda's spirit of resistance. Rather than reducing Birsa Munda to a mere icon, Devi preserves his memory as a living heritage, embodying the ongoing struggle against oppression. Through the subterfuge of Drona, Mahasweta Devi creates Dhani Munda, who can either be 'wearing motley' or be named later on; his thoughts contain perceptions of the society and also a radical view of freedom is sung and echoes in the street. Together, they articulate a "structure of feeling" of the collective, the lived experience of oppression and the aspiration for freedom (Williams 436).

These transformations are mirrored in the younger generation, who navigate new social and political realities while retaining the ethical and political consciousness inherited from Birsa. Chotti Munda, as a living repository of memory, embodies the continuity of resistance and adaptation: his famed arrow, passed down through generations, is both a symbol of insurgent legacy and a practical tool mediating disputes over land and authority. This continuity is most vividly seen in Chotti's training in archery, a tribal tradition passed down through ritual and communal practice. Learning the arrow is not just about physical skill; it is also an initiation into the cultural values and knowledge of the Munda community, rooted in land, forest, and justice. Over time, Chotti gets mythologised, where the community believes he is blessed by ancestral spirits and that his arrow never misses its mark. Chotti's longevity allows him to act as a living archive of *Adivasi* memory, linking the historic rebellion of Birsa Munda with the ongoing struggles of his community.

Spivak observes that subalterns' "history is not seen as a continuity in Indian historiography". (9) The subalterns, particularly the tribals who are denied any space of representation, reclaim their history through oral memory. Dhani, Bisra, Chotti and all other characters in *Chotti Munda Aur Uska Teer* emerge as tributaries of fragmented experiences that coalesce into a larger river of resistance. This transformative flow, carrying echoes of uprisings and memory, extends from the forests of Chotanagpur, where Chotti Munda wields his arrow, to the hills of Mewar, where Govind Guru rekindles the sacred fire and the collective will to rise. *Birsait*, a continuous ebb and flow, mediates through the crests and troughs of the Maangarh hills. *Dhuni Tape Teer* translated as "Arrow Drawn from the Fire", appears to be a reflective narrative that is part memoir, part prose-poetry.

Hari Ram Meena's *Dhuni Tape Teer* also centres on a contemporary *Adivasi* uprising, sparked by systemic injustice, land alienation, and cultural erasure. The novel depicts the life of tribals, particularly the *Bhils* and *Meena* communities, who resided in the forests and hills of southern Rajasthan. The protagonist Govind Guru, who belongs to *Banjaara*⁵ community, is but raised amidst the rhythms of tribal life through stories and songs, through rituals of the *dhuni*, sacred fire, and a way of living close to the land. Govind Guru recalls scenes of everyday tribal life: festivals, local deities, myths passed down by elders, and the wisdom of a community deeply rooted in nature. He describes how these early memories are always shadowed by the distant presence of the state, schools, and landlords; figures of authority who keep intruding into their way of life and constantly attempt to 'civilise' them. Govind Guru attempts to subvert the stereotype of uncivilised tribal and channels the same impulse of rebellion against colonial, feudal, and capitalist structures that Birsa resisted in the nineteenth century. Govind Guru gives voice and shape to the scattered grievances of the *Bhils* and other tribal groups in the region.

It focuses on a collective assertion of cultural and political identity, just as Birsa's movement was as much about spiritual awakening as about political liberation. The protagonist and his community are rooted in tradition but forced to face modern encroachments, mobilise around a spiritual-political awakening, symbolised by the rekindling of the *dhuni*. His language, parables, and symbolic acts form a shared narrative that binds his people with the collective. The tribal consciousness thus flows across regional divides, unified not by geography but by the pulse of historical memory and struggle. The novel reclaims suppressed *Adivasi* language, their songs and oral history, treating them as acts of defiance. Small acts such as refusal to give up ancestral land or preserving rituals become their subversive gestures. As the plot progresses, resistance becomes organised, echoing the grassroots mobilisation of Birsa's movement. Further, the arrow symbolises the indigenous way of fighting both literally and metaphorically. The *teer* does not just happen to be a tool of war, but an important marker of *Adivasi* identity, passed down through generations. Through a contemporary narrative of indigenous resistance, Meena not only commemorates the *Ulgulaan* but revives it, in new forms, for new times.

Hari Ram Meena's *Dhuni Tape Teer* thereby tends to emerge as a powerful literary continuation of Birsa Munda's revolutionary thought. Rooted in *Adivasi* experiences and cultural memory, the text challenges dominant narratives of power, be it linguistic, caste-based, or historical. Reality ensconced in literature, either situational or incidental or epiphanic, creates a dialogic intervention, a multiplicity of voices that intermingle. These voices each carry a certain valency to form bonds with others and alter their speed and direction. Birsa Munda sustains his legacy of resistance and empowerment through *Chotti Munda Aur Uska Teer* and *Dhuni Tape Teer* and moves beyond the image of the leaders of the tribals towards an abstract visualisation, consequently to become the valency of a radical change. An utter change that tends to engage with the sufferings and problems of the mundane through a philosophical outlook. The two voices of resistance get topologically transformed into woven tales, told and retold across generations that keep them fixed in time and concurrently metamorphose into memory, myth, and meaning while being shaped by distinct geographies and struggles, and converge in their uncompromising defiance against systems of oppression. *Ulgulaan*, the

⁵ The Banjar community is traditionally nomadic and known for its rich cultural heritage.

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song of rebellion sung by the chorus, transforms into a beacon for the people to carry forward and glow in the streets. This transformation resonates with Yeats's evocation of revolutionary change, where he writes,

"He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly;
A terrible beauty is born"
(lines 15-16)

The 'terrible beauty' here is not a moment of aesthetic rupture alone but is the forging of a political and spiritual awakening out of oppression. Mahasweta Devi's fiction is marked by a historical sensibility, an awakening that transforms the past into a living presence rather than a static chronicle. In works like *Jungle ke Davedar* and *Chotti Munda aur Uska Teer*, she does not simply recover forgotten episodes but reanimates them, allowing history to speak in the voices of those who have been silenced. In *Chotti Munda aur Uska Teer*, the past is not an object of nostalgia but an active force—Chotti's arrow travels forward, insisting that rebellion is a possibility in the present, not just a memory of the past. By contrast, Hari Ram Meena is more invested in historicity, where it retrieves Birsa's life from the forgotten margins of colonial archives and places it in the foreground. Meena's project is restorative, reminding readers of what was lost, whereas Mahasweta's is transformative, using narrative to expose the continuing structures of dispossession. Devi practices what Walter Benjamin calls "brushing history against the grain," insisting that the past is never closed but continues to demand justice in the present (257).

Across spaces, this beauty is born in the act of standing up, singing one's history into being, and resisting erasure. The act of standing up against oppression, as exemplified in the struggles of the subaltern, does not remain merely a physical or symbolic gesture; it becomes performative, where words evolve into songs, rhythm, and collective memory. It invigorates an idea rooted in dignity, land, language, and collective memory, an idea that insists that the subaltern not only can speak, but can reimagine history itself as a flowing, living continuity...*kal kal behto jaye re*⁶.

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⁶ a song