

CASTE, GENDER AND RESISTANCE IN BAMA'S

KARUKKU AND SANGATI

A dissertation submitted to the Bharathiar University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN

ENGLISH

Submitted by

G. JENEFAR

(Reg. No. 2016R0983)

Under the Guidance of

Dr. P. JAYASEELA, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Head & Associate Professor of English



PG & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

TIRUPPUR KUMARAN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

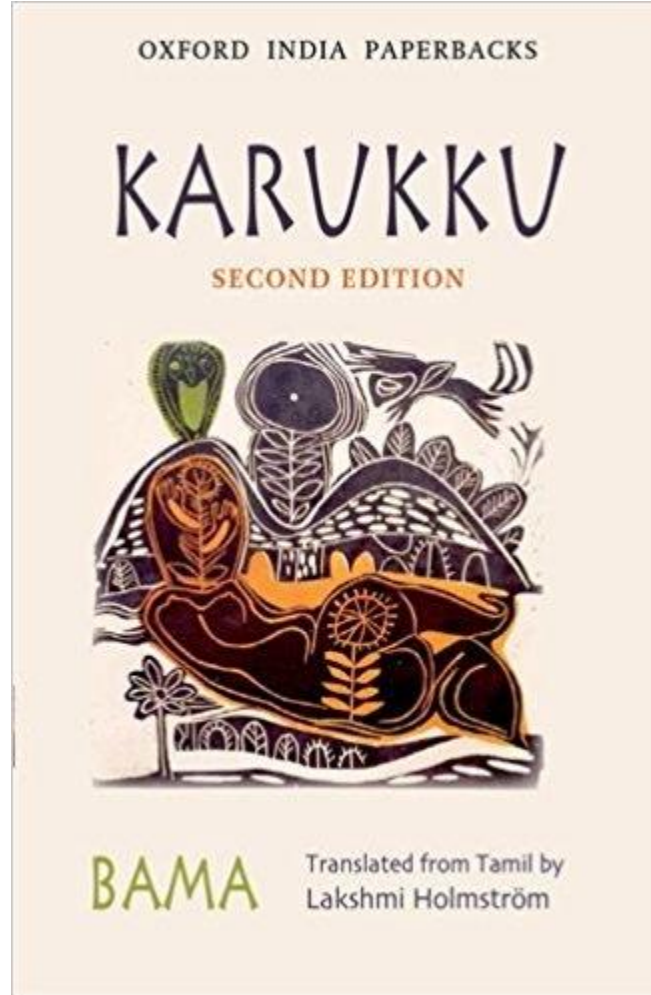
TIRUPPUR-641 687

NOVEMBER - 2017

Women Can Make and Women Can Break in Bama's
KARUKKU and *SANGATI*

G. Jenefar. M.A.

Under the Supervision: Dr. Jayaseela



Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Karukku-Bama-Faustina/dp/0199450412>

Abstract

Untouchability is one of the greatest evils our country has been facing from the time Immemorial. Untouchability is still seen somewhere in direct form and elsewhere in a subdued way. Dalit women are one of the most marginalized segments in the society. The condition of dalit women is more vulnerable than non-dalit women. Dalit women are suffering from multi-disadvantages this paper deals with Dalit issues like daily threats of rape, sexual assaults, physical violence at the workplace, in public arena as well as violence at home.

Keywords: Bama, *Karukku*, *Sangati*, Untouchability, Double Oppression, Marginalization, Multidisadvantages, Subversive Strategies.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:4 April 2018

G. Jenefar. M.A.

Women Can Make and Women Can Break in Bama's *Karukku* and *Sangati*

Bama's Portrayal of Dalit Suffering

Bama has remarkably portrayed the sufferings of Dalit women, who are doubly marginalized-being a Dalit and being a women. In this paper we shall explore Bama's varied representations of Dalit women in *Karukku* and *Sangati* with a view to underline the interface between gender and caste significations in Dalit fiction. Bama's intervention in Dalit literary discourse in the early 1990's made a significant contribution in the arena of gender-caste intersections in the lives of Dalits. Her works foreground the twice cursed lives of Dalit women, oppressed on account of their caste as well as gender, at home and outside, by upper caste men and Dalit men, by the state machinery as well as the family. Bama's writing celebrates Dalit women's subversive strategies to overcome their oppression is depicted in this paper.

Karukku

Karukku which means the searing edges of a Palmyra leaves, is indeed a double edged sword directed towards the reader which highlights the atrocities caused by the gender discrimination, caste and class division. *Karukku* is the narration of painful memories, despair, disillusionment, dejection, the pathetic conditions of the life, culture of people where women are subjected to sexual harassment and physical assault. Incidents are narrated were again over narrated and reinterpreted each time to express an Oppression of Dalits. Bama's rewriting of self is the rewriting of Dalit history. Bama explains how the male perspective have been encountered and questioned by feminine perspective. Her works voice the emergence of Dalit Literature.

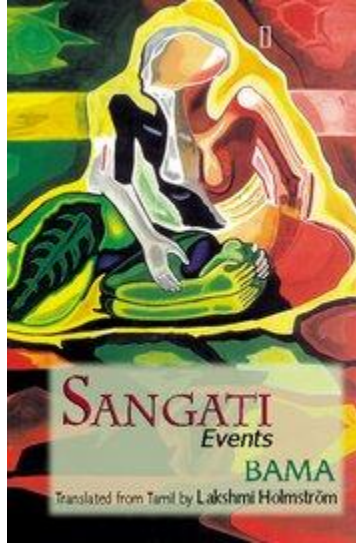
In the beginning of *Karukku*, she starts with a narration of beauty of her village and the village separation in the name based on caste in mountain peaks with different names as Nari Paara, Vannan Paara and vattala vitthamm paara, in the same way lakes, fields streets, fish, food, works, temple are marginalized according to the caste are marked .Like the palmyra leaf (*Karukku*), it sears the reader with its sharpness. Her style in writing was at its finest-fearing nothing, unabashedly radical, shaped by the strength of personal experience. *Karukku* moves from the village to the convent, transverses the marginal communities of the urban poor.

Bama's Emphasis on Education

Finally, Bama has indented to conclude with the emphasis on Education and consider Education is a passport to upgrade the life of Dalits in that way Dalits are exposed to awareness of their situation and their earnings to cope up with the family needs. So her intention to serve the poor and low children was attained by setting up school on her own was the firm decision. She felt that one has to disguise for all time for others was not possible so she proceeded in her own way. It gives promising bright prospects for making our society largely integrated through literacy was pin pointed in her novels. In this way it has begun to bring about a change; to enable Non-Dalits to deconstruct a traditional mind set which makes them perceive Dalits as lower than themselves; and instead to see Dalits as equals rather than pitiful victims. It also fills Dalits themselves with confidence and pride. Surely it is an apt compensation for lack of philosophy in Dalits. Their philosophy is to bring them equal with others and this vision can't be rendered true until they have confidence and pride in them. Once they become confident and proud, they begin to shatter the social system which imparts Dalitism. This was an ultimate aim of Dalit literature to fight against the system and not against other caste people. She ended her

work *Karukku* with positive note; with hope in future Dalits also will breathe the independent air without caste-difference and with different Identity with justice.

Sangati



Courtesy: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/sangati-9780195698435?cc=us&lang=en&>

Sangati was originally written in Tamil in 1994. It was translated by Halmstrom into English. The whole narrative is divided into twelve chapters. *Sangati* is an autobiography of her community, which highlights the struggle of Paraiya women. Bama chooses only a woman protagonist for every story in her novel “*Sangati* contributes both to the Dalit movement and to women’s movement in India especially Tamilnadu.

This paper is an attempt to study the sufferings of Dalit women as voiced by Bama in *Sangati*. Having personally experienced the sufferings of Dalit. Bama narrates the life of a dalit women right from the child birth to old age. The novel highlights on issues varying from Christian conversion, Caste and Sexual discrimination, Economic inequality, Physical violence, Disproportionate labour between men and women, Rituals of Puberty, Panchayat system, superstitious beliefs and oppression of women.

The major focus of in the novel is on the life of Dalit women, right from the birth; the description goes on about how the infants are also shown discrimination for example the boy child is feed longer than the girl child, The labour of the boy and girl which is not proportionate is illustrated. The rituals of puberty and the sufferings of women is subjugated to the man beating and working in the fields for longer hours for a very less pay.

‘*Sangati*’ ends pointing out how Paraiya women are always the most vulnerable, even when educated, economically independent and choosing to live alone. This novel is written in colloquial style, which overturns the decorum and aesthetic of upper caste, Tamil; the novel seeks to tease out a positive cultural identity as Dalit and women who can resist upper caste

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:4 April 2018

G. Jenefar. M.A.

Women Can Make and Women Can Break in Bama’s *Karukku* and *Sangati*

norms. It gives an account of Dalit women's dual oppression on account of gender and caste as well as other discriminated situations of womanhood in Tamil Dalit culture. "*Sangati*" explores the female subjugation and subordination in a great way.

Conclusion

Social discrimination is also a major problem. Dalit people are considered 'untouchable'; higher caste people would not marry a Dalit, invite them into their home or share food with them.

- Dalits are prevented from entering police stations in 27.6% of rural villages,
- Dalit and non-Dalit people cannot eat together in 70% of rural villages
- 70% of Dalit women are illiterate in rural India

Bama asks her community to follow a few things to put an end to the sufferings women. She asks them to treat both boys and girl alike, showing no difference between them as they grow into adults. Girls too much be given freedom and make them realize their strength. Then she is sure that, there will come a day when men and women will live as one , with no difference between them; with equal rights. Then injustices, violence and inequalities will come to an end, and she is sure that the saying 'Women can make and women can break'. (123) will come true and "such a day will dawn soon."

Works Cited

Bama, *karukku*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2014, Print.

Bama, *Sangati: Events*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.2008.Print.

Anand, Mulk Raj, and Eleanor Zelliott. *An anthology of Dalit literature: Poems*. South Asia Books, 1992.

Dangle, Arjun. "Dalit literature: past, present and future." *Trans. Avinash S. Pandi and Daya Agrawal. In The Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*, ed. Arjun Dangle (1992): 234-66.

Fairclough, Adam. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* University of Georgia Press, 1995.



G. Jenefar
M.Phil. Scholar
jenefarvictory@gmail.com

Institutional Address

Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women
(Affiliated to Bharathiar University)
Post Box no.18
S.R .Nagar
Mangalam Road
Tiruppur 641604
Tamil Nadu
India.