

**VOICING THE VOICELESS IN  
GEETA NAGABHUSHANA'S NOVEL DHANGE**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The evolution of Dalits in literature's trajectory reveals its capacity for both revolutionary and reactionary actions. The harsh and cruel reality of the existence of the metaphorical Caliban is reflected in Dalit literature's themes. This is an effort to produce an entirely novel form of writing representative of Dalit writers who believe they can overcome their exclusion and lack of voice. Due to their long history as victims of patriarchal society, Dalit women still have relatively little freedom concerning human rights. Human torture, rapes, killings, and other murders are often the result of the higher castes' steadfast resistance to their efforts to seize their rights. These are indications that the subalterns are in threat of being killed again, threats caused by the authority of the upper caste. Horrifying representations of concrete emerge in Dalit alter-texts. The extent of violence against women of Dalit origin remains unrecognized and unheard.

Dalit literature seeks to reveal the evil and hypocrisy of the privileged classes and to protest against the existing system of hierarchy that is based on injustice. A journey from idealism to reality based on real-life experiences must be started promptly. Based on a novel Dhange by Geeta Nagabhushan, a Kannada writer, this article explores the impediments to their freedom and the reasons for their choice to speak up.

**KEYWORDS:**

Dalit, Dalit literature, margin, voiceless, Kannada writers.

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## Introduction

In every aspect, caste is a part of our being. The cities lacked social boundaries, although they did have caste, jathis, and religious distinctions. It isn't just another narrative about Dalits. It is about embracing a way of life in which we value differences in our way of life and accept them while appreciating the disparities among people as human beings. Dalit literature is written by and about the oppressed, often referring to a wide range of individuals who have traditionally been viewed as the lowest segments of the Indian society, or "untouchables." It's an attempt to point out the experiences of those who are marginalized.

Dalit writings in Kannada literature highlight discrimination, violence, and poverty faced by the Dalit community. Despite being silenced, these texts aim to rectify this by examining Dalit culture and becoming a significant literary movement in post-independence India. The transformation of the stigmatized identity of these so-called 'untouchables' to a self-chosen identity as Dalit. "Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys, sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society."

Objectives: This research paper aims to fulfill the following aims and objectives: 1. To evaluate the novel in the light of Dalit writings. 2. To analyze the Social condition of Dalits. 3. To create awareness of the torments faced by Dalits. 4. To study the heart-rending tortures faced by Dalits.

To mention a few novels written by Geeta Nagabhushan are Dhummasu, Eirilithagalu, Asaregalu, Nanna Olavu Ninna Cheluvu, Dhange, Abhimana, Baduku, Kage Muttitu, Baki, Kappu Nela Kempu Hoovu, Kaddimucchi. This paper tries to analyze Geeta Nagabhushana's specific novel Dhange, a feminist Kannada work that protests against the exploitation of Dalits, particularly women. The novel portrays the distress of Dalit women, who are victims of societal caste discrimination and destinies determined by heredity. The Kannada novel Dhange reflects social realism, presenting

Durgi's experiences in their native language, reinforcing power structures and subordination within the society, rather than aiming for ideal representation or individual commitment.

Geeta Nagabhushan, who enriched the critical circle of readers through literary creation as a Kannada writer, took inspiration from progressive writers like Basavaraj Kattimani and Chandrashekhar Kambar, a rarity seen in Kannada literature, and entered into literary creation by creating the foundations of literature in a very unique and innovative way.

The driving force behind her writings is concern for the upliftment of the rejected community who have devoted themselves to feudal life, poverty, superstition, ignorance, rape, secularism, independence, freedom, character, thirst, self-respect, equality, etc. Many longings, aspirations, and progressive stances are embedded in the core of this work. The idea of being neat in a temple, the idea of drawing water from a monastery well, with revolutionary aspirations like inter-caste marriage, arrogance of landlords, brutality, sexual violence, corporate atrocities, ideological thought expressed by resistance, and feminist concerns have added value to her works. Geeta Nagabhushan is the leading writer who tried to eradicate the most despicable and evil practices like Devdasi, Jogati, and Bettale Seva that had survived in a caste system through literature.

## **Dhange**

A girl who was born with difficulty and has to lead her life among the stones and thorns throughout her life, when the necessity comes from helplessness, she revolts against the one she loved and the one who loved her. The novel is based on the sensibilities of the women's center and mainly tells the story of two Dalit girls who are stuck in a spiral of problems and find no solution. Suttadyappa and Lakkavva's pet daughter-in-law Kashi; Parashurama who goes to his grandmother's village to make oil for Kashi's due date of pregnancy is bitten by a rattlesnake and dies. Suttadyappa has a

deep love for his daughter-in-law. An innocent girl, Kashi, is raped by her father-in-law and she commits suicide.

Losing her parents at an early age, living under the shelter of her sister and brother-in-law, Durgi marries an evil and lazy farmer and gets a daughter named Sathi. If she went to work after making roti at home, Mallappa would sell the roti and drink arrack. Due to her husband's cheating, Durgi stops making roti. When the rice is not cooked at home, he decreases his visits to the house, and finally, one day he goes away forever. Although it is difficult to control and live, Durgi, who was patiently carrying the boat of life, becomes food for the evil eye of lovers. Courageously she takes the responsibility of raising her daughter far away from the village and stays in another village. The young man's desire, the thirsty looks she got did not lessen. The safety of her and her daughter's future was very important so she decided to be a lady love for Kukhani. Radhabai, Kukhani's wife, is furious to know this extra-marital affair of her husband and demands him not to pay a single penny for Durgi. She makes a home in the garden of the Kukhani; Durgi and Sati are to some extent settled. Then Durgi sends Sati to school on horseback with Govindappa's son Seenappa. Sati, who is intelligent in the village, grows independently in the forms of education, completes her matriculation, and goes to college in Kalaburgi with Seenappa. Sati wants to marry Seenappa; Radhabai is shocked and Govindappa gets angry. Villagers giggle at the news of a Brahmin boy marrying a Madiga girl. Durgi is shaken by her daughter's decision but Sati consoles her mother and dares to face the villagers.

The novel explores the sufferings and suffocations of marginalized women, particularly Dalit women, for centuries. The author hopes that their position will change unless social and political attitudes change, requiring courage and determination for Dalit expression. The article explores the story of Durgi, an orphan and Dalit woman who rebels against her wealthy Brahmin lover, Mallappa, who is a lazy and unemployed man. Prior to Mallappa's

passing, Durgi was happy that he was still alive and that her daughter had a father. Now, however, she had to battle alone. While the patriarchal culture expects Durgi to be a prostitute, she is impoverished and forced to be one by social conventions. Or, because she is a member of a lower caste, they rape her and turn her into a prostitute. It promotes the supremacy of the patriarchal society in order to further the gendered class divide to the point where only upper-class, supposedly inviolable women can be considered “women,” while a woman from a lower social class has no value placed on feminism or chastity and is not deserving of respect from any male.

We witness Saati, Durgi’s daughter, receiving an education in the latter part of the novel. The tone of the Right to Education suggests that Saati is familiar with the exploiter’s vocabulary and power dynamics. She has developed something weird by learning the language of the master of yesterday. This suggests that the likelihood of a lower stratum girl receiving greater freedom to marry increases with her level of education.

The novelist Geeta Nagabhusan comes to the conclusion that attitudes of the characters about the freedom of choice in choosing life mates are directly correlated with urbanization and education. Love marriages are more likely to succeed because education enables youth to critically evaluate and challenge the attitudes and rigid beliefs of their parents. The stability of the family may even be in danger since one’s emotions could push him or her to marry someone who is not only fit for their temperament but also for the family as a whole. The Hindu varna system viewed chosen mates as undesirable and thought that this freedom of choice could interfere with the bride’s adjustment to her new household.

The existence of this position for women is an essential prerequisite for the enunciation of this novel brought out in the character Saati. Compared to her mother, she plays a more vocal and loud character. She takes an active role in the decision-making

process and is responsive to several events; she also learns from her mother's experiences, speaks out against the strict caste system, and attempts to emulate Basavanna. She speaks for the "others" and applies a sharper critical eye to the politics of gender and representation. Despite the potential implications and the fact that it is considered scandalous for a Brahmin boy to wed a Madiga girl, she boldly challenges the Brahmin man to marry her.

In actuality, Dalit women were restricted to working in the fields and performing household tasks; they lacked the ability to speak out against the strong or to become forced or willing concubines, sex workers, or prostitutes. Are we to believe that these uneducated Dalit women were destined to live precarious lives? Yes, Saati was unaware of this scheme until she arrived in the hamlet. Being a Dalit woman, she was unable to be a lawful wife, to be a reputable lady like the women from upper castes. As a result, she was an unlawful wife of a Kukhani or concubine.

Durgi realizes that there has to be a solution to this issue and that she can no longer sit around hoping for miracles to come. She needs to let herself be affected by the upheaval and changes. She has devoted her entire life to exposing injustice and hypocrisy, and it is Durgi's violent action that silences her calls for justice.

The much-anticipated action turns violent. Gowda, who poisons out of an old grudge against Durgi for not coming to his bed, conspires with goons to kill her and her daughter. Sathi tells Durgi that she will stay there as she will get a job in Bangalore. Govindappa takes Durgi on the train from the village and leaves her with the goons, taking care not to let anyone know. But at some point, Durgi, who was sleeping with her eyes closed, came to know that Govindappa had arranged to kill her daughter from his words. Durgi understood the goons and their plan to kill her daughter. After some time she went near the door; at the door of the train, he pretended to stand in the air and slowly she came behind Govindappa. Durgi looked around and gathered all her strength to push him.

Without expecting any danger, Govindappa gets hit by the wheel of a train that is running fast. When Durgi approaches the entrance with the intention of getting some fresh air, he intentionally stumbles on Kukhani, who is leaning toward the door and loses his equilibrium. He is pushed from the moving train by Durgi.

Durgi argues that shoving Kukhani out of the moving train was the only option to keep herself and her daughter safe. She is aware of Kukhani's malicious intentions in plotting Saati's murder. Durgi recognizes his goal and responds to the injustice, asserting her right to survive. It goes without saying that Brahmin men are not allowed to marry untouchables. It was a risky act in an environment where she was unable to receive justice or sympathy since she was a member of a historically conservative community where the varna system still held sway. She becomes a social embarrassment and turns to even more violence in an attempt to save her family. Despite being aware of the horrific crime or offense that a Dalit woman killing a Brahmin would constitute, Durgi proudly seeks Saati's assistance.

In this novel Dhange we can understand that if a woman can be a symbol of helplessness, weakness, and also showcase female strength with the embodiment of power and revenge. This work is a testimony that one should not hesitate to cut the hand of cruelty from the tender leaves of the lotus to the tender feelings of women. If a woman is unjustly raped, tell me if a man likes it, this is men's politics. Look at their own state, their own justice. If we all take a back seat then who will stand up to voice out, who has the courage? Here is the answer to the questions through the Dalit characters of Durgi and Sati; the novel portrays the need to transform the current situation. Sati is an educated woman who falls in love with another caste, especially a Brahmin boy, and gets married. Now they have to walk on the right path and let lower-caste girls get married to upper-caste men. Sati becomes the epitome of an enlightened woman who calls the sect to social formation. In the ever-changing life, there is a necessity for the Dalit community to wake up socially,

educationally, and politically. The novel illustrates the fact that education authorities can give them confidence and courage. Dalit communities living in urban life do not have to live under the black shadow of untouchability and rapes as before. Many progressive thoughts and reformation processes shed new light on his life and the leaves of this reformation are finely expressed in the novel.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the novel Dchange illustrates how many disadvantaged people—such as women and slaves—live in a world like that of children, where laws, values, and rituals are imposed upon them without their free will. This state of affairs is characterized by the imposition of external institutions and power structures rather than the potential for transcendence. Because they are unfamiliar with this power, the power play that is often exerted upon them is limited.

In other words, their circumstances seem like a blank slate and the way the world is meant to be. It is therefore expected of a slave and a woman to think that this is the natural order. Dalits are inferior and subservient, therefore they cannot struggle against nature or attempt to persuade the oppressed that their circumstances are what they are. In this sense, the oppressor prevents any revolution by mystifying the oppressed and making them unaware of their power. The novel does, in fact, support the cruel traditions that are prevalent in society and, in a very emotional and important way, it questions the hypocrisy. The literature of the Dalits conveys a message about their community, uniqueness, rebellion, passivity, advancement, and regression. It conveys to the entire world their social standing by depicting them as exploitative, weak, overcome with sadness, repressed and oppressed, and living in a subaltern state.

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