



ANGARA: INTERROGATING FEMALE IDENTITY AND FORMS OF RESISTANCE IN KUSUM MEGHWAL'S NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE

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Abstract:

This research paper delves into the evocative story "Angara" penned by Kusum Meghwal, Seeking to unravel the intricate tapestry of female identity and the myriad forms of resistance depicted within its narrative. The study employs a comprehensive literary analysis to dissect the nuances of Meghwal's storytelling, exploring the ways in which the characters navigate and challenge societal expectations.

Through a feminist lens, the research scrutinizes the complexities of female identity as portrayed in "Angara," considering the intersections of gender, culture, and socio-economic factors. The paper also delves into the various forms of resistance employed by the female protagonists, shedding light on how they navigate oppressive structures, assert agency, and redefine societal norms.

Furthermore, the analysis contextualizes Meghwal's narrative within the broader socio-cultural landscape, examining the implications of these portrayals for the larger discourse on women's rights, empowerment, and societal transformation. By critically engaging with "Angara," this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on female identity, resistance, and the transformative potential of literature in shaping perceptions and fostering social change.



Keywords: Angara, Kusum Meghwal, female identity, forms of resistance, narrative landscape, storytelling, literary analysis, feminist perspective.

Introduction

The narrative realm has long been a powerful arena for the exploration of societal dynamics, and in the short story "Angara" by Kusum Meghwal, we find a captivating tableau that intricately weaves together themes of female identity and resistance. This research paper embarks on a journey to dissect the layers of Meghwal's narrative landscape, seeking to unravel the complexities surrounding female identity and the diverse forms of resistance employed by the characters within "Angara."

Against the backdrop of an ever-evolving socio-cultural context, this study endeavors to employ a feminist lens to scrutinize the nuanced portrayals crafted by Meghwal. As we navigate the intersections of gender, culture, and socio-economic factors, the research aims to shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of female identity as experienced by the protagonists in "Angara." The analysis extends beyond mere characterization, delving into the various ways in which these female figures resist oppressive structures, assert agency, and challenge societal norms.

In positioning "Angara" within the broader socio-cultural landscape, we aspire to unravel the implications of Meghwal's storytelling for the larger discourse on women's rights, empowerment and societal transformation.

By critically engaging with the text, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between literature, female identity, and the myriad forms of resistance that shape and redefine societal narratives.

As we embark on this exploration of "Angara," we recognize the significance of narratives in



Reflecting, challenging, and shaping societal perspectives. Through this lens, we hope to not only dissect the narrative brilliance of Kusum Meghwal but also contribute meaningfully to the story 'Angara' is a famous story of Dr. Kusum Meghwal. This story depicts the reality of Dalit women's life, their torture, as well as their wish to overcome this torture. If there is exploitation, there is also tremendous resistance to it. Being aware of injustice towards oneself is a sign of growing consciousness in a society. Resisting that injustice is the next step towards consciousness. This story shows the rebellious form of Dalit woman, who is no longer ready to tolerate oppression at any cost. Dr. Kusum Meghwal is a powerful writer of Dalit women's writing.

She was born on 29 April 1948 in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Rajasthan, as the name suggests, has been the land of kings, feudal lords and princes. Dr. Meghwal was definitely born in independent India, But feudal shackles in the form of caste were present all around. The obstacles in life that she overcame to reach this point have been expressed many times in her writings in different forms. This is the reason why life experiences have a stronger presence in her works rather than imagination. Dr. Meghwal did M.A. in Hindi. After completing her research, a revolutionary stream of Dalit thought was identified. She has written countless books to the Dalit society. Through such research articles, she carried forward the tradition of Dalit thought. Baba Saheb Ambedkar considered one highly educated person is more important than hundreds of literates because he has the ability to change the parameters and not the measurement. . Dr. Kusum Meghwal has published more than fifty books so far. In which various aspects of Dalit life emerge. Kusum Meghwal is known as a prestigious signature among the minority of Dalit women writers.

Angara: 'Angara' is a powerful story by Dr. Kusum Meghwal full of Dalit women's consciousness. The story revolves around Jamna, a Harkhu cobbler's daughter. The story begins with Harkhu



and his wife Jhamku shedding tears over the looted honor of their daughter Jumna. Their pain has increased due to the taunts of their neighbors. Seventeen year old Jumna, who had basically endured excruciating pain, has dragged herself to her father's doorstep. Instead of solace, she finds insult and pain at her father's doorstep. People's sarcastic arrows come like this: "How the bitch used to jump around to show off her youth." Don't know with whom she has blackened her face?" Now suffer, who will marry this whore?" No one understands the pain and suffering of Jamna. What is beyond the understanding of her younger brother Keshu, why there are tears and sadness instead of happiness when his sister arrives. Jamna's elder brother Heera becomes enraged at her helpless plight. This sympathy of the brother is a balm for the sister's pain. Heera vows to his parents and sister, "Bapu, don't cry, as long as Heera is alive, he will take revenge for his sister's insult." Jamna finds great courage and tells her brother all the misdeeds of therapists (Sumer Singh and his uncle Nathu Singh). She also tells about her escape that both of them were unconscious under the influence of alcohol and only then she was able to run away, otherwise it would have been difficult for her to escape. Heera, trembling with anger, says, "The untouchable poor also have respect and he also knows how to live with respect. After taking the mortgage, he files a report in the police station. When Heera asks the police officer for action, the police officer asks for a witness. Whereas the truth is that Sumer Singh has given a huge bribe to the police station to hush up the matter. Sumer Singh is also a relative of a minister, due to which he is safe from the administration. From his side he is safe. Due to this, he also gets the courage to go to the Dalit colony and threatens him. Some Dalits, oppressed by humiliation, get scared by his threat and consider him as their food provider. They know how to enmity a crocodile by living in water? The blood of the youth was boiling. Sumer Singh's threat increased Heera's anger like adding fuel to



the fire. Heera explains to his sister Jamna. This government and police officers cannot punish these rapists. All of them have become impotent. You stand up and support me; we will have to punish them. Only he comes to know about the one whose sister or daughter is being affected. Before Sumer Singh can fire his gun, Heera quickly jumps on him. Both of them become unarmed. Heera's courage paid off and other youths came with sticks and women also gathered. Sumer Singh became exhausted and his uncle ran away. Jamna, who had been tortured by Sumer Singh, turned into a member of the government and the police, who could not be punished, completed her revenge by punishing him. She cut off the part that symbolized Sumer Singh's masculinity and separated it from his body. In this way, 'Angara' is basically a resolution to stand up against oppression and exploitation. There is a beginning of resolution from one side. How does the government help in punishing rapists? It has been seen in hundreds of incidents that the attitude of the police is irresponsible and cruel. They show disregard for filing primary information reports or investigation by not considering it as their duty and responsibility. Often they scare the victim away and make every effort to weaken the case and protect the accused. They openly throw dust in their eyes. In this way we understand that the story of Jamna. One is the oppression of Dalit community. Even in that Dalit society, both the identity and dignity of women are not free but are imprisoned in the cruel palm of the upper castes. This cruel hand is like two wheels of a mill which have no mercy. This is why solidification turns into embers in resistance. The caste of feudal lords rose in superiority to oppress women. There is a panic - for those who exploit. And, this example is a warning to many Sumer singhs and many Natthu Singhs to stop from such misdeeds. Caste ego, arrogance of power and adherence to traditional customs make Sumersingh take revenge for his insult by destroying his male ego in one stroke. The



inaction of the administration, police and judiciary forced him to fight the struggle for his identity himself. Therefore, the basic sentiment of the story is not limited to this one point, but asks many questions related to it. Without finding solutions to these questions, the dream of a socialist democratic republic will remain only a dream and will never become a reality. Inaction forced her to fight the struggle for her identity herself. Siddhartha Gautam Buddha had given the example of fire and said that whether the fire is of sandalwood or of any other wood, its crest is the same, in the same way, no matter which caste a person belongs to, if all the five spiritual qualities are present in him, then he/She can progress. He has the right to move forward on the path. The society of independent India must understand this statement of Gautam Buddha today; otherwise the meaning of India's independence will change. Serving one's husband has become the duty; there is equality between women and Shudras; Serving is their duty. One serves the entire society. Secondly, while defining religion in Brahmin religion or Hindu religion, the nature or duty of one's husband and family was talked about. But while practicing religion, the scale is completely different, it is a mixture of worship method and social method. For example, Shudra is inferior because he has committed sins in his previous birth. What sins have you committed? Then the Brahmin's answer would be that birth itself as a Shuda proves that he has committed sins, so how can he be freed from it according to religion? The answer would be by serving the upper castes. Hindu religion, which does not provide any opportunity for equality in worldly life, assures equality before the Supreme Being or God in the next world. To confirm this assurance, no Dalit has returned to the soil for the last three thousand years. Nirguna Bhakti was born in the medieval period on the basis of anger against such deceit. The traditions and customs in which women were kept captive. The sting of that slavery has been highlighted in its vengeful form in Kusum



Meghwal's story 'Angara'. Jamna and Heera struggle with this tradition. Tradition had taken away their sense of self-respect. They achieve this through modern consciousness. Violence against women's body Feminist thinkers made the female body a subject of discussion for the first time. What is feminism? Feminism is another name for the theory, technique and movement to realize the disparity between men and women and to establish equality at the level of relationships and behavior by eliminating this disparity. In this thinking, a woman has presented a different discussion of her body from that of man. The woman's body has been an object of enjoyment for male power on the one hand and a lesson of dominance on the other. On one hand the husband was given authority over her body and on the other hand the responsibility of guarding it was handed over to the father and the son. Perhaps this might have been the reason why the Smriti writer had to write in the eighth chapter of Manusmriti, "A woman depends on her father in her childhood, her husband in her youth and her son in her old age." In the story Angara, Jamna is a victim of the dominance of patriarchy, her dignity is attacked by Sumre Singh of the feudal patriarchy. Jamna is a Dalit woman. Her exploitation is different from the exploitation of a Dalit or a woman. Thinker on such incidents of triple assault on Dalit woman, Prof. Vimal Thorat says in the May 2001 issue of 'Communal Combat'. : "Dalit identity politics emphasized caste identity but completely ignored the need to understand and explain the gender discriminatory role of caste. The feminine side of the Dalit woman has been neglected by Dalit politics, and her Dalit side has been neglected by the women's movement. On one side, in front of Jamna, there is the Dalit society, which initially does not show sympathy with her, on the other side, there is Sumer singh the oppressor of the feudal society, who considers her an object of enjoyment. The right to his body is actually an attempt to take right to the life of the Dalit. Dalit women bear the brunt of this



entire struggle. Sumer Singh says in the same spirit, "Right now we have taken away one. Don't worry, the turn of all the buds will come." Here, threats are being given not to any particular family but to the entire Dalit society. Powers rule over people in many ways – they rule over money, labor, knowledge and consciousness. The last stage of domination is completed by establishing control over self-respect. This is the stage where Angara's story takes a turn. Marx said that social existence determines the consciousness of an individual. Consciousness has arisen in the Dalit society through the movement. It is because of this consciousness that people like Heera stand with Jamuna. The story which started with the attack on Jamuna's female body, ends with the dismemberment of Sumer Singh's body. Can this be considered an act of violence? Under the circumstances in which the incident occurred, Jamuna had no other option. In such a situation, it becomes the responsibility of every human being to protect one's honor; anyway, raising the question of violence and non-violence on the question of justice is only giving support to injustice.

The story of Angara begins from the time of evening. Another darkness is descending into Harkhu's hut, another darkness has spread into Jamna's life. Due to a man's misdeeds, her entire existence comes into question. The male-dominated society does not hold the rapist responsible for the violence committed by him, instead it places the victim of violence in the dock by giving violent and cruel decisions to the woman, victim of violence as per the parameters of purity of women and country set by Brahmanism and puts the blame on the woman. Jamna's struggle is very tough. At the same time, she has to take a stand against patriarchy, casteism and Brahmanism and she is ready to oppose it. His brother Heera, who supports her in this fight, is a conscious Dalit youth. This youth does not have the burden of the older generation. He was brought up in independent India; its



constitution was written by Babasaheb Ambedkar. He has grown up in an environment in which freedom and equality are not concepts of Vedas but law. This law is as solid as an iron hammer and is equally effective as the antidote Dr. Ambedkar had inspired the Dalit community to gain political power. So that the law can be used in the right direction. In the story Angara, Jamna and her brother Heera initially fight for the same legal, take recourse to rights. It is said that no matter how good the law is. But if the intentions of those implementing it is flawed then the law fails. The British Raj, despite its imperialist character, was known for the 'rule of law'. But despite independence, the problems of rule of law persisted in India. Be it police, administration or courts, everything became casteist. In such a situation there was no possibility for a Dalit woman like her to get justice and she did not even get it. Money is demanded from Heera to file a police report. He also by selling his mother's silver ornaments, gives the money to the policemen as fees. . But to hush up the matter, Sumer Singh pays an even bigger amount to the police officer. On top of that, this relative of a minister also became involved with the police after this transaction. When hedge starts eating away at the fields, what should a farmer do? This statement of Gopal Guru makes it clearer that in the Indian context neither democracy nor the state provides concrete support to the Dalits in their fight against contempt. In such a condition the resistance of solidification and demand changes. In a civilized society, institutions like administration, police and legislature, legal and media, civil society etc. work to prevent the dictatorship of any person or system and to protect every person in the society, to provide him/her justice and respect as an individual. But such institutions are not visible in the Angara story. Their workplace is associated with urban society and middle class. Their presence in the village remains the same. Here Jamna and Heera are in front of Sumer Singh and Nathu Singh. There is no modern organization available to help these two. Heera then angrily



says that the government and the police cannot punish these rapists. All of them have become impotent. You stand up and support me; we will have to punish them. This simple gesture of Heera reminds, the story told by Babasaheb Ambedkar. In the story, she goes to God pleading for her life and honor. The essence of the story was that respect is never achieved, it has to be earned and fought for. Jamna and Heera's struggle is also to achieve this respect. After the failure of police and administration, they themselves decide to do justice and immediately punish the culprit. Such justice is not ideal for any democracy, but for self-defense and respect, Jamna ran into the house and went to the corner. Jamna completed her revenge by punishing the one whom the government and the police could not punish. She removed the private part of Sumer Singh from his body. In this revenge, Jamna takes the help of her brother Heera. Is this the revenge of Jamna or Heera? It is not just one person who is exploiting Jamna but the entire group along with him. There is a Brahmanical system which recognizes the oppression of women in the Puranas and Smritis. The caste which protects even the misdeeds of its people and the administration which becomes neutral in a very cruel manner, then when the oppression is collective then its resistance will also be collective, not individual. You can go alone but you have to fight the corrupt system alone. It is difficult, that is why in this story the author has shown some Dalit youth organizing themselves against the opposing group. The old generation remained inactive but the new generation came forward in the struggle. Jamna found the support of this new generation in the form of her brother. "The journey of our slavery starts from our birth and it will also end with the end of our life. Therefore, the painful sorrow of Jamna emerges in the form of its resistance. The end of the story shows the power of women, who aspire for male support, but not dependent. Yes, Jamna clearly puts forth her situation, her pain in front of everyone regarding the heinous crime that happened to



her and pleads for justice. Her plea spreads awareness among her brother Heera and other young people. Heera's self-respect was awakened. He promises, don't worry sister, Shame on me if I fail to take revenge for your respect from them, I will tell these sinful Chandalas that even the untouchable poor have respect. And he knows how to live with dignity. The credit for awakening this self-respect goes to Jamna, who is the main character of the story. The story begins with her torture and ends with her revenge, her tears of pain which have turned into embers after burning in the fire of determination. Therefore, the revenge in the story is basically the resistance of the Dalit woman. The young Dalit generation has also contributed to this. In fact, there is a whole system behind this misdeed that happened to Jamna.

The religiously accepted tradition of tact between the two castes had determined the master and the slave. In the beginning, Sumer Singh and his family seem to be successful in maintaining this relationship, but in the end, Jamna has severed all the conditions for maintaining the relationship by giving Sumer Singh as if she had cut off the relationship between master and slave. Rejecting egoistic practices, the new identity, and tradition of resistance were adopted by the village's landowning class, which was usually of the upper caste but could also belong to the intermediate castes depending on the region. It is this class that establishes its dominance among the Dalit society. Their basic objective to gain control over production is to control the productive power of Dalits. All the Vedas, Puranas and theology express their beliefs in this direction. To control the productive power, Dalits have been forced to accept the mental slavery of the principles of karma and rebirth. Those scriptures and epics were kept to reinforce this strategy. But against this Mahatma Buddha's, Raidas was the tradition of Jyotiba Phule which was carried into the modern era by Babasaheb. The Constitution of democracy has made the idea of equality, freedom and



justice a fundamental value.

What is the basis of the feeling of revenge in the story? Two reasons can be seen for this. First in relation to land, second in relation to consciousness. Sumer Singh is the representative of the dominant caste in the village. He physically attacks a Dalit girl, scares the villagers at gunpoint, and uses the police station and court for his own ends. On the other hand, there are Jamna, Heera and his society. Jamna's rape seems to be an old form of women's oppression, which Dalit women have been going through for centuries. But her resistance is new in this story. If we pay attention, we will find that if Sumer Singh is a land owner then Heera is also not a land laborer. He also definitely has a piece of land. When he is informed of his sister's plight to return home, he is working in his own fields, not as a slave for someone else. He is also the owner of land, even if it is a small land. This ownership itself fills him with a feeling of independence. If he had worked as a laborer on Sumer Singh's land, perhaps the thought of tolerating injustice would have come to his mind. Not to retaliate. It is the change in this economic status that changes their consciousness. The new consciousness says. That's it! Enough is enough." Expressing this sentiment, Heera says that we respect it does not mean that we should let you play with the respect of our sisters and daughters. This anger is to change the system which discriminates on the basis of birth. Regarding this, Baba Saheb Ambedkar had said that Hindu society is like a tower. It is worth noting that there are different floors (castes) in it but there are no stairs. Jamna and Heera do not want to change their destination but they want to live with dignity where they are. Behind their consciousness is the influence of the thoughts of Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. This change is not just a personal rebellion. Rather, there is an aspiration to get organized. Change in status can be an individual effort, but change in society is possible only through collective effort. Heera also



makes other youths partners in his hatred for Sumer Singh. On the other side of the elders, the youth their blood was boiling. Seeing Heera's courage, other youths also jumped into the field carrying sticks from their huts. Then even women were not left behind. Within no time a war-like situation appeared there. What is worth noting is that everyone else was feeling that it was Sumer Singh's fault and not Jamna's. There is talk of oppression of their caste and clan, but before this no one had so much courage. Everyone had accepted this barbarity as their destiny. They were saying that she used to roam around dressed up but today Heera's courage has awakened her sleeping consciousness. In the story 'Angara', the current events indicate the direction of future social change. In this, Jamna's vengeance is for equality. This is the result of the desire for liberation. The Dalit society crossed the limits within which Jamna wanted freedom. It opens the way for the establishment of freedom and human dignity. Ramanika Gupta gives her opinion on what efforts should be made to establish human dignity - In fact, non-Dalits have to understand that the demand for identity is not nihilistic or separatist but is a part of humanism and it is necessary to help a crippled and broken society. An attempt to provide perfection. Such a literature creates such a feeling that by getting inspired the discrimination not only between humans, not only between religions but also between men and women and mutual harmony and respect can be developed so that people can move away from the narrow confines of Hindutva, religious dogmatism and casteism. Dalit identity could leave its mark in the new construction of a casteless society. Dr. Kusum Meghwal's 'Angara Kahani' begins with the incident of oppression of Dalit women. Through this incident, the casteist character of the Indian social system comes to the fore. In this, we saw that Sumer Singh and Nathu Singh, the upper caste with feudalistic tendencies, consider the Dalit woman Jamna as an object of enjoyment. After warning the entire colony, they



announce that they will continue committing such heinous crimes in future also. His announcement destroys the democratic image of independent India. It exposes the feudal, casteist, varna supremacy, blind to class distinctions, false ostentation and arrogant character of the upper class. As a result of which frustrated and unhealthy actions continue to take place in the society, which hinders a developed society. Similarly, we saw the drunkenness of the upper caste in the story. Saw the increasing courage of the criminal under the protection of the police and the minister. Even after so many years of Independence, we saw the reality of Dalit settlement in the village, how they cannot take enmity with crocodiles while living in water. The elderly Dalits are helpless and dependent on exploitation and abuse. An effort was seen in the new generation of Dalits to bring respect to the humiliation of Dalit woman Jamna. Saw a woman fighting for her identity, saw Dalit girl Jamna transforming her caste defeat and humiliation into victory through struggle, saw the awakening of consciousness of Dalit girl Jamna, found the courage for Heera and other young Dalits to get equal respect and stand up in the fight for their rights. This courage and consciousness takes the form of embers in Jamna, which has the power to burn to ashes the misdeeds that have been going on for centuries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of "Angara" by Dr. Kusum Meghwal has provided us with a profound understanding of Dalit feminism, resistance, and the pursuit of justice within the intricate narrative tapestry. Through the lens of this poignant short story, we have delved into the harsh realities faced by Dalit women in Rajasthan, where societal oppression, entrenched caste Hierarchies, and gender discrimination intersect to shape their experience.



The character of Jamna emerges as a powerful symbol of resilience, embodying the collective Consciousness of a community that refuses to accept subjugation. Dr. Meghwal skillfully Portrays not only the individual responses to injustice but also the collective resistance and Organized activism that arise against oppressive systems. This narrative transcends the fictional Realm, inviting us to scrutinize the socio-economic dynamics and legal challenges faced by Dalit Communities in the real world.

"Angara" serves as more than a literary work; it becomes a mirror reflecting the transformative Power of literature in shaping societal consciousness and fostering change. The nuanced Exploration of Dalit identity within the narrative contributes to a broader understanding of the Complexities embedded in Dalit literature. Beyond the pages of fiction, this research paper prompts us to consider the implications for real-world activism and social transformation. As we conclude this examination, "Angara" stands not only as a story of resistance but also as a Call to action. It challenges us to confront deep-seated inequalities, question societal norms, and actively engage in dismantling structures of oppression. Through the lens of this short story, we are reminded of the enduring spirit that propels the Dalit community towards a future where justice, equality, and dignity are not just ideals but lived realities.

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