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IMPACT OF DALIT ELEMENTS IN BAMA'S KARUKKU

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**Abstract:** The Paper throws light on Dalit literature which takes example of Bama's Karukku to simplify the concept of dalit women with their sufferings and untouchability towards social injustice.

**Key words:** Feminism, Dalit literature, Karukku

Dalit literature is a literature written by Dalits, who are oppressed by Indian Caste system. It forms an important and distinct part of Indian literature. Dalit literature was emerged in the 1960s, with Marathi language and soon appeared in Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Bangla and Tamil languages.

Dalit literature began to appear in India with the English translations of Marathi Dalit writing. *An Anthology of Dalit literature*, edited by Mulk Raj Anand, Leonor Zelliot, and Poisoned Bread.

Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit literature originally published in three volumes and later collected in a single volume edited by Arjun Dangle, both published in 1992, were perhaps the first books that popularized the genre throughout India.

But the origins of Dalit writing can be traced back to Buddhist literature. Using autobiography as a literature genre, writers showed their personal experiences of caste discrimination, taking its existence under liable for the middle classes. The genres like fiction, poetry and drama largely autobiographical in the hands of Dalit writers. In the 80s and 90s, a group of Hindi writers like Om Prakash Valmiki, Mohandas Naimishray and Kanwal Bharti had to fight a hostile literary establishment to carve out a unique space for Dalit literature. Several Dalit writers and critics have called Dalit autobiographies 'narratives of pain'. The plot is often strung together by a series of painful events that are outcomes of caste discrimination. In fact the shared pain is what binds the community together. The contemporary

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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

dalit autobiography have become tools of political assertion for contemporary Dalit writers, the real challenge lies in creating a fine balance between the idea of inclusion and the necessity of resistance.

Dalit literature has expanded the horizon of Indian literature and criticism and transformed people's preferences. Dalit literature has awakened many new social strata and made new literary contributions. Equality, freedom and social justice are the basis of Dalit literature. Dalit has been humiliated and exploited for thousands of years. Dalit is rejected by high caste as human. The touch of Dalit, the shadow of Dalit and the voice of Dalit treated as impure. Dalit lived out of village, out of city and in separate sections. Dalit cannot enter in the temple of high caste, Dalit cannot drink water on the river bank of high caste Dalit cannot cremate e dead body in the graveyard of high caste. Dalit cannot marry, cannot eat and cannot live with the high caste. He was only slave. He has no rights.

Many writers, their thinkers, social reformers and political figures gave their contribution in the dalit literature movement like B.R.Ambedkar, M.K.Gandhi, Rettaimalai Srinivisan etc. As an exponent of Dalit Feminism, Bama has found Karukku the right way to explore the sufferings of Dalit women.

Bama was born in 1958 as Faustina Mary Fatima Rani in a roman catholic family. She is a tamil dalit woman writer who has contributed many literary works to dalit literature such as novels, short stories, poems etc. She rose to fame with her autobiographical novel Karukku, she has written about the gender and caste discrimination faced by them even if they attain good education.

In Karukku, the main philosophy of human life is clearly revealed. It does not mean in which religion the person is born, it mean that in which way he is grown. The society is having a blind eye on dalits. Bama has got double depressed after she has joined in convent. Being a poor dalit Christian woman, she has learnt the gospel and possesses the wish of helping and serving poor as they have learnt that Jesus himself born in cattle shed and died for the poor, ugly, disgusting sinners. We are surprised to hear about nuns through Bama who could not possess such love n them.

Bama raises many questions to society she asks,

Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack?" (Bama,27)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Karukku means palmyra leaves, with their serrated edges on both sides, are like double edged swords. By a felicitous pun, the Tamil word karukku, containing the world have embryo or seed also means freshness, newness. Bama draws attention to the symbol and refers to the words in Hebrews (New Testament), “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division the thoughts and intentions of the heart”(Hebrew, 4:10)

The protagonist of the novel is never named is never named. The events of Bama’s life is not arranged according to a simple, linear or chronological order, as with most autobiographies, but rather, reflected upon in different ways, repeated from different perspectives, grouped under different themes, for example, work, games and recreation, education, belief etc. It is her driving for integrity as Dalit and Christian that shapes the book and gives its polemic.

Bama’s Karukku focuses on two aspects namely caste and religion that caused great pain in Bama’s life. The book describes Bama’s life from childhood to adulthood. The first person narrative expresses the traumatic experience of caste discrimination from the stand point of Dalit women, when Bama was studying third standard she has seen the discriminations is her locality.

He came along, holding out the pocket by its string, without touching it. I

stood that thinking to myself, if he holds its like that, won’t the package came undone, and the vadai fall out? The elder went straight up to the Naicker, bowed low and extended the packet towards him, cupping the hand that held the string with his other hand. Naicker opened the parcel and began to eat the Vadais(13)

Bama remembers her experience as a farm worker, even though Bama went to school, she worked as a labourer for daily wages to meet her expenses. There is also double vessel system. Dalits were asked to stand away from the vessels of the Nacikers where they give leftovers:

.....I Know I should not touch their goods or chalets; I should never come close to where they were, I should always stand away to one side. These were their rules. I often fell paired and ashamed....(46)

Bama lights on as incident that took place in her college hostel that was heart breaking incident for her. She made a request to her warden for leave to attend her brother Gautamani’s communion on genuine grounds. Her plea was rejected. But the warden granted leave for the upper caste students without any query. Bama argued with the school authorities with an arrogant voice: “....there cannot be different rules for different castes, only the same rules for everyone.”(19)At last she won justice and she went home.

Bama gives importance to women identity. Women were restricted from certain freedom and assaulted by upper

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

caste people women were not allowed to see movies, or to walk in the streets with an open face.

Bama embraced Christianity to serve the Dalits. Karukku challenges the oppressors who have enslaved and disempowered the Dalits, on the other hand, it reiterates the need for a society with ideals such as justice, equality and love. Dalit can be empowered and can gain human dignity. Bama passes through many

emotional encounters and experience. The whole process is a trait of discovery which makes her a self made woman.

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