

Testimonio – An Autobiographical Narrative in the Novels of Bama's *Karukku* and *Sangati*

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Abstract

The paper intense to throws light on narrative strategy in detail and its effect on the style of language used in her novels. This paper will also examine the contribution of the writer, Bama in her works “*Karukku*” and “*Sangati*”. Autobiography is different from a testimony but Bama made these two in her writing with different style as testimonial autobiography. The aim of this paper is to talk about the energy of writing to transform understanding into life stories that will in the long run offer ascent to a separated sort of social experience through the perusing of the novel *Karukku* and *Sangati* by the Indian Dalit author Bama. With a specific end goal to make clear the experience of the Dalit Women, Bama changes the style autobiography, as comprehend in the west, since in her story the voice of the community forces itself upon the voice of the individual. In this manner, she changes the quality and style of accepted narrative considered as artistic with the goal that they will oblige the stories of quieted individuals enunciated through a separated sort of feel. Bama utilizes people dialect which is new to the standard journalists. Not at all like Sivakami, who utilizes society dialect just in exchanges between her characters, Bama utilizes people dialect all through her work. In addition she challenges the etiquette and style of standard writing and breaks the rules of grammar too to make the reader's to know about their traditions and her experience.

Key Words: Testimonial, Dialect, Style, Language, Experience, Etiquette

INTRODUCTION:

Bama, famously known as Karukku Bama, was born in 1958. She is a Tamil writer, teacher and a social activist. She goes by the pen name Faustina Mary Fatima Rani. She is a prolific essayist. Her novels include *Karukku*, *Sangati*, *Vanman* which has been converted into other Indian dialects, English and French. Besides, she has composed twenty short stories which have not been distributed in the book form. She holds a privileged doctorate degree, and has won the Crossword Award for her semi-fictional

autobiography, *Karukku*, in 2000. She is regularly welcomed by Indian and Foreign universities to address at different conference. She is a multi-faceted personality and is a woman with exceptional strength and conviction to any type of oppression. She has a sharp eye for excellence in nature, significant understanding into issues relating to caste, religion and woman. She has clarity of thoughts and expression. She is devoted to the upliftment of the discouraged, is

passionate about teaching and her main goal is to fabricate a casteless society. Bama's grandfather had changed over from Hinduism to Christianity and her ancestors were from the Dalit people group and filled in as rural workers. Bama had her early education in her village. On graduation, she served as a nun for seven years. With encouragement of a friend, she wrote about her childhood experience. These experience formed a basis for her first novel, *Karukku* published in 1992. At the point when the novel was published, Bama was shunned from her town for depicting it in poor light and was not permitted to enter it for the following seven months. Bama tailed it with *Sangati* and *Kusumbukkaran*. Bama's *Karukku* has been meant English and *Kusumbukkaran* and *Sangati* to French. Bama's novels concentrate on caste and gender discrimination. They convey caste-discrimination practiced in Christianity and Hinduism. Bama's works are seen as embodying Dalit feminism and are famed for celebrating the inner strength of the subaltern woman.

The confession, conversational method of writing embraced by Bama in *Karukku* and *Sangati* is a noteworthy point of reference in Tamil Dalit fiction. It leaves from the artistic, invariably refined and therefore elitist vocabulary of scholarly talk that stands distanced from the marginalized subjects. Bama utilizes the vocabulary and talked idiom of the marginalized in her literary works thereby underlining the ideological supporting that controls the traces of personality, self expression and artistic talk in Dalit writing. She writes on those up to this point underestimated in

artistic talk in a dialect that has been held unliterary. She examines predominant literary practice and explains the encounters of the abused in the language of the oppressed.

Bama writes on Dalit woman in her novels in her ability as a Dalit woman herself. She in this manner makes it clear that written work from the edge – the act of writing for a Dalit woman – is a political act. She looks to overthrow prevailing observation, portrayal and explanation of Dalit Woman's lives. In investigation of Bama's written work, we might follow the nearby connection between education, writing and strengthening that Bama sets as devices that could free woman of her caste from leading a corrupted repressed existence eternally.

DISCUSSION:

Karukku can be considered as the youth memoir composed by Bama, which voices the delights and distresses of her kin, persecuted by the higher standings in India. The book mirrors the different occasions occurred in her life. She was naturally introduced to a poor Dalit family. Her grandma and mom works in the fields and the homes of the Naicker landowners. Regardless of the hopelessness, she had a lighthearted youth. Her sibling, Raj Gauthaman, additionally an author, acquainted her with the universe of books and motivated her to compose. In school, she used to compose verse. Later she transformed into composing fiction. After instruction she turned into a teacher. Bama depicts the mistreatment she looked as an understudy and an instructor. She said that, since she was brilliant in examining and

instructing, she figured out how to escape from the brutal persecution to a specific degree. Her life took a major turn, when at 26 years old, she took the pledges to wind up a sister. However, in the theological college and later in the religious circle, Bama understood the intense truth that the circumstance of Dalits will dependably be the same. Along these lines seven years after the fact, in 1992, Bama left the community. Outside the religious circle, she confronted heaps of inquiries arrowed upon her. It is her choice to account the encounters as her life account that spared her from terminating her life amidst every one of the battles. In this way with *Karukku*, Bama shot into quick acclaim and was talked about in higher artistic circles.

Whereas in *Sangati* is a startling understanding into the lives of Dalit women who confront the two fold inconvenience of rank and sexual orientation separation. Written in an informal style, the first Tamil form upsets the respectability and feel of upper-rank, privileged Tamil writing and culture and, thusly, ventures a positive social personality for Dalits as a rule and for Dalit women specifically. *Sangati* mocks got thoughts about what a novel ought to be and have no plot in the ordinary sense. It relates the mindscape of a Dalit woman who ventures out of her residential area group, just to enter a standing ridden and progressive society, which continually addresses her position status. Understanding that abandoning her group is no escape, she needs to deal with her way of life as an informed, monetarily autonomous woman who lives alone. In relating this story, Bama transforms *Sangati* into the story not simply

of one individual, but rather of an outcast group. Hard work and financial instability prompt a culture of brutality, and Bama intensely investigates this subject as well. She also composes of the vicious treatment of women by fathers, spouses and siblings, and the fierce household controversy which are carried on freely, where once in a while women battle back.

Her dialect is additionally altogether different from the other women writers of India as she is more liberal with the utilization of Dalit Tamil slangs. She tends to the women of the town by utilizing the addition amma; (mother) with their names. From the names of places, months, celebrations, ceremonies, traditions, utensils, adornments, garments, edibles, amusements, and so forth to the names of occupations, the method for tending to relatives, apparitions, spirits, and so on; she persistently utilizes different Tamil words.

AS A SUBALTERN STUDIES: TESTIMONIAL:

The word “testimony” and “testify” both comes from the Latin word testis, which is normally translated “witness”. Testimonial Literature is considered as oral or written autobiographical narrative, particularly with evidence or human rights abuses, injustice and war and living under condition of social oppression. As stated in the site Worldlitonlinenet, George Yudice defines Testimonio as “an authentic narrative told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation like war, oppression, revolution etc” (22). Bama’s *Karukku* apart from her autobiography, becomes the testimony of a community. ‘Dalit’ is a

Marathi word derived from Sanskrit, ‘dala’ meaning ‘of the soil or the earth’. Another meaning is ‘that which is rooted in the soil’

Karukku is considered as the childhood memories of Bama, which gives not only joys and sorrows but also about her people oppressed by the higher castes in India. “As a woman and as a dalit Christian, Bama’s act of expression can be viewed as a subaltern expression”. *Karukku* turned out as a resistance against the continuous caste and gender oppression. Additionally the book turns into the testimony of a dalit Christian woman’s hateful experiences. Her act of seeing ended up being a source of motivation to her fellow writers. Bama’s collection of memoirs is quite different from the normal style, resulted as subaltern testimonial autobiography. So it is applicable to study a content which records the oppression confronted by a subaltern dalit woman. *Karukku* is about the self and identity however on the other *Sangati* depends on the group of characters. The novels discuss about the Paraiya community who are doubly oppressed.

Gayatri Spivak’s, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, a fundamental work in the theory of Subalternity, examines the requirement for a voice of the radical Other to express their experiences. The Subaltern, as she would like to think, is one who has no position or power outside the talk that develops him or her as a subject. She argues that one can’t get to a ‘pure’ subaltern cognizance on the grounds that the subaltern can’t talk in a talk in which he or she has almost no control.

What more, henceforth there is dependably somebody who is represented the Subaltern. It is through the West’s affirmation that the subaltern finds a character. Be that as it may, Spivak is against this endeavor of recuperating the voice of the Subaltern by savvy people in light of the fact that in such an endeavor, the scholarly is just a straightforward medium through which the subaltern’s voice develops. Just a subaltern can talk about their sharp encounters in full measure and when others discuss them, which will cover just half of their life. There is a critical need to make a moral reaction to the voice of the subaltern. Spivak contends that,

...the subaltern can be spoken to just in a moral connection where there is the ponder production of a room, a space for the voice of the radical Other (171-172).

What’s more, here, in *Karukku*, Bama rose and built up herself as an effective voice of the subaltern woman. Therefore, in *Karukku*, the “subaltern talks”. Bama effectively pictures the social, social and familial existence of Dalits. It doesn’t restrict itself to the persecution and the cruel substances confronted by Dalits. It intricately depicts the everyday life, dialect, naming traditions, religion, culture, celebrations, nourishment propensities, amusement, recreations, prodding tunes and connection in the Paraya people group. About the religion she discusses the social centrality of drumming which is featured in the way they praised the “Pusai”.

Karukku remains as a methods for quality to the large number whose personalities have been executed and denied. *Karukku* has

enabled many to raise their voices and proclaim, "My language, my culture, my life is praiseworthy, it is excellent".(x) Bama breaks the rules of written grammar and spelling throughout, elides words and joins them differently, demanding a new and different pattern of reading... by using an informal speech style which addresses the reader intimately... As well as this subversion of received Tamil...an oral tradition made up of work chants, folk-songs, songs sung at rites of passage, as well as proverbs...there is often a layering of meaning in certain words...often there is a spin or a turnaround of meaning, a freshness in some of the coinages...breaking a mainstream aesthetic....proposing a new one which is integral to her politics (Holstrom xix-xx).

BAMA'S USE OF LANGUAGE:

She utilizes a Dalit style of dialect which social practices and appearance of acquired high society, upper-caste Tamil. She breaks the guidelines of composed sentence structure and spelling all through, omits words and goes along with them in an unexpected way, requesting another and distinctive example of perusing. *Karukku*, additionally, by utilizing a casual discourse style which tends to the reader intimately, shares with the reader the writer situation as dalit and Christian straightforwardly, demystifying the religious contention, and settling on her decision a matter of heart.

And in addition this subversion of updated Tamil, all Dalit composing is set apart by certain different attributes. It recovers and stays near an oral custom made up of work-serenades, society tunes, tune sung at soul

changing experiences, and additionally maxims and some of this convention has a place especially with the woman's space. *Karukku*, strangely, additionally recounts the narrative of Tamil Dalit Catholicism in the vocabulary that it utilizes especially in the focal section which depicts her otherworldly trip from youth confidence to homecoming subsequent to withdrawing from the religious community. There is regularly a layering of significance in specific words, where a Tamilized Sanskrit word is given another Catholic importance, for instance, Tamil mantiram from Sanskrit mantra progresses toward becoming; catechism; in catholic utilize. Consequently, frequently there is a turn or a turnaround of significance, freshness in a portion of the coinages, diverse courses and slippages in the way Catholicism has been naturalized into the Tamil of the content. It is critical to note what Bama reliably utilizes the dialect of prevalent Catholicism.

Essentially, the recreations that children play are classified on gender. As the storyteller reviews in Sangati,

Boys do not let girls play their games. Girls could only play at cooking a meal, play at being married off or even play at getting beaten up by husbands! (Sangati 56)

In *Karukku*, the storyteller gives an intricate portray of the amusements played by youngsters in a Pariayar town. The young men of the state play go about as Naickers (upper caste landlords) and the young women take action accordingly as Pannaiyaals (farmhands). Dalit girls who are fortunate to go to class routinely - for example Bama - are subjected to casteist

segregation at different focuses in their school life. Bama describes strikingly in *Karukku* that she came to ‘realise, recognize and felt humiliated’ about being conceived in an untouchable station when she was examining in third standard. The returning back home from school was dependably an agreeable one for Bama and her companions. They could walk through the bazaar, watch different types of normal rustic preoccupations like monkey move, wind charmer's ability, notice the fragrance exuding from the different eating slows down, connect with rovers offering dots and strings. They could likewise witness every so often, enchantment appears, ‘Therukootu’, puppet appears or hear party specialists holding forward their pioneer's ideals and grandness et cetera. Such a fulfilled trip covered with honest delights, most likely normal in any country children's standard way of life.

EXPRESSED THROUGH SONGS:

In *Karukku*, Bama rose and set up herself as an intense voice of the subaltern woman. Bama effectively pictures the cultural, social and familial existence of Dalits. It doesn't bind itself to the persecution and the cruel substances looked by Dalits. It intricately portrays the day by day life, dialect, naming traditions, religion, culture, celebrations, sustenance propensities, amusement, diversions, prodding tunes and family relationship in the Paraya people group. About the religion she discusses the social hugeness of drumming which is featured in the way they commended the “Pusai.” During the Pusai, there was only one man who sang out loudly, while quite a few others accompanied him by beating out the

rhythm on all sorts of objects (Bama, 66). Bama illustrate the festivals in her community as: “There were celebrations for Christmas, New Year, and Easter and for the Chinnamalai festival” (*Karukku* 64).

They sang teasing songs to the bride and groom who were usually cross-cousins:

“As I was grinding the masala,
machan,
You peeped over the wall,
What magic powder did you cast upon me?
I cannot lift the grinding stone any
more.”(Sangati 63)

However, Dalit women display excessive aptitude for survival and battle. They not just go around the prohibitive code forced upon them by upper standings or their own particular men folk, they even test or subvert the same. They exceed expectations in music and mood is a piece of their fundamental physical development. Each part of their life is rendered into melodies by the woman. Singing is a technique they receive to break free from the exhaustion of hard work, to celebrate critical breakthroughs in a woman's life, to partake and stamp their quality in social/religious capacities where, all things considered, they are avoided the spotlight. Their oral version of their life's distresses and delights is a parallel scholarly history, undocumented in hegemonic artistic, scholastic talk. Their amusingness, their capacity to laugh and bother even while driving a socially curbed way of life draw out their inborn quality, flexibility and imagination. Bama reports in *Karukku*, “Women sing songs composed by them. They sing when they sow, when they transplant, when they harvest. They

compose the tunes themselves. Their lullabies, their songs to celebrate the onset of puberty, their dance at Easter or their song of lament at a death ..." demonstrate how tunes are and indispensable part of Dalit women; presence (*Sangati* 51). The melody sung by the grandma at Mariamma's beginning of feminine cycle in *Sangati* is a rich, aural embroidered artwork of beautiful excellence, and pleasant points of interest. It commends a woman's introduction into sexuality with a glad and not a biting talk. The women ululate all things considered, sending the audience members to a condition of joy. The holding among women at such events makes an effective structure of solidarity with regards to consistent reprimanding, mishandle and brutal attacks on these women by their spouses, fathers and siblings. Bama writes, 'From birth to death there are special songs and dances'. (*Sangati*, 78) "Even the little ones were good at singing and dancing. Even the bare-bottomed toddlers would sing out 'Sanjanakka – Sanjanakka' as they strummed away on broken clay pots strung with cattle-membrane, and they danced beautifully, never once losing the beat" (*Karukku*, 62)

Women excessively sang, as they planted out paddy seedlings, or weeded the fields, or harvested the grain, they attempted to the mood of their tunes. They sang to their children as they shook them in their supports. They sang to the young woman when they became an adult. They sang requiems to their dead. After the Easter Pusai was said in the Church, the women stood in a circle and sang: "Theruvil varaare, theruvil varaare – Yesu theruvil varaare, He

is coming through our street, he is coming through our street –Yesu is coming in his chariot" (*Karukku*, 63). They would sing this and dance a Kummi, clapping hands. It was only after they did this that the sapparam procession was taken around our parts. Bama explicits the varieties of Dalit art forms and she makes a special emphasis on how the women folk are naturally skilled and instinctive in performing them. "Roraatu (Lullaby) to oppaari (dire) it is only the women who will sing them" (*Sangati*, 79). Bama uses a many of these songs in her fiction. She also narrated the energetic rendition of Kulavai (Ululation) – where women perform in chorus. A song sung at a girls coming-of-age, with a chorus of ululation at the end of every four line begins as: "On Friday morning, at day-break. She came of age, the people said."(*Sangati*17)

She became a pushparati, so the elders said her mother was delighted, her father too, the uncles arrived, all in a row. Bama likewise encloses a few cases of clever rhymes and verses made up on the last minute to fit an event. Her narrative seems to be a splendid structure of straightforward life-circumstances with the trace of genuine socio-political variables. In *Sangati*, there are songs identified with the abuse of women. The spouse beats the wife hard despite the fact that she is pregnant. She is punished on the grounds that she got a few crabs from the wet fields and made a curry and ate it before he got back home for his dinner, demonstrating her subservient position. She sings her agony:

He came to hit me, the hungry brute
He pounced at me to kill me

He struck me, he struck my child
He almost crushed the baby in my womb
He beat me until my legs buckled
He thrashed me until my bangles
smashed.”(*Sangati*, 30)

Although the subaltern texts in general are angry in tone, the sense of humour of its characters cannot be neglected. Bama’s style is unique as she blends pain and humour in a curious combination in her writings. Such a style vouches for the fact that even under suppression Dalits are able to celebrate their lives with joy and fun. The characters make fun of each other throughout and they even sing songs teasing people. “Even though they left at dawn and hardly ever came back until after dark, they still went about laughing and making a noise for greater part” (*Sangati*, 76). Bama gives an account of such songs composed and sung on the spot in her texts. For example:

Handsome man, dark as a crow
More handsome than a blackened pot?
I have given you promise
You who can read Ingilissu” (*Sangati*, 77)

Dalit Literature and its dialect is described by torment, distress, revolt, oppression and embarrassment, as experienced by the Dalits. The greatly forceful vitality of the lingual authority portrays the oppressions experienced by Dalits. Dalits approach existence with an insurrection spirit which is displayed in their music and words. Bama purposely utilizes the vernacular which bothers the reader, to catch the distress and defiant nature of the abused. All through her works she breaks the principles of sentence structure, spelling and natural dialect.

CONCLUSION:

Bama ends up being it to be more decisive, free, enthusiastic and responsive than the scholarly dialect expected to befit the style of standard writing. Dalit life has its own style, vernacular, culture and personality which are in its moment points of interest caught by Bama in her accounts. Bama enough and more legitimate explanations behind the savagery of their dialect as a shield to secure them, once in a while a sharp tongue and revolting words utilized by women, just help them to escape from extraordinary physical brutality caused by men and to disgrace them. Every single other time Bama suggests that, such dialect may become out of a baffling absence of peace and delight in their lives. Bama investigates numerous parts of Dalit dialect in her stories, she upgrades her accounts with an extraordinary fixing enhanced in Dalit dialect that is mocking or parody, and unpretentious mockery. Bama uses dialect the way she uses to motivate the feeling of the peruse at direct, as experienced by any individual who lives among Dalits, or to empower Dalits relate with the experience depicted in her works. The way Bama’s dialect however Bama’s style and word usage emerge in their own specific manner asserting a one of a kind personality for her and in addition for the life and stature of the Dalit characters she is turning her story around. At last her work just demonstrates that Bama is a person of good taste in her own particular right and every one of her characters are not the slightest bit hostile to stylish, or foul of unrefined. By utilizing the dialect of protection and insurgence Bama has attempted to weave the dialect of Dalits.

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