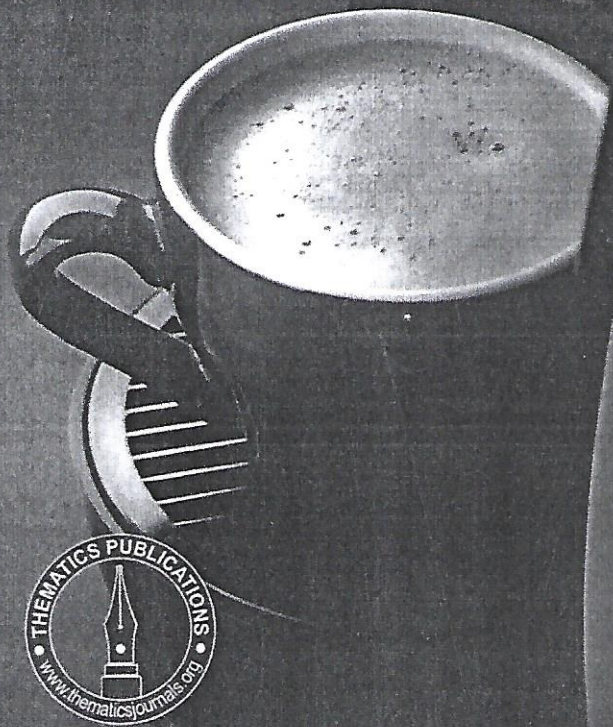


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Literary World of Bama: A Review

V.W. Wahule & V.M. Rasure

Bama has created a significant position in Dalit Literature relating to her innovative style and narrative structure. She deals with an astonishing variety of themes. She has published an autobiographical work *Karukku* (1992) and two novels *Sangati* (1994) and *Vannam* (2002) originally written in Tamil and three volumes of short stories, *Kisumbukkaran* (1996), *Oru Thattharum Evmayam* (2004) and *Kondattam* (2006) respectively. Her works have been translated into English and other regional languages. *Karukku* and *Sangati* have been translated into English, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

The French translation of *Sangati* has won her international readership. *Vannam* and *Kisumbukkaran* are translated into English. Her latest novel, *Manushi*, the second part of *Karukku*, is soon to be published. *Karukku* has become the first Dalit autobiography in Tamil written by a Dalit woman in the rustic language of the Paraya community. There, she talks about various forms of violent oppression like social, gender and religious unleashed on Dalits, especially on the Paraya community to which she belongs. She

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highlights the discriminatory conduct of the church authorities towards Dalit Christians.

Sangati expresses the dual oppression of Dalit women on account of gender and caste. It turns out to be a feminist narrative. She endeavours to enlarge a feminist agenda in taking up the theme of caste oppression against Dalits. Moreover the women at the same time as also incorporating the inbuilt strength in the oppressed group which offers the possibility of empowerment.

Vannam manifests a noticeable departure from *Karukku* and *Sangati* as she takes on a linear and descriptive tone to reveal a pronounced empathy for Paraya victimhood in the unceasing strife between the Pallars and the Parayas. Bama offers a counteractive viewpoint and a critical introspection on the subject of victimhood in *Vannam* for the reason that whenever intra-Dalit strife took place. It frequently led to the denigration of Dalits, whose voices stay behind submerged. The public decline to distinguish the internalization undergone by the Dalits.

Bama's writings are more often than not comic satires that depict the discrimination prevalent in the society and delineate the characters in a funny way that lightens the situations and at the same time leaves the reader to reflect. She uses the rustic language of the Paraya community in her stories also. Bama has a proficiency to detain the rhythm of their speech naturally.

Bama has witnessed a turbulent period of Indian history and the personal world of human life. She moves heaven and earth to humanize Indian society in her novels. In actual fact, Dalit feminism is the excellent stage in her fictional world.

Bama brings forward the well-sounding Ambedkar's ideology in her narrative. In every respect, she puts before the readers Ambedkarism as the soul force. To be sure, it is a constructive force. However, the gloomy picture is that it is not utilizing directly. She insists on putting into practice systematically and adequately that anyone can hit the nail on the head any point in time even today.

Bama's vision marks the influence on her living art of characterization. She points out that vision towards Dalit women, rather than as a man or woman. She gives the heart to every character that can apply the mind and put over like human. She holds in admiration towards human life through the prism of magical colours.

Bama believes that every piece of Dalit literature is often written in various kinds of circumstances. She writes when she can, however usually sets aside weekends, with hardly any breaks, other than for a meal or to drink tea.

For Bama, writing is more than a hobby because she has published numbers of books; she has published articles all over the world. Her creativity as a writer is the understanding of her human pain. She has unquestionably reached the summit of two divergent careers, literary and personal. She is painstakingly entangled in Dalit culture and society at various levels. She has captivated by the plurality represented by the sub-continental democracy. She has, again and again, persisted with her literary adventures endeavouring to portray its rich Dalit culture heritage, geographical diversity, topographical diversity, human diversity and linguistic diversity in her arena. She displays an obsessive liking for the phenomenon of Dalit. She emphatically defines her obsession as a genuine effort to discover herself with Dalit society and her indispensable spirit.

A serious author of contemporary Dalit Literature, Bama is conscious of the myriad dimensions of India, which significantly comprises a thematic spectrum of both her fiction and non-fiction. A postmodern dynamism highlights her fictional world, for the most part, hovers on the colonial and the postcolonial experiences of her society. That has played a significant role in configuring her present and will undoubtedly keep on doing the same for her future.

The essential themes of Dalit Literature are as: tyranny, subjugation, oppression, pain, troubles and exploitation. Nowadays the advancement in science and technology opens new doors to

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human beings and holds out numerous ways of life with new varied basic themes like love-hate relationship, post-colonialism, feminism, man-woman relationship, Indian diaspora, sex, politics, freedom, expatriation and marital relationship.

What is significant of these novels is the bewildering variety of thematic concerns ranging from mythology, history, family relationships, bureaucracy, politics and feminism to horror, suspense, sex, Raj nostalgia, diasporic experience, generation gap, fossilized emotions, racial tensions, use of fantasy, fabular imagination, dystopia, travesty, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, subversion and other post modern techniques (Asnani 34).

The confused disposition and natural spirit of the younger generation give a deep colour to the varied themes of the Indian Novel in English.

Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan points to the unsteadiness of the notion of women's identity and to the power imbalances which exist between different groups of women under the blanket notion of gender. Taking this further, the Dalit feminist critic, Sharmila Rege writes:

The Dalit Feminist standpoint is about historically locating how all our identities are not equally powerful, and about reviewing how in different historical practices similarities between women have been ignored to underline caste-class identities, or at other times differences ignored for 'the feminist cause' (7).

The works of Bama in Tamil demonstrates the materialization of Dalit writings. She is hailed as the first Dalit woman writer in India. *Karukku* means Palmyra leaves. With their serrated edges on both sides, they are like a double-edged sword Bama herself describes in the preface of the book:

The driving forces that shaped this book are many events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like Karukku and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance and left me trapped and

suffocating; my own desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy these bonds; and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split all these taken together (*Karikaku* xxiii).

Bama's vision marks the influence on her living art of characterization. She points out her vision towards a human being, rather than as a man or woman. She gives the heart to every character that can apply the mind and put over like human. She holds in admiration towards human life through the prism of magical colours.

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