



## An Analysis of Bama's 'Sangati'

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the experiences of Dalit women who were subjected to prejudice and violence from both internal and external sources. Women are thought to be the most oppressed members of the Dalit society because of their twofold oppression. The anonymous protagonist of Dalit feminist novelist Bama's book, *Sangati*, represents the amount of labor and pain that women must endure beginning in early childhood and how they must find the strength to overcome it.

**Keywords:** Dalit, Women, discrimination, protagonist, oppression, labour.

### Introduction

Literature has always been important in raising social awareness about a variety of societal problems. One such book in Indian literature is Bama *Sangati*. In this essay, an effort is made to pinpoint the novel's central theme—the oppression of Dalit women in Indian society. Years of patriarchal oppression and exploitation have progressively given Dalit women the courage to defy social conventions and structures. The author Bama believes it is her responsibility to speak up for and highlight the condition of her community for the audience; she wants to raise awareness of these pernicious customs in India. If Bama's first book, *Karukku*, can be considered her autobiography, her second book, *Sangati*, could be considered the autobiography of the Dalit community to which she belongs in South India, depicting the struggles of various women and how each of them conquered them.

The foundation of India's caste system has always been the upper caste's attempt to dominate and oppress the lower caste. When the pariah revolted against this marginalisation, exploitation, and prejudice and eventually found the fortitude to speak up, the Dalit literature came to light. Being a woman and a member of the Dalit community caused a lady to suffer and experience oppression. It may be considered to be oppressed twice as a result. Bama, a Dalit Christian author, explores class and gender oppression together and assertively displays the identity of women.

Bama consistently chose female characters for her books, which aided in the advancement of both the Dalit and women's movements, particularly in Tamil Nadu. *Sangati* is a

book full of chronicles events and daily activities of the Dalit community. The book is a collection of anecdotes rather than having a traditional plot "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* focuses on specific women who dared to make fun of the upper class that oppressed them and through this, the courage to revolt.

Many powerful women who were formerly restrained by authority now concentrated in *Sangati*. Dalits were in very poor condition since they were forbidden from entering temples and educational institutions. This type of identity-based prejudice is comparable to racism. Through an examination of the nature of female experiences, it attacked the masculine view of the universe. Dalit is the term used to describe the lowest rung of the Indian social ladder. Dalit feminism frequently draws attention to how the Dalit movement has a history of excluding a gender viewpoint. Every woman in Dalit society is subject to the dual authority of caste and patriarchy. Within the Dalit community, we could even see caste hierarchy in action. In *Sangati*, even the priest exhibits gender bias and has distinct views about Dalit Christians who have converted to Christianity.

### Conditionalization of Women

Women were viewed as means of pleasure and as objects to be satisfied by men. Though the upper class, which comprised both men and women, discriminated against the Dalit

community because they were viewed as inferior in public, women were the only ones who suffered at home because men considered it as their sole means of having authority over others. Women felt it was their job to submit to all the pain and beatings they endured at the hands of men, and they believed that this submissiveness made them the ideal woman in a patriarchal society. Women were tortured and mistreated by males. After a woman was married off, she became her husband's property and had to silently endure all of his outbursts. The irony of the tale is that, despite being viewed as the weaker gender, women were the ones who supported their families.

Bama raises issues of gender and caste both inside and outside of society. Sangati is a term commonly used to describe Dalit women who have faced prejudice on the basis of their gender and sexual orientation. She thinks that everywhere, women are treated as second-class citizens. For Dalit women, the problem is acute. Being Dalits caused them to encounter a variety of problems. Sangati gives multiple examples of encountering problems. As the protagonist's grandmother, Paatti, puts it, "Can a woman go up to four or five men after she is born? In the event that you ever do it.

### Bias Arising from Parents

The story is initially told by a twelve-year-old girl, but by the end of the book, she has developed into a lady. An adult reflecting on her background as a Dalit and how it has evolved over time is speaking in this voice. The gender inequity that Dalit women face, starting from an early age, is covered in the book. The younger girls have gotten less attention and are generally thought to be less than. It was different for females, but boys were always provided with the utmost care and nourishment at the right moments. Boys were never left crying on their own. The upbringing of Dalit females has not been very enjoyable. There's not much time for them to play because she has to look after their younger siblings.

Occasionally, they even marry off at a very young age, shortly after they become adults. When she was younger, she questioned why she was treated differently from her brother in Sangati by her maternal grandmother Vallaiamma Kizhavi. Because females were sometimes given far less food than boys, she was trained to wait until the men in the family had finished their meals before she started eating. The games that the lads were playing were off limits to girls. While the boys played kabaddi or marbles, they would cook or get married, and the girls would often get abused by the male players. Since they were little children, boys

### Discrimination at Work

In addition to men, women also worked as wage workers in the fields and industries, earning less money for completing the same tasks. After work, males spend their money as they choose, while women save every cent in order to support and care for their husband and children. Women are also responsible for managing the household's finances. They had to quickly return inside after finishing their outside labor, take care of all the household chores, eat her husband's leftovers, and then indulge the man's erotic cravings. They were unable to even get a decent night's sleep because of this never-ending cycle.

Women are the ones who experience sexual harassment and abuse at work, and even in cases where men are at fault, they are nearly always held responsible. Maikkani is one of the many characters in the book who is thought to be the

narrator's age. She started working at a very young age to support her mother and provide for her siblings. At twelve, she is made to shoulder the family's financial burden. Maikkanni took care of the needs of her house. She developed resilience and maturity above her years by coping with the verbal and physical abuse she endured at work. He came to understand the value of both money and labor.

### The Susceptibility of Women

Mariamamma, a different character, is portrayed as a victim of sexual assault who is unable to scream since the attacker is a wealthy man. Women's voices were ignored and valued nothing because it was in the hands of men. In this case, upper-class men also benefited twice, much as Dalit women endure double oppression. Bama says that although it is acceptable for a man to treat a woman cruelly, it is wrong for a woman to express her opinions in this culture of duplicity. She is advocating for her community in this book.

### Conclusion

Based on the research conducted for this dissertation, one could argue that this is a protest against Dalit women's subjugation in India. Bama asks the reader to see things from the Dalit community's point of view in order to understand the caste system and patriarchy, which are the real causes of these issues.

In closing, she expresses her hope and prayers for a brighter future, where everyone will be treated equally regardless of gender or caste: "We should educate boys and girls equally, demonstrating no distinction between them as they develop into adults." We should grant girls the same liberties as we do boys. If we teach our children this way, even from an early age, then women will show their strength. The day of equality will then come. This study suggests that Bama has attempted to stand up for people without a voice.

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