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**Role of Dalit Women: A critical study of Bama's novels :**

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**Abstract:**

To speak of the role of Dalit women in Bama's novels is to quote the golden lines of Mahatma Gandhi: "If I was born woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his playing.". A deep and careful study makes us understand that women have been facing disparity in servitude and peripheral at the social, political, and familial levels. They're never provided the same and equal rights as men as they are born as women, as they are soft-hearted and are treated as the best for household work. In this male-dominated or patriarchal society, women are considered to be the endless sources of peace and happiness for their families. Not only that, they sacrifice even their liking, dislikes, merriment, and joy for the parents' sake before marriage and for the sake of in-laws and husbands and sons after marriage. This paper focuses on Dalit women's past and present plight as exposed in Bama's Novels.

**Keywords:** Gender discrimination, patriarchy, marginalization, casteism.

**Introduction:**

In this male-dominated society, women have become subordinates of their families, and this feeling of practice swallows the whole society. According to Genesis, " This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called 'women' she has taken out of man"(23). That is only why women have been considered as sexual puppets to the patriarchal society Since the establishment of our society, women have been regarded as brainless, kind-hearted, and powerless for making money and doing politics. In his book 'Politics, 'Aristotle opines, "The female

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is female under a certain lack of qualities"(13).To him, women are inferior to the male. He proves the following: " As regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior, and the female is inferior, the male ruler and female subject"(Aristotle 14). The trends of society, as well as the patriarchal system, are so strong that women themselves bow their heads at the feet of men and become the victims of the male. Women feel that men are like God and should always devote themselves without protestation. As a result of this, Dalit women have become worse victims at the hands of triple marginalizations such as caste, class, and gender. However, to empower the life of Dalit women, Dalit literature plays a vital role. Besides, Dalit women are writing about the life of Dalits and, therefore, have been considered Dalit feminist writers.

Faustina Mary Fatima Rani Bama, like Shantabai Kamble, Urmila Power, Baby Kamble, and Goku Shyamala, raises her fire voice against the pathetic condition of the life of Dalit women through her novels and tries to establish equal rights like men. Bama, through the famous revolutionary novels, wants to expose the social, political, and economic discrimination and, above all, the exploitation of Dalit women. Her immortal creation, *Karukku*, shows casteism and gender discrimination of Dalit women. Therefore, it teaches them how to fight against the patriarchal society for justice or establish equality in terms of human rights. However, upper-class women face the same discrimination; they do not like Dalit women who face triple marginalizations such as lower caste, class, and gender. Her novel "*Karukku*" gives a vivid picture of Dalit women who are hard-working women with no dreams, desires, hopes, or expectations. They work throughout the day and night like worms without any physical, mental, or social support from their husband.

Furthermore, both the patriarchal and the male folk provide them with pain(psychological and physical torture). The novelist Bama proves the story above by expressing her childhood experiences. The heinous incidents do not help her to sleep peacefully at night. Men, according to her, can hide in the jungle, but their women have to face the bestiality of the police. Bama quotes, "All of a sudden, a huge gang of policemen came out of the challyyar settlement, and they used obscene language and swore at them, told them since their husbands are away, they can entertain the police at night, winked at them and shoved their guns against their bodies (35). One more example of discrimination is that Bama asserts, "If they do the same work as the men do, men receive one wage, women another . They are always paid more . I could never understand why"(47). Another significant difference that Bama notices between Dalit men and women is very prominent: Dalit men are oppressed by upper-class people, and Dalit women are oppressed by their men at home, like the king. In this context, Bama opines, "They control their women, rule over them, and find their pleasure. Within the house, they lay down the law! Their world is scripture (59). Patti, in "*Karukku*", opines that if anyone wants to take birth in this material world, they should take birth only as a man, not as a woman, since women are forced

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to live with pain and suffering. Bama writes, "From the moment they wake up, they set to work both in their homes and the fields. At home, their husbands and children pester them; in the field, there is back-breaking work besides the harassment of the Landlords. When they come home in the evening, there's no time even to draw breath (59).

"Sangati" by Bama is considered the Bible of feminist writings, for it is the collection of a miniature of the fundamental stories of Dalit women that inspire them to have self-confidence. It is said that "Sangati" is a journey of Dalit women to accept challenges with a rebellious attitude. Bama's Sangati exposes oppression, defiance, and loveliness in dealing with one's troubles in life. The lead is best expressed in the character of Veliamma, who helps pregnant women to give birth to a child. She even goes to the house of the Landlords to provide her expertise service, but the Elite class people of society avoid her entrance and offer poor quality food instead. The financial condition of women is also fragile; in Grandmother's words: "We have to labor in the fields as hard as men do and then on top of that struggle to bear and raise our children. As for the men's work, it ends when they have finished in the field. If you are born into this world, it is best you were born a man ".Bama here shows the gap between the female child and the male child. Society prefers male children in the family. The male children are provided food, dress, and education more or less based on priority before the female children. Girl children are forced to do the household work instead of fulfilling childhood dreams and desires. The girl children are not allowed to participate in the games like boys. During menstruation, they are kept even apart from the family. They can play games with stones and shells like Mangal or Chastain. But they are criticized for playing boy's games like Kabbadi, marbles, or chellaangucchi. People will say, "What does she think she is? She is like a donkey; look at how she plays boys' games (2).

Vanmam is another immortal creation of Bama, the pioneer of Dalit feminist writing. It is the novel deals with various social oppressions like caste and gender equality, Identity crisis, and sexual assault of Dalit women. Instead of directly protesting against the injustices above, Bama tries to empower the Dalit women to have the self-confidence and power to struggle with those injustices. So that they can entertain freedom of speech, dress, and equal rights in the workplace as well as at home; through this novel, Bama wants to stand on the side of the Dalit women to achieve human rights as she says, " Oh, the French have so much regard for literature. They appreciated my writing for its quality. They didn't think "She is a woman writer" or she is a Dalit "(VAN 156). In this novel, Bama depicts that the two castes, Pallars and Parayars, despite enormous difficulties, have unitedly decided to elect a person from their community and won. Therefore, both groups understood that by any means, they should be united and fight against the injustices above society for setting up human rights. The novelist in this matter says, " First, through highlighting the

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disaster that awaits both castes if they persist in violence and vendetta as against the benefits that they can accrue to them if they can achieve a meeting of minds asserts their rights unitedly—second, using the device of an omniscient narrator who reports but doesn't participate, thereby challenging the stereotype that Dalit writing must deal with Dalit victimhood (VAN XV). Another vital incident that moves our hearts is the character of Rayappan, who, without knowing anything, was working in the field when he saw a group of Pallars people with knives and sticks coming towards him, and he became afraid. His wife Amalobhavam Chandana Mary requested Rayappan to run off and hide himself, and the two women presented there stood in front of the angry mob. As a result, one of the angry men cut off the head of Chandana Mary. " The Pallars and the Parayars used to face many dangerous incidents now and then in their everyday life. The riots and vengeance became the fear of their life. They came to realize that they were struggling and revolting for their Landlords after killing their brothers and sisters. This realization changed them; they understood it "started as a tiny spark. Now it is a raging flame threatening to burn us all "( VAN 127). The seed time came when the hearing of the murder case of Sethuratham started; they felt that the situation was not under their control as many of them were in jail. The Pallars felt that the justice might go against them. So they thought it might be better to settle the matter amicably. They said, " We want to live like human beings. But if we were treated like beasts, we may have to act according to the situation's demands. Others live first and then die, but we are dying even when we are still alive. At least, the generation to come must live well . Let's find a way to do that, said Nataama firmly (VAN130).

**Conclusion :**

To conclude, it can firmly be said that Bama, unlike other feminist Dalit writers, shows a way for how the Dalit women can be free from socio-oriented sins or barbaric tortures like casteism, gender dissemination, exploitation of childhood dreams, especially for girls' children, sexual harassment and patriarchal system of the society. According to the novelist, the only way of redemption for these sins is to educate Dalit women, and the poor socio-economic setup of the society must be developed rapidly. Thus, the darkness of injustices on the forehead of Dalit women will disperse slowly but steadily.

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