

Dissent through Laughter:

Translating the Offensive Voice

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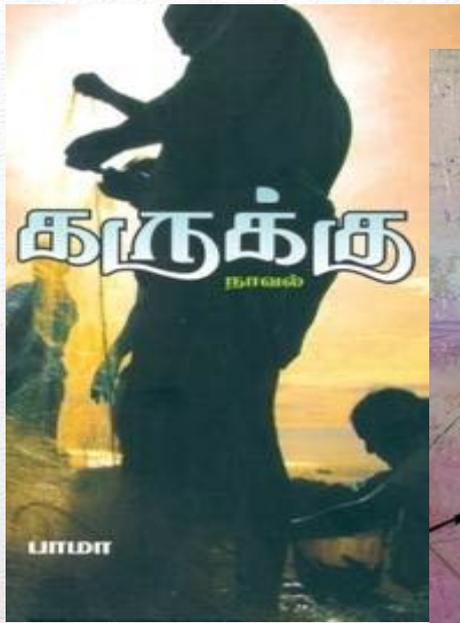


Dalits writing in South Asia

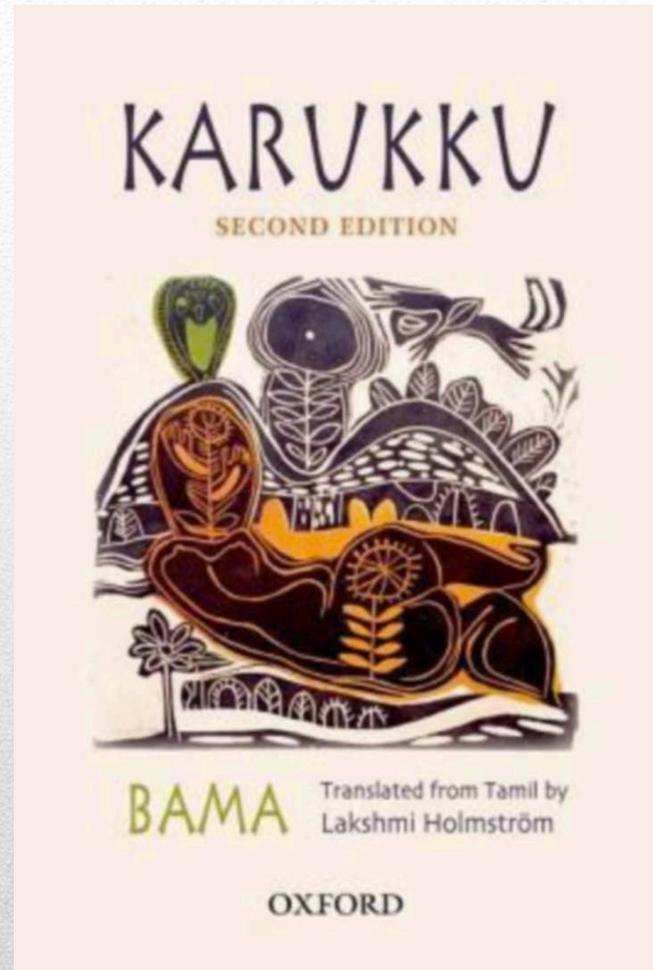
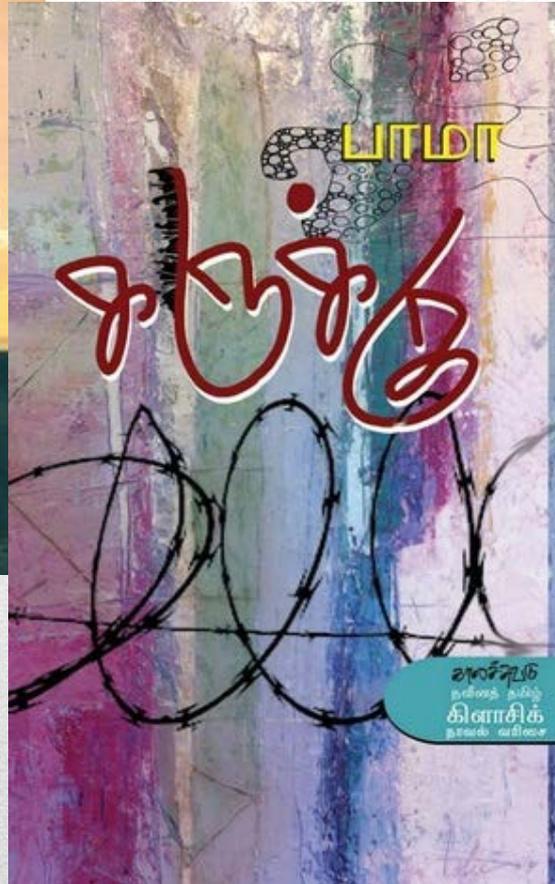
- **Dalit writers**
- **Tamil Dalit writers**
- **Female Dalit writers**



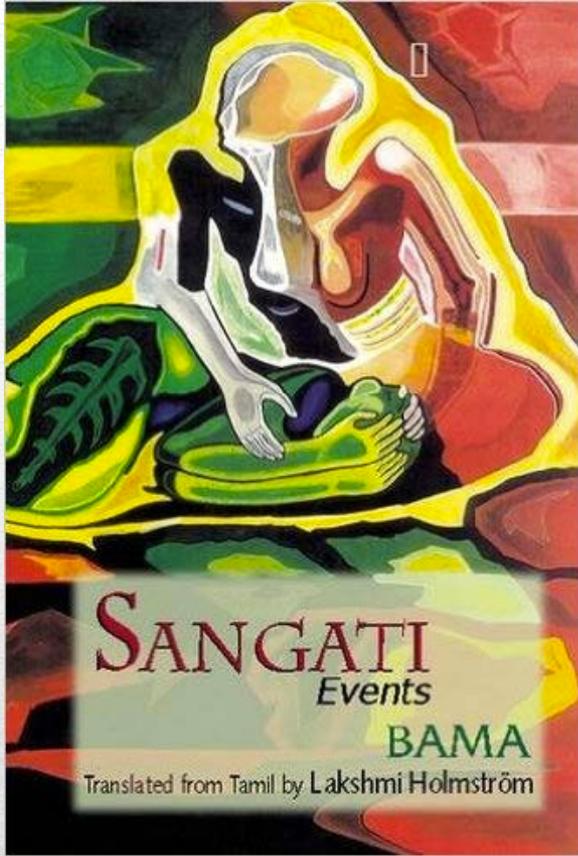
Bama



(*Karukku*,
1992)



(English trans.
2000)



சங்கதி

1994

English

trans. 2005;

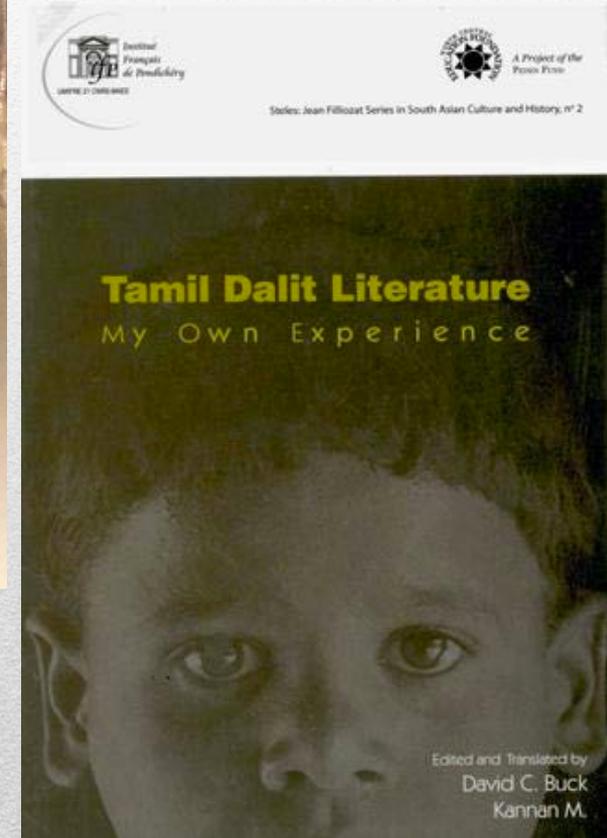
French

trans. 2005

An anthology that includes an auto-biographical piece and a short story each by nine Dalit writers. Anthology includes both male and female writers.

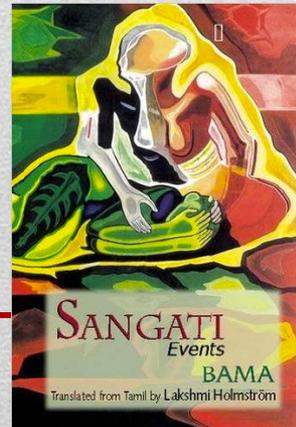


(2004/ trans.2011)



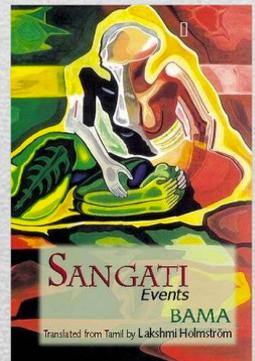
What is offensive?

- **Female Perspective: focusing on female stories and voices**
- **Female bodies: focus on bodily parts and functions**
- **Non-standard language: non-literary registers of Tamil**

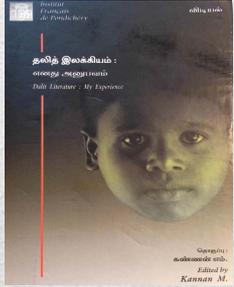


Perspective & Voice

"Rakamma got up after that kick and...shouted obscenities, she scooped up the earth and flung it about. 'How dare you kick me you low-life? Your hand will get leprosy! How dare you pull my hair! You disgusting man, fit only to drink a woman's farts! Instead of drinking toddy every day, why don't you drink your son's piss? Why don't you drink my monthly blood?' And she lifted up her sari in front of the entire crowd gathered there" (trans. Lakshmi Holmström, *Sangati*, 2005: 61).



“எக்கா நல்லா அர்த்தர்த்தமா எடுத்துப்போடுங்கக்கா.” செந்தாமரை அவர்களில் சிலரிடம் கேட்டுக்கொண்டாள். மனங்களுக்குள் நிரம்பியிருக்கும் கசப்பில் முழுக்கி, தங்கள் வசவுகளை எடுத்து தெருக்களில் போட்டுக்கொண்டே நடந்தார்கள். அவர்களின் மர்ம உறுப்புகளில் தேய்த்து எடுக்கப்பட்ட வார்த்தைகள் மலக்குப்பல்களைப்போல தெருக்களில் விழுந்துக் கொண்டு வந்தன. கொழ கொழவென தன் அப்பன் துப்பும் கோழைபோன்ற **சாப்பனைகளைத் துப்பிக்கொண்டே வந்தாள் செந்தாமரை. தன் பிய்யையும், தூமையையும் தின்னச்சொல்லி போலீசுக்குப் போட்டு வைத்தாள் சின்னத்தாயி.

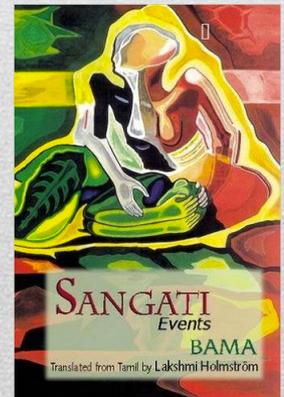


“Sisters, pick out some choice words and let ‘em hear it! Senthaamarai said to...them. Drowning in the bitterness that filled their hearts, they shouted their abuses out in the streets.... Words that had been rubbed into their private parts spilled out into the streets like piles of excrement. Like the sticky, slimy sputum that her father spat up, Senthaamarai kept on spitting out curses. Sinnathaayi threw it at the policemen that they ate her **shit** and **menses**” (Trans. David Buck, 63).

Bodily Parts

Language: non-standard

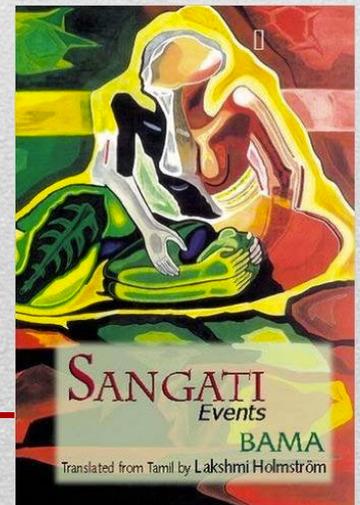
"One thing that gives me most satisfaction is that I used the language of my people - a language that was not recognized by the pundits of literature, was not accepted by any literary circle in Tamil Nadu, was not included in the norms of Tamil literature" (Bama, Interview. *Outlook Magazine*, April 25, 2001)



The Translator

The translator's

- **voice**
- **position**
- **choice**



Audiences

Giving 'voice' to the offensive through translation

Invites different responses from

- International audiences
- National (Indian but non-Tamil speaking) audiences

