

AN ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CASTE AND GENDER IN BAMA'S NOVELS

Abstract

Dalit literature describes the discrimination and exploitation Dalits experience in a caste-based society. Dalit writing monitors Dalits' cultural and social existence as a political writing technique and politically writing encourages resistance. Bama is a Tamil Christian Dalit author who focuses on the life of Dalits in Tamil Nadu. This article analyses Bama's novel Sangathi as a representation of Dalit people and considers how gender and caste serve as tools of dual injustice in their daily lives. This important feminist interpretation of the novel from a Dalit feminist perspective sheds light on the oppression of women in the Paraiya group as a result of their connections to numerous social structures, including as marriage, electoral politics, and education. At the same time, we observe how the structure and subject matter of this work inspire resistance to the injustice that women deal with on a daily basis.

Keywords: cultural, social justice, Dalit Literature, education, caste-based society.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, a Tamil Dalit's reflective writing of Karukku of Bama and Sangati is (re)positioned. The author performs a multidisciplinary examination of Dalit narrative conversations based on the combined lineage of Bakhtin's ideas and feminist dialogues to comprehend the construction of dialogical spaces as spaces that subordinate and undermine. This essay addresses the interpretation of Bama by appropriating different registers—self, linguistic, and ethnology—and dialectal Tamil to the radicalization of Tamil Dalit's consciousness through a demarcation of tale interbreeding in Karukku and Sangati. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the intricate relationship between caste and gender in Vanmam with a focus on Dalit female participation. Dalit writers in Tamils explore the authors' responses to themes relating to Dalits' caste identity and the trade in a gender social matrix during the second half of the twentieth century, which was characterized by a vibrant literary production. The novel under study is an active decade in Tamil literary discussion that gave rise to a new, varied voice that questioned cultural and literary stereotypes, set new standards, and developed fresh perspectives on literary paradigms. Dalit women subject themselves to apologies, tears, seeking safety for males, cursing their femininity, and speaking of their inability to maintain their virginity for themselves on a regular basis. Instead of being viewed as fighters like in Bama's tales, they are portrayed as victims.

II. A DYNAMIC INTERSECTION WITH GENDER AND CASTE

Dalit literature is a call to action, a literature of suffering. Its early origins can be linked to earlier oral mythologies and histories that were not recorded. When a flood of Dalit writing in Gujarati and Marathi was produced in the 1960s and 1970s, a genre of Dalit literature emerged. His identify was first made known in the Tamil Dalit's literary map of Tamilnadu approximately two decades ago. A Dalit woman is a Dalit woman in the middle of Dalits. A Dalit woman, despite being demoralized by a patriarchal and caste-based culture, always possesses the unfathomable strength and tenacity to rise beyond all obstacles. The time has changed for Dalit writers to grieve more than only their oppression and to confidently recognise the resolute bravery of Dalit women. This section would cover how Dalit literature, including Bama's Karukku, Sangati and Vanmam, testified to this rapidly shifting pattern.

India is one of the largest countries in the world, yet because it is a caste-based system, a large portion of its population lives in oppression and unspeakable sorrow. A subhuman and miserable life has been forced upon thousands of Dalits in India by the caste system. Following centuries of oppression, the Dalits are now fighting for independence under the direction of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar thought that the Dalits' oppressed life could only be changed by education. He established several Dalit-only institutions and colleges in Maharashtra. Numerous Dalits send their kids to study at these Dalit-run institutions because they value education. Dalits need to be liberated from the conflicts of untouchability by economic security and education since they are aware of their dehumanised character. The next development was a sudden flurry of autobiographies and poems by Dalits. The works were meant to effectively sow the seeds of rebellion and dissent in the hearts of their supporters as well as show their

deplorable and pitiful nature. About two years after the Marathi Dalit revolt in Tamilnadu, dalit writing began to emerge. The word "Dalit" is derived from the Marathi language and meaning "oppressed" or "rooted in the country." Only in the 1990s did the word itself become widely used in Tamilnadu. The Dalits have already been mentioned in the Tamil equivalent *odukkappattor* (the downtrodden) or *taatzhtappattor* in the 1980s (the deposed). After the 1994 Ambedkar Centenary and the nationwide unrest brought on by the Mandal Commission's report, the writings of Tamil Dalits increased. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar), who started the self-respect campaign, was the one who promoted the downtrodden through his anti-caste and anti-religions rhetoric. It's crucial to note that many Dalits believed Periyar's *DravidaKazhagam* was more focused on the issues of Hindus like the *Vellae*, the upper caste, and the Dalits in the past.

Women's societal disparities are a major theme in Bama's writing. While her Dalit identity influences her role as a woman in the greater society, Bama's personality as a woman gives her a more nuanced understanding of her Dalit identity. Even if certain empathy is discernible in each of their responses to the woman issue, Bama's feminist viewpoint on Dalits cannot be unquestionably connected to Gynocritics or French feminist theorists due to the ground realities and socio-political processes that exist in India. A girl could be a potential source of low-cost, amateur labour in Dalit society. She may relieve her mother of her enormous workload on the farm and delegate housekeeping to her daughter because she is the surrogate mother to her brothers. The majority of a Dalit girl's daily household responsibilities include gathering firewood, cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings or even older brothers. She also runs errands, works at the farm in the afternoons in exchange for a few handfuls of grime me or peas, and works at factories or farms during sowing and harvesting season, and gives her wages to a harassing brother or an inebriated parent. This is a typical female profile that is between the ages of four and fourteen.

III. THE DALIT GIRLS OF SANGATHI

Naturally, the child faces gender discrimination from the moment of her birth, especially if she is dark-skinned. The Sangati narrator made the observation that "The fact that I was dark skinned unlike my older children was a source of deceit in everyone's household" and she reminded everyone that it is customary in her neighborhood for a male child to never be able to complain despite the fact that the female child is left unattended for extended periods of time. The male youngster is used to nursing for a longer duration and this habit carries over to weaning as well. A small child is free to be fed and play outside while an adult sits at home and performs a number of laborious tasks, including gathering water and firewood, scrubbing the floor, cleaning, and preparing food. A girl won't leave the house till she meets her little brother and takes him out to play. Girls can only pretend to be married, have children, or even be punished by their husbands while they play! The narrator gives a detailed description of the games that kids in a village in Pariayar played. The colony's boys play the roles of Naickers while the girls play *pannaiyaals* (farmhands); the boys pose as store owners while the girls 'buy' food; the boys pose as priests while the girls pose as sisters; the boys act as inebriated husbands; Girls are encouraged to take pictures of themselves in Dalit homes. Nothing forces them to become vulnerable, occasionally in search of food. Children can be seen playing in parks, fields, or lakes

that have just rained in the Karukku writer. They catch nothing fish or steal earthworms, then cook them over a rag and garbage fire.

IV. SCHOOLS FOR UNTOUCHABILITY STUDENTS IN BAMA'S NOVEL

Beyond their survival strategy, Dalit children's education is important. Poverty robbing people of their right to lifelong learning is paradoxical. They are compelled to attend school, yet, by poverty as well. As soon as twelve o'clock rolls around, Dalit kids rush to the school to claim their part of the midday meal (the church bell at noon cannot be missed). A Dalit family's young girl only receives food once a day in such a crucial environment. She might struggle and make every effort to fill a pitcher of water at the community pump in the evening with just a few meals. In fact, Dalit female students who are lucky enough to attend school frequently experience caste discrimination throughout their academic careers. In KarukkuBama, she flamboyantly claims that after conquering the third level, she "realised, embraced and felt terrible" for having been raised in a cast that was regarded as being untouchable. Bama and her parents always looked forward to the trip home from school. They might wander the bazaar, observe a variety of rural customs like monkey dancing and snake charming, smell the flavours of the various food stalls, and interact with gipsies who sell beads and cords. Additionally, they would frequently witness magic performances, puppet shows, or hear party members praising their king's qualities and glories, etc. Such a happy journey, filled with innocent joys, is undoubtedly common of youngsters growing up in rural areas, but it is undulated by the untouchability of the dominant caste, leaving these Girls with a lasting impression.

The narrator is seeing a Dalit adult man behave on her street while carrying his boss Naicker'spakora packet. The snack is wrapped in newspaper and a banana leaf. The Dalit labourer at the back of the lengthy line keeps this parcel. With a hunched back and muffled voice, he extends a modest offer to the Naicker landlord. The girl believes this to be a funny scene, but she later tells her brother that Dalits must perform their duty toward the upper castes because their touch will disturb everything (person and objects). The young woman is upset and angry.

This represents the novel's first incident of outrage or protest against caste prejudice. A young Dalit girl who attends third grade brings to light the beneficial relationship between education and the Dalit consciousness. The younger sister receives the brother's vital consciousness. The ability to criticize resentment and, more especially, the questioning of traditional casteistic patterns, are all influenced by education access. The first tenet of Ambedkar's advice to Dalits is that, in this case, "reading, organization, and uniting" are acceptable ways to introduce a young Dalit girl to the Dalit consciousness and inspire her to learn about and challenge unfair societal practices. For instance, Dalit females who are detained at home to care for their younger brothers are denied access to this permissible information. The narrative most strongly reflects Bama's significance in education as a potential weapon for empowering Dalits. In this regard, a short story by another Dalit author, Abimani, is quite illuminating. In the book Pazh (Ruin), a Dalit girl's desire for formal education, tenacity, and difficulty are depicted. The smart and intelligent fifth-grader Malati is the top student in her

class. She and her students are cited in her research as role models. However, due to the birth of a new brother, her academic performance for the previous year was subpar. Malati is tasked with watching over her brother while her mother works in the landlord's fields. To ensure that her mother can routinely care for him, she occasionally needs to take the baby to the field with her. She must also get a leave of absence from her instructor in order to administer her caning the following day. She regrets not getting her first job at the school. Her mother, a temporary worker, is asked by the landlord to gather nuts in the land the day before her final exam. Malati cares for the little boy, gives him food, bathes him, plays with him and studies and puts his exam material to the test.

After completing eighth grade, Bama transfers to a high school in a neighboring town and lives in the dorms. She is shocked to see her peers' extravagant spending on showy clothes and easy money there. On-going footage from the dormitory depicts the warden abusing Dalit females. After a break at home, the sister always treats them badly when they return to school, blaming their caste and poverty. Every chance is taken to degrade Dalit women or suggest that they live in a filthy environment where they come from. It is crucial to note that the Dalit pupils are equally responsible for paying for the mess. However, they are not exempt from sarcasm or jeers. Once more, it is agreed that caste prejudices, not any particular shortcomings on the side of Dalits, are the main problem at hand. For instance, when Dalit children are travelling to school by bus, upper caste women and adults will not sit next to them.

V. VANMAM IN SANGATHI

The Dalit intra-caste conflict and its solutions are covered in Bama's third dissertation, *Vanmam* (2002). Compared to *Karukku* or *Sangati*, *Vanmam* is, in some ways, a travelling or less intense story. However, in *Vanmam*, there would be certain issues without adding a new or distinct dimension to the conversation's subject matter, including memories of incidents that were mentioned in or addressed in her prior two works. The plot lacks appeal and is occasionally quite weak. While Bama employed duplication as a planned narrative method in *Karukku* and *Sangati*, she did so to reveal a new meaning or highlight a crucial significance of the narrative content that wasn't previously apparent. This interesting trope is not present in *Vanmam*. Even while this may be annoying, *Vanmam*'s research is essential because it encourages Dalits - both Paraiyars and Pallars - to think critically and advocates for social and more extreme unification between Dalits.

Bama acknowledges and calls for Dalits to band together and sustain themselves throughout all of her writings, including the autobiographical story *Karukku*, the feminist novel *Sanga* about the life of Dalit women, and the class novel *Vanmam*. "Who will come to our aid? She claims that everyone must awaken from sleep in *Karukku*. They ought to denounce this unequal slavery rather than accepting your lot as your destiny. You must have the audacity and self-assurance to defend oneself. They should smash prejudices and caste boundaries to show the world that everyone is created equal. Many who benefited from crushing them would not easily release their hold. However, they must demonstrate their perspective, the fairness of everyone involved, and how culture is improved. *Karukku* is a call to liberate Dalits from caste-based

discrimination, and Bama restores great faith in education as a way to free oneself from oppressive communal structures. Bama exhorts women in Sangati to get together and defend their rights.

Why do we stifle our abilities? We're performing equally as well as the boys. Actually, I should go into greater detail. One day, ask these men to take over our responsibilities. They will quickly rush away from... We need to defend our freedom. We must express our thankfulness loudly. You are well prepared to rot for a lifetime if we wait for someone to come and help us. The books by Bama, Karukku, Sangati, and Vanmam that have been analysed show that Bama is not only a feminist but also a profound social pragmatist who fearlessly and critically attacked conventional societal diseases. She demands that the nation advance in order to shift the sea within the shrouded realm by battling the civil unrest. There are just 136 little villages in Tamilnadu where her stories are based. However, her works serve as a microcosm of the lives of other Indian communities. They disparage the Karukku Christian organisation for maintaining a caste system and stating that "both are fair at the feet of Heaven." the Christian religion's lofty objective.

As the Dalit community's spokesperson, women in Sangati push for their equitable treatment to ensure social justice. She issues a stern warning that the dominant caste structure is a rebellious one and contributes to the dissolution of society in Vanmam, a true disciple of Ambedkar. The themes of Dalit victimisation are genuine to Bama's novels.

VI. CONCLUSION

Bama's artwork reflects her awareness of Dalits. She shares her opinions with the readers about how her residents in this caste-dominated society perceive one another on a daily basis. All of her works explore the misery of casteism from a Dalit perspective, showing how the caste system in India mistreats and ignores a segment of its own population. Bama contrasted the current with the recapitulation technique to draw attention to the Dalits' pitiful challenge in the endurance campaign. Bama confronts institutions including the family, the community, the schools, and the government with her tranquil demeanour, which has led many of her residents to both literal and figurative or psychic death. She fervently contends that nothing short of a concerted effort on their part will grant her people the freedom to become citizens.

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