

A Transition from An Excruciating Pain of Oppression to Rebellious Victory Of Women Through Faith With Reference To the Writings of: Alice Walker And Bama

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Abstract:

Are women considered secondary because they are born women? Alice Walker, an African American woman novelist and Bama, the first woman Dalit writer in Tamil, a contemporary woman in the 21st century, strive to prove the self-worth of themselves as women who have now emerged victorious and expect to be looked upon. Alice Walker's Work "The Temple of my Familiar" explores the black experience in America from varied perspectives mainly focusing on female experience. All the same Bama's work "Sangati" originally written and published in Tamil focuses the lived experiences of Dalit women community that was deliberately pushed to the fringes/margins of Indian Society by the Dalit themselves. Women in both novels stand oppressed and suffer pain that is irreparable and agonizing. Among the Dalits, particularly Dalit women stood at the intersection of caste, gender, class and religion which cut Bama at heart and stimulated her to articulate them through her numerous works particularly "Sangati". This study explores

the rebelling victory of women in both novels amidst the excruciating pain lived and experienced inevitably and as daily pattern of life. Nevertheless, the uniqueness in the novels is in their rejection of the women in their marginalized status and the emancipation of oppressed women who are determined to bring to the limelight several of those evils of gender discrimination which still exist, even in modern world. In their novels women emerge victorious and they overcome all hindrances by supernatural power and faith from within.

Keywords: Marginalization, tri-monster, ostracized, freedom, supernatural power.

Introduction

Trinh T. Minh-ha in her work *Woman, Native, Other* (1989) states that a woman of color is in a triple bind and therefore located at the intersection of subject and history. Such a writer stands at the interstices of race, class, and gender and when she writes she must constantly negotiate her position / identity within the matrix of all the three categories: race, class gender. In the case of Dalit women writers in India, race is interchangeable with caste and therefore they write at the intersection of caste, class, and gender. A Dalit writer has to negotiate the politics of their identity within the socio-cultural milieu. When a Dalit woman writer authors a text she has to claim her space and identity within the caste system as well as the stronghold of patriarchy in literature. The Catholic community follow rigid rules of hierarchy and patriarchy. The religious congregation of nuns and priests are placed in high esteem by the common laity. Bama is a Dalit woman writer, who is also a Catholic. In her case the aspect of religion also plays a significant role in her identity formation. More so because the Indian constitution gives minority status to Christians, along with Muslims. As a Dalit woman and a Christian-Catholic, the politics of identity is manifested in her caste, creed, and gender.

Literature has traditionally been the forte of male writers in the west, East as well in the Indian English literature. It has been the bastion of men who were educated, learned, and belonged to the elite and upper caste Hindu society. In the west the elite male writers were Edgar Allan, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, T.S. Eliot etc. In the African- American literature the

writers like Phillis Wheatley, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Raiph Ellison etc. were the strong voices that emerged to enumerate their slavish experiences vividly. Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao belongs to this 'class' of Indian English writers. There have been a few women writers too, such as Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markandya, who have also entered the literary tradition. However, Black and Dalit literature has a comparatively recent history in the eighteenth mid twentieth century respectively. Dalit literature began in Marathi Literature with writers such as Arun Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Raja Dale, Om Prakash Valmiki among others. According to Arun Dangle, Dalit literature has a sociological point of view as it addresses the caste system prevalent in Indian society.

Bama's works are looked at and analysed in the perspective of Dalit Feminist writing. Dalit feminism is a feminist perspective that includes questioning caste and gender roles among the Dalit population and within feminism and the larger women's movement. Dalit feminists advocate and have advocated for equal rights for Dalit women based on gender, caste and other issues. Dalit women use literature mainly to articulate the unheard or unspoken voices of their community. They bring into the feminist literature the issues of caste identity as effective portrayals of Dalit women's experiences that are partially or completely unheeded in the writing of Dalit men. The study here tries to redefine feminism radically into the core of feminist thought

by introducing Bama and other women who suffer subjugation as Dalits. Bama's writings depict the Dalit feminism and seek to establish a communal female identity for Dalit women. She, as a central character and narrator in the novels exposes the condition of low caste women under the tyranny of the upper caste men and women. Sangati owes its popularity to the contributions made in the field of both Dalit literature and Feminist literature as it is written in a Dalit-feminist perspective. Bama is hailed as the first Dalit woman writer, who carves out a collective female identity for Dalit women. Sketching out a variety of disciplines, the chapters in the paper focuses to discuss the Dalit patriarchy, the meaning and value of the Dalits in and through their lived experiences. The study also celebrates the women for their extraordinary strength to withstand all trials and to rise above from their own predicaments to uplift the other from their unbearable pains. Bama firmly decides to represent her community women giving them their due dignity.

Societies all over the world is divided into the categories of the powerful and the powerless. This power relations is called politics. Politics can operate along the factor of power from wealth, governance or muscle power. Gender, race, caste and religion are some other factors that determine the politics of identity in civilized societies. In most societies the powerful occupy the center, and the powerless are pushed to the periphery. This political equation creates further hostility and division among people. In Africa the racial-ethnic groups differed at different levels with their own racial ethnic centrality

creating politics among Blacks, Latino, Asian and multicultural groups of adolescents. In India, caste is a major determinant in identity politics. The elite caste such as Brahmins are considered to be superior to the low caste such as Mallar, Mahar, Pulleyar, Paraya, Adivasis, Hinduism believes in practicing segregation based on caste. This led to the practice of untouchability.

The caste system in India, is said to date back to 1200 BCE. However, it was the Portuguese travellers who introduced the term caste in the 16th century. The word 'Caste' is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word "casta" meaning "race", "breed", or "lineage". In India, many people use the term "jati" for caste and there are 3,000 castes and 25,000 subcastes. Caste was connected with one's occupation as well and strictly followed by successive generations. The four main categories or varnas are: Brahmins who become priests and teachers, Kshatriyas who are brave warriors and rulers, Vaishyas turn to cultivation or trade and become farmers, traders and merchants. The lower caste is called Shudras and they become laborers. Caste prescribes not only an occupation but also food habits and contacts they need to have with the members of other castes as well. It is always the high caste people who enjoy more wealth and opportunities than the people who are considered low caste and who are assigned to perform menial jobs. There is a community that is lower than Sudras and they are the Untouchables; they are nowhere within the four varnas, and remain outside of the caste system. The jobs of the Untouchable were to clean the toilets and to eliminate the garbage. Since

they do the menial jobs, they are considered to be polluted and are not to be touched. They have isolated entrances to homes and must draw and drink water from separate wells. They were considered to be in the state of impurity permanently. Understanding the pathetic state of the Untouchables Gandhi named them as “Harijans” meaning Children of God. In the pursuit of raising their status with symbolic gestures, Gandhi tried to befriend and eat with the Untouchables. The upward movement is very infrequent in the caste system. For the same reason, most people aspire to remain in the same caste throughout their life and marry within their caste.

Every individual born on earth has constant questions from within at different levels of growth and development that is, “Who am I”? “What am I”? This includes the concept of knowing or being labelled a ‘girl’ or a ‘boy’. To become acquainted with one’s identity is not one day or years endeavour but a lifetime process. In psychology, an individual’s sense of self is defined as a sense of continuity, or the feeling that one is the same person today that one was yesterday or last year despite physical or other changes. Such a sense is derivative from the feeling of one’s feelings, body image, and from the sense that one’s memories, goals, values, expectations, and beliefs belong to the self. This is also called personal identity.

In cognitive development, the awareness that an object is the same even though it may undergo transformations lead us to see the world as a place with an intentional design, created by someone who is Almighty and all Powerful. Children, for

example, with their fresh mind are inclined to believe that, even small aspects of the nature they perceive around them were created with a purpose. Barrett’s book *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (2004) endorses that belief in God is an inevitable cognitive development of the human psyche. It comes from mental tools working beneath our conscious awareness. “Whatever we believe consciously is in large part driven by these unconscious beliefs” (Azhar 2010).

The identity of an individual is formed from childhood and develops with age. It is rather difficult to clearly define ‘identity’ or restrict it to certain particular terms. It depends upon one’s gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion and sexual orientation. A person’s identity is also shaped by some other aspects such as nationality, culture, education and caste. One of the most important factors that contribute towards shaping one’s identity is the physical appearance which is inclusive of body image, face shape, and skin colour. People usually judge a person’s identity based on how he/she looks like. The physical appearance is something which doesn’t change usually because it’s something that one is born with. In spite of the unchangeable facts and mysteries of a human creation and their appearance the inhuman comparison of color and caste, gender and religion are lived and practiced in the name of discrimination in full swing ardently. People still are daring from the guts to act beyond the Constitutions the law of the lands and its fundamental rights prescribed opulently.

Feminism or Feminist movement that began officially in the 1960s demanded

equal rights for women. Although it began in the West as a political movement, by women demanding their right to vote, it soon spread into social, economic, literary and aesthetic fields. The presence of women came to be seen and felt in every way and the world had to acknowledge her difference and her worth through great works such as *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, *The Female Eunuch* (1970) by Germaine Greer, *Sexual Politics* (1970) by Kate Millet. As Feminism grew in ideology and literature, a sub-category called postcolonial feminism emerged with Black Feminism. Dalit Feminism can be identified with Black feminism as both shared a further marginalization on the basis of race/caste which had been absent in Western Feminist theories. From Beauvoir to Millet, all the Feminist Studies agree that society is patriarchal in nature; it gives subordinate status to women; there is a sexual politics working at all levels and spheres of civilised society. As Beauvoir contends in her monumental work *The Second Sex* (1849), that in patriarchy, man is the 'self' and woman the 'Other'. This theory of alterity denies woman equality with her male counterpart. This is true in all cultures and regions. Femininity is constructed based on role expectations and behaviour. Female has to be always subject to male authority over her life and her decisions. A woman who does not fit into this role is termed 'mad' 'rebel' or 'witch' and often punished by society in various ways.

Alice Walker is an Afro-American writer. Her novel *The Color Purple* (1982) tackles

the sufferings that black women undergo and the relationship between black women and black men. According to Alice Walker who coined the term "Womanism" in 1983 in her collection of essays titled as *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983), it is from womanish. (Opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folks' expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious (Farda, 2014).

African American women have been showcased by both white men, women and black men in different ways. They have faced conformed situations of slavery along with racism, sexism and classism right from their arrival in America. Their lives have always been that of struggle against marginalizing modes of oppression. Black women face more oppression as an ethnicity as well as a race too, as Blacks are the most visible race in America. They are easily discriminated after having stayed in America from the same time as their American inquisitors. Most people hardly concede the unique experience of black women under multilateral struggle. It is essential that people recognize that "black women experience a unique form of oppression in discursive and non-discursive practices alike because they are victims at once of sexism, racism and extension by

classism. Relegated by both the Black Nationalist Movement and White Feminist Movement, and American society on different counts, black women started voicing their lives, and the need for freedom through activism and writings too.

Walker's novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (2004) is a discourse of women adopting the importance of womanist consciousness and womanist spirit. Her novel is truly a tribute to the black womanhood owing to their strength, endurance and vitality. It exemplifies how Black women have outgrown beyond hurdles, disgraces invested on them by both whites and black patriarchs within black society working under the guidance of white patriarchs and have built a better black community that stands strong built as on rock. The racist, sexist and classist aspect of American society is set forth by Walker through the narrative twists and turns employed in the novel. Walker through the novel talks about the need to overcome conformities of the sort above and emerge as successful individuals. Womanist consciousness or awareness is the crucial aspect of the novel. Women constantly seek deliverance from their oppression through their womanist awareness attained by a hard and vigorous fight against injustice. Walker amidst all the pain and oppression advocates healing of the heart, mind and soul through forgiveness a sign of gaining confidence in faith that pain will soon be overcome by acceptance of oneself and the other only through forgiveness. Thus, Walker in her novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (2004) advocates forgiveness to overcome racial

bickering between blacks and whites to avoid violence and terror as she states:

Forgiveness is the true foundation of health and happiness, just as it is for any lasting happiness. Without forgiveness there is no forgetfulness of evil; without forgetfulness, there remains the threat of violence. And violence does not solve anything; it only prolongs itself." (Walker, *Temple* 310)

The text recommends redressal of racial animosity, as neither whites nor blacks would leave America as it is their home.

Black Feminism and Dalit feminism speak about the sufferings of women not only due to their gender but also due to race or caste. Thus, they are said to be in triple-bind. Bama's identity is that of a Dalit Catholic woman. Her work *Karukku* reveals the growth of her identity as a marginalized person to that of a spokesperson of her marginalized community. The journey of her life from the village to the convent and then back to the village is fraught with challenges due to the politics of her identity: caste, gender, as well as religion particularly for being a member of a minority religion - Christianity. Walker makes her own assertions of how she overcame her own sufferings and was a saviour for others through the characters of Zede and Mary Ann. Both women dare themselves to rebel against the drug gringos and assert their feminineness through their concerns for each other and their dependents who were scarred to revolt their oppressors. Once when Zede asks Mary Ann of how she found the courage to rebel and fight against

the injustice the latter confesses the trust she placed on Jesus as she states:

It had been based on something she vaguely remembered from Sunday school, something Christ was reported to have said. Something about “the least of these.” She saw that her politics had not been wrong – for as a radical she had tried to stand with “the least of these,” but she had tried to help people she did not know, with whom there was no reciprocidad; she had tried to ease the suffering of those who could not see that she, too suffered, or even believe that she could. (Walker, Temple 81-82)

As a Catholic, Bama too was indoctrinated into following church rituals strictly. She learned to become more spiritual, by allowing her spirit to interact with the Divine. It is a deep spirituality that enables her to empathize and help her community as well as all the poor and suffering in the world. In the New Testament book of the Bible, St. James in his letter gives a clarion call to all believers of Jesus to uphold humanity without discrimination:

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honourable name by which you were called? (Bible: English Standard Version, James: 2: 1-7)

Dalitism according to S. P. Punalekar, is a condition of oppression on the basis of political, economic, social and cultural. It embodies different degrees of darkness, destitution and marginalization. It basically denies human rights and social justice. (qtd. in Choubey 2013, 76). Dalit women are subjugated and a marginalized group who are officially known as Scheduled Castes in India. They make up the largest socially segregated group who face different challenges than upper-caste women. Dalit women live in poverty and are illiterate. They face severe oppression not only from the upper caste men but from their own Dalit men. They are also forced to face the hierarchy among the Dalit groups where few Dalits behave as higher-ups on the social scale than others. Dalit feminism questions such as caste and gender roles amidst the Dalit population and in the larger women’s movement. The Dalit feminists fight for equal rights based on such caste, class and gender disparities and other issues.

In the first place, Dalit women are the victims of social, cultural and religious practises. They face violence at higher rates, including all types of violence especially reserved for Dalit women. Asha Choubey in her book *Righting the Wrong* (2013) mentions few practices of forced prostitution like Devadasis or Jogins where village girls are married to God by their helpless parents. They are then exploited sexually by the upper caste landlords and elite men leaving them speechless and

subdued (77). In Walker's novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (2004) the characters Carlotta and Arveyda, another young couple in the novel lead luxurious life as they hail from a rich league of America. In spite of material riches, all modern amenities and children as bountiful blessings obtained from heaven, they rarely see their blessings and are often misled by anxiety and post-modern torments. A singer par excellence, Arveyda strikes a chord with his spectators but rarely strikes a chord with his inner self, personal life and Carlotta, later on. The problem of invisibility sucks him inside out, despite being a popular singer as he has connectivity with his ancestors, parents or kinsfolk to keep him on track with his ancestral history and heritage. A journey back home and his mind's voyage to his childhood helps him recover contact with his long-lost self. Carlotta being a trophy wife claims: "..... I was really going through a period of such Trauma as a woman that the only way I could deal with it was to become someone other than myself. I was a female impersonator" (Walker, Temple 386). Carlotta becomes a personal impersonator, mimicking her true personality and neglecting herself on account of sexism, discrimination and domestic violence from her husband Arveyda and her boyfriend Suwelo. The domestic violence women face in the name of love, is brought into focus by Walker throughout the novel, exhaustively in and through the two younger couples, Carlotta and Arveyda and Fanny, and Suwelo. Arveyda faces ostracism and racism despite being a popular singer and unknowingly thrusts the tension faced by him under

oppressive marginalizing forces, on his wife and children.

Moreover, the toss with his mother-in-law Zede becomes a matter of debate between Arveyda and Carlotta. Cedric and Angelita, their children, suffer immensely due to broken matrimonial relationships. Carlotta, on the other hand, tries to define her beauty according to western standards and constantly fails to belittle herself. She overcomes the lacunae in her life when she develops womanist consciousness and emerges as a strong woman to stand and defend not only herself but in her all-other women who seldom stand for the greater cause in life.

Additionally, the Dalit victims of violence including their families are ignorant of their rights or are left uninformed of their constitutional rights. Bama being a Dalit woman faced such discriminations and witnessed the sufferings of other women in Paraya community in her village. She thus dedicates to her literary efforts to pen their lived experiences, bravery acts and how they reacted and resisted their oppressive social system through her novel *Sangati: Events* (2005). Amidst the triple monster, Bama says the Dalit women love to live. The hardships faced on daily basis because of caste, class, gender and religion as well make them as vibrant and capable women who strive to break the system that breaks them down. To fight the oppression strongly she equips oneself following the strategies of Ambedkar at every step: educate, agitate and organize.

Bama in *Sangati* narrates the ruthless life lived by her Perimma who suffered silently under her demonic

husband bearing him “seven eight babies in a row and then closed her eyes” (10). Her ignorance leads her to be tortured by her husband crazy with lust and frenzy after her long hours of back-breaking job inside and outside her home. Bama emphasises the height of patriarchal domination suffered by Dalit women by their own men questioning Vellaiyamma Kizhavi (her Paatti) regarding her aunt (Perimma). Patti expresses the struggles of women in her village speaking of her own daughter – the Perimma of Bama thus:

You are talking like a silly child. When a man is hitting out like that, can a woman go and pull him away? And was she born alongside four or five brothers who could have helped her? There was not a soul to support her or speak for her. Not even her own father. Who was there to question a man? Even if the bystanders had tried to stop him, he would have shouted at all of them, ‘She is my wife, I can beat her or even kill her if I want.’ Tell me, who could have stopped him? (Bama, Sangati 10-1)

Walker’s Fanny never had a chance to escape from the crude lustful masculine forces around her. She faces overt and covert racism at every nook and corner of her life, both in personal space and at the workplace. Marginalized by racism and sexism on various fronts right from her childhood, Fanny loses contact with herself. Chastised by racism, demoted by her husband, she tries to make a engagements with her long lost self. She shudders making contact with herself, as she rarely acknowledges the severe sexism and discrimination, she faces from Suwelo. Fanny exclaims: “we knew it wasn’t going to work, . . . She hated the institution of

marriage. She said the ring people wore on their finger’s symbolizing marriage was a remnant of a chain.....” (Walker Temple 240). It becomes difficult for her to assess her strengths and accountabilities despite being a well-educated woman with requisite awareness under Suwelo’s bigotry. Further, the agitations regarding her sexuality continuously pains her, both on the physical and emotional planes. The novel as a womanist text is empathetic to all sorts of sexuality. Above all, racism makes Fanny sick. She feels and experiences that there is no freedom with the white man around. She tells Ola her African father: “In the United States, there is the maddening illusion of freedom without the substance. It’s never solid, unequivocal, irrevocable. So much depends on the horrid politicians the white majority elects. Black people have the oddest feeling, I think, of forever running in place”’. (Walker Temple 307)

Vellaiyamma Kizhavi who was known to the whole village as a midwife who had acquired or inherited the wisdom from the testing times absolutely had no way to protect her daughter – the aunt of Bama. Although she protected the girl heirs from the rich landlords or upper-caste men by restricting their movements in the village yet could not voice the injustice done to her own daughter. Sharmila Rege in her path-breaking essay Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of ‘Difference’ and towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint argues to reassess the feminist perspective in the viewpoint of Dalit feminist. She says that: “A Dalit feminist standpoint emerges from the endless struggles of Dalit women. thereby transforming themselves as

“Individual feminist” into “oppositional and collective subjects” (qtd. in Choubey 2013, 79).

The Dalit feminists repeatedly bring in the issues of the patriarchal system that is ruthless in the society. Illaiah, as has quoted in *Dalit Feminism: Issues, Factors and Concerns* by Asha Choubey compares the Dalit patriarchy with the Hindu patriarchy and declares that the former is more liberal and democratic. He opines that “certain customs like ‘paada pooja’ (touching the feet)” is not observed in Dalit families. But wife battering by the men of the house and wife, in turn, attacking the husband with shouts and insults gives her certain amount of freedom so to avoid the situations that try to tap her into complete oppression. (Choubey 2013, 79-80). Bama in *Sangati* elaborates one such anecdote of one of the main characters Maikkanni. Maikkanni an eleven years old girl who is smart and bright-eyed is subjected to care for her younger siblings and share in the burdens of her mother. She works in a match factory as young an infant she is. Once she gets beaten by her father for buying ice-cream for one rupee from her own wages and by the factory owner for taking a break to attend to her nature call. She is also beaten by the boys in the bus for the position near the window seat. On the other hand, she is a bubbly child who fights back the boys for the same window seat, enjoys the trip in the bus that takes her out of her village, relishes that a lavatory is built in the factory, enjoys listening to superstar Rajinikanth songs played in the factory that enables them to work fast and complete the day’s workload. For Bama, Maikkanni stands as a symbol of hope and a symbol of survival instinct. She

is so smart that she even survives the instant when in the jungle a man who tried to molest her approached. She gathers up all the twigs and the courage to run away from his wicked tactic using the common-sense, the innate freedom that liberates her externally. (Bama, *Sangati* 69-75).

Bama depicts Maikkanni as a girl/woman who in spite of oppressions and hard life yet is strong or headstrong built with tough fibre. She thus celebrates her exuberant courage to face life as it comes and maturity to maintain her sanity. Bama with pride narrates an important incident in *Sangati* described by Maikkanni about their (Paraya children) resistance to continue to work at the factory for being abused by the boys from another village addressing one of them as “Bernath’s granddaughter, that is – a Paraya”. At that, all the Paraya children shouted back the ‘rudest words’ and were ready to ‘fight each of them to death’ to the point of even picking up their carriers and walk all the way back home (74). Here Bama not only celebrates the unity of the Paraya children to fight back and regain their dignity but also their courage to take firm decision to stand together against the oppressor and the oppressive system.

In *Sangati* Bama also gives another example of Sammuga - the fighter Kizhavi who does not wait for any one’s aid but fights her own little fights with courage and audacity. During elections, different parties volunteer themselves to take the people of the village to the polling booth cantered at different places to make things favourable to them. Once the casting of the votes is over, they least cared for the once whom so much they wanted and do not drive them back home. Sammuga Kizhavi was

escorted to the booth by Golvalsaami Ayya's car but was left there after casting the vote. Sammuga Kizhavi is not the one to accept easily such discrimination. She sat back in the car defiantly and said:

You made sure of my vote, and now you're going to leave me stranded here, are you? We get no good out of voting for you, so at least let me have a free ride. Just give me a ride home Ayya. Otherwise, I'll speak to all the people in our street and none of the women will vote for your party. (Bama, Sangati 101)

In fear, Golvalsaami Ayya takes her back to her home in his car. On reaching she says that she took a ride in their car but did not even vote for them. Another rebellious event of Sammuga Kizhavi is that the proud one claiming that the wells in their parts were useless and went to the well of Sinivasa Ayya to bathe in it. When she was caught red-handed and was abused, she gives a very bold answer saying: "Ayya, the water in your well is not at all good. It's all salty" and in front of the upper caste owner she spits out a mouth full of water back into the well and moves to change her clothes. Sammuga Kizhavi made the man dumbfounded. Unable to approach her complaints to the naattaamai (117). In another event of resistance Sammuga Kizhavi rebels in the field of groundnut crop. Sinivasa Ayya had brought with him a pot of water which one of the children touched by mistake. Ayya took some young groundnut stalks and beat up the child cruelly. Noticing the pathetic state of the child she shows her concern and revolts the man saying: "the wretched man is beating up that innocent child just because her hand brushed against his water pot. See what I'm

going to do to him." And she pissed into the pot when he wasn't there (118). All women and children witnessing the event had a hearty laughter. Bama gives such subversive instances of resistance and celebrates such protesting moments of some of the stronger Dalit women who put forth themselves courageously within their ability.

Bama acquaints her readers with the unique challenge of the Paraya community. In her conversation with Githa Hariaran, she states how the oppressive system reinforced them and brought to their knowledge that they could resist their oppressive systems not being meek any more. She says that in spite of the hardships faced the women of her community knew that they were capable women and brave individuals. They began to celebrate their womanhood, diligence, hard life that brought them a tremendous change from themselves as they were people who could resist. Bama says that she gained her strength from the experiences of her community women who were able to face hardships and yet live joyfully. She takes upon herself a commitment to give hope for those who have lost it showing them a life which is simple yet beautiful. Dalit women amidst oppression and subjugation love to live with human relationships and values. The humanistic values give hope and depth meaning to life which becomes the essentials for survival. She calls women to agitate and fight oppression and extend the solidarity with other groups and movements and fight till the end for equality, fraternity and freedom. At the end of the novel Sangati, a community autobiography Bama gives an awakening call to all and says:

Men can humiliate us a thousand times, speak about us with disrespect, and act towards us in that way too. ... But let a woman be outspoken just once – just one single time – let her act just once with self-respect.we must change this attitude that if married life turns out to be perpetual hell, we must still grit our teeth and endure it for a life time. We must bring up our girls in these new ways from early age. ...We should give our girls the freedom we give our boys. If we rare our children like this... women will reveal their strength. Then there will come a day when men and women will live as one.... (122-3)

Just as the prayer of Jesus “May they all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (Jn: 17: 21). Bama desires to be united to the oppressed women in good and bad times being a true source of strength filling all with the Divine grace.

Sangati (1994, trans. 2005) focuses on the politics of identity of the Dalit women/girl born with dark completion, fills the mother with a mixed feeling of joy and disappointment when she says: “If the third is a girl to behold, your courtyard will fill with gold. When I was born, it seems that my grandmother, Vellaiyamma quoted this proverb and rejoiced. My mother was happy enough. But she was a little disappointed that I was dark, and didn’t have my sister’s or brother’s colour” (3).

All are well aware that human beings are social beings, social animals and rational beings. The creation of human beings is a composite of numerous concepts like logic, mathematics, philosophy and science – the products of rationality. Nonetheless, the sociability of human beings is that of an animal herd and that the

society of human beings is founded and developed basing itself on their specific belief systems.

In a comprehensive survey of notions of “the animal” in the history of western philosophy, he describes the latter’s overwhelming conclusion that although a human being “can project anthropomorphic characteristics onto the animal or experience emotions (such as pathos or sympathy) in response to its being, an impenetrable screen - language - divides the loci of human and animal being” (qtd. in McKay 2001 p. 254).

This apparently is a non-combative theory that is familiar outside philosophy as the taboo on anthropomorphism in scientific reports on animal behavior. This is clearly retold by Miss Lissie, a character in Alice Walker’s novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (2004):

“The animals can remember; for, like sight, memory is renewed at every birth. But our language they will never speak; not from lack of intelligence, but from the different construction of their speaking apparatus. In the world of man, someone must speak for them.” (Walker, Temple 201).

The succeeding analysis examine many implications of the above-mentioned statement proves that the women in general and Miss Lissie had some relationship with the animals and her children deeply satisfied women of which the men were jealous. Thus, it is clear that this is the ways in which women (pitiful and dumb animals) might be said to be “spoken for” in Walker’s novel.

Conclusion:

Belief systems are reinforced by cultural values, theological perspectives,

stereotypes, political viewpoints and largely through personal experiences. These beliefs are often reflected as religious beliefs or as one's strong convictions that draws them to possess personal commitment which is an interesting feature of ideology. The characters in the novel "The Temple of My Familiar" "seek methods of connecting to their pasts and each other- through storytelling, music massage, and of course love and sex-and seriously avoid the traditional systems of the white male patriarchy, while asserting a philosophy of spiritual unity and balance" (qtd. in Dhavaleswarapu 2019 p. 8). By the end of the novel "they all vaguely realize they have a purpose in each other's lives. They are a collective means by which each of them will grow. They don't discuss this, but it is felt strangely by all. There is palpable trust" (Walker Temple 398). The novel ends on a positive note wishing for and signing in a better future for blacks, especially black women who fight a vigorous fight yet develop deep faith in themselves and grows in God consciousness following the canons of Womanism in a realistic way. Bama after rebelling from within and the oppressors with her spiritual Christian identity becomes powerful not politically, socially, economically but by the spiritual rejuvenating power obtained from Jesus' Spirit. She thus, lifts up herself from the shackles of oppression, depression, discrimination, alienation, domination and moves to lead her community into similar spiritual privilege - the Truth. Thus, Bama has evolved from a meek and weak self to a strong self-willed personality owning

convictions with no compromises in living and practising equality and justice.

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