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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WOMEN'S METAMORPHOSIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON NTOZAKE SHANGE AND IFA BAYEZA'S SOME SING, SOME CRY AND BAMA'S SANGATI

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ABSTRACT

Comparative Literature emphasizes on the study of literature from different cultures, nations and genres and explores relationship between literature and other forms of cultural expressions. African American Literature is the body of literature produced in the United States by the writers of African descent. Dalit literature is the form of literature written by Dalits about their life struggles and experiences. Dalit literature is often compared to African American literature relating to the issues such as racial segregation and injustice. The paper compares these literatures through the novels of Ntozake shange and Ifa Bayeza's *Some Sing, Some Cry* and Bama's *Sangati*. *Some Sing, Some Cry* leads to the epic saga, covering almost two hundred years and seven generations of Mayfield family, dealing with the struggles and troubles of black women in contemporary America. *Sangati* deals with dalit women's lives and their hard work, where the women of dalit community have to do great labour in the field as well as home, she also portrays the real picture of dalit paraiyar women. The paper discusses in detail about the similarities from novels such as the struggle and hardship of African American women and Dalit women to survive among their society, taking up each tussle as an experience to succeed in their life. Women from both of these novels have learned to accept life wholeheartedly even in the midst of desperation and horror.

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INTRODUCTION

Comparative Literature is a literary discipline which has its origin in France; it's an outcome of the interest of French scholars in finding the impact of culture on European Literature. The term Comparative Literature is a literature rendering of the French phrase 'la literature comparee'. It is first used in 1829 by the French scholar, Villemain and popularized after by the influential critic, Sainte-Beuve, and rendered in English as Comparative Literature by Matthew Arnold. Bijay Kumar Das in *Comparative Literature* expresses: Comparative Literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and the use of folk-tales, myths in two different literatures or even more (8). Ntozake Shange was born to Paulette Williams an upper middle class family in Trenton, New Jersey in 1948. Although many of the characters she writes about in her literary works are rural, poor, or members of the urban underclass, she grew up in a privileged, upper-middle-class environment.

Her father was a musician and painter as well as a ringside surgeon, and the Williams household was frequently visited by well-known African American musicians, writers, and sports figures. Despite the protective environment, she is spared neither the experience of racial discrimination nor that of sexual discrimination. As a young teenager in St. Louis, she moved as part of a desegregation program, to a mostly white school, where she felt out of place and was mistreated by her fellow students. Experiences of these kinds are the roots of the interest in feminism and African American issues that informs her literary work. She changed her name in 1971 as part of her effort to establish her African American identity. The name Ntozake means she who comes with her own things, while Shange means who walks like a lion. The new name clearly represents the strength and independence that Shange, like many of the characters in her writings, was seeking. In the novel *Some Sing, Some Cry*, the narrative begins with the nostalgic musings of a newly emancipated slave, Betty Mayfield, as she prepares to leave Sweet Tamarind, a plantation on an island off the coast of South Carolina, with her granddaughter Dora. Daughter of a slave woman and the powerful white planter who would also become Betty's own lover and the father of her three daughters. It traces the way each of Mayfield women fight not just survive but to thrive in a world seemingly arranged to ruin her.

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The story tells about generations of African American women's greatness and potential for happiness. After every defeat these women pick themselves up, sometimes literally off the ground, and take the next impossible step differently. Bama Faustina Soosairaj is a renowned Tamil, Dalit feminist, committed teacher and novelist. Bama's novels focus on caste and gender discrimination. They portray caste-discrimination practiced in Christianity and Hinduism. Her works are seen as embodying Dalit feminism and are famed for celebrating the inner strength of the subaltern woman. Through the novel *Sangati*, Bama depicts the story of individual struggle to perception of a community of *paraiya* women. She also narrates the violent treatment of women by fathers, husbands and brothers. Women are presented as wage earners as much as men are, working as agricultural and building-site labourers, but earning less than men do. They are constantly vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse in the world of work.

The study focuses on the similarities from the novel *Some Sing, Some Cry* and *Sangati*. Both the novels starts with the character called Betty that is Mama in *Some Sing, Some Cry* and Vellaiamma that is Patti in *Sangati* both of which literally means the grandmother. Mama is the sole care-taker of the family who is a widow as similar to Patti in *Sangati*. Patti suffers the tribulations of upper caste people and Mama undergoes the trouble of Americans through which both of their lives becomes difficult for the survival even being talented with many skills. It is evident from the novels that despite of all the tribulation and traumas, both of these characters Patti and Mama never gave up on their responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren and their fragmented family. The narrator says: When I was born, it seems that my grandmother, Vellaiamma quoted this proverb and rejoiced. My mother was happy enough. But she was a little disappointed that I was so dark...(S 3).

Further these African American and Dalit woman were merely property than human beings who were used only for the purpose of sensual pleasure whenever and wherever they desired, they were used only to fulfill the lustful desires. Almost all the characters undergo same kind of tribulations. In *Some Sing, Some Cry*, the Africans are being ill-treated and discriminated for their race even being financially sufficient, whereas in *Sangati* the characters are being maltreated according to their caste. The trials of both the novels are similar. Where Dora says "Nana, please stop. They owned us. They owned us. That's not a family. It's... like harvestin' niggahs 'steada rice or cotton. Don't you see that, Grandma? We're some by-product of nights when decent white women have a thing to do with the likes of Julius Mayfield" (SSSC 12). The narrator states: 'And even among women, I had never heard upper caste women becoming possessed and dancing in a frenzy. The peys always seem set on woman from the pallar, paraiyar, chakkiliyar, and koravar communities' (S 58).

The woman characters works so hard to meet the ends of the family without the support of their husband. These women take every trouble as a challenge and overcome with never fading self-confidence whatever the circumstances might be. These woman characters are portrayed as strong and skillful personality, whatever situations comes in their lives they are ready to tackle in *Some Sing, Some Cry*, it is evident through the characters like Betty, Eudora, Elma whereas in

Sangati it is Patti, Mariamma, and Maikkanni. Eudora is betrayed from her husband and being forcefully emancipated from their home land moves to Charleston for a new beginning. Even their after being discriminated and rejected by the American Society, she manages everything and becomes a successful dressmaker. Similarly Maikkanni, a little girl supports her mother and her family by working in a matchbox factory, even undergoing all the struggles from the landlords. The narrator expresses: Yet, his mother was out one day, cutting grass for their cow. She was pregnant at that time, nearly full term. She went into labour then there, and delivered the child straight away...(S 6). Eudora the daughter of Mama is being assaulted by an American old man in whose house she works, where there is nobody to rescue her in *Some Sing, Some Cry* and like her the character of Mariamma is being assaulted by Upper Caste men, who then puts all the blame on Mariamma just because she doesn't agree with him. She is made to pay the fine of some amount and asked to touch every male's feet in order to ask forgiveness for the mistake that she never did. She says: He leaned against the door frame and stroked her cheek with the back of his hand. "I see yogrannmammy on the docks. Sellin' charms. Crab claw under the tongue. Where's your charm, huh? Let me see?" When his palm graced her lips, she bit him good. The tray went flying. Green crystal glass and sprigs of mint crashed to the floor (SSSC 90). Bama quotes:

'Mariamma, it is best if you shut up about this. If you even try to tell people what actually happened, you'll find that it is you who will get the blame; it's you who will be called a whore. Just come with us quietly and we will bring out the firewood you left there. Hereafter, never come back on your own when you have been collecting firewood. That landowner is an evil man, aft with money. He's upper caste as well. How can we try to stand up to such people? Are people going to believe their words or our words?' (S 20). Furthermore not only the women characters, even the children of them are discriminated just because they are from lower caste or different race. The narrator quotes:

Bottles broke the windows, followed by eggs, tomatoes, vile curses, and screams of "Niggahs, go back! Get back, niggahs. No spooks round here! This is for white people. Go, get away from here!" Irish, Italians, some Jews, and plain poor white trash were furious that some eight- to thirteen-year-old colored children were where their children were going to be (SSSC 511-512). The present study displays the way these woman experience in the workplace, the complexities of their romantic lives, the challenges they face as mothers and grandmothers, their spiritual and religious practices, and so many other aspects of their lives are largely unknown to the wider community but still able to tackle everything in life. It concludes with a suggestion that even though the characters underwent all of these struggles, they never left their confidence.

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