



Vol.5. S1., 2018

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

**DOUBLE MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN DALIT SOCIETY PORTRAYED IN SANGATI BY  
BAMA**

**S. ROHINI**

I MA English Literature, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women,  
rohinimuthukutty@gmail.com

The word Dalit is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dal' which means downtrodden or oppressed. These are the people who were called Untouchables, Harijans and nowadays these people are increasingly calling themselves as 'Dalit'. They faced discrimination right from the ancient period. Women from these communities face both caste and gender discrimination and they were doubly marginalized. Bama's *Sangati* expose lives of Dalit women who face double disadvantage of caste and gender.

Bama was a pen name of Bama Faustina Soosairaj a Tamil Dalit Feminist and novelist. She was born on 1985 in the Madras State. Bama's ancestors were from the Dalit community and worked as agricultural laborer. With the encouragement of a friend, Bama wrote on her childhood experiences. These experiences formed the basis for her autobiography, *Karukku* published in 1992. Bama followed it with *Sangati* in 1994 and *Kusumbukkaran* collection of short stories in 1996 and *Vanmam* novel in 2002 and *Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum* short stories collection in 2003. Bama got a loan and set up a school for Dalit children in Uttirameru. Bama's *Karukku* has been translated to English and *Kusumbukkaran* and *Sangati* to French. *Karukku* was however critically acclaimed and won the Crossword Book Award in 2000.

'Sangati' means news, events and happenings; the book is one of interconnected anecdotes. *Sangati* moves from the story of individual struggle to the perception of a community of paraiya women, a neighbourhood group of friends and relation and their joint struggle. In this sense, *Sangati* is perhaps "the autobiography of a community". *Sangati* is not like other novels with a specific plot, but it is a collection of events narrated by the protagonist Patima. She show how women are being oppressed, ruled and still being ruled in names of patriarchy, government, caste and religion.

Bama's novels focus on caste and gender discrimination. They portray caste- discrimination practiced in Christianity and Hinduism. It contains the themes of growth, decline, culture and liveliness of Dalit women. The theme of Dalit consciousness is carried out immensely in her works.

*Sangati* was originally written in Tamil in 1994. It was translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom into English. The whole narrative is divided into twelve chapters. The novel through individual stories, anecdotes and memories portrays the events that take place in the life of a woman in paraiya community. The novel also exposes how Paraiya women were doubly marginalized by caste and gender. *Sangati* shows three generations of women; protagonist's grandmother, mother and the protagonist Patima.

The narrator in the early chapter a young girl who speaks about the discriminations faced in her childhood and in the later chapters she grew up into a young woman who is the replica of Dalit women not only how they face trouble and but also express their habit, custom, tradition beliefs, ideas, opinion, keenness, imagination and their fashion.

Analyzing under feminist theory in this novel right from the childhood female born in this community were marginalized. Boys were bossing over them everywhere. Even in games girls should not play the games that where meant for boys if they were playing boys game they would tease them. She is asked to eat only

after every male member in the family finish eating their meal. Only the left-over foods of male are women's feast. In fact, even the quality of food served to the girls is much poorer than the kind of which is served to boys. All the household works like cleaning, cooking, laundry, baby-sitting, etc. are done by the girls whereas the boys enjoy playing games or hanging out with their friends in the village. Despite this, the girls in the village are not provided good education unlike the boys. They will get married them as soon they become matured. The boys are kept free from all sorts of responsibilities that they should take up whereas the girls are overburdened with numerous endless toilsome everyday activities. Because of industrialization, child labour is recruited from the village and their struggle is shown through the character Maikanni.

As a young woman she describes the evilness of marriage that shows women discriminations, village practices like panchayat and Christianity shows the caste discriminations. Protagonist shows the incidents that Mariamma, Rakkamma, Thaayi are treated violently by their husbands, and they were abused by every means since they married a man of no manners.

The older women in novel were pretend to be the believers of superstitious elements and make their mind that they are slaves of men. They don't believe in progress and say "Don't dream that everything is going to change just because of you've learnt a few words of alphabet" (Bama39). Patima echoes in frustrations because of those who don't believe in progress of their dwells. Shewants their people to realize that they too have their own self-worth, honor, and self-respect. Bama has brought out many things that happen to Dalit women by using Dalit Tamil dialect; she found that *Sangati* is in the voice of many suffering women, sometimes these voices are raised in anger or in pain.

The women in *Sangati* were poorer; they don't have social, economic, and mental support. They are living by their daily wages; their husbands do not bother to give his earnings to them. Men earns, goes to market place spent everything lavishly. Women wake up, set to work after completing morning kanji, there is back-breaking work besides harassment of the landlords, they return home evening with no time to breath, they collected water and fire wood for night meal, cook a kanji, fed their hungry husband and children, even now they can't go to bed in peace and sleep, night after night they must satisfy their husbands pleasure. For women because of all sorts of pressure, they lose their strength and become good for nothing.

The violation of women takes place since their birth. It is because of women, women are deprived. Mothers were more concern for male child than female child, suppression found its foundation from there. They treated badly by their father, bother, husband and by their children. They were ill-treated merely by the creature named 'man'. However women work very hard they get the wages only less than men. A serious question arrows in her mind that why can't women be treated the same way as men are.

Then she analyzed that it was men and upper caste make who women's mind that they are slaves to them. From the initial stage they make the male children to feel superior to women. When the male children grow older, they were given more respect. So they were bossing over female. They don't give any respect or regards for woman even that is his mother. They control over women and find pleasure. They lay down the law that their word is scripture.

Older Women on the other hand were so innocent. That they say that a woman becomes a corpse without a husband, and single-handedly. Even if the husband is good for nothing she must accept him and must suffer till her death. Many sufferings that a woman faces because of men and men's ignorance of women. Even in panchayat women's were not allowed to speak so that innocent Mariamma will be punished and that will be the end of her life.

Even if the mistake is done by men it is better for women to keep their mouth closed. If she opens her mouth to reveal the truth that she will get herself blamed and she will be called a whore, "whatever a man does in the end the blame falls on women" (Bama20).

They feel being women especially Dalit women lead especially hard. When young girls come of age, they made hut out of Palmyra fronds and got her to sit there for sixteen days. She must not come out of that for these sixteen days. But even after that women are never let out saying that "If upper-caste fellows clap eyes on you, you're finished" (Bama8) and "the pey always grab hold of young girls as soon as it claps eyes on them" (Bama46). They want the young girls to believe that their happiness and comfort are only with husband. Life outside is so hard.

The old women like Vellaiyamma Kizhavi, Maikulz Kizhavi do not believe in development, they say "As if the entire paraiya community is going to make progress just because these are going to school" (Bama39) Sometimes the young mind will say however much we strain to leap forward, caste holds us down like a tap root. But they have enough courage to take up all sortsof responsibilities. The more educated one, tend to move away, seeking different lives. The courage of Sammuga Kizhavi is admired by everyone and the protagonist also say that only ten people of Sammuga Kizhavi's guts can make a drastic change in their community.

Becoming literate and learning things women come to know that they were separating them in the names of God, party and caste. Even though this novel is based on Dalit feminism, it does not deal with fear, shyness, simplicities, innocence, modesty rather it deals with courage, fearlessness, independence, fight back and self-esteem.

She also said that one must educate the girl child alike the male child, showing no difference between them as they grow into adults. Then the injustices, violence, and inequalities will come to an end. The protagonist had a serious hope that the time will come soon when men and women both treated as same.

The solution for discrimination is that some moral values should be taught for student from young age. They should be educated to treat all same, showing no difference. The younger children should not be influenced by caste and gender discrimination. There should not be any sorts of discrimination at any level. This is only in the hands of society and individual people in the society to make the new world where there will be no discrimination and a human being will be treated as a human being and not a living being who is living a life worse than that of mere animals, which had been the lot of Dalit women down the ages.

**Work Cited**

Bama. *Sangati* Events. Oxford University Press.2005. Print.

---