

Suppression of Dalit Women in Bama's *Sangati*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to know how dalit women suffered by the high caste people and from their own community because of being women. This novel *Sangati* is all about the sufferings of the dalit women. In this novel there is an incident which discusses about a pregnant lady who was killed by her own father and brother because of her marriage with lower caste man. There is also an another incident that a man got married with lower caste women but he was not punished by the people like how the women got punished by her father and brother. She was punished because she is a female and the man was not punished because he is a male. People blindly believed the words of higher caste say and accepted it. As a result of this blind belief, in the novel, Mariamma was punished by the men in her community. And she was not allowed to express the truth in the common meeting because she is women in the lower caste community.

Keywords: Suppression of Dalit Women, Bama, *Sangati*, longing for rights, sorrows, and sufferings

Bama, also known as Bama Faustna Soosairaj, is a Tamil Dalit feminist. She is a teacher and novelist. She became famous by her autobiographical novel *Karrukku* (1992), which records the joy and sorrows experienced by Dalit christen women in Tamil Nadu. She is the sister of famous Dalit writer Raj Gauthamam. She subsequently wrote two more novels, *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002) along with two collections of short stories: *Kusumbukaran* (1996) and *Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum* (2003). In Addition to this, she has written twenty short stories.

Feminism was started in the year 1960's, actually it's a renewal from old tradition and thought are already possessing in the classic books which talks about the sufferings of women. There are few writers who wrote their works to support women. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of women* (1792), Olive Scheriner's *Women and Labour* (1911), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), and Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family* (1884)

Kumarasami Ayya tried to misbehave with Mariamma and she got afraid and escaped from him. Kumarasami Ayya got afraid that she may inform to the village people so,

straightaway went to the village people informed them that Manikkam and Mariamma were behaving in a dirty manner in his pump-set. After, all these situations, her community people didn't listen Mariamma and they didn't allow her to explain what has happened in the pump-set. They decided themselves that Mariamma behaved in dirty way and she was dominated by her community people.

By this time, Kumarasami Ayya, afraid that his reputation might be in ruins, hurried to the village, and went and complained to the headman of the paraiyya community, the *naattaamai*. (*Sangati*, 20)

Esakki was a girl who got married with the other caste man without the permission of her family. She was warned by her brothers when they came to know about the love story of Esakki. Her brothers showed her no mercy. When they came to know that Esakki had eloped with that vanaan caste man, they were searching for Esakki and they found Esakki living with her husband in next village. The brothers went to her house and told her that whatever happened is happened you must come to our house for the first baby birth.

Esakki believed her brothers and went with them. Her brothers have no intention to take her to their house and they took her straightaway to the deep forest they showed no mercy to her and tied her hand and foot drive her into the cart in to the deep forest where no one will be there except wild animals. They dragged her out from the cart without even caring that she was full-term pregnant and cut off her head in one sweep and they took out the baby and twisted the baby's head and killed it. And when her husband came to know this he become mad and after that no one knows what happen to him.

Those villains had no intention of taking Esakki home. Instead, they made straight to for the mountain forests. Esakki realized then that she had trusted her brothers only to betrayed. Weeping frantically, she tried to escape them and ran away. But what could she do against seven men? They gagged her, tied her hand and foot, thrust her into covered cart so that nobody could see her and drove her in to the jungle'.... There they dragged her out of the cart and without even caring that she was a full-term pregnant women, with one sweep of a sward they separated her head from her body. They sliced open her stomach, took out the baby, twisted its neck, and killed it.... Nobody knows what happened to him in the end. (53)

Bama narrates the incident that took place in her community. There was a woman called Ananatamma, she ate crab curry before her husband come for his meal and she was hit by her husband so hard just because she ate before her husband, her husband doesn't even care that she was caring the child. In those days women were not allowed eat before men eat in the family; even if they dying with hunger they have to eat after men in the family finish up his meal and go.

O crab, crab my pretty little crab, who wandered through all the fields I Planted I pulled off your claws and put you on a pot, I gave the pot a hot and set it down. I waited and waited for him to come home, and began eating as came through the door. He came to hit me the hungry brute, He pounced at me to kill me. (30)

Even among the parents there was partiality they more cared for the boy child and less care for the girl child. Girls has to play the girls game and they were not allowed to play boys game. Even when the children plays the mother and father girl has to serve the mud rice to the boys and the boys will hit the girls by pulling their hair by telling that what sort of food is this without anything, like these incidents not only happening in the game its happening in the life of the women in the community. It's the life of the women in the community when they got tali around her neck tied by the man she is the slave for her husband till she dies. She cannot go as per her wish she will be under the control of her husband.

Even when we played 'mothers and fathers', we always had to serve the mud 'rice' to the boys first. They used to pull us by the hair and hit us says, 'what sort of food is this, di, without salt or anything!' In those days we used to accept those pretense blows, and think it was all good fun. Nowadays, for many of the girls, those have become real blows and their entire lines are hell. (31)

Men under go dog treatment in the work place by the landlords so, they show their manliness to their wives. But for the women has to go through domination both in the work place and in the house. Upper class women also facing the same problem by their husband. Bama said that more than everything her community women facing more problem than the others. Women in her community showed as wage earners like men do in the field and in the industries

It is not the same for women of other castes and communities. Our women cannot bear the torment of upper-caste masters (mudalalis) in the fields, and home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands (65).

Bama expressing her feelings to her paatti that women has to come out from everything and need some changes in the life of the women in her community. Paatti said for this that from the ancestors time its agreed that women will be under the control men and whatever the men says is the correct. If you learnt some letters from alphabet you cannot change the life of the women in the community. It shows that women got practiced by their ancestors.

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 have learnt a few letters of the alphabet?” (118)

Even when women lay down with their body pain they have to fulfill their husband’s pleasure. Women were not allowed to take part in occasion. Men themselves dress up themselves and act as a woman in the program.

Even they lay down their bodies wracked with pain; they were not allowed to sleep. Whether she dies or survived, she had to finish his business. Women were not allowed to take part on any occasion, the man themselves would dress up and act as women rather than allow us to join in. (32)

Sangati talks about the life of men and women in the community. Men spend all is earnings for his own purpose but women takes the responsibilities to fulfill the family. Men and women come home after doing the hard work in the field. Men straightaway go to the chavadi to while away his time and come home only for his meal. But for the women clean house, gather firewood, collect water and go the shop buy rice cook meal feed her husband and children before they sleep and eat what has left over and go to bed.

After all this Bama works by herself and take care by her. No one going to work for the improvement of the women. Women themselves have to work for their improvement and for their welfare. There are few feminist writers who used the dalit community language as quote in the work. But Bama used her community language to write her work. There are few theories which can be applied in *sangati* that is subaltern, feminism and Psychoanalysis theory

Works Cited

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