

## **SANGATI – THE STORY OF OPPRESSED DALIT WOMEN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Dalit literature is about the sufferings of oppressed class. Dalit fictions and its literary movement are based on the common ground of social oppression. It is a study of marginal and colonized. Dalit literature is a form of post-colonial literature. Equality, justice and freedom are the basis of Dalit literature. The form of dalit literature covers a wide range of literary genres. Many writers, thinkers, social reformers and political figures gave their contribution in the dalit literary movement. The paper intense to throws light on the analysis of dalit marginalization in detail. In Indian society, Dalit women are oppressed at the margins by gender and caste. Generally, women are facing suppression from men in society. If women were born as dalit community, they should face both male domination and being as a lower caste. Dalit fiction and its scholarly development depend on the shared opinion of social sufferings. It is not only about whole community but conveyed as an individual. Women in the Indian society were generally treated as subordinates to men, they were discriminated and disgusted as well. The plight of Dalit women can easily be assessed by the fact that they being Dalits first and secondly women. The paper will examine the contribution of the novelist, Bama, in her work Sangati. Bama's Sangati is a unique Dalit feminist narrative carrying autobiographical elements of the whole community. In Sangati, Dalit women are anguished from their childhood and Bama portrayed these women from a different perspective. The researcher points out the amount of pain and labour of dalit women have to experience right from their childhood and how they find the courage to break those shackles through the very experience of the unnamed protagonist in the novel Sangati.

**Key Words:** Suppressed, Marginalized, Subordination, Colonization, Dalitization

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Literature has always played a significant role in inculcating social awareness against various issues prevalent in society. Bama Faustina Soosairaj's Sangati is one such novel in Indian literature. Born as Faustina Mary Fatima Rani in a village called Puthupatti in Tamil Nadu, South India, Bama is the leading voice of the suppressed class - Dalits. She rose to fame with her autobiographical novel Karukku, which chronicles the joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. She subsequently wrote two more novels, Sangati and Vanmam along with two collections of short stories: Kusumbukkaran and Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum. She holds a privileged doctorate degree, and has won the Crossword Award for her semi-fictional autobiography in 2000. She is a multifaceted personality and is a woman with exceptional strength and conviction to any type of oppression. She has a sharp eye for excellence in nature, significant understanding into issues relating to caste, religion and woman. She has clarity of thoughts and expression. She is devoted to the upliftment of the discouraged, is passionate about teaching and her main goal is to fabricate a casteless society. In her famous novel Sangati, many strong women who had been under the shackles of authority are focused. The condition of Dalits was very bad as they were not allowed to enter into the temple, and schools for education. This form of discrimination based on identity akin to racism. It focused upon attacking male version of the world by exploring the nature of female experiences. Women were treated as an object to satisfy men and as means of pleasure. The novel is an important Dalit autobiography, and is a landmark work of Bama. It depicts Dalit woman's agony and anger at the dual oppression. The Dalit women who are the downtrodden sections of the society have been exploited and oppressed not only by their men but also by the upper caste men and women. As a result, they have become one of the most exploited and marginalized groups in the society. Holmstrom commends in the introduction of Sangati that Bama was already formulating a Dalit feminism which redefined woman from the socio-political perspective of a Dalit, and examining caste and gender oppressions together and Sangati is uniquely placed in contributing both to the Dalit movement and to the women's movement. In Sangati, Bama narrates the events of Dalit women who managed to overcome their wretched situation through their determination and self-respect. In Sangati, she "had written about the life of three generational women - grandma, mother and daughter. The main purpose of writing Sangati is to bring out the stamina of Dalit women with which they try to live their life to the full amidst their daily misery and agony.

### **2. MAJOR THRUST**

Dalit women are the most deprived class in Indian society and they are the victims of triple oppression of caste, gender

and class. Dalit literature is the literature of oppression which articulates the pain of this oppression and exploitation faced by Dalits in a caste ridden Indian society. Bama through Sangati portrays the exact lives of Dalit people, especially Dalit women of her community. As a Dalit woman, she knows every inch of the pain, insults and physical torture that every Dalit women have to go through. Dalit women's life is a life full of suffering which starts from their childhood itself. The word 'Sangati', in Tamil means 'Events' as the front cover page of the novel indicates. The novel is divided into twelve chapters dealing with a number of anecdotes replete with the pains, sufferings, miseries, despair, hopes, and subjugation of Dalit women who are treated as games like animals even in 20th century. Sangati is a realistic portrayal of a series of incidents which emphasize the atrocities of dalit women facing day to day life. The novel is packed with the themes like women facing sexual assaults, inequality of treatment both at work and at home, health issues, injustice, and child marriages. Dalit women rarely get time to take care of their health as they have to manage the work at home and in the field, and so often they have to face many health issues too. Dalit women are destined to work throughout the day and at night are expected to submit them to the male desires. Every night the males desire them and if they deny, they are beaten to death. This novel delineates women of many generations and their struggles against the type of male biased social system from socio-political perspective of Dalits. It examines the impact of caste and gender oppression together and women's inability to break away and find the route for freedom from the maze of socio-cultural construction. In the preliminary chapters of the novel, the narrator is a young girl who is shown to have a discussion with her grandmother about the real experiences of the old lady and her contemporary women. Normally the novel seems to have no dominant plot but the stories of exploitations related to the female protagonists like Maariamma, Maikkani, Thayi, Essaki, Mukkama, Irulaggi, Rakkamma and the narrator, etc. are based on human relationship physical, psychological and social to construct a stronger plot of the novel. Bama depicts the predicament of Dalit woman in such a realistic way that we can have a glimpse of the exploitation and subjugation of the women who faced physical violence like lynching, whipping and canning by the male members of their own family. The male members can do what they want, even go for polygamy to have more than one wives as Maikkanni's father have, but the woman is not allowed even to marry someone of her own choice. The novelist has exposed minutely when and where a female has to face gender discrimination. Bama depicts the predicament of Dalit woman in such a realistic way that we can have a glimpse of the exploitation and subjugation of the women who faced physical violence like lynching, whipping and canning by the male members of their own family. The male members can do what they want, even go for polygamy to have more than one wives as Maikkanni's father have, but the woman is not allowed even to marry someone of her own choice. The honour-killing happened to Esakki because she loved a person of Vennan caste that is out of her caste. If she had been a man, nothing would have happened to him rather he would have been free to love and marry according to his will. Sangati is collection of anecdotes to encourage women's folk to have self-confidence. It is considered as the journey of Dalit women to face the challenges of life with revolting attitudes. Moreover, a kind of self-confidence is created with humorous events.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Bama utilizes the vocabulary and talked idiom of the marginalized in her literary works thereby underlining the ideological supporting that controls the traces of personality, self expression and artistic talk in Dalit writing. She writes on those up to this point underestimated in artistic talk in a dialect that has been held unliterary. She examines predominant literary practice and explains the encounters of the abused in the language of the oppressed. In Sangati, Bama examines various issues the Dalit ladies need to meet in their homes and outside their homes. Bama highlights socialist-feminism, by speaking of the grievances of the Paraiya women who are presented as wage earners. They worked very hard in fields, factories and building-sites for their livelihood. Life for Dalit girls is not a bed of roses rather it is harder than to commit suicide.

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