

## ***Caste, Gender and Resistance in Bama's Sangati and Karukku.***

Chhotu Paswan

*Research Scholar  
Dept. of English  
LNMU Darbhanga*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Dalit literature** is a literature of protest, pain, and agony. The primary motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits. It has become an effective tool in expressing their protest against the domination of the caste Hindus. Its beginning can be traced to the undocumented oral folklore and tales of the past decades. Dalit literature as a genre was established in the 1960's and 1970's when a spurt of Dalit writings was published in Marathi and Gujarati. Dalit literature is also giving importance to the upliftment and liberation of Dalit women from patriarchal and caste ridden society. Dalit women face more atrocities due to caste and gender discrimination. They are subjected to systematic oppression and structural violence both from the general community and from within their own community and their families. Violence is used to curb the assertion of the rights of Dalit women in particular and of the community in general. Their socio-economic status combined with being a woman and Dalit also increase the incidence of violence against them.

In Bama's *Sangati and Karukku*, Dalit patriarchy is an important subject of concern. Bama criticizes the domestic violence and abuse of Dalit women at home by Dalit men and sexual and occupational harassment faced by them outside their homes at the hands of the upper caste men and the police. Untouchability is one of the greatest evils our country has been facing from the time Immemorial. Untouchability is still seen somewhere in direct form and elsewhere in a subdued way. Dalit women are one of the most marginalized segments in the society. The condition of Dalit women is more vulnerable than non-Dalit women. Dalit women are suffering from multi-disadvantages this paper deals with Dalit issues like daily threats of rape, sexual assaults, physical violence at the workplace, in public arena as well as violence at home.

**KEYWORDS:** Bama, Karukku, Sangati, Untouchability, Double Oppression, Marginalization and Class and Gender

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Bama has remarkably portrayed the sufferings of Dalit women, who are doubly marginalized-being a Dalit and being a woman. In this paper we shall explore Bama's varied representations of Dalit women in *Karukku* and *Sangati* with a view to underline the interface between gender and caste significations in Dalit fiction. Bama's intervention in Dalit literary discourse in the early 1990's made a significant contribution in the arena of gender-caste intersections in the lives of Dalits. Her works foreground the twice cursed lives of Dalit women, oppressed on account of their caste as well as gender, at home and outside, by upper caste men and Dalit men, by the state machinery as well as the family. Bama's writing celebrates Dalit women's subversive strategies to overcome their oppression is depicted in this paper.

*Karukku* which means the searing edges of a Palmyra leaves, is indeed a double-edged sword directed towards the reader which highlights the atrocities caused by the gender discrimination, caste and class division. *Karukku* is the narration of painful memories, despair, disillusionment, dejection, the pathetic conditions of the life, culture of people where women are subjected to sexual harassment and physical assault. Incidents are narrated were again over narrated and reinterpreted each time to express an Oppression of Dalits. Bama's rewriting of self is the rewriting of Dalit history. Bama explains how the male perspective have been encountered and questioned by feminine perspective. Her works voice the emergence of Dalit Literature.

In the beginning of *Karukku*, she starts with a narration of beauty of her village and the village separation in the name based on caste in mountain peaks with different names as Nari Paara, Vannan Paara and vattala vitthamm paara, in the same way lakes, fields streets, fish, food, works, temple are marginalized according to the caste are marked .Like the palmyra leaf (*Karukku*), it sears the reader with its sharpness. Her style in writing was at its finest-fearing nothing, unabashedly radical, shaped by the strength of personal experience. *Karukku* moves from the village to the convent, transverses the marginal communities of the urban poor. Exploitation or oppression of weaker by stronger is as old as mankind itself. The Indian history has been a vibrant record of conflict and dialectic between two opposite forces like exploiters and exploited colonizer and colonized, powerful and powerless. Dalit literature is always marked by revolt and a great struggle of lower caste, against the high-class people commonly known as savarna. In India there is a huge campus of religion situated in the society. There are four major caste divisions in India, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and

Shudra. The lowest caste people came under Shudra's. They are regarded as Dalits. These people are suppressed, humiliated, exploited, discriminated and marginalized in every sphere of life. These people are also regarded as untouchables/ Ahoot/ Harijan. In Indian society some communities are at the lowest step like: Dalits, females, poor, eunuchs, etc. If the woman belongs to Dalit community, they suffered of two types: first being a woman, second belongs to the lowest community. Therefore, it could be said they are "doubly oppressed."

The major focus of in the novel is on the life of Dalit women, right from the birth; the description goes on about how the infants are also shown discrimination for example the boy child is feed longer than the girl child, The labour of the boy and girl which is not proportionate is illustrated. The rituals of puberty and the sufferings of women is subjugated to the man beating and working in the fields for longer hours for a very less pay.

*Sangati* also refers news and the book is full of interconnected events—the everyday happenings of Dalit community. It goes against the notions of traditional novel. The book does not carry any plot in the normal sense, but it is a series of anecdotes. The author herself says the purpose of writing the book in her acknowledgement. Women are presented in *Sangati* as wage earners as much as men as working as agricultural and building side labours, but earning less than men do. Yet the money that earn in their own to spend as they please, whereas women bear the financial burden of running the family. Women are also constantly victim to sexual harassment and abuse in the world of work.

. Bama exposes caste and gender problems both outside and inside the community. *Sangati* focuses generally on Dalit women on various issues such as gender, sexual discrimination. According to Bama "All women in the world are second class citizens. For Dalit women, the problem is grave. Their Dalit identity given them a different set of problems. *Sangati* encapsulates the author's experience of working within an erogenous and appraised society and the series of several interconnected anecdotes, experiences, news and events as narrated in the book, from an autobiography of a community. *Sangati* is a portrayal of many trouble witnessing stories as one's writers Paatti said "Once you are born a woman can you go and confront a group of four or five men?" Should you ever do it?

Bama realistically portrays the physical violence, like lynching, whipping and canning that Dalit woman by fathers, husbands, and brothers. Bama explores the psychological stress and stairs. Her language is also very different from other Indian women writers as she is more generous with the use of Tamil Dalit slogans. She addresses the women of village by using suffix 'Amma' (mother) with their names. The names of places, months, festivals, rituals,

customs, utensils, ornaments, clothes, edibles, games etc. to the names of occupations, the way of addressing relatives, ghosts, sprits etc., she unceasingly uses various Tamil words.

The voices of many women speaking and addressing one another, sharing their everyday experience with each other, sometimes expressed in anger or pain. The language is full of explicit sexual references too. Bama bridges the spoken and written styles of Tamil by breaking the rules of written grammar and spellings. Bama says that man can humiliate woman many times, he can disrespect a woman, it is very normal. But in this partial double minded society woman has no right to spoken out anything. This is acceptable to all.

The postcolonial thrust of her book is in its huge criticism of Indian church. Bama feministically voices out the grievances of Paraiya women. Characters like vellaiamma patti and a small girl and the narrator herself, who learns the story from her grandmother which becomes development of the novel. In novel many strong Dalit women had courage to break the shackles of authority. Bama said they live under pressure and get enjoy their fully life. In India there is prevalence of caste –hierarchy within sub castes of Dalit community.

*Sangati* examines “the difference between women and their different ways in which they are subject to apportion and their coping strategies”. In the novel the language of Dalit women is rich and resourceful giving way to proverbs, folklore and folk songs. Bama as a feminist writer, protests against all forms of oppression and sufferings faced by Dalit women in the first half of *Sangati*. But later part of *Sangati* moves away from the state of depression and frustration. Instead it presents a positive identity to Dalit women focusing their inner strength and vigour. She also attracts our mind towards the education system about Dalit community. She gave the example of Pecchiamma, who belongs to Chakkili community, studied only up to fifth class. The girls of that community do not go to school all that much. Through *Sangati* Bama holds the mirror up to the heart of Dalit women. She makes an appeal for change and betterment of the life of a Dalit woman in the variety of fields, including sex and gender discrimination, equal opportunity in work force, education rights etc. Actually, gives the narrator a key function and controls all the incidents and events in a proper way. The narrator becomes both omniscient narrator and a controlling agent of their story, who speaks out historical aspects of Dalit community through variety of characters, and it becomes development of novel. Bama is clear that no one is going to help the hopeless women in her community, it is up to the woman themselves to take their lives into their own hands. Hard labour and precariousness of Dalit women leads to a culture of violence, and this runs through the novel.

## CONCLUSION

Social discrimination is also a major problem. Dalit people are considered 'untouchable'; higher caste people would not marry a Dalit, invite them into their home or share food with them. Bama asks her community to follow a few things to put an end to the suffering's women. She asks them to treat both boys and girl alike, showing no difference between them as they grow into adults. Girls too much be given freedom and make them realize their strength. Then she is sure that, there will come a day when men and women will live as one, with no difference between them; with equal rights. Then injustices, violence and inequalities will come to an end, and she is sure that the saying 'Women can make and women can break' will come true and "such a day will dawn soon."

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