

Chapter V

Conclusion

In the proceeding chapters, an attempt has been made to examine how Bama has presented the Dalit identity and how she exposed the fictional output in the form of Caste, Gender, and Socio-Economic and cultural politics in her autobiography and novels. In the process, Bama's writings mainly focus on how Dalits subjugated, especially Dalit women. In Bama's works, Dalit women who have suffered all the iniquities possible in a caste repressed society and fought through many seemingly impossible odds, have settled the issue. Her writings are prone to believing that oppressed subjects can speak for themselves daring to break the shackles of the repressive power of casteist forces. Her attempt to reconstruct the marginalized without the erasure of women succeeds in understanding and reconfiguring the importance of Dalits to Dalit history. The fictional writings of Bama are not political, and no sensitive reading of her can be political, for her coalesce social, cultural, and national discourses. Bama's works embed firmly in the realization of Dalit literature, history, and contemporary event are parts of the same narrative.

Dalit literature is a new and distinct stream of Indian literature. It has contributed fresh experiences, new sensitivity and vocabulary, a different protagonist, an alternate vision, and new chemistry of suffering and revolt. But unfortunately, it has been charged as propagandist literature. It has criticized that Dalit literature lacks artistic finesse. Due to the commonalities in Dalit writer's

thoughts, experiences, and emotions. Dalit literature appears to be univocal as the language they use is dialectical and hence, considered to be vulgar and obscene. Dalit writing is fundamentally subversive, bringing both content and forms that challenge received literary norms. The emergence of such writings may not be purely 'literary,' but there is a pressing need felt by Dalits and others to bring Dalit experiences into the field of literature. As part of the growing awareness that the oppression and suppression of Dalits is something that needs to be denounced and corrected. The experience described is social; hence, it articulated as a collective and not individual.

The present study explored the bottom of the caste system in India in the fictional writings of Bama. It argued that the works of the writer constitute literary resistance not only to the caste system, and the apartheid system but also to patriarchies. The social institutions of religion, law, politics, art, and literature glorify the dominant ideology of the Caste Hindus. But, after centuries of suppression, Dalits are now finding their voice in literature through political activism. In many ways, an arm of downtrodden politics, Dalit literature has become a useful tool in expressing the protest of the community against the domination of Caste-Hindus. The protagonists of the select works take the subversive step of rejecting and identifying themselves primarily as Dalits. It has also explored more substantial ambiguities in the construction of an identity of Indian Dalits.

This dissertation examined the dramatic accounts of Dalit Women's various inhuman experiences in the caste and hegemonic religious society of India, especially

Tamil Nadu. The themes of Bama's writings are the social phenomenon and realities of Dalits in India. It traces the conditions of the Indian social factors that surround the Dalits and their interactions with others. It also explored how Dalit women denied equality and liberty in socio-economic-political institutions. The select works corroborate the conditions of contemporary Dalit women in Tamil Nadu, India. The novelist depicts how Dalit women are living in a deprived condition of food, shelter, settlement, and culture within and around Indian society. For this reason, Bama ranked as the "civil-heroes" of a deprived community. She also gives her traumatic memories of apartheid, abuses, assaults, discriminations, injustices, and atrocities. In the process, the study delineates the Dalit women's subjugations and self-elevation.

This dissertation divided into five chapters. "The Introduction" focused on necessary information on Indian, Dalit Literature, and Review of Literature. It traces the writer's education, career, writing, and contribution to society. It also examined the dramatic accounts of Dalits and especially Dalit women in the caste hegemonic and patriarchal society of India. Bama's writings based on distinctly feminine themes of empowerment and self-determination. The power of independence, freedom, and equality imparted to the community through her writings; she advocates Dalit women's self-reliance and self-esteem so that she could create an identity for her and her community. The hope and optimism inherent in the writings of Bama make her different from other writers of their Clan. Bama's writings celebrated Dalit women's lives, wit, humour, resilience, and creativity. They are shown as hardworking, courageous women, despite dual pressures of work at home, in the field, and any kind of workplace. Dalit women

forced to put up with enormous violence at male hands. No less than the upper caste men argue Bama's narratives while Dalit men abuse their women.

The second chapter, "Victim of Caste System," portrayed how the Caste system has inflicted excruciating pain on Dalit for centuries. The low caste people known as Dalit, women suffered the brunt of ill-treatment, humiliation, and exploitation in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of Indian history. In India, the caste classifications are given by Varna, and afterward by Manusmriti created the divisions among people based on their birth and their respective occupations. The *Sudras* were the last on the social ladder, and they made to perform menial works to all the other higher castes. After the Independence, Dalits still as a bonded labours and especially, Dalit women working for the landlords in their farms in the most dehumanizing conditions. Violence in the life of Dalit women differs from the violence done to men of their community because these women become the Dalits of the Dalit when ill-treated by their Dalit husbands who are abused by the upper castes unjustly, violently, and arrogantly.

Bama's reflections on her childhood in a caste divided village Pudupatti, Virudhunagar District, in Tamil Nadu, India, made her recreate her experiences as a Dalit child in her autobiographical novel, *Karukku*. It depicts how Dalit Christians ceased to sing in the church choir and forced to sit separately away from the upper caste Christians. Their treatment is different towards Dalit nuns, and they do not consider Dalits as human beings. Dalit Christians are fighting against Catholic Christianity partiality is shown. At present, the Dalit Christians have formed the

Christian Dalit Movement, and now they demand equality with upper-caste Christians. Bama records her experiences at school and college in her *Karukku*, which is simultaneously an intensely personal experience and that of a community. Bama's *Sangati* chronicles a Dalit woman's history. The story of Mariamma, Bama's cousin, speaks volumes of the helplessness to assert. Mariamma becomes a victim of sexual advances by an upper-caste landlord, Kumaraswamy. But, she dare not raise her voice against this injustice for fear of social ostracizing. The mistakes and evil deeds of the upper caste people are cast upon the Dalit women. It draws upon autobiographical as well as a community's history. It stands for every Dalit women's history. *Sangati* provided no clear cut resolution to the problems that face Dalit women but gives temporary moments of solidarity. Bama's *Vanmam* is an exception focusing instead on the inter-caste rivalry within Dalit communities. The novel highlighted the animosity between the Pallars and the Parayars of Kandampatti village, who identify themselves as Hindus and Christians respectively. It also described how the landowners of the dominant Naicker caste stoke the fires of intra-Dalit hostilities to benefit themselves, ignoring the human costs paid for time and again in misery, loss, and death. It celebrated Dalit women's lives, their wit, their humour, their resilience, and their creativity. They shown as hardworking, courageous women who work ceaselessly at home and outside and manage the household single-handedly when their menfolk, especially the men of a particular family are rounded up by the police over trumped-up charges.

The Third Chapter, "Predicament of Gender Inequality," explored that Dalit

patriarchy is an important subject of concern in Bama's writings. Bama narratives argue that despite dual pressures of work at home and in the workplace, Dalit women forced to put up with enormous violence at male hands. Dalit men abuse their women no less than the upper caste men. While some act as shrews and overwhelm their violent alcoholic husbands with their verbal tirade and thereby escape physical violence, some others wrestle with the men while a few of them choose to walk out on their abusive husbands. The novelist portrays the domestic violence and abuse of Dalit women at home by Dalit men and sexual and occupational harassment faced by them outside their homes at the hands of the upper caste men and the police. Dalit women face daily threats of rape, sexual assaults, physical violence at the workplace, in the public arena, as well as at home. This kind of ideology exists not only in India but also all over the world. Because women everywhere treated as subordinates to men. Dalit masculinity, which is a consequence of discrete patriarchal norms, and consolidated in the domestic sphere, is undermined in the workplace through the physical exploitation and psychological humiliation imposed by the hierarchy of the caste structure.

Bama's *Karukku* discussed how oppression borne by Dalit women at the hands of state Panchayat and Dalit men at home. The collision of patriarchy with caste hegemony causes a harsher and more unjust suppression of Dalit women. Their personal experiences transcend and extended to the communal. *Sangati* explored how Dalit women engage patriarchy; this occurs between the narrator and her mother, and occasionally turns into a conversation as another woman joins them. The novelist tells about how her maternal Aunt's husband physically abused

her when she refused to have sex with him because she was exhausted after labouring both field and home. In *Sangati*, Bama brings afore many characters who victimized for being a woman. For example, Mariamma was accused, abused, and made a scapegoat because she escaped from the landlord's efforts to molest her. It shows that power rests with men, whether they are caste-courts or churches; the rules regarding sex differ for men and women. In *Vanmam*, Bama focused on the oppression of Dalits faced by the state and a brutal police force. The animosity between the Pallars and the Parayars of Kandampatti village, who identify themselves as Hindus and Christians respectively, a communal calamity arose in the village, and the police posted there created a terrific fear in them. Men went under hiding, and some women helped their men to hide from the police. Police entered the house in search of men who were in hiding. The failure of the police force in enforcing the laws to reduce violence against the Dalit women is strongly brought out in the novel.

The fourth chapter, “Emancipation of Socio- Economic and Cultural Politics” traced how the patriarchal society exploited women's political empowerment and the realization of the empowering nature of economic self-reliance and sexual oppression in the form of cultural practice. The writings of Bama centered the powerful mechanisms of political activism through her women- characters. It also discussed their multiple oppressive experiences, not only to fight against their political and sexual oppression, but also to define themselves and their existence, as opposed to being identified, and to maintain their self-defined rights, identities, and independence. Dalit women's life charged with massive frustrations because of

the unfavourable political and socio-economic dispensations currently affecting them. The psychological feeling of abjection enmeshed lower groups in such a social structure that they are continuously threatened by the hegemonic group that they struggle continually against to prevent falling off the social ladder further. When they are unable to fight the dominant group, the violence turns against their own people, that is, the other lower castes work off their hatred. The patriarchal society exploited women's political and the realization of the empowering nature of economic self-reliance and sexual oppression in the form of cultural practice. Bama's works are by contextualizing it within the larger cultural and political debates within and without Tamil Nadu.

Bama's *Karukku*, *Sangati*, and *Vanmam* concentrated on interrogating Dalit social structures, religious institutions, the caste system, and patriarchy - that have oppressed Dalits. In Bama's novels, the despicable conditions of the poverty-stricken Dalit Women who are working in the farms of the higher caste Naickers and the way they deceived and cheated by the upper caste traders portrayed vividly. It is a shame that the higher caste stoops so low to perpetrate such cruel exploitations on these poor Dalits. The Dalits forced to work in the fields to eke out a living. They toil hard to earn their daily bread. They work from dawn to dusk and get the wages to fill their stomachs. They do not enjoy any other comforts in their lives. The plight of Dalit women is still worse. They work along with their menfolk and get a lesser pay because of the rampant gender discrimination. They are doubly oppressed because they work as domestics in the households of the higher caste besides working in the fields. They continue to work at home when

they return from the fields, look after the children and their husbands, and finally, give themselves a way to satisfy the physical needs of their husbands too. There is a life of untold misery, and not a day passes without such humiliation.

The “Conclusion,” sums up the major arguments of the research and establishes the authors’ social consciousness to use writing as a weapon. The writings of Bama, a pariah woman who has suffered all the iniquities possible in a caste repressed society and fought through many seemingly impossible odds, have settled the issue. Her writings make us believe that oppressed subjects can speak for themselves daring to break the shackles of the repressive power of capitalistic forces. Her attempt to reconstruct the marginalized without the erasure of women succeeds in understanding and reconfiguring the importance of subalterns to history. Bama's *Karukku*, *Sangati*, and *Vanmam* celebrate Dalit women's subversive strategies to overcome their oppression. While some act as shrews and overwhelm their alcoholic, violent husbands with their verbal tirade and thereby escape physical violence, some others wrestle with the men while a few of them choose to walk out on their abusive husbands. All Dalit writing perceived as political writing, as a strategy of resistance to social oppression. Bama’s writing hopes to influence Dalit women readers to shape their lives positively. Her works lay a lot of emphasis on the empowerment of Dalits through education.

The writings of Bama shown that the hegemonic hierarchies state, for its hegemony and hierarchies machinery and did in some way or the other refers to the sanction of a force that is elusive, therefore, never accessible for verification. The

history of Dalits' manipulation of the denial of human rights to a large section of society. The adjunct of the construction of a selective history has to be written or spoken or dramatized or filmed not from archival resources but from the life and breath of the victims of this double manipulation. Bama's works dealt with the torture and death in police custody, brutality and violence upon the oppressed, the nexus between the state's mechanisms of control and power politics, the failure of democracy, and the continuation of feudalism feature easily.

Bama's novel is not merely autobiographical, it is a fusion of the freedom of autobiographical self-expression with a compensatory withdrawal through fiction, nor a critique of how religion and life are conflictual and overdetermined but the power relations of caste, nor a poetic hyperbole of a woman's sorrows. Bama's works are implicated in her life and that of the society which they specifically address. For example, Bama's *Karukku* is an imaginary map or the god of small things is a piece of creative writing where all the characters bear any intentional resemblance to 'real-life' people with the author being fully responsible in their creation.

The literary site becomes a political praxis that addresses gender, class, caste, law and governance, religion, and police. The other institutional determinates of a nation's life without at any time competing with the aesthetic features of the text, such that the fictional is as aesthetic as it is political, addressing the interaction between the two. Besides, the vantage of the woman worker's point of view has inflected the availability of meaning. These texts then

are not only critiques of history, but simultaneously the representation of the fictiveness of the nation's history as it survives in the disruptions and unmasks the pretensions of Indian history as a singular and universal narrative. But in touching the conscience of every sensitive reader they outreach the purpose of the former locating the act of reading literature itself as the first step in not only questioning history but in participating in forming a new history for the future times. Dalit writing is paradoxical contests the post-coloniality of the text's temporary location for the writers who are driving home is the colonial and the pre-colonial condition.

Future of Dalit Literature

Dalit literature is a new and distinct stream of Indian literature. It has contributed fresh experiences, a new sensitivity and vocabulary, a different protagonist, an alternate vision, and new chemistry of suffering and revolt. It has criticized that this literature lacks artistic finesse. Due to the commonalities in Dalit writer's thoughts, experiences, and emotions, Dalit literature appears to be univocal as the language they use is dialectical and hence, considered to be vulgar and obscene. Dalit writing is fundamentally subversive bringing both content and forms that challenge received literary norms. The emergence of such writings may not be purely 'literary,' but there is a pressing need felt by Dalits and others to bring Dalit experiences into the field of literature, as part of the growing awareness that the oppression and suppression of Dalits is something that needs to be denounced and corrected. The experience described is social; hence, it articulated as a collective and not individual.

The awareness in Dalits and their potential economic, as well as aesthetics of Dalit writing, has been made possible. Because of the phenomenal increase in literacy level among the Dalits. Dalit literature has begun to bring about changes; to enable non-Dalits to deconstruct a traditional mindset, which made them perceive Dalits as lower than themselves and instead to see Dalits as equals rather than pitiful victims. It has put forward new and subversive ethics that not only awaken the conscience of non-Dalits but also fill Dalits with confidence and pride. Thus, it shares its aims with those of other marginalized and subaltern" groups worldwide.