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BAMA'S IMAGE OF DALIT WOMAN IN SANGATI

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ABSTRACT

Bama make a special emphasis on how the women folk were naturally skilled and instinctive in performed them. In Sangati she focused on the double oppression of females. The images of Dalit women, their pain, situations and which has an impact on our emotional feelings. Women were presented in Sangati as wage earners as much as men were working as agricultural and building-site laborers, but earning less than men do. Yet the money that men earn is their own to spend as they please, whereas women bear their financial burden of running the family, often alone. Women were constantly victim to sexual harassment and abuse in the world of work. Bama exposes the gender problem both outside and inside the community. Sangati focuses generally on Dalit women on various issues such as gender, sexual discrimination, etc. According to Bama, "All women in the world are second class citizens. For Dalit women, the problem is grave. Their Dalit identity has given them a different set of problems. They experience a total lack of social status. Even they are not considered dignified human beings. In characters like Vellaiyamma, Bama realistically portrays the physical violence like lynching, whipping and canning that Dalit women undergo by fathers, husbands and brothers. Bama explores the psychological stress and stairs faced by Dalit women. The voices of many women speaking and addressing one another, sharing their everyday experience with each other, sometimes expressed in anger or pain. But in this partial double minded society woman has no right to speak out anything that is acceptable to all. In the novel, many strong Dalit women had courage to break the shackles of authority. Bama said they live under pressure and get to enjoy their life completely. Key notes: Violence, Dalit woman, community and sexual discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

The word Dalit was first used by Ambedkar in preference to his own earlier term "Scheduled Castes", it only gained common currency following what might be called the second wave of the Marathi Dalit movement, that is to say, with the founding of the Dalit Panthers in 1972. In Tamilnadu, the term had been used intermittently along with taazhtapaattor(those who have been put down) or odukkappattor(the oppressed) during the eighties, but it is only since the nineties that it has been used widely, not only by Tamil Dalit writers and ideologues in order to identify themselves, but also by mainstream critics, in order to single them out. The mainstream critics have begun to acknowledge Dalit writing as radically new and different. The word Dalit comes from Marathi and meaning 'oppressed' or 'ground down', is not without problems in

Tamilnadu but it has been appropriated for particular reasons: it does away with reference to caste, and points to a different kind of nationwide constituency; specifically, it signals the militancy of their Dalit Panthers, their broad definition of 'Dalit' and their professed hope of solidarity with all oppressed groups. As Raj Gauthaman wrote, 'Dalits, who have for so long been treated as commodities owned by others must shout out their selfhood, their "I" when they rise up'. Yet in contrast with Marathi, we have a few autobiographies among which Sangati has a special significance. The contributors to Dalit Penniyam (Dalit Feminism) point out repeatedly that the Dalit struggle has tended to forget a gender perspective. Sangati teases out the way patriarchy works in the case of Dalit women. In Sangati Bama describes the violent treatment of women by fathers, husbands and brothers and she describes the violent domestic quarrels which are carried on publicly, where sometimes women fight back. She explores the psychological stresses and strains of Dalit women. She brings out the real position of the womenfolk in general and Paraiya women in particular. She has vigorously recorded the experiences of tortures, hurts, humiliation meted out to the womenfolk in Dalit community. She brings out the ignorance of women, violence upon them, and domination of the upper caste men and also suggests remedies to come out of the humiliation. Through the novel she appeals that only a Dalit woman like her can make a change through education and self-empowerment. In a way, she becomes a role model to all the Dalits. Bama thinks of the past events and describes them throughout the character Pathima. The book deals with several generations of women; the older women belonging to the narrator's grandmother Vellaiyamma Kizhavi's generation downward to the narrators' own and the generation coming after her as she grows up.

Bama makes clear her intention in her Acknowledgements in Sangati:

"My mind is crowded with many anecdotes: stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture; their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim vigorously against the tide; about the self-confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over their adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them; about their passion to live with vitality, truth and enjoyment, about their hard labor. I wanted to shout out these stories".

Bama is originally known as Faustina Mary Fatima Rani. Bama is the pen name of a Tamil Dalit woman, from a Roman Catholic family. She was born in the year 1958 at Puthupatti, Madras state, India. She is a Dalit feminist and novelist. She rose to fame with her autobiographical novel *Karukku* (1992), which chronicles the joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamilnadu. *Her themes are mainly about the Tamil Dalit Christian, focusing on caste and gender discrimination practiced in it. Her works all are the embodiment of Dalit feminism, famed for celebrating the inner strength of the subaltern woman.* Bama narrates the stories that were born in the crucible of experience. Bama's writings capture the exclusiveness of the folk narrative in its unique, expressive idiomatic style, which is conveyed through a plain raw passionate language of emotions. *Bama's narrative seems to be a brilliant composition of simple life-situations with the hint of serious socio-political factors.* The so-called elite writers have branded the subaltern language to be submissive, but Bama proves it to be more assertive, independent, energetic and reactive than the literary language supposed to be befitting the aesthetics of mainstream literature. Dalit life has its own style, vernacular, culture and identity which are in its minute length details captured by Bama in her narratives. The sense of communal life and intimate relationship with the group can be felt while reading her texts. The very form of the novel floats the traditional notions of writing a novel and the language of the novel are very close to that of the spoken language of that community of people in the world. Bama deliberately uses the vernacular which disturbs the reader, to capture the agony and rebellious nature of the oppressed. Throughout her works she breaks the rules of grammar, spelling and earthly language. Words like she-donkey, bastard, savage, mind its shocks the reader, but that is what Dalit language is like. Bama gives an account of nicknames which again is a typical Dalit culture of the most often found missing the diplomatic upper class society. Eg. Munkovam (short temper), Naadodi (wanderer), Kaaturasu (king of the forest) are some of the nicknames she uses in her works. These names are highly interactive, lively, which depicts the Dalits and the characteristic feature of their language. Even while it is subjected to the severest of oppressions, the language of the subaltern is informed by a

rhythmic lyrical quality. Her writing encloses several samples of witty rhymes and verses made up on the spur of the moment to fit an occasion.

Bama's language in her writing is also a very different one 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.

She unceasingly uses Tamil words in the name of the places, month, occupation, festival, rituals, customs, games, edible etc. As a feminist writer, she adopts an appropriate style to depict the exploitations and marginalization of women in the patriarchal society. As a self-conscious Dalit writer, Bama experiments with the form and theme of this novel and brings out a political edge to the experiences recorded in the novel. **She is considered to be the torchbearer of the Dalit literacy movement in Tamilnadu.** Her writing style is a mixture of photographic realism and creative interpretation and the combination of these two elements is organically united to evolve a call for practical action against all sorts of discriminations that are prevalent in the society.

Her notable novels are:

- *Karukku* (1992)
- *Sangati* (1994)
- *Vanmam* (2002)

Her notable short stories are:

- *Kusumbukavan* (1996)
- *Oru Tattuvam Erumaiyum* (2003)

Images of Dalit Women:

Sangati does justice to its title by narrating the news, happenings, and events in the lives of several Dalit women. Bama records the struggles, tribulations, frustrations as well as the triumphs, joys and survival of Dalit women. Injustice, humiliation is met by Dalit women mainly on the basis of gender discrimination and caste. The narrator who is a young girl in the early chapters grows pensive due to the myriad events happening around her. As she grows into a young woman she stresses on the need for change and is calling out for action against the atrocities that happen to the girls and the women in her community.

Sangati pictures the violent treatment of women by fathers, husbands, and brothers, and she describes the violent domestic quarrels which are carried on publicly, where sometimes women fight back. It is the voices of many women speaking to and addressing one another as they share the incidents of their daily lives. These voices, sometimes raised in anger or in pain as they lash out at each other, or against their oppressors reported exactly. Such a language is full of expletives, quite often with explicit references. Bama suggests several reasons for the violence of this language, and its rude nature. Bama shows gender discrimination meted out by her community throughout their lives. Throughout each chapter Bama describes and presents the conditions of women, which is discussed as follows.

In chapter one the plight of women is presented. Bama brings out the plight of a Dalit woman right from their childhood. There was no difference between boys and girls in the village. But when parents brought up the children they showed much concern towards the boys. Therefore, the boys were very proud and haughty. Even when they are infants the society shows discrimination

In Bama's words,

"Boys are given more respect. They'll eat as much as they wish and run off to play. As for the girls, they must stay at home and keep on working all the time, cleaning vessels, drawing water, sweeping the house, gathering firewood, washing clothes, and so on" - *Sangati* (pg.no.07)

The character Vellaiyamma Kizhavi, grandmother of the narrator Pathima, got married when she was fourteen years old. Her husband was Goyindan. Their life was going smoothly. After four years of marriage, the couple got two children. The narrator's mother Sevathi was the youngest one and when she was three-month-old baby, Goyindan left the village. He went to Srilanka to work in a tea estate. Later, did not return to the village. Vellaiyamma kizhavi struggled a lot to bring up the two children. One day Paati told the story behind the name of the boy, Kaaturasa. His mother's name was Pachamuukipillai. She got married at her young age and became the mother of four or five children. Once she was pregnant again and went to the fields to cut

grass. There she got the labor pain and gave birth to the child by herself, as there was no medical facility to avail. Pathima asked grandma why the lady had to go to work when she was full term pregnant. The grandmother said that if they did not go to work, they could not get any food. It was the condition of every Paraiya woman. They could not depend on their parents or their husbands. Only women had to work as men and they had to take care of their children and the home. The husbands never did anything except beating the women.

The Paraiya women were suppressed a lot. The women in the narrator's street had very painful lives. Each and every day they faced blows and blood. They were treated like slaves. The parents always gave much importance to the boy babies. They did not let the boy babies cry whereas they ignored if the girl babies cried. If the boy babies became ill the parents immediately took them to the hospital, but it was not the same with the girls.

Moreover, Girls are not allowed to play games such as kabadi or marbles or chellaanguchi. If they play, they will be roundly abused.

"People will say who does she think she is? She's just like a donkey, look. Look at the way she plays boys' games." - *Sangati*, Chapter one(pg.no. 07)

The women received blows not only from their men, but also from the upper-caste men. The Paraiya women, especially young girls were told not to go to the fields alone because if they fell in the evil eyes of the upper caste landowners, they would try to rape the Paraiya girls. They were not even allowed to go to cinema theatres. If they went out alone, the men would pierce them by their looks.

At homes the women are meted out only blows and humiliation. It is evident in the case of Pathima's periamma. Pathima's aunt has been married to Samudrakani but he is not as good as Paati thought. He is a brute and he tortures his wife like an animal. He is a lustful man. There are quarrels, blows and violence in their life. He hit his wife in front of the Paati and other members of the street. But no one could stop him. At last, paati's elder daughter dies giving her third daughter Seyyakodi, who was only four years old. It is the condition of almost all the paraiya women. Bama's grandmother tells her of her aunt's death.

"I reared a parrot and then handed it over to be mauled by a cat". - *Sangati*, Chapter one(pg.no.10)

INJUSTICE AND MALE CHAUVINISM

The story of Mariamma is not a mere story of a girl, but it is a representation of the situation of every girl in a paraiya community. It tells a lot about the sexual assault faced by Dalit women and their inability to stand up against it. Bama is very careful in portraying the picture of a Dalit-woman. Her story who must get back to work soon after puberty, there is no romantization of poverty, but a brave practical approach. Usually when a girl attains puberty, she was confined within a kuchulu for a few days and follow certain rituals and customs. But as for Mariamma, the situation was worse. Her life was so miserable as she was pushed into a situation where she is supposed to take care of her family and so she pulled down the Kuchulu by herself, burnt it and set off for work.

"Her mother went and died. Her father is a drunkard" - *Sangati* (pg.no.16)

This line explains the encumber and the reason of Mariamma to look after her family. As she was the eldest sister, she had to earn for the daily kanji. She behaved like a matured woman. She was to take care of her sisters and so went to work on digging well. Poverty pushed her to work in the fields, immediately after she was discharged from the hospital. She, along with her sister Annamma began to work in the fields, weeding or harvesting. Though her father did not care for her, she was much fearful of him. This is a result of male chauvinism.

Many injustices were laid against women in their society. Such an example is the scrape of Mariamma. One day as she gathered her firewood as usual, she went to drink a couple of mouthful of water, near pumpset. She was seized and pulled in by Kumarasami an owner in upper-caste. Mariamma frightened out of wits, she ran out and told her friends about the incident. But they felt the landowner being rich as well as an upper-caste man, they could not stand against him and advised her not to reveal the matter to anybody because the real story would be turned against her.. Kumarasami feeling afraid of his reputation and spur-out-of a moment to Seeniappan, the nataamai of the paraiya community and complained that Mariamma and Manikam (belonging to Paraiya community) were misbehaving. Believing his words, and no one dares to

question him, called in for a meeting that night. The naattaamai believed blindly whatever the upper-caste land owner charged. Even when a chance was given to them to give an explanation from their side, the chance was first given to Mannikkam. But the Panchayat did not rely on their words. Although, other women knew the truth and they were trying to come forward they were not allowed to say. But they were not allowed to speak in the Panchayat.

From the group of women, Kaliaamma said, as if she was speaking to herself, "that akka Mariamma went away with her firewood a long time before all the rest of us. Machaan Manikkam helped to lift my bundle on to my head, and then walked home behind me. How could these two, possibly have met and misbehaved? This is really unjust. Look at the cheek of the mudalali. He came here as fast as he could and told his fibs"

Even as she was saying this four or five of the men got up once again and shouted at us. "Will you she –donkeys get out of here or do we have to stamp on you? The more we drive the wretches away, the more they come back and make trouble! Once again the women were silenced"

- Sangati (pg.no.23)

From this it is patent that women were not allowed to express even their opinions. Here, in society the women are voiceless. They have to be a silent sufferer.

Finally, Mariamma was asked to beg forgiveness before the panchayat. Samudrakani also forced her to beg forgiveness. When Mariamma expressed the truth that it was only the land owner, Kumarasamy who tried to rape her. The whole men-crowd shouted at her and called her a whore. Samudrakani came forward to kick his daughter Mariamma. Being terrified of her father's blows she asked for forgiveness. But Manikkam was not asked to beg forgiveness.

Injustice is pictured also in another instance where Mariamma is fine with rupees two hundred and Manikam is fined with only rupees one hundred, he is not asked to prostrate in front of the panchayat. She could not raise her voice against men. Not only Mariamma even the elder grandma couldn't raise her voice.

Although both men and women came after a hard day's work in the field. The men went straight to the bazaar or chavadi to while away their time, coming home only for their meal. But as for women they return home, wash vessels clean the house, collect water, go to the shops to buy rice and other provision, boil some rice, make a Kozhambu or a kanji, feed husband and children before they eat what is left over and go to bed. Women were not allowed to take part on any occasion, the men themselves would dress up and act as women rather than allow them to join in.

When Pathima asked her Grandma, why didn't she speak the truth, though she was a big woman in the village. But granny gave a negative reply. Paati advised her that it would be better not to open their mouths against men.

"What do we know about justice? From your ancestors' times it has been agreed that what the men say is right. Don't you go dreaming that everything is going to change just because you've learnt a few letters alphabet?" - Sangati (pg.no.23)

Pathima accused Paati for treating them unequally. Because only the elderly women from the beginning showed much concern about boys rather than girls. It was like putting butter in one eye and quicklime in the other eye. It was the parent who did not allow the girls to talk or laugh loudly. Only the parents restricted the women from their free movement. Even in the earlier days women were after men. The life of the women in the community was really a hell. Everywhere men were at first and exploited women.

The pitiful women have to escape from the upper-caste men's molestations. Bama touches on the question of the church on broader lines. Parish priests are not sympathetic towards women's individual choice of life partners. They are given the meanest jobs in the church with the promise of a 'reward in heaven'. Women do not get proper food or drink. Many women die in childbirth or soon after. As it is, the families keep going only because of the women.

Mariamma's life was destroyed and she was made the scapegoat, because of some upper-caste man's foolishness. Bama makes us to understand through her narration that if a woman is slandered, it is her fate. People won't consider whether the accusation is true or not, nor they will allow the woman to speak out. The grief-stricken situation of Dalit women is depicted through a character Thaayi., Who was beaten by her

husband. When others protested the beating, Thaayi's husband became enraged and said that it was his wife so he could kill her if she wished. Pathima thought that one should never be born a woman in this world. All cruelties happened to a woman just as they were tied with the Tali around their necks. Moreover, the wives could not easily leave the husbands because the tradition would not let them live alone. Till their death, the women had to suffer with their husbands. Bama, through the narrator expresses her anger towards the society.

"I wanted to get hold of all those who had brought her to this state, bite them, chew them up, and spit them out."- Sangati (pg.no.42)

" Well, Amma, just because he's tied a tali round her neck, does it mean he can beat his wife as he likes? It's just pitiful to see Thaayi, Amma"- Sangati (pg.no.43)

Vellaiyamma kizhavi's stories about the spirits that haunted Dalit women make Bama conclude that these stories are concocted to push women to a subservient position. Dalit women are an easy prey to these stories because of their repressed state. Overworked and exploited both in the family and in society, these women give vent to their mental agony in their spirit-possessed state. The story of Esakki shows us that a girl is not allowed to lead a life as per as she wish. Even after death, their wishes couldn't be fulfilled and so they wander as evil spirits. Pathima was not ready to believe in these stories .

She wondered why the ghost caught only their caste women and why the ghost did not haunt any upper-caste women she examined the lives of such Dalit women. Only the lower-caste women woke up early in the morning, cleaned homes, went to work in the fields and after returning from homes, they had to do all the house hold works and look after their children and husband. At night they could not sleep peacefully. As they had no strength both physically and mentally, they were oppressed and became affected with mental problems. Only for these reasons, the women in the low-caste pretended as if they were caught by a ghost. Pathima understood that only the lack of physical and mental strength was the cause for being possessed by ghost and dance and that was the only way to find expression for their anger and thoughts.

By these events, Bama points out that a Dalit woman must be strong, show by their resolute lives, never allow their mind to be worn out or damaged.

"I decided then that it is up to us to be aware of our situation, and not fool ourselves that we have been possessed by peys"

" Just as we work hard so long as there is strength in our bodies, so too, must we strengthen our hearts and minds in order to survive"- Sangati (pg. No. 59)

As the novel proceeds Bama presents the positive images of Dalit women, as she compares their life with the upper-caste women. This is not only a comparison, but it also represents the predicament of women in general.

Bama brings out that women are suppressed not only in their caste, but also in upper caste. They are being treated as slaves to men. It is not the same for women of other castes and communities. At home, they cannot bear the violence of their husband and at the fields they are tormented by the upper-caste masters. Besides this, they are treated with contempt as is they have no sense of honor or self-respect. But even the upper-caste women are shut within the four walls. A Dalit woman by shouting and fighting, survive without going crazy. But the upper-caste women can neither express nor shout. They lose their nerve and become unstable or mentally ill. Consciously or unconsciously Dalit women manage to survive in the world with the best they can and try to cope up with it.

"Upper-caste women, though, keep it all suppressed; they can neither chew nor swallow. They lose their nerve, and many of them become unstable or mentally ill. If you look at it like that, our women have an abundant will to survive, however hard they might have to struggle for their last breath"- Sangati (pg. No. 68)

A woman's body, mind, feelings, words and deeds, and her entire life are all under her husband's control and domination and women too have accepted that woman's happiness lies in being

enslaved to men. Only when women realize that they too have their own self-worth, honor, self-respect, they could manage their own life in their own way.

In presenting the positive images of Dalit women she narrates the life of a little girl named Maikkani. It is Bama's admiration for the women of her community, from the little girl who supports her mother and her family by working in a matchbox factory. In their community, the small-children do not enjoy their childhood, the entire community would expect them to behave like a matured woman, even at the age of 7 or 8. Many girls wake up at cockcrow and work in the match factory all day, so they go to sleep immediately after their evening kanji, or even without drinking it. It is women who have to struggle with childcare and everything else.

"Yet how many jobs they are able to do simultaneously, spinning about like tops! Even machines can't do as much"- *Sangati* (pg.no.78)

Though the marriage of Dalit women is hard-pressed into despondent situations with a few superstitious beliefs, there is enhanced life among them. The marriage ceremony of paraiya community was ridiculed by the upper-caste people. They considered it as a beggar's ceremony and it seemed to them lacking in refinement. But Pathima thought high of her costume because their people never got dowry, and the women were allowed to marry a second time after the death of their husbands. There was no such widow alienating system. Sometimes, some women never wear a Mangal sutra (tali) the widows were given equal chances in all functions as the married women were given.

"Some women marry a second time after the death of a husband. That is quite normal among us. On the other hand, among the other communities of our village, you can see straight away, the indignities suffered by widows. In our street, though, everyone holds the same; widows are not treated differently."-*Sangati* (pg.no.90)

The story of Pechiamma and her second marriage made Pathima to wonder that in chakkili community there is a chance of breaking their marriage and getting a second marriage, if they are unable to bear the tortures of the husband. The head person of the village would call for a meeting and broke off the marriage.

But in Pathima's Christian Paraiya community there was no such chance. The women had to live with only their husbands, though their life was not smooth. Because of the husband's torture, many women from their community committed suicide.

Bama gives emphasis on the system where Christians (paraiya being converted) restrict them with certain rules in marriage, whereas Hindus can lead life as they wish.

"Had we stayed as Hindus, our women would have had the chance of divorce at least. But in everything else, we're all in the same position."-*Sangati* (pg.no.97)

This line explains that women are being suppressed with certain restrictions even in the name of religion.

Dalit women were deprived of education and equality. They were not able to vote the candidate whom they wished. They had to vote as their husbands directed. Moreover, their ignorance did not make them realize the worth of being a citizen. When the narrator expressed her anger to her mother that in the name of party, God, religion, caste, priest, and *a bible*, gospel, the upper caste men made them puppets in their puppets, her mother said that poor women could not do anything. Pathima's anger shows that it is the parents who underestimate the women folk. Her narrations point out that women could take all responsibilities, the community should reorganize about their conditions and learn to live with self-respect, independence and equality with good education.

"The women are in a worse position. More than half never go and vote. Give how many women there are altogether, there is much as we could achieve. We could demand the rights that are due to us. We could fling away the beggarly coins the party workers bother to give us when they ask us to vote for them, and elect an MLA from our own community. We could demonstrate our own strength through political power. Instead of all that.... I can't help thinking about all this."-*Sangati* (pg. No. 103)

Even though Dalit women are deprived of their right to vote, where they are threatened by their men as well as the upper-caste to vote for the person they say, sometimes Dalit women make use of the situation and act promptly.

The restrictions such as women are not allowed to go to cinema, whereas men are allowed to go. The fear that men would assault them was one of the reasons. The notion that only Dalits would be assaulted whereas men would not even other caste women because they had caste power, money. Dalit could not stand up against them.

In regard of inter-caste marriages, community agreed when a boy gets married to another caste girl, but if a girl marries another caste man, they protested and tortured her. There would be only quarrels. This is evident from the life of a girl being mentioned by Bama. As the girl fell in love with a Palla boy, the girl was beaten up in her house every day by her father and her brother. Though she was an educated girl she was being tortured in terms of caste and creed. The saying that 'if a man marries outside his caste, it is nothing. But if a girl marries outside her caste, the honor and pride of the whole community is lost' is prevalent not only in Paraiya community but also to all other caste women. This discrimination and agony are applicable to educated women too.

"So it's only the girls with little or no education, and who go work in the fields, who will choose to marry boys of their own community and caste. If they cannot get married in the proper way, they will have together anyway. But a girl who has a little education and has progressed somewhat, is not allowed to seek a like-minded man, and certainly not marry anyone of her choice." - *Sangati* (pg. No. 109)

The condition of an educated woman who knew better about the happenings in the civilized world where she is not allowed to choose a man of her own heart and are forced to live within a border line, is a pathetic situation. The question which the narrator arises regarding the benefit of those boundaries makes the reader think about this situation of women. This is presentation of women in general.

As the novel proceeds towards the end, the narrator points out the benefits of being a "paraichi". The women in upper-caste are suffering many untold sufferings such as widow system and their condition of being confined within "four walls". But on the other side paraichi, do not use the "widow". They treat everyone as same. In case of other caste if a girl is born, they would grieve as they have to give dowries and bear all the cost of her marriage. But such a situation does not prevail in Dalit community. They allow both girl and boy to grow and go to work, which is lacking in other communities.

Women of other caste do not clean the churches, it is only the paraichi women who go and keep it clean. But when they question others, they are being fooled in the name of God's blessings.

Even the educated paraichi sometimes do not mix with their own community and they behave like an upper-caste women.

The event which the narrator states about her own life where she as an unmarried educated girl finds it difficult to seek even a rent house and she is being questioned for many reasons. Only after she revealed her identity, she is being questioned more. Not only in the society, but also in her working place.

"But even though I think and agonize like this, I know that my own situation is not so bad. Somehow, I have a little education, I earn a living, and stand on my own two feet. But when I think of the women from my community who can't tell "a" from "aa", and bend low to receive endless blows at home and at work, I am filled with frustration." - *Sangati* (pg.no. 122)

The narrator is concerned more about the conditions of her community women. This is the effect of feminism, which made her to feel and seek a judgement for women.

Thus, Bama presents the condition of women of her caste, their strength as well as weakness and compares their life to that of the upper-caste women. She presents the images of women in general to a few extent. *Sangati* is rooted in everyday happenings: of women working together, preparing and eating food, celebrating and singing, bathing and swimming. In this way, a positive picture is built up of certain freedoms which Dalit women possess: no dowry is required of them, for example; the symbols of marriage such as the tali do not have such a binding significance as in other communities; widows are not discriminated against, may re-marry if they choose.

Throughout the book, Bama explores a Dalit woman's relationship to her body in terms of diet, health and safety, sexuality and notions of modesty. Bama supports her folk by concluding with the saying,

"Women can make and women can break".

CONCLUSION:

As Roseanne Barr's saying,

"The thing women yet to learn is nobody gives you power. You take it",

It is in the hands of women to become stronger and change the attitude, both women and men should live as one, with no difference between them and with equal rights. And by doing so, the injustices, violence, and inequalities will come to an end are all appreciable. As per my concern through this novel and examining the images of women I conclude that women folk should come forward to support and each other. They should not stop themselves within a blind boundary. They should understand that even a woman can achieve more and the society should also go in regard to it. Society must bring both boys and girls in equal terms.

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