Gender Issues and Women Suppression from Bama's Sangati

D. Aslin Jerusha and L. M. Swarnalatha

Department of English, Vellalar College for Women, Thindal, Erode, India

ABSTRACT

People agonise from different disputes and also make progress from it. It differs from each person. Women faces numerous problem often and the society expects to recover soon. They are on the frontline for misery and also to give response for the suffering. This paper draws on a study about three women characters such as Mariamma, Thaayi, Maikanni from Bama's Sangati dealing their life in the gender biased society. From this, the researcher asks to acknowledge the power of women and also utilize the skills which is quite natural in them that is problem solving and also to recover from breakdown. Steps must be taken to advance women's wellbeing and also to strengthen them by dropping their burden.

KEY WORDS: DISPUTES, SUFFERING, MISERY, DISCRIMINATION, GENDER BIASED, BURDEN.

INTRODUCTION

The post-world war II brought many changes to the lives of people. The society craved for change and the post war effect brought extreme change to the society. The change which attracted the decision makers was gender issues and suppression of women. Gender issues itself clearly says that it is the discussion about both men and women, women who suffer from gender inequality. This gender issues starting from post-world war to present is common everywhere. It is still prevalent in government and non-governmental organisations. Today, many believe that positive approach towards gender inequality can bring strong and healthy changes to the society. This healthy decision can decrease poverty because women bring new fame and new energy in their respective fields. Many debates are going in national and international level on women and their upliftment for the past few decades. The importance for women and voice against inequality is gaining steady growth and intellectual legitimacy.

Gender issues is present for both men and women. But, from start women are treated inferior to men. The patriarchal society never gives enough exposure to women. Women are treated as objects who are designed

to obey the orders of men in family or society. If a women find a unique way to prove herself to the society, she is treated worst. They are subjected to follow tradition what others says or else they are seen as degrade to their family itself. This gender issues begins from the day when a child is born. The entire family waits to know the gender of the upcoming baby in a family. If a boy is born, then it is a celebration, otherwise the atmosphere of the entire house change as a death house.

My mother told me that in our village, they didn't make any difference between boys and girls at birth. But as they raised them, they were more concerned about the boys than the girls (Bama 3) Women are brought up with the mind set of suppression. They suffer in the hands of male from birth till death. They are merely a pleasure givers to the male. Their opinions and ideas are not valued because they are treated badly than animals. This suppression is extended to sexual desires too. Men always express his needs violently to women. If a women openly conveys her desires she is abused with bad words and even physically. This society never allows women to be independent. Dalit women are no exception to this situation.

Discussion and Analysis

Discrimination Against Women

Dalit women suffered from discrimination, marginalisation and brutal tortures. Dalit men and women need more awareness because they are fooled by their masters. Dalit men itself suppress Dalit women and therefore the condition of Dalit women in the hands of upper caste men is critical. The upper caste men takes advantage

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of lower caste women. Marginalisation is common to women of this patriarchal society in which Dalit women are doubly marginalised. This double marginalisation and discrimination is vividly clear in Bama's Sangati. Our women cannot bear the torment of upper-caste masters in the fields, and at home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands.

Besides all this, upper-caste women show us no pity or kindness either, if as women to women, but treat us with contempt, as if we are creatures of a different species, who have no sense of honour or self-respect. They themselves lead lives shut up inside their houses, eating, gossiping, and doing their husbands' bidding, and then they treat us like this. God knows how they stay shut up within four walls, all twenty-four hours of the day. (Bama 65,66)

Gender Inequality: The word Sangati means news which is apt for this book because it brings news to the society about the struggle of this particular community dalit women. This suppression and torments are active even today around us. Many women especially dalit women not given chance to shout out their inner emotions and hardships. The book Sangati shows the gender inequality and women suppression from first page of text clearly. If a boy baby cries, he is instantly picked up and given milk. It is not so with the girls. Even with breast-feeding, it is the same story; a boy is breast-fed longer. With girls, they wean them quickly, making them forget the breast. If the boys catch an illness or a fever, they will run around and nurse them with the greatest care. If it's a girl, they'll do it half-heartedly. (Bama 7) This above lines clearly focus the fate of female children.

If a boy baby cries, then he is immediately given milk but for a girl baby no attention is given. This society framed a setup that men take care of family and society but women goes to other house and live for other family. Even in that house where a woman goes for the rest of her life, she is not given any priority because of only reason that she belongs to other gender. Only male are considered superior remaining are termed as 'the other'. This is not only in the case of breast feeding but also continues even in their playtime. In the life of a male child, he can eat how much he wants and go for playing games. This scenario is exactly opposite for female child. They are not given proper care, enough food and also not given time for games because they are the caretakers of their younger siblings. They also clean vessels, wash clothes, drawing water etc. they are treated as maid in their home. If girls play along with boys or they play boy's games like kabbadi or marbles, people abuse the girls' character to the extreme.

Reality of Patriarchal Society: Boys are given more respect. They'll eat as much as they wish and run off to play. As for the girls, they must stay at home and keep on working all the time, cleaning vessels, drawing water, sweeping the house, gathering firewood, washing clothes, and so on. When all this is done, they will carry the tiny

babies, minding them even when they go out to play. (Bama 7) Female suppression extends in their workplace too. Men are paid more than women. Women are treated just like that because none raise their voice for them. If a woman, asks for her rights and equality she is treated badly sometimes tortured physically and mentally.

The women, in any case, whatever work they did, were paid less than the men. Even when they did the very same work, they were paid less. Even in the matter of tying up firewood bundles, the boys always got five or six rupees more. And if the girls tied up the bundles, but the boys actually sold them, they got the better price. (Bama 18)

Poverty Suppress Humans: Some of the characters from the book Sangati tells this physical and mental tortures in detail. The character Mariamma in the book Sangati portrays the exact hardships faced by Dalit women normally. Mariamma went to gather firewoods in the woods, the upper caste men Kumarasami Ayya wants to take advantage of this poor girl. When he acted rude and dirty Mariamma manages to escape, this frightened the Kumarasami, if Mariamma conveys the issue to the village people, his reputation may be at risk. So, he decided to take the initiative to save his honour. Kumarasami hurried to the Paraiya community head and made a false accusation that the girl Mariamma and Manikkam, who is also from the same community behaves badly in the woods. The exact scenario is after the escape of Mariamma, Manikkam passed that way with the collected firewood. This is common in present world. One to escape from snake den, he/she throws someone who lacks power than him/her. This cycle continues from powerful to powerless. Not only to a person but also to the entire nation this scenario occurs.

After the complaint of Kumarasami, the nattamai gathered the village people for enquiry. Mariamma and Manikkam is accused before the whole Parayar community. Mariamma refused the accusation, she received the reward as only blows from her drunken father. People abused her with all the possible filthy words. Now, Mariamma has no other option other than accepting the accusation. Without any mistake on her part, she is forced to ask for forgiveness and pay fine. This remark on her continued throughout her life. This results in marriage with Manikkam. Manikkam who always drinks and spends his time uselessly. He is of no use to him and also to her family. After marriage, Mariamma's life is covered with darkness like hell. By the cunning words of Kumarasami to escape himself, a girl's life is doomed to be in hell.

This not only happens to Mariamma but also to many innocent women in the society. Innocent people are seen as victims in this current society. The naattaamai finished the proceedings by saying, 'It is you female chicks who ought to be humble and modest. A man may do a hundred things and still get away with it. You girls should consider what you are left with, in your bellies.' (Bama 26)

Obstacle Faced by a Poor Dalit Woman: Another woman, Thaayi from the same parayar community face regular struggle in her life. Not even a day passes without hurdles in her life because her husband is a symbol of patriarchal society. He who thinks men has every right to rule women. One incident can describe the nature of this cruel man is that he cut off a big hunk of hair of Thaayi and tied to the doorpost. Only with the license of being man in patriarchal society, he does all the cruelties to his wife. Beast in the form of man suits him. To see, he looks like human but all his activities projects him equal to beast with all dominant nature. All this made author 'a variety of emotions grew in my heart: anger, excitement, fury, pride, resentment, hatred' (Bama 44).

A woman's life is pitiful before marriage and also after marriage. Before marriage, she has to do all household chores, obey the words of her father, brothers and also blindly follow the words of house members. After marriage, they have to handle the whole family along with that they have to face the barbarous behaviour of their husband. On the whole, if a baby is gendered as female, then the society conclude her in one word as a slave to men. Whether it is right or wrong, it is better for women not to open their mouths. You just try speaking out about what you believe is right. You'll only get kicked and beaten and trampled on for your pains. And it isn't just here that it happens, you know. It's the same throughout the world. Women are not given that kind of respect. (Bama 29)

Brutality of Society: Maikanni, is another small girl who also faces all the brutal nature of society. Whenever her family is pregnant, she goes to work in Match Company. She catches the bus before the dawn breaks and returns home after the darkness arrives. In between she has no rest. One day, her master behaved rude to her. The reason is very pitiable. The workers are not given time to use restrooms. Owners or landlords are money minded. They expect the yield or product with same quantity from workers but they never raise their pay and never give proper time to rest. Maikanni, being a Dalit girl encounter these inhumane activities of society in order to get some food for her family. Many family suffers because of men. They lack in their responsibilities instead they show their ferocious behaviour to their women.

CONCLUSION

The position of women is both pitiful and humiliating, really. In the fields they have to escape from upper-caste men's molestations. At church they must lick the priest's shoes and be his slaves while he threatens them with tales of God, Heaven, and Hell. Even when they go to their own homes, before they have had a chance to cook some kanji or lie down and rest a little, they have to submit themselves to their husbands' torment. (Bama 35). To attain, gender equality and the rights for women in all entities is not an easy task in countries like India. This gender discrimination begins even before the birth of female child. The female feticide and infanticide shows the evils of society and testimony how world is brutal to

women. Though the constitution of our country treats everyone are equal before law and provides all the aids to improve the status of women, most of women could not benefit this rights and liberty which is given to them.

More than 70 percent of people in India are women. If women lacks in literacy and equality then that results in lack of new opportunities to the entire nation. Poverty is the main reason in our country for gender discrimination because only a man from a family earns for a entire family which directly or indirectly suppress the voice of women because the family on the whole depend economically on the male counterpart which results in gender disparity.

Next to poverty, literacy rate also speaks the disparity level. Women are not given access to any form of education. They are meant to be as maids in houses. Slowly, they enter into education in which again disparity happens in primary and secondary level. Lack of education results in lack of identity and strength of women in all phases of life. The customs, beliefs and practices also subjugate women because it always favours men and makes women confined to four walls of home. This gender bias society sees women as burden because of major evil like dowry prevalent in this nation. Parents are not ready to invest on girls' education instead she will be married and shifted to other family. This orthodox belief or practice also one of the main reason for gender discrimination. Women are not given preference even in health care. Men are given enough nutritious food because they earn and considered as head of the family. Today, women lacks behind everything which is not the fault of women. To change this pathetic situation, empowering the women with gender equality is greatly required.

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