
**Politics of Marginality and the Discourse of Othering: A Feminist
Study of Narrative Strategy in Bama's *Sangati* and *Vanmam*.**

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Abstract: The narratives chosen for this study reverberate with violence throughout, holding the women vulnerable to its power politics. This paper categorically refutes the term victims to women who encounter violence at every stage of their lives. Instead, this paper contends that Bama's women are poised on the verge of uncertainty as the narrators, despite empowerment and the other Dalit women, continue to inhabit a marginal existence through constant Othering. This paper also contests the critics' reading that the ending of the novels suggests possibilities of a better future for its women. This paper raises pertinent questions on fundamental issues at the end of the argument.

Keywords: Marginality, Othering, Silence, Atrocities, Absence.

This paper begins with a famous quote by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: **I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress women have achieved.** This statement is more relevant to the present topic and the novels under study. It is no accident to say that writing has attested to the identity of women in any society, and it is no accident that the '**Pen is mightier than Sword.**' The emergence of Dalit writing on the National Literary Map of India has been historic. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has been not only a pioneer in eradicating untouchability in India but also an inspiration behind the birth of Dalit Writing. The last part of the 20th century witnessed an unprecedented body of Dalit writing under the Ambedkarite movement. G.N.Devy believes that "the writers in Dalit movement show a clear awareness of belonging to a distinct literary culture and society"(157). While male writers were preoccupied with their status as the low born, their writing was an attempt to break the upper caste assigned stigma of '**the shudra**' and hence became a tool of protest against their inferior status and a move towards owning their identities

by deconstructing the negative identities imposed on them by upper caste Hindus. Victims of oppression, denial of human dignity, and suppression of their voices, the untouchables under the centuries-old Varna system, and religious purity charted a new course of history with the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar as their leader. Renamed Dalits, they not only recovered their silenced voices but were able to radically redefine themselves. Writing became a tool of empowerment and an agency of defiance of caste hierarchy and social stigma. Ambedkarite ideologies of Dalitness, Dalithood, and Dalit consciousness have been central to evolving a Dalit Identity. Dalit Literature marks a definite shift under the rubric of Indian Writing as it attempted to and has succeeded in rewriting the nature of Indian literary Canon. In his Preface, Zakir Abedi states, "Dalit Literature in India is an autonomous Dalit intellectual tradition which exposed the pitfalls of Casteist Indian Society"(2). Dalit writing draws its aesthetics from Ambedkar's ideology, which stands for **revolt and scientific humanism** based on **Justice and equality. Fraternity**. The Dalit writings critique the legitimacy of the caste system that denies them humanity and equality. Ambedkar's motto, **Educate, Organise, Agitate**, has laid the foundation for Dalit writing.

Though the Dalit writing finds its literary antecedents in regional languages and hence did not find either a larger readership or recognition in its inception, the translated works into English have not only won grudging appreciation in India despite the upper caste's refusal to acknowledge them as works of art but also have reached a wider readership and recognition globally. The earliest Dalit writing has been a major contribution but is invariably male, which is unfair in its depiction of women, as they are insensitive to women's problems and confines them to domestic stereotypes, denying them sexual equality. The Dalit Women caught in the vortex of conflicting forces of caste and gender oppression were forced to create their own literature.

Whatever the genre that women adopted, their writings not only made an indelible mark in the annals of essentialist Indian writing but also registered visibility and presence. The Dalit women's writings not merely ensure subjectivity but also empower them to debunk and defy the myths and negative stereotyping discerned in the dominant caste writings in India. Besides, the Dalit women's writings serve as a corrective to the distortions and omissions in the Dalit male writings, thus providing them with a distinctively women-centred standpoint. They also consciously attempt to deconstruct the sympathetic narrative voice in the liberal caste Hindu writers like

Mulkraj Anand, Arundhati Roy, and others by rendering the narrative from the insider's perspective, thus giving authenticity and voice to the female narrator. As Toni Morrison avers " I had to bear witness to what was not recordedthis person this female ... didn't exist center-self"(Russel 45) the dalit women strive to depict the men , women and the dalit community that coexist with the upper caste .Bama defends"Caste is a constant and continuous presence in our culture...how can one ignore it? Among Dalits, though there is male domination, there is a certain amount of caring and recognition of Dalit women"(158).This is further endorsed by Sharmila Rege " dalit feminist critiques of the post 1990s posed challenges to feminist canons....alliances with brahminical power and privilege"(3).

This paper posits that fiction has been the most appropriate arena for Bama to articulate her feminist ideology that stems from dalit women's unique experiences and serves as an oppositional discourse to the male centred , male authored works. This paper selects Bama's two texts for study and makes dalit male violence the context to argue the debilitating impact on its women that confound them into immobility , passivity and psychological impairment.Her novels foreground a radical consciousness that inform , insist and dismay the readers in the depiction of a volatile, violent world of dalit male hegemony which threatens, petrifies(Sartre) and destabilises its women.

This paper looks at women in Bama's *Sangati* and *Vanmam* as the narratives delve deep into the tamil dalit lives exclusively and weave around women's day to day lived experiences as they wrestle with men within and without . Abedi states "Tamil Dalit Literature ...tramples all conventions with its intensely personal expression; is concerned with the life of subaltern"(13) .Though some of the women are **unconscious victims**(Margaret Atwood) at the beginning of their stories they eventually transcend their suffering in order to survive . This paper shall focus on the different forms of violence these women are subject to, in the form of physical abuse, sexual exploitation , denial of voice, rights and space through marginalisation,subjugation and abandonment and also violence inflicted on them by the upper caste hindus by being branded as the Other, hence it becomes imperative to "integrate questions of caste with those of ...gender"(Rege 4). Bama uses a paradigm shift, writes Otherness as the Centre to situate dalit women in her fiction. Narratives of both texts uncover the interior thoughts of women as they respond to the reality of the upper castes' Other as well as the Other by their male counterparts.The consistent pattern a man adopts in Othering a woman begins at birth and ensures it

by systematic violence he inflicts on her as a **modus operandi** to retain his Absolute power. Simone de Beauvoir avers, "She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (16). What is significant about Bama's narratives is that protagonists's voices serve as actors, participants, observers and onlookers there by reveal their individual and collective consciousness(ideology) of a unique cohesive dalit community that attempts to comprehend and come to terms with upper caste community that exploits, abuses, uses, yet paradoxically coexists alongside their marginal existence.

Bama's fictional Oeuvre addresses issues of family ethos, female bonding(Toni Morrison) and characters' encounters which are at variance with men and upper caste hindus. She probes the inter caste and intra caste conflicts as they occur in the present rather than in retrospect to reinforce the actual as against the factual. The women make family the Centre for their existence despite taboo, marginalisation, violence, silence and self- erasure with a sense of rootedness and but their dis-location brings about an irrevocable loss. Bama deconstructs the conventional **Plot** and uses the Text, Points of view(Polyphony) and Context to allow women to speak for themselves. The narrator of both novels inscribes a female voice within the Indian genre of **Puranas**, which incorporates an oral tradition of story telling like Achchakka of *Kantapura* (Raja Rao) and the western tradition of story telling of a frame narrator, Nelly Dean(*Wuthering Heights*) and Marlow (*Heart of Darkness*) enclosing an embedded narrative of women in the fictional village of *Sangati* and the actual village of Kandampatti in *Vanmam*. What is important to discern here is that the narratives lay bare the unrelenting reality of the consistent Othering of the women by their men. Sartre argues "the look of the Other defines me, puts me in the context of his vision and grants me an identity, the look makes me aware of myself as perceived by the Other" (314-317). As the Other, women suffer denial, absence, erasure, silence and invisibility. For "the origin of man(not human kind, not woman) as the phallus consists in his separation from and imprisoning of the women ...seeking to protect his identity he keeps woman the 'other'" (Elizabeth A. Meese 118). The dalit men and upper caste men perceive women not only from Freud's castration complex (penis envy), Aristotle's (imperfect man), but also enjoy the prerogative of centuries old unquestioned masculine authority that legitimises the silencing of women through arbitrarily enforced binary. For him "the woman is the absence of speaking; the speaking subject is not woman....to refuse to speak is to reinscribe woman in silence, marginality....Thus woman as a sign is the site of

struggle between contradiction and repression”(Meese 118).From time immemorial following the tenets of Manusmriti, the dalits defined as the untouchables were pushed to the margins by the upper caste hindus justifying the divide as they identified and defined the **ati shudras** as the Other. This divide over passage of time worked as a stigma in which the dalits were treated as the untouchables or abrahman (Sharmila Rege).

Through the I narrator of *Sangati* and the omniscient narrator of *Vanmam*, Bama delineates the lives of women in dalit patriarchy “out of her need to articulate herself or express herself or give voice , a voice that needs to be heard, for being acknowledged as a human being”(Millet 22).The women are constantly subject to domestic violence, abuse by their men and sexual exploitation by the upper caste men at the fields .Hence “the term ‘politics’ shall refer to power-structured relation, arrangement whereby one group of persons are controlled by another” (Millet 23). Bama has consciously given the narrators a voice that is literate and articulates an essentially female literary consciousness(Rita Felski) that celebrates “the female aesthetic spoke of a woman’s culture that has been neglected and had to be revived of a woman’s language and literary forms that came out of a specific female psychology”(Showalter 67)as they respond to the everyday personal or a collective experience from the trajectory of female self. It becomes imperative for the Dalits to write “ about Dalits with a Dalit consciousness”(Limble 19).They express sympathy, rage or helplessness at the inhuman condition of the women and as actors , participants move in and out of a microcosm dalit society hence are **reliable narrators**(Wayne C. Booth). They record, recount, relive and respond and are endowed with “Dalitness ... stands for Dalit sensibility and consciousness”(Limble 19).The dalit women unable to end the tyranny either of their husbands , sons, or fathers voice out their outrage , suggest alternate modes of survival as they are bound by the confines of marriage, “ the drama of female existence centers on the effort to achieve and maintain marriage as an index of social ...and moral virtue”(Spacks 116). Crucial in the Othering that marginalises and forces the women to a peripheral existence is glaring example of Paati in *Sangati*. Paati’s point of view within Polyphony(Bhaktin) provides credibility to scenes of violence and passive acceptance of male authority for “She cared for her grandsons much more than she cared for us”(7) and later admonishes her daughter about the narrator’s coming of age as a female and hence deplors education of her own grand daughter “As soon as she gets her periods , you stop her from studying, hand her over to some fellow or other,

and be at peace”(9) and later ..” to keep a virgin girl at home ...is like keeping a fire going in your belly”(9-10).Bama uses her as the first generation dalit woman who unconsciously internalises the patriarchal ideology of a submissive female who has a father as the first custodian whose responsibility is to transfer her to the next man who is a husband and it is mandatory within the patriarchal set up ,that the girl goes to the husband as a chaste virgin woman, “the internalization of ...female identity as supplementary to and supporting of a male figure by women themselves is registered as the most disturbing indication of the deep-seated influence of patriarchal ideology”(Felski 12). The I narrator(text) functions as a frame narrator unfolding multiple narratives , which is to suggest that the frame narrative encompasses an embedded narrative which allows the minor but significant narrators to unfold their narratives. Bama’s choice of polyphony(Bhaktin, individual points of view) thus acts as a commentary on the upper caste hindus who continue to enforce the divide as they fail to reconcile to the equality rights granted to the dalits by the Indian constitution. Limbale states that for centuries, " the Dalits have been the upper caste Other...This Other is a part of Hindu Society, yet apart from it ...the alterity of the subaltern has been replicated in culture to ensure that Dalits will not have a voice or ...presence”(2-3).

The narratives divulge the interior psychological damage of women whose lives are battered by domestic violence within marriage, contrary to what Ambedkar advocated to his countrymen “ the relationship between husband and wife should be one of closest friends”. Men refuse equality to women and fail to see them as humanbeings. Paati is both appalled and helpless in preventing the physical injury meted on her daughter, whose loss by death is recalled in sheer horror of the bestial treatment by her husband. The passage reveals the abject condition of her daughter in the sexual role “ he wanted her every single day. How could she agree to his frenzy after she worked all hours of the day and night.? He is an animal...he hit her with a rice-pounder”(10). It also unveils the succinct sexual objectification of the woman and the debasement in the breeder role. History bears testimony to the fact that woman has been fetishized and erotized in the biological and sexual role as “unto the woman unto that which is ideologically defined as an unproblematic sexual object”(Guerro 760). Another facet of male hegemony is made known by Mariamma’s point of view who is married off in a hurry and Thaayi from the west street who suffer identical fate of marital violence. She “suffered blows and kicks and beatings everyday, and was reduced to no more than a half-life or even less”(42),

while Thaaayi is subject to a more brutal violence by her husband “beating her up again and again with the belt from his waist”(42). Bama uses the narrator’s interior monologue to articulate her own feminist ideology. The nameless narrator(text) though empathises and sympathises the two women over their helplessness is very vocal and vehement in her rage,”just because he ‘s tied a tali round her neck, doesn’t mean he can beat his wife as he likes?”(43) but it does not embolden herself to question the wrongs done to women. She is further appalled by the celebration of male power when the husband of another woman calls out to her “ ‘*Madani*,... It’s this whore’s hair that I have cut off myself and hung there... to put down her pride’ “(43). The passage not only suggests the blatant male definition of the woman as the Other as wife , mother , daughter, or a man’s lover but an aspect of politics within the binary that render women powerless following bodily assault. Simone de Beauvoir deplores “It was *beyond* the human realm her power was affirmed and she was therefore *outside* of that realm”(561).

These narratives through polyphony(Bhaktin) uncover the inherent patriarchal dictates that uphold , endorse and enforce female subjugation, and subordination which invariably silence the women and render them emotionally paralysed. Another narrative(point of view) in this exclusive multiple episodic structure is the conscious/unconscious internalisation of a superstition in the existence of a ghost, *Pey* that accelerates an innocent dalit woman’s death. It is more an aspect of a bruised male ego and family(male as the head) image rather than resistance to a love marriage when the brothers of Esakki fool her to return to her natal home only to kill her by stabbing and pulling out from her womb , an unborn baby , a possible testimony to a scandal that might shame their family reputation as they “ dragged her out of the cart and without even caring that she was a full-term pregnant woman, with one sweep of a sword they separated her head from her body. They sliced open her stomach , took her baby, twisted its neck, and killed it “”(53).

The anonymous narrator(text) expresses anguish over the injustice her village women had to endure :The

Women never got a proper night’s peace and quiet after working hard all day. They had to please their husbands whenever they demanded it so they never got any rest. Neither their bodies nor their minds felt rested when they woke up. Promptly they vented their irritation by quarrelling with everyone they met. And then, after this bout of useless wrangling, they had to run to their work.(67).

The passage, while explicating the domestic drudgery of the women being constantly Othered, shows the tragic aspect of their lives that is devoid of sexual pleasure. The narrator feels sorry for her women who have no rights over their own bodily pleasures “Nobody seems to reflect on women’s bodily hungers and needs. Women are told never to reveal these things. They have written it into our foreheads that we must repress and destroy our own needs and feelings”(122). She blames the dalit patriarchy that disallows a woman’s expression of her sexual needs. Toni Morrison laments the absence of women’s sexual enjoyment “they were not people who were supposed to enjoy sex either”(Dreifus 75).

As Bama explores the devastating effects of physical violence on the dalit women and their inability to counter male attack, she also shows how women have to constantly safeguard their bodies against male onslaught as the men perceive them as the Other and hence available in a sexual role. Mariamma (point of view) who works in the upper caste Kumarasami Ayya’s field to earn her livelihood narrowly escapes his sexual advances “when she went innocently to get some water, he seized her wrists and pulled her inside. Frightened out of her wits, she left everything and ran home..”(20). Having lost her mother and a father who never cared for her she is deprived of education on her growing womanhood is able to protect herself by sheer presence of mind. Likewise, Maikanni (point of view) also escapes the possible sexual assault of her employer when she goes to collect twigs from the woods, “I said to my friends, this man seems to be nasty fellow, up to something or the other...so ...we just ran away from the place as fast as we could”“(75). Staples contends “men are socialized into a concept of manhood that is based on sexual conquest ...of women” (6).

Vanmam acts as parallel to *Sangati* in the narrative structure in that though it adopts the third person Omniscient narrator (text) it is rendered from the point of view of a woman. P. Sivakami attests “I believe only Dalits can write about issues concerning them and that only women can write about feminist issues”. Arguably it is the implied author who assumes the voice of a displaced narrator (Bama) who delineates her own **individual experience** (Ian Watt) as a dalit christian woman. But this omniscient voice (reliable narrator, Wayne C. Booth) enfolds other narratives within dalit patriarchy of the actual village (Kandampatti) which Bama herself visited and drew her inspiration from. This narrative distinctly brings to the fore, domestic atrocities on the women and their need to subsist. It explores the growing conflict by Othering through binary (Beauvoir, Irigaray) erected against the Parayar women

under the hate instigated by the upper caste Naickers . What is shocking is the feminist consciousness that is threatened and silenced by the dominant men. *Vanmam's* women are not only scarred emotionally, psychologically and spiritually but the extremity of the violence inflicted on them leaves their bodies bruised or maimed making them incapable of countering the male assault.

Chavady which functions as a metaphor for forging male bonding arbitrarily excludes women's participation except occasionally in the secondary roles, as they are forced to reconcile as the Other denying them a voice or assertion. The narrator (text) introduces the first generation illiterate Mekellamma whose point of view provides facets of her sacrifices to ensure education (literacy) to her son and her daughter Katiyamma that she herself was deprived of. Partly empowered Katiyamma has the advantage to read out to her mother her brother's letter that announces his forthcoming arrival on completion of his education. It is important to note here that Bama's choice of Epistle (Samuel Richardson: *Pamela, Wuthering Heights, Color Purple*) augments her narrative style which gives prominence to Mekellamma (woman) as a culture bearer thereby privileged to decode the message and pass on to ensure cultural continuum. The ensuing return of Saminathan accelerates the birth of an exclusive parayar group, **Kazhavi Arts Troupe** to commemorate the contribution of the Dalit leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the erection of his statue. The **Chavady** that initially serves as a platform for the community gatherings with the Pallars ironically becomes a site of dispute, divide, clash, death and separation as the Naickers instigate the Pallars against the Parayars over the issues of Hindu religion versus the Dalit Christians. The insidious killing of an innocent Parayar, Sesurathnam and the counter killing of the Pallars by the Parayars culminates in segregation of the two prominent Dalit communities affecting Parayar women the most. As men of both communities label and marginalise the women as the Other they become objects of male violence that not only shatters their harmonious coexistence but also threatens and debases their lives.

While Bama questions the government's (police department) failure to protect the rights of the Dalits despite constitution, this paper critiques the failure of the older, illiterate first generation Parayar men and the insensitive educated Dalit boys to protect the vulnerable women as they flee from the scenes of violence (**Chavady**) which hitherto had been their seat of power that their women folk helped preserve and foster. The cowardly escape they take recourse to in preserving and

safeguarding their own lives at the cost of the women is baffling in its intensity. The inept men, young and old abandon the women to a dismal fate of suffering while the police abuse the same power to torture, bully and violate them. The narrator delineates the horror experienced by women and their concerted efforts to remain sane and alive in the midst of chaos and confusion that throws their lives in disarray. Namma, Annamma, Madathi and others (points of view) are also terrorised by the intimidation of the callous, brutal and tyrannical police "But the police didn't even allow them to mourn. They threatened the women and forced them into the police van"(84).

It can be argued here that women are disillusioned and overwhelmed by the changing reality that entangles them which they cannot comprehend and over which they have no control creating in them an utter sense of despair. They are caught in triple jeopardy of oppression discerned in their helpless, hopeless struggle to free from the cruel police custody, their own men who fail by them and the outside Naickers who having bred hate between the two rival groups play sadist onlookers to the drama they enacted in effecting their destruction. Chellakili (point of view) becomes a scapegoat for the Parayar's vendetta against the Pallars when the merciless policeman, is insensitive to her plea to set her free owing to her condition, instead "kicked Chellakili in the lower belly with his boot... Another policeman hit her hard on the lower back with his lathi.... she had an abortion"(86). The passage while it exposes the brutality of a man in all its ramifications, it also suggests the non-functional police force. And surprisingly, it is the women who act to save themselves from further tyranny of the police. Rosemary convinces the police and it is she who leads the bruised, battered women back to village to arrange the funeral of the murdered men while the cowardly escaped men continue to take refuge in hiding "There wasn't a single adult male left in the village.... The women stayed and suffered."(88).

Bama deconstructs the male social order by making the dalit women perform the burial ritual of the murdered men. She allows Rosemary to improvise on the available resources as a timely intervention to save her women from further abuse. But the ensuing suffering these hapless women endure borders on martyrdom. Spacks argues "Feminine heroism depends upon endurance and denial"(106). One cannot fail to see the hypocrisy of men who forgo their roles as protectors, saviours but allow them to bear the brunt of the police's wrath as they "started beating the women with lathis... cursing them in the foulest language they entered every street

and every house and went about thrashing the women”(89) . They continue the search for the missing men “were moving around, and the women were terrified. There wasn’t a single man to protect them”(89).The graphic details of the horrifying horrendous torture on women is poignant to the last detail .One cannot but hold the men culpable who harass women at every possible opportunity .

The later pages bear testimony to rising judicious consciousness that brings about women’s solidarity in the hour of crisis “ They got some comfort in staying close to one another”(89). And it is Rosemary again who extends succor to the jailed women and acts wisely and rationally rather than breakdown emotionally thus subverting the dichotomy where women are perceived as emotional and irrational(De Beauvoir,Luce Irigaray). And it is these courageous women who invent alternative survival tactics by selling cows milk when they can no longer work in the upper caste fields. But the hate engineered by the Naickers against the Pallars reaches its pitch when, "the pallar mob was crazed with blood lust. With a single blow, one of them chopped off Chandana Mary's head...They hacked down Amalorbhavam even as she pleaded for mercy....fell to the ground unconscious"(117).

All the events of violence taken for this study are a glaring testimony to the inhuman ,callous , uncouth and bestial nature that gets expressed in men.Sartre argues”the look makes me aware of ‘my self ‘ as perceived by the ‘other’, I become aware of the fact that to the Other I am an ‘object’, I am a ‘thing’”(314-317) .It suggests the male perception of any woman as the Other , a thing that can connote a commodity to be bartered . While one cannot condone the sly and wily nature of the Naickers who abominably effect their vendetta albeit obliquely , one cannot also condone Parayars for failing by the women who are physically incapable of protecting their bodies from abuse, exploitation and torture.

Bama makes the narratives distinctively dalit in the choice of dalit cultural idioms and does not compromise on the dalit cultural expression.The arbitrary choice of I and the omniscient narration is to strategically distance herself from a biased lens and allow a free play of the male and female characters within a specific caste, cultural and male hegemonic vantage point. The narrators of *Sangati* and *Vanmam* both represent the third generation educated women who grow ,become aware of their equality rights and consciously subvert the dichotomy/ domestic sphere by breaking the stereotype and forge their own individual spaces. The narratives end with a hope and promise of a better future for them and the women.But what imperatives that need to be argued here are : Though the two narratives have a closed

ending Bama does not dwell on the new/different course of life the women chart for themselves. Perhaps she deconstructs the conventional ending in not revealing the fate of women in the aftermath of disintegration when **things fall apart/centre cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the earth.**

But the fact that women stay within the community following reintegration instead of leaving it surely suggests their passive acceptance of the Othering. It definitely cannot suggest that women realise their equality rights that are free from male oppression and violence. These women ensure a life transcending their daily life of ostracism, denial, exploitation atrocities the men inflict on them as they are not endowed with the tools of empowerment that benefits the narrators. They are very alive and vocal in their responses to the relationships within the community, but find it futile as the power of violence forces them to a life of denial, silence and absence. They experience **Angst**(Kierkegaard) whenever they encounter violence by men and cannot come to terms with and cannot prevent them either. They may not be aware of equality rights but struggle and survive against all odds that suggests their perseverance and resilience. But they perpetually remain the Other that has been culturally, socially and politically labelled and sanctioned including the narrators who draw a finale to their harrowed stories as “ women are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women” (de Beauvoir 113) .The narrators clearly state that they despite their empowerment by education and economic stability are poised at the threshold of caste and gender and need to override that reality in order to survive .They along with other women are forced to resign to the binary as male politics and the inherent bias continue to push them to the marginal existence as the Other.

Notwithstanding, this paper posits that both narratives suffer an abrupt foreclosure with a disturbing climactic ending without a convincing and favourable denouement. What can be argued here is that the feminist awareness discerned in the women which is so alive to the male violence is stilled and stunted in its inception and appropriated in the service of male by violence and hence they cannot envisage a safe and secure life . As the prevailing Othering poses a limitation, it threatens its realisation in the present as also in the future .Besides the constant Othering by socialization and the discourse of violence delineated by Bama leave the dalit women dysfunctional and passive except in the allotted and sanctioned roles for sustenance .Abedi maintains “Dalit literature is experience based.This ‘**anubhava**’(experience) takes precedence over ‘**anumana**’(speculation)”(2). The subtle and veiled optimism that Bama suggests at the end leaves the feminist concerns perplexed and

unanswered as the women move towards conformity by surrendering to the inevitable silence there by absence as a way of survival over everything else. They obviously fail to challenge the patriarchal authority by subverting the negative stereotype. The narrators seem to delude themselves into an unrealistic future of a make-believe and far-fetched Utopia. While Bama wants peace for her protagonists and vibrant dalit women it can be argued that binary remains intact and cannot translate into autonomy and independence they dream of. The women resign themselves to the Othering within the prescribed, mandated parameters for existence as they comprehend the dynamics of violence that remains a tool of female control.

Nowhere in the novels does Bama provide reasons for the male violence on the women. It needs to be mentioned here that most often the dalit writings are compared with African American Literature as there are many commonalities for academic discussions. Slavery and its attendant reality in the United States accounted for the male slaves to commit crimes in the form of rape and other atrocities on their female slaves over their frustrations brought on by their own impotence and failure to fight the white slave holders. The gradual self-hatred generated in their subconscious mind found an outlet by displacement through transference when they held the women guilty as witness to their powerlessness. But the dalit men's continued prejudice through Othering and the consequent damage they impose on the women is baseless, irrational and has no rationale. The narratives are replete and punctuated by scenes of violence that do not end. One posits whether they are the only modes of existence for women to fit into its mould?. The narrators inhabit the same dalit patriarchy that categorically effects and ensures the Othering of dalit women. Concomitantly they are doubly Othered as they embody individualism and cannot subscribe to the Norm. It can be posited as a final argument that the dalit women eventually subscribe to **I Am, therefore I Think** (Descartes: Existence Precedes Essence) while the narrators uphold and subscribe to the dictum, **I Think, therefore I Am** (Descartes: Essence precedes Existence). But the narrators speak of their own marginal Othering despite empowerment by pedagogy that can suggest their own limitation as the male community perceives them as the aberrational women "when the deviant is a woman, the community is threatened particularly since its continuity is at stake" (Morrison 25). The ending suggests that they continue to function in the limited role as the Other, denied acceptance. As this study on the politics of marginality and the discourse of perennial Othering draws to a close, one can sum up the argument that the narrators in these highly nuanced modernist fiction

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remain nameless or anonymous that unequivocally testifies to the unclear, unformed, unrealised, yet fluid stage of their self discovery and self identity as dalit women. It arguably calls for a reorientation of male thinking and bias and practices that can possibly put an end to the violence of whatever degree and form on the women. One definitely asks a pertinent question, whether it is/can be truly borne in reality?

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