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Abstract

The present paper attempt to focus upon the theme of the role of class and gender in culture in the novel Sangati by Bama. The novel Bama's Sangati is unique Dalit feminist narrative carrying autobiographical elements of the double oppression of females. The novel has several individual stories, anecdotes and memories that portray the events taking place in the life of women in Paraiyas community in Tamilnadu. Sangati is more of celebration of Dalit female identity. Bama's women are no longer subjugated , they assert their individuality through education and collective action . Their resistance both passive and active to oppression makes Sangati piquant depiction of the Dalit women. In this novel I analyzed with the theme of class and gender based on culture. Culture is a word for the " way of life "of groups of people , meaning the way they do things . Key words Caste, Indian society, Women, Dalit, Marginalization, Discrimination,Gender,Class, Culture. Bama's Sangati analysis Dalit women's oppression by double patriarchies the covert patriarchal stance subsumed within the gender relations of their own community and the overt patriarchal system of the upper castes. "Oppression, ruled and still being ruled by patriarchy, government, caste and religion, Dalit women are forced to break all the strictures of the society in order to live" Bama's Themes Bama's novels focus on caste and gender discrimination.

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Introduction

They portray caste-discrimination practiced in Christianity and Hinduism. Bama's works are seen as embodying Dalit feminism and are famed for celebrating the inner strength of the subaltern woman. In an interview, Narendhra Modi has said that she writes because she considers it her duty and responsibility to share also finds the act of writing cathartic and liberating. For her, "writing itself is a political act", and a "weapon" that she uses to continuously fight against the dehumanizing caste practice. *Sangati Sangati* was written in Tamil then translated into English by Laxmi Halmstrom. The whole narrative is divided into twelve chapters having more than thirty-five characters.

The word *Sangati* means events. It carries an autobiographical element in its narrative, but it is the story of a whole community and not an individual. The condition of Dalits was very vulnerable as they were not allowed to enter into temple and schools for education. In Indian social hierarchy, Dalits get the lowest status. Observing all, Bama expresses caste and gender problems both outside and inside the community. 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. The Experience a total leak of social status. Even they are not considered dignified human beings. My stories are based on these aspects of Dalit culture...." (Ranjana 2-3) "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, passion about life with vitality, truth, enjoyment and about their hard labour. I wanted to shout out these stories." (*Sangati*,9) The novel of Bama, the Tamil Dalit writer, challenge the hegemony of the narratives by the upper-class people and by their own men, these women of exhibit an amazing strength of resistance and survival potential. Bama's another novel *Karukku*(1992) depicts the sufferings of an individual Dalit woman, whereas *Sangati*(1994) transcends from the individual to the community, *Sangati* means news, and the book is full of interconnected events, the everyday happenings in Dalit community. It portrays the collective struggle of the Dalit women. Bama's *Sangati* analyses Dalits women's oppression by double patriarchies the covert patriarchal stance subsumed within the gender relations of their own community and the upper castes.

Absolute power rests with men in the community and in the institution led by then the caste courts, the church, the panchayats. Domestic violence is one of the major issues for grounded. The text simultaneously brings forth the patriarchal attitude of the upper castes who equate the visibility of the Dalit woman with availability. But *Sangati* is not merely yet another tale of the pain of the oppressed Dalit woman.

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Bama highlights the “difference” of Dalit women from the privileged upper caste women and, more importantly, celebrates their “identity” in their strength, labour and resilience. Though the Dalit women are oppressed, subjugated and looked down upon as inconsequential creature both by the upper-class people and by their own men, these women exhibit an amazing strength of resistance and survival potential. Bama's another novel *Karukku*(1992) depicts the sufferings of an individual Dalit woman, whereas *Sangati*(1994) transcends from the individual to the community, *Sangati* means news, and the book is full of interconnected events, the everyday happenings in Dalit community.

It portrays the collective struggle of the Dalit women. Caste and Gender are the two important identity building mechanisms that create a Dalit feminist perspective. Dalit feminism redefines women from the socio – political perspective of a Dalit, taking into account the caste and gender oppression. This paper focuses on the sufferings of Dalit women in two aspects: first, being a woman second, belongs to the lowest community. Therefore they are double oppressed. Gender and caste in culture Culture is a word for the “way of life” of groups of people, meaning the way they do things. Different groups may have different cultures. A culture is passed on to the next generation by learning, whereas genetics are passed on by heredity. The word ‘culture’ is most commonly used in three ways. • Excellence of taste in the fine arts and humanities also known as high culture. • An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior. • The outlook, attitudes, values, morals, goals, and customs shared by a society. Most broadly, ‘culture’ includes all human phenomena which are not purely results of human genetics. The discipline which investigates culture is called anthropology, though many other discipline play a part. Customs, laws, dress, architectural style, social standards, religious beliefs, and traditions are all example of cultural elements. Since 2010, culture is considered the fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development by UNESCO. Gender studies are a field for interdisciplinary study devoted to gender identity and gendered representation as central categories of analysis. It also analyzes how race, ethnicity, location, class, nationality, and disability interest with the categories of gender and sexuality.

Many culture have different systems of norms and beliefs based on gender but there is no universal standard to a masculine or feminine role across all cultures. Social roles of men and women in relation to each other is based on the cultural norms of that society, which lead to the creation of gender systems. Gender roles are considered by social constructionists to be hierarchical, and are characterized as a male advantaged gender hierarchy. The term patriarchy, according to researcher

Andrew Cherlin, defines “a social order based on the domination of woman by men, especially in agriculture societies. Females of our country have faced the discrimination for ages now and still continue to exist in various forms. Any denial of equality, and gender and opportunity on the basis of gender is gender discrimination. Nature doesn’t discriminate men from women. But women worldwide have been the victim of inequality not only in terms of social and political rights but also on grounds of employment opportunities. The male dominant society of India makes its women habitual of this discrimination. As a result, most women are fail to understand their own rights and freedom.

There are many spheres of life where women are denied opportunities. Discrimination against females starts with their birth and continues through their lives. An unborn girl child is aborted with the help of sex discrimination techniques. A girl child who is born is seen as a burden on her parents or family and not given equal treatment as boys of the same family ever since birth. She is not given proper nutritious food in some cases. As she grows, she is either denied of right to education and in some cases, it is limited to elementary level. Her health and well-being is not given due attention and concern. She is married at an early age and this puts an end to any possibilities of growth and a good life in most cases.

The discrimination doesn’t end here but continues with the expectations of giving birth to boy. The vicious cycle of female discrimination starts here. Almost all women face some incidents of eve teasing, some are unfortunate to be assaulted sexually and raped. Marriage of s woman becomes more perplexed if she faces dowry threats, which sometimes cause deaths also. With such a deprived living, how can we expect the standard of living of women to rise and their presence be felt at international level? Women, both illiterate and partially literate have limited access to health care and job opportunities and remain confined to the bounds of their household chores, raising children and looking after families. A good education or qualification does not bring women at par with the men. They are still deprived of many work opportunities as men are believed to be more capable than their female counterparts with similar qualification. The notion that women do not have caliber and intelligence to take up managerial positions or high-profile jobs is another proof of the discrimination against women in our society.

Society favors men and gives them higher authority and this makes women vulnerable to crimes like rapes, eve teasing, sexual abuse etc. Though the number of women officers is growing, yet the number is not comparable with men holding higher ranks. The discrimination against women is not only hampering the growth of

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women at social, economic and personal level but also significantly lower female-to-male ratios impact the country's growth. While women are the most common sufferers and remain suppressed due to social pressure, there are some disadvantages that men have over women as laws favor women in certain cases. For instance, in case of adultery husband can be jailed for his unfaithfulness towards wife. Even though some changes had been done in our society, Women has to come across some difficulties in their surroundings such as Natural gender difference, In work place, In the criminal justice system, In Television and film, variation by country or culture, and even in Homes too. Now-a-days women's are permitted to go for jobs, but everyone.

This has to be change at least in future. Each and every women should shine in every field that of equal to men. Class or Caste In modern India term caste is used for Jat and also for Varna. The term, caste was used by the British who ruled India until two terms to describe Indian communities Castes and Tribes. The term caste was used for Jats and also for Varnas. Tribes were those communities who lived deep in jungles, forests and mountains far away from the main population and also communities who made a living from stealing or robbery. These lists, of communities who were entitled for positive discrimination. The castes, which were the elite of the Indian society, were classified as high castes. The other communities were classified as lower castes or lower classes. The lower class categories. The first category is called Scheduled Castes. This category includes in it communities who were untouchables. In modern India, untouchability exists at a very low extend. The untouchables call themselves Dalit, meaning depressed. Until the late 1980s they were called Harijan, meaning of children of God. This title was given to them by Untouchables within them The second category is Scheduled Tribes. This category includes in it those communities who did not accept the caste the system and preferred to reside deep in the jungles, forests and mountains of India, away from the main population. The Scheduled Tribes are also called Adivasi, meaning aboriginals. The third category is called sometimes Other Backward Classes or Backward Classes. This category includes in it castes who belong to Sudra Varna and also former untouchable who converted from Hinduism to other religions. This category also includes in it nomads and tribes who made a living from criminal acts. Dalit Dalit literature is written by Dalits about their lives.

Dalit literature emerged in the 1960s in the Marathi language, and it soon appeared in the Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Bangla and Tamil languages, through narration such as poems, short stories, and autobiographies, which stood out due to their stark

portrayal of reality and the Dalit political scene. Dalit feminism is a feminist perspective that includes questioning caste and gender the Dalit population and within feminism and the larger women's movement. Dalit women primarily live in South Asia, mainly in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka Dalit women face different challenges than women in higher castes in these countries. They are more likely to be poor, uneducated and socially marginalized. Dalit feminists advocate and have advocated for equal rights for Dalit women based on gender, caste and other issues. They have addressed conferences, created organizations and helped elect other Dalit women into political office Traditionally Scheduled Castes or untouchables were suffering from several disabilities of problems. These problems are discussed below.

1. Social Problem: These problems pertained to the concept of purity and pollution. The untouchables were given a very low position in the society. The high-caste Hindus maintained a social distance from them. They were denied many basic amenities of life which were accorded to the high-caste Hindus. They were dependent on the tradition of Hindus for items of food and drink.

2. Religious Problems: These pertained to the denial of the right of entering temples which were exclusively served by the high-caste Brahmins. The untouchables were neither allowed to enter the temples nor served by the Brahmins. They had no right to worship the Gods and Goddesses in the temple.

3. Economic Problems: They suffered from many economic problems. They had to face many economic hardships and they were not given proper reward for their service. Traditionally, untouchables were deprived of landed property of their own. They were not allowed to carry on any business. They were not permitted to engage themselves in the professions which were being carried out by the people of other castes. The untouchables were not free to choose any occupation according to their own ability they had to clean the streets, remove dead cattle and to undertake heavy agricultural work. Mostly they were landless laborers. They worked in the fields of high- caste Hindus as laborers.

4. Public Disabilities: Harijans had to face many public indignities because they were denied the right to use the services of public utilities like wells, public transport as well as educational institutions.

5. Educational Problems: Traditionally the untouchables were deprived of getting education. They were not allowed to use public educational institutions. Even today most of the illiterates are untouchables.

Conclusion

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Sangati thus celebrates the fortitude of the Dalit women who can actualize their potential even as they are oppressed by the male dominated and caste ridden society. The Feminine ideals of fear, shyness, innocence, and modesty are replaced by the womanist ideals of self esteem in the Dalit woman's ultimated quest for identity. The Dalit fight against caste discrimination untouchability, poverty, slavery and injustice. Educated Dalits like Bama writes their oppression anguish and protest through the writings of Dalit autobiographies. The conclusion focus on the summarized view of my paper Bama's Sangati in the theme of Role of gender and class in culture. In the end of this novel, the Dalit women celebrates their newly found identity and inner strength. The narrator of this novel finally becomes free from clutches of her limitations. She works and lives by herself. Bama realizes that it is up the Dalit women to take their lives into their own hands.

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