



# Resistance and Resilience: A Critical Study of Bama's Vanmam

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**Abstract**— *This paper aims to analyze how Dalit women are portrayed in literature in Bama's Vanmam. The current study looked specifically at how caste and gender interact in Vanmam, with an emphasis on how Dalit women are portrayed there. The second half of the 20th century saw a thriving output of Tamil-language works by Dalit writers, who are thought to have explored the writers' responses to issues related to the Dalit community's caste identity and its interaction with a gendered social matrix. The book being studied depicts a ten-year proactive involvement in Tamil literary discourse that gave rise to a fresh, lively voice that challenged literary and cultural clichés, establishing new benchmarks and novel perspectives on literary frameworks. Dalit women are depicted as continuously weeping, wailing, wishing for male protection, cursing their femininity, and lamenting their incapacity to maintain their chastity on their own. Instead of being portrayed as fighters like in Bama's novels, they are shown as victims. Dalit women are victims of sexual violence.*



**Keywords**— *Dalit women, Tamil- language, Weeping, Lamenting, Sexual Violence.*

Being a Dalit in society is a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped by an individual's experiences of oppression, resistance, and empowerment. The identity of the Dalit people is a sociocultural construct rather than an absolute. Since caste is a significant indicator of their social standing and cultural background, Dalits frequently use it to define themselves but stigma and discrimination based on their caste identity also exist, and these things can make people feel ashamed and inferior. For Dalits, who face systemic marginalization and discrimination due to their inferior caste identity, going through an identity crisis can be especially difficult. Therefore, as a coping mechanism when facing an identity crisis, Dalits may lie to themselves about who they are.

Identity is a central theme in Dalit literature, which often explores how Dalits have been denied, suppressed, or distorted in their sense of self. In Dalit literature, "deception of identity" refers to how Dalits have been forced to follow cultural norms and values that deny or downplay their own cultural identity and heritage. Dalit literature shows

deception of identity by showing how many Dalits feel like they are being oppressed from the inside out. This can take the form of self-hatred, shame, and a sense of inferiority that is imposed on them by the dominant culture. In the book *Annihilation of Caste* by B.R. Ambedkar, "The caste system in India has historically placed Dalits, also known as "untouchables," at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with little access to education, economic opportunities, and political power". (32)

The caste system in India has historically placed Dalits, also known as "untouchables," at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with little access to education, economic opportunities, and political power. This marginalization has led to a culture of fear and social control that has played a significant role in the formation of self-deception among Dalits. Fear is a very effective way to keep people in line and stop them from making changes. Dalits have been conditioned to fear the consequences of challenging the caste system and the power structures that support it. This fear is kept alive by different kinds of violence, such as

physical, verbal, and mental abuse. Because of this, many Dalits have learned to accept their lower status as something that is part of who they are and can't be changed.

Bama makes deliberate decisions about form, language, narrative style, tone, character development, and content in her writing. The liberation of oppressed people in general and Dalits in particular is the main goal of Dalit literature. It is essentially a cultural practise that falls under the larger political liberation movements of the Dalits. The politics of culture is what it is. It manifests as a protest.

Bama expresses an activist agenda in her writing. Writing has given Bama more power as a Dalit. Her admission to the academy, her attendance at literary events and conferences both domestically and overseas, and her ongoing work as a school teacher are just a few examples of her social empowerment.

It is noteworthy that Bama values educated women who choose not to get married to avoid abuse and oppression. The author supports feminist theory and Marxist analysis, but she makes a strong case for expanding the scope of conventional theoretical frameworks to specifically address caste-related ground realities in modern Indian society. Intra-caste conflict among Dalits is discussed in Vanmam, along with potential solutions. Vanmam is, in many ways, a less dramatic or poignant story than Karukku or Sangati. Vanmam revisits several topics, including incidents that were told or discussed in her first two works, but it does so without bringing anything new or distinct to the conversation. The story is less compelling and, at times, rather bland.

Vanmam begins with the story of Mariyasu, a farmhand from Paraiyar, being killed by Karupasami, a farmhand from Pallar, for distributing water to their separate masters' lands. Karupasami's master shields him, so he gets away with killing Mariyasu and disposing of his body covertly. "God knows when we, Paraiyars and Pallars, would stand united," exclaims a Paraiyar woman, Mekelamma (27). The novel's main refrain is Mekelamma's lament. One incident triggers another. When a Pallar community member acts aggressively in one instance, a Paraiyar acts aggressively in another. The landlords belonging to the upper caste fuel the flames of prejudice and hatred, summon the police, and settle scores with the Paraiyars. Though an objective analysis is conducted to show that Naickers use Pallars for their political gain, the novel is written from the perspective of the Paraiyar.

Vanmam shows how caste-strife, which is created by men, punishes and harms women. It is not what they desire. They don't start it off. But they end up being its worst victims. Vanmam adduces a crucial disclaimer to the Dalit identity debate. Non-Dalits have a tendency to homogenize

Dalits by eliminating the variances, inconsistencies, and abnormalities that exist among different Dalit communities. They are discarded as a common heap, an untouchable monolithic category, to the outside world. S. Sandhiya and Dr. M. Kannadhasan say

The entire poetics of female experiences, subjugations and desires have come in the form of brilliant creation of Palace of Illusions, Draupadi the emblem of Indian womanhood is projected not as a silent spectator but as a self-aware human being resisting exposing and protecting the voices of their oppressors. In Palace of Illusions, Draupadi has become a living image and vibrant voice of the suppression of womanhood(2)

Vanmam draws our attention to this troubling aspect of Dalit life: although they recognize a single, cohesive political identity as Dalits, they are unable to acknowledge or get past cultural divides within their community. Books asserts, "[O]ne of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone." (227) Although the upper castes make fun of them and take advantage of this aspect of their social identity to further their political agenda, it is important to keep in mind that the diversity within the Dalit community is a reflection and an extension of our pluralistic society, where homogenization is both unfair and undesirable. However, Dalits would need to put aside cultural and regional differences and unite under a single cause to achieve political empowerment. The successful overthrow of upper caste hegemony in society requires the unity of Dalits.

## REFERENCES

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