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Feministic Approach in Geeta Nagabhushan's *Dange* (Mutiny)

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ABSTRACT

The attempt has been made in the paper to analyze the predicament of dalit woman in Geeta Nagabhushan's Kannada novel *Dange* (Mutiny1997) from the feminist perspective. The novel explores various facets of the Indian dalit woman and depicts the social and cultural status of dalit women and portrays intricate human nature, graveness, sufferings and inhuman male oppression to highlight and thereby aims to create an awareness of certain social evils. The novel explores the emotional world of dalit women, revealing an awareness of varied forces with dalit feminine sensibility. The author concentrates on mute miseries and helplessness of Durgi, a dalit woman who is tormented by high castes and openly discourses her inner conflict.

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Introduction

Feminism is a movement for the equal rights of women, and it looks at the oppressive elements and suggests alternatives. It mirrors about women, her social roles, her liberties and privileges and about social transformation. It is a socio-political movement for the liberation of women from the clutches of traditional society and inhuman suppression. Mary Wollstonecraft is perhaps the first feminist who insists for women's rights and their education, in her classic work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In India, many feminists fought for the liberation of women. But dalit feminists have the complaint that mainstream feminists never considered the problems of dalit women. Though women novelists emerged on the arena as early as the last quarter of the 19th century, it was only in the Post-Independence period, i.e., only in the last decades of the 20th century, that dalit women writers began to emerge in different regional languages. Dalit women writers like Bama, Baby Kamble, P. Shivakami, Geeta Nagabhushan, B. T. Lalita Nayak, Anasuya Kamble, Sukanya Maruti and Jyoti Lanjewar have enriched Dalit literature by writing in different literary forms like novel, autobiography, poetry, with feminine sensibility focusing on women's problems. In recent times, Dalit literature is gradually taking centre place from the periphery, giving the glimpse of different world of dalit women, i.e., not represented in literature till then. Their writings reflect new status of dalit women, their assertion and individuality in the society. Recently, their works have been translated into different foreign languages like English, French, etc, and thus dalit women writers have gained international recognition. Novels, short stories, poetical works and autobiographies of dalit women writers seek to express their submerged and suppressed anger, anguish, fury, pain and agony. Unlike men writers they have their own way of expressing their experiences. Their writings are stuffed with protest against prevailing customs and traditions and female entrapment in masculine society. They demand just full space in the male

centric society which has treated dalit women as inferior in all spars of society.

Geeta Nagabhushan's *Dange*

Geeta Nagabhushan is one such Kannada dalit woman writer who portrays intricate human nature, graveness, sufferings and inhuman male oppression to highlight and thereby aims to create an awareness of certain social evils. The novels of Geeta Nagabhushan mainly explore the emotional world of dalit women, revealing an awareness of varied forces with dalit feminine sensibility. She writes with determined mind to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of dalit women tormented by high castes. The recurring theme in her novels is trauma of dalit women in hostile male centric society which is conservative and taboo ridden. She openly discourses the inner conflicts of her female characters and depicts different aspects of their life. The attempt has been made in the paper to analyze the predicament of dalit woman in Geeta Nagabhushan's Kannada novel *Dange* (Mutiny1997) from the feminist perspective. The novel explores various facets of the Indian dalit woman.

Geeta Nagabhushan is one of the dalit feminist writers who concentrate merely on pain and agony of dalit women. Her writings occupy the prominent space in Dalit literature. The exploitation of illiterate innocent dalit women is the main theme of all her novels. She is the first forceful Kannada dalit woman writer who has nearly about twenty five to thirty novels to her credit, and they can be divided into two groups - popular novels and dalit novels. All her dalit novels and short stories had once shivered the high castes of 1980's. Geeta Nagabhushan's some protagonists raise their voice against the straight jacketed role models and refuse to be the objects of cultural and social oppressions of masculine society and some other characters mutely suffer all types of oppressions. Being sensitive they feel suffocated in an encaged code of life but remain serene.

The novel is set in the village, Karelli in Gulbarga District, Karnataka. Durgi, an orphan, spends her worst childhood days in her step sister's house, toiling hard both in farm and in house.

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Unfortunately, once when she is raped by her sister's husband, Hanamantha, her dream mirror which is adorned all these days has been smashed into pieces. Hanamantha, sprays black ink on beautiful portrait drawn by her and smears black collyrium on the first paper of white plain book of Durgi's life. Thus the first chapter of her life closes with tears. Even her married life is stuffed with painful circumstances. Her husband Maalappa is a sluggard, spends all money earned by Durgi, plays cards, gambles and smokes. In addition to it, he sells 'roti' (bread) prepared for small child, Swati. Durgi suffers with poverty, insufficient food, while he enjoys varied food items in tea stalls. When he becomes hermit and leaves the village, she goes to neighbouring village and strives hard to make both ends meet. She thinks that she needs support in her life and finally leads her life as a keep of Kulkarni. But ultimately, Durgi takes revenge on Kulkarni by pushing him out of the running train when he discards Swati's marriage with his son Seenu and plots to murder both Durgi and Swati. The story wonderfully takes dramatic turn and brings forth the plight of dalit woman in the male chauvinist society.

The author uses the state of oppression as a weapon against the very structure of the society. This makes her powerful and confident. When Durgi comes to know the limitations of her husband, she stops respecting him and even mocks at him instead of suffering mutely. She abuses him and scolds him until her mouth starts paining. Durgi is torn between love and hate for her husband and life situations. She has to strive hard and she should be obedient and submissive wife. As Maalappa is a sluggard, Durgi starts going out for labour work within fifteen days of her delivery.

Dalit communities have been separated and isolated due to the practice of untouchability. Though Swati is pretty, educated, sharp-witted young dalit girl-not less than any other Brahmin girls- she is not accepted whole heartedly by Seenu's parents. The main purpose of the novel is to highlight and thereby create an awareness regarding certain social evils. The writer concentrates more on the characters rather than social milieu. They have been driven into deep despair and are made to stand against the tide. Nevertheless the development of the plot is determined by the characters. Geeta Nagabhushan has produced unforgettable characters. Durgi is in deep despair when she is molested by Hanamantha. Swati bursts into tears when she could not find 'roti' (bread) in the cane basket. Durgi is shattered when she comes to know the limitations of her husband. She is exhausted and extremely upset when she notices the true colour of Kulkarni with whom she has spent sincerely, nearly about fifteen to twenty years. Kulkarni's wife Radhabai is broken into fragments when she hears Seenu's marriage with Swati. Durgi and Swati being dalit women have the extreme power and strong determination to stand against the tide where as Radhabai does not.

The novel is torn between two roles-tradition and modernity. Durgi suffers mutely. She is emotionally and economically dependent whereas Swati is independent in all respects. Thus, the novel portrays diverse obstacles that obstruct

dalit women's way of life, articulating the protagonist's attempts to come out of dominant power structure. Dalit women have silently borne the inhuman male oppression which has ultimately evoked the rebel in them to acquire self respect and sense of dignity. Durgi rebels against oppression and injustice openly and sometimes with silent manifestations. The educated dalit women like Swati, rebel through newly acquired freedom and thus, resist gender discrimination. Both Durgi and Swati revolt against social taboos, traditional values and constantly question human relationships and high castes' inhuman lecherous behaviours, but strive to attain ideal freedom. Durgi's revolt is of different kind from that of Swati's, but the ultimate goal of both is a quest for self and search for identity.

Education matters while resolving things. Durgi instantly determines to kill Kulkarni for the sake of her daughter. Swati thinks cautiously and takes the step of marrying Sheenu for the sake of her mother. The strong determination of Swati clearly reveals the state of dalit woman who is struggling to understand herself throughout her life and rebels against high caste's male domination. Untouchables are not allowed to love and marry upper caste men as well as women, while other varnas are allowed to defile and even to rape dalit women. By critiquing the traditional norms, the writer follows an unconventional narrative practice and challenges the ways in which women are imprisoned in various socio-cultural constructs. Like other feminists Geeta Nagabhushan also yearns for freedom of space for dalit women. Freedom of space is the major demand of many feminists all over the world and they argue that a woman needs her space to enjoy freedom. The writer radically approaches dalit women's issues. Her views on feminism go stronger with the description of bold and assertive dalit women characters. The writer exhibits dalit women's craving for love, freedom and sex boldly and critiques the traditional bound, conservative society. She is far ahead of many other Indian dalit women writers and she has never cared about what others thought of her. She also boldly admits that dalit female writers have less opportunity compared to dalit male writers.

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