

Voicing the Voiceless Dalits With Special Reference to Bama's Karukku

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Abstract

In India, Dalit Literature has become a prominent concept or genre in the field of literature in several Indian languages. Dalit literature is a distinct genre that offers voice to those who have experienced humiliation, exploitation, marginalisation, and revolt in India's underprivileged communities. The discourse of the dissenting Dalit writer Bama Faustina, whose work provides a comprehensive and integrated portrayal of Dalits suffering, gives Dalit literature a gendered perspective. Faustina Mary Fatima Rani, better known by her pen name Bama, she was lauded as India's first Dalit woman writer with her autobiography 'Karukku'. Her work depicts the situation of Dalit women, about their suffering and persecution at the hands of patriarchs. This paper focuses on the suppressed voice of Dalits and represents Bama as a voice of Voiceless Dalits. 'Karukku' examines many forms of brutal persecution of Dalits, as well as the atrocities perpetrated upon oppressed women in the paraiyar caste. In light of the growing relevance and awareness of Dalit Literature, this research aims to depict the sufferings of women both inside and outside the community. This paper also tries to demonstrate how a Dalit woman expresses herself by accepting and embracing Dalit society's paradoxes.

Keywords: Dalit Literature, Caste, Downtrodden, Marginalization, Oppression

"Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary."

-Arjun Dangle

Dalit Literature is a real mirror that shows the reality of the Indian Caste System and oppression beard by Dalit women specifically. Dalit literature is one such genre that voiced the humiliation, exploitation, marginalization, and rebellion of the tyrannized segment of Indian society. The phrase 'Dalit,' which literally means 'of the earth' and 'that which has been ground down,' is believed to be of Marathi origin and represents socially downtrodden groups. The word "Dalit" was coined in Maharashtra in the 19th century by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, in the context of the exploitation of those who were traditionally referred to be "shudra" and "outcaste" Hindus. It primarily refers to individuals and communities who have been historically and structurally oppressed and excluded from society's mainstream. Dalit is not a caste; it is a group of people from many castes who have been discriminated unfairly and their lives were filled with hardships and tyranny. The nature of Dalit Literature/writing is resistance against the

suppression and humiliation endured by Dalits in the past. It has a long history of suffering and burden associated with being a Dalit dating back to the Vedic period in India. Dalit writings show the real reflection of the suppressed classes and evolved out of the suffering of the people.

As a whole, the term Dalit denotes not just a caste, but also a symbol of change and revolution, and in this revolutionary period, three well-known writers, Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, and J.V. Pawar, founded the 'Dalit Panthers' to revitalize the word and widen its horizons by adding scheduled tribes, peasants, and notably women who are socially, politically, and economically oppressed. With the assistance of the Dalit Panthers in 1972, the definition of the word "Dalit" was enlarged to include revolt, political equality, cultural liberty, and economic independence. Later, in the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society) convention in 1958, the term "Dalit literature" was first used. Dalit literature arises as a voice for all those who are oppressed, exploited, or discriminated against because of their social status. Dalit literature holds an important place in Indian English writing and many other Indian languages. The downtrodden group and castes of India is the subject of Dalit literature. Modern Dalit literature draws heavily on the works and ideological perspectives of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, the principal architect of India's constitution, whom most Dalit authors regard as their patron, symbol, and inspiration, placed a strong emphasis on learning from the beginning of the Dalit Revolution. His works and speeches are excellent resources for the representation of Dalits and research into social developments in our society in terms of India's caste system. Dalit literature is inextricably linked to Dalit liberation struggles in various regions of India. Dalits are frequently regarded as disposable bodies and lives. Now in the present scenario, the Dalit term symbolizes the group of people who have been treated as an outcast.

Dalit writing not only challenges established canons, but also seeks to create new ones. Its goal is to challenge the traditions and cultural norms that have silenced the Dalit and other marginalized communities' voices, particularly women's. It seeks to create a new approach and an innovative idea that may be applied to today's cultural context. Dalit writing is a form of historical reconstruction as well as a means of protest and rejection. Dalit and Subaltern awareness have encouraged intellectuals to explore India's whole culture and heritage from the ground up. This subaltern historical perspective has sparked a process that will lead to India's genuine discovery. Debashree Chakravarti and G.A. Ghanshyam say that Subaltern consciousness is "one that borders on the realm of neurotic and psychotic behavior a result of years of repression, pain, loss and denial..." (33). The term "subaltern" is derived from Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony, which established marginalized social groups. The concept of Subaltern gained prominence value with the Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous work '*Can the Subaltern speak?*'

"Subaltern" is a military term, which refers to those who are "of inferior rank or position", and Spivak uses it to describe women's inferior rank and marginal status, as well as the literature that explores it. Spivak in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak*" writes, "The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman a pious. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribe task which she must not disown with a flourish" (p. 308). In her essay Spivak, raises various issues related to 'Sati', the practice of widow self-immolation. It was the best example to demonstrate the argument that subaltern women did not get the opportunity to express their opinions and persuade society with their dissenting viewpoint. She prefers the term "subaltern" since it perfectly represents the lower-class individuals. According to one of her interview, subaltern means, "It refers to those who don't give orders; they only receive orders. That comes from Antonio Gramsci, who

made the word current. But “subaltern” also means those who do not have access to the structures of citizenship.”(Spivak) Spivak argues that it is necessary to listen to the voices of the subaltern in order to understand the complexities of power and oppression. However, she also recognizes the difficulties of this task, as the subaltern are often unable to speak for themselves due to their marginalization.

In critical theory and post colonialism, those who are culturally, economically, and geographically outside the colony's and colonial country's hegemonic power structure are referred to as "subaltern". Peasants, labourers, and other people restricted to hegemonic authority are examples of subaltern classes. Gayatri Spivak is prominent subaltern studies academic. In her research, she draws on a variety of theoretical perspectives like Deconstruction, feminism, and Marxism. She is a scathing critic of colonial historians' accounts of Indian history. She broadened the scope of subaltern literature to include the works of marginalized women. She makes a critical remark about the male-dominated culture and demonstrates the secondary, inferior position that women are given in patriarchy. Women, according to Spivak, are exploited twice and undervalued in postcolonial writing. She is an outspoken postcolonial feminist critic:

“Spivak can be said to be the first postcolonial theorist with a fully feminist agenda. That agenda includes the complicity of female writers with imperialism..... Spivak’s insistence on the importance of feminist perspectives is part of a larger role that she has perhaps unintentionally played over the last two decades: that of the theoretical conscience of postcolonial studies. Her work has as much addressed theoretical shortcomings in post colonial theorizing as it has focused on postcolonial issues itself.” (Bertens, 211)

In her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak critiques the notion of representation, arguing that the subaltern cannot be represented by the dominant culture and that attempts to represent them can actually reinforce their marginalization. She argues that the only way to truly understand the subaltern is to give them a voice and to listen to their experiences and perspectives.

Dalit literary critics worldwide have recognized Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as an analysis of the caste-based socio-cultural and economic structure of Indian society, specifically pertaining to the paradigm of colonizer-colonized relationships. The dichotomy of colonizer and colonized was further developed in Indian culture and literature with the use of higher and lower classes. In the framework of subalternity, the emancipation of the subverted group, whose repressed voices have presented a real image of their misery and suffering and have created their own self-identity, must be recognized. Spivak's subaltern theory provides a framework for understanding the marginalization and exclusion of Dalits in Indian society and the ways in which their experiences and perspectives have been silenced and erased. Dalit literature, in this sense, can be seen as a means of giving voice to the subaltern and challenging dominant discourses that have historically erased their experiences and perspectives.

Dalit literature has grown in popularity across India as part of a socio-literary movement stimulated by the ideals of Jyotirao Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar is usually cited as the hero who cleared the way for Dalit writers to create and reply via their works. Dalit writers as: Daya Pawar, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Omprakash Valmiki, Faustina Bama and Sivakami define Dalit discourse as writings and speeches about Dalit Authors with Dalit consciousness. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is the inspiration for all Dalit writers; most of the writers have been influenced by his ideas. Valmiki acknowledges Ambedkar's influence on him and his work Joothan as:

“Dr. Ambedkar’s life –long struggle had shaken me up. I spent many days and nights in great turmoil. The restlessness inside me had increased. My stone-like silence had suddenly begun to melt. I proceeded to read all of Ambedkar’s books that I found in library.”(Valmiki).

As a result of his efforts to promote human dignity, he is recognized as the Human Rights Champion. Ambedkar pointed out that equality is not attainable in Hinduism. He named the untouchables as "scheduled class," "depressed class" or "Dalits". His words to his people were about self-help, self-elevation, and self-respect. His notion of self-reliance and self-development was advocated for the uplift of the untouchables. According to Dr. Ambedkar, we must educate a slave so that he is conscious of his enslavement, and only then would he fight slavery. Dalits are frequently unaware that they are exploited as slaves, “You must abolish your slavery yourself. Do not depend for its abolition upon God or superman” (Ambedkar Thoughts 70). Ambedkar believed that the caste system was a social evil that needed to be eradicated. He saw the Dalits as an oppressed and marginalized community that had been denied basic human rights and dignity for centuries. He argued that the caste system was not just a religious or cultural practice but was deeply embedded in the social and economic structures of Indian society. Ambedkar advocated for the education and empowerment of Dalits as the key to their liberation. He believed that education was essential for the Dalits to break out of the cycle of poverty and ignorance that had kept them oppressed for generations. Arjun Dangle claims in his celebrated book *"Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature"*, that Babasaheb loved his books more than his children:

“I cannot understand how time goes while writing books. All my energies are concentrated at the time of writing. I do not care for food. Sometimes I stay up all night to read and write. I am never bored then, nor do I feel boredom. I become very discouraged and dissatisfied as soon as the work is finished. I get the same pleasure when my book is published as I would on having four sons.” (Ambedkar 1947)

Babasaheb appreciated realistic and life-affirming literature. This is proven by his love of reading, expectations of humanistic notions in literature, and literary theory founded on the writer's dedication to common humanity. The act of writing from a life-affirming stance is the Ambedkarism of Dalit Literature. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar believed that education was the cure-all for social problems. His thoughts influenced African and Afro-American black leaders such as Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Martin Luther King in the United States. ‘Nelson Mandela’ said: “Education is the weapon with which you can change the world”. Mandela thought that education may help eliminate societal problems. ‘Martin Luther King’, the former president of the United States, was humiliated by white Americans with their racist beliefs that black people are inferior to white people; thus in his speech *I Have a Dream*, he said, "One day, my four children will be recognized in this world not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their intellectuality." Dr. Ambedkar’s beliefs and thoughts had great impact across the world.

B.R. Ambedkar viewed Dalit literature as a distinct form of cultural expression that was rooted in the experiences and struggles of the Dalit community. He believed that Dalit literature should challenge the dominant narratives of caste-based oppression and promote social justice and equality. Dalit Literature alludes to oppressive settings, on underprivileged groups, political and cultural dimensions. Dalit literature often depicts various levels of impoverishment and marginalisation. It includes cultural, political, religious, and social marginalization in addition to economic marginalization. Dalitism is a word that consists almost entirely of poverty and marginalization. Marginality is well-known for depriving individuals of their basic human rights and social justice. Like Arjun Dangle, the Marathi Dalit writer in his translation titled *‘Poisoned Bread’* had elucidated Dalit literature as:

"Dalit literature acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India...It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion, and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary" (Dangle).

In his popular work 'Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature', Sharankumar Limbale remarked:

"Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief. Every human being must find liberty, honour, security, and freedom from intimidation by the powerful elements of society. These values are now being articulated in a particular kind of literature- its name being Dalit Literature." (Limbale 30).

Dalit Literature, according to Bama Faustina, is the literature of oppressed people and it's all about their quest for equality in society. In between a conversation with Jayadeep Sarangi during an interview, she says:

"It is the literature of oppressed people, telling about their pains, agonies, disappointments, defeats, humiliations, oppressions and depressions. It also speaks about their vibrant culture, dreams, values, convictions and their struggle for annihilation of caste in order to build a casteless society. It reveals their resistant and rebellious character, their strength and stamina to live amidst all odds and their resilient nature to love life and live it happily. It brings out their inborn tendency to celebrate life and to fight against the caste ridden society by breaking through this inhuman system without breaking themselves. It liberates them and gives them their identity. It heals them and strengthens them to fight for their rights."(Bama)

Women from the Dalit community are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Indian culture. Dalit women are in a more vulnerable situation than non-Dalit women. Even when they seek minimal payment for their labour, Dalit women are exposed to the most heinous types of fundamental rights abuses, such as rape and molestation by higher caste officials, landlords, and administrative officials. Dalit women face a caste-system limitation on water access from higher caste sources, as well as being beaten up in their own homes, as a result of their constant poverty and hard exploitation at labour. Dalit women are the most oppressed within the Dalit community, according to Ruth Manorama, since they are threefold marginalized on the grounds of caste, class, and gender. Dalit women face gender discrimination as women, as well as economic and caste exploitation as Dalits and within their households, Dalit women are subjected to physical assault and torture. Dalit women's biographies are clear and straightforward about the various forms of exploitation and subjugation they had to sustain both within and outside their community. The central aspect of Dalit Literature is the portrayal of women as exploitation victims. Dalit women have abandoned their customary appearance and spoken out against their oppression.

In Dalit Literature, Dalits themselves express their anguish against the people who are responsible for their condition such as Bama expressed her experiences in her book 'Karukku'. My paper would focus on Bama Faustina Soosairaj, commonly known as Bama, a Dalit feminist, passionate teacher and novelist who is born in 1958. Her work 'Karukku' was first published in Tamil in 1992 and Lakshmi Holmstrom translated it into English in 2000. 'Karukku' received the Crossword Book Prize for outstanding fiction in Indian languages. All of her writings are special in their treatment of Dalit consciousness. The marginalisation of Dalits appears to be a theme in Bama's writings.

'Karukku' is definitely a unique novel, nearly masticating for a new shape. The narrator discusses many incidents of her life from diverse angles over and over again. In her work 'Karukku' the writer takes the

risk of focusing on caste and social inequality, attempting to expose the hypocrisy of the caste system. 'Karukku' challenges hegemonic social, economic, and religious discourses, as well as offering a criticism of the caste system, demonstrating how deeply it has pervaded society. It is so true, that the pain and suffering faced by Dalits can only be conveyed by Dalits themselves. Because people who have not experienced discrimination, shame, or suppression are unable to appropriately express their emotions. As a result, only Dalit writers' works showed the reality about Dalit literature. Only Dalit women authors can judge how they express their grief, the depths of poverty they have endured, and the injustice they have witnessed among their own people. The 'God of Small Things' by Arundhati Roy depicts the same horrible experience of brutal torture on Dalits. The development of Dalit women authors for their own cause, however, revealed the reality of our society's double standards ideals. 'Karukku', in many respects is the novel that comes out as the vision and voice of Dalits, and to inculcate this idea we need to know the meaning of the term 'Karukku', the term literally means "Palmyra" in Tamil, but in the context of Bama's book, it refers to the marginalization and discrimination faced by Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu, which are often forced to live in the shadows of society, much like the Palmyra tree that grows in the corners of fields and is used only for its fruit and leaves. Bama describes in her book:

'Karukku' means Palmyra leaves, which, with their serrated edges on both sides, are like double-edged swords. By a felicitous pun, the Tamil word Karukku, containing the word Karu; embryo or seed, also means freshness, newness. (Bama xv).

Bama herself acknowledges the significance and importance of 'Karukku' on her life in the book's foreword, writing:

"The driving forces that shaped this book are many events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like Karukku and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance and left me trapped and suffocating; my desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy these bonds; and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split then; all these taken together" (Bama xxiii).

Sheena Sarah Winny correctly remarks in her illuminating paper titled 'Articulating Silence: A Study of Bama's Karukku':

"The title word Karukku of Bama's autobiography can be understood as a Dalit metaphor. Karukku means a Palmyra leaf with seared edges. It is used to thatch the roofs of Paraya huts. The seared edges of the leaf hurt one who handles it. The pain experienced then is negligible compared to the wounds inflicted by the society" (Winny 23).

'Karukku' deals with the issues of caste oppression and the sufferings of Dalits. Bama's zeal for working in the direction of the betterment and upliftment of Dalits finds real expressions in 'Karukku' which gives us the vision and voice of Dalits. She strikes out bravely against the standards of the so-called society which led them to humiliation and makes them realize their caste. Her works are also mouthpieces for Dalit feminism, which reflects the subaltern women's powers and tenacity. Bama believed it was her responsibility to raise attention to her tribe's suffering and mistreatment, and she dedicated her entire life to helping the Dalits. Bama writes in her book, "...I left behind my life of renunciation and came out into the world. After that, I wrote my book *Karukku*. That book was written as a means of healing my inward wounds; I had no other motive." (Bama). She writes 'Karukku' to heal the wounds that have been heaped upon her. 'Karukku' is a novel that shows the structure of her personal life according to her design. In her

book "*The Hard Business of Life: Bama a Writer, Teacher, Woman, Christian, Tamil, and Dalit*," Githa Hariharan assesses Bama's contribution in depth:

"Bama left the covenant, only to find she did not know 'how to live. It was this terrible period of isolation that forced her into doing something that would help her to survive. Bama began writing about her childhood, about being Dalit. She wrote about a culture of survival – hard work, and the noise, whether of songs or quarrels. She had the women speaking in the earthy language they had spoken in – 'the only armor' these women have against both landlords and husbands" (Hariharan).

According to Bama, if you are born into a minority caste, your life will be full of challenges and terrible experiences no matter where you go or what you do. Bama thoroughly explains this in her autobiography 'Karukku':

"In this society, if you are born in a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after death, caste difference does not disappear. Wherever you look, however much you study, whatever you take up, caste discrimination stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us into a frenzy. It is because of this that we are unable to find a way to study well and progresses like everyone else. And this is why a wretched lifestyle is all that is left to us." (Bama 26).

Bama is a member of the Paraya society, an extremely low class group and experiences every high and low consequence of being a Dalit born from the very beginning of her life. She never heard about openly about untouchability from people around her, but felt an experience and humiliated by what untouchability is. The upper castes oppressed the Paraya community in every way, and they were obligated to show respect and service to people who belongs to upper caste groupings. Females were compelled to perform menial tasks in exchange for a few pennies or "Joothan." They were seen as the other and were frequently mistreated. Bama describes an experience she had as a teenager, she saw a Paraya elder carrying a parcel tied with a cord but not touching it as she writes in book:

"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 that held the string with his other hand... He said everybody believed that Naicker's were upper caste, and therefore must not touch Parayas. If they did, they would be polluted." (Bama 15).

Later, Bama told her elder brother about the experience, who did not find it amusing; however, witnessing his serious attitude made her realise the miserable state and humiliation of their caste people, and she became sorry and the incident changed her perspective on life. At this phase of her life, she realized that only education has the ability to change society's thinking. Bama's brother said,

"Because we are born into the Paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their accordant attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn" (Bama 18).

These words had a profound impact on the writer's life, for being more motivated by her zeal to do something better for the upliftment of their society.

Bama was always portrayed as a fearless and valiant woman throughout her life. There was an incident when she was a schoolgirl, she asked permission from the principal and warden to go home for the First Holy Communion ceremony of her siblings, but they refused. She became outraged at their denial and challenged them, "How is it when you are allowing these others to go; why is it that you only refuse me?" (Bama 22). It shows that the students who belong to the upper caste are allowed to go but Bama is not. She claims that individuals of low caste are always persecuted in all areas, not just physically, but

also mentally and socially. Bama gets hurt when she realized that caste bias is everywhere and we cannot get rid of it easily. There are many incidents lined up in her life from which we can understand the mentality of people and the torture they endured at the hands of the elite class in the name of caste discrimination.

When Bama was heading home for the holidays by public transport, the woman sitting next to her stood up and walked to another seat when she realized the writer was from a lower caste, which she had assumed was becoming impure. This was a moment when she accustomed to the sick mentality of people who belongs to the upper class. Bama deliberately writes about such experiences and incidents of discrimination and atrocities which she witnessed. She writes about an incident that shows a clear picture of how Dalit women were treated at that time. When a lower caste woman (Patti) who was working in the house of the Naicker family asked for drinking water,

"It was shameful to see them do this. Even the way they were given their drinking water was disquieting to watch. The Naicker women (upper caste women) would pour out the water from a height of four feet, while Patti and the others received and drank it with cupped hands held to their mouths. I always felt terrible..." (Bama 16).

This was all just to avoid getting polluted by their touch. Even the way they offer their leftover food was disquieting to watch. "The Naicker lady came out with her leftovers, leaned out from some distance, and tipped them into Patti's vessel, and went away. Her vessel, it seemed, must not touch Patti's; it would be polluted" (Bama 16). Bama also mentions poverty and illiteracy in the novel. Due to poverty and ignorance, the Dalits are obliged to beg for menial jobs from the higher classes, according to Bama. Illiteracy drives Dalits to serve as laborers on farming for minimum wages, and Bama depicts a sequence of episodes in the book 'Karukku' that symbolize Dalit sufferings and illiteracy.

"Most of the land belonged to the Naicker community. Each Naicker's fields were spread over many miles. The fields were spread over many miles...Our people knew all the fields by their names and turned up exactly where they were required to work" (Bama 6).

In these lines, Bama underlines that these fields belonged primarily to the upper castes and that they were only used on a daily basis. Bama was truly filled with pride when she was awarded the SSLC topper among the Dalit students. This was a great opportunity to show that Dalits can also make progress and achieve success. She had spent the rest of her life working hard and studying, most likely to imitate the example of her older brother, who had once enlightened her on the importance of acquiring knowledge.

Bama was never been afraid of coming out as a Dalit and never been cowardice. She raises issues about the numerous post-colonial systems that oppress Dalit women in her book. Bama reluctantly denied hiding her caste when her mother recommended her "Say you are from a different caste. They'll never know" (Bama 20). Caste to her, was her identity, which she never wants to put out of sight, rather she wants to be a voice of voiceless people in the downtrodden community, she initiates being a Dalit woman and renders her voice for her community. Bama as a writer, saddened to see how effortlessly individuals of low caste had accepted their degraded position.

Bama admits honestly that she has abided by quiet on several occasions since it was the only way to get through the difficult situations. She describes every phase of her life where she faces caste discrimination and humiliation as a Dalit born in her book 'Karukku'. As a result of her experiences, the author realized that intellectual progress is the only way to climb the success ladder. i.e; she focused on her academics and later uses this as a weapon to fight against all atrocities. Bama's major goal in writing

is to share her experiences with people as she describes it: "I use writing as one of my weapons in the struggle for impoverished people's rights".

Bama's life underwent a significant change, when she expressed her desire to be a nun to help the oppressed class student, because she was really sad to see the pathetic condition of Dalit children in the convent; so she entered into the religious orders. Bama was shocked, after learning the truth about the convent and school that the Dalit community was performing all of the menial jobs on the convent grounds, and she really cannot do anything about it since they didn't recognize her as she also belongs to low-caste. She writes,

"I was filled with anger towards them, yet I did not have the courage to retort sharply that I too was a low-caste woman. I swallowed the very words that came into my mouth; never said anything out aloud but battled within myself." (Bama 25)

Bama writes about the Dalit community as "This is a community that was born to work" (Bama 55). She continues, "If you are born into a low caste, every moment of your life is a moment of struggle" (Bama 27). She writes about the conspiracy to keep us in the same place, along with the same pathetic condition, and should live and die like that. Bama says in 'Karukku':

"Dalit has been enslaved for generation upon generation, and been told again and again of their degradation, they have come to believe that they are degraded, lacking honor and self-worth, untouchable; they have reached a stage where they themselves, voluntarily, hold themselves apart" (Bama 28).

Bama tries her best to lift the Dalits from their crawling misery from years ago. Bama's impassioned words awaken Dalit ladies out of their slumber. She writes in her book:

"We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it our fate, as if we have no true feelings; we must dare to stand up for change We must crush all these institutions that use caste to bully us into submission, and demonstrate that among human beings, there are none who are high or low" (Bama 28).

Bama represents Dalit feminism and the Dalit Paraiyar community's freedom. Through Dalit women's autobiographies, it is now obvious that women are fighting societal injustice, discrimination, and exploitation. As shown in the story, Dalit women have hope for a brighter future. Her novel has some unsolved questions as:

"Are Dalits no 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 wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack? They treat us in whatever way they choose, as if we are slaves who don't even possess human dignity" (Bama 27).

When the reader goes through these questions to better comprehend her point of view, it appears that they have a deeper influence on them. She wants to wipe out the stain of being untouchable and create a new vision toward a society where people can live with dignity and equality.

To conclude, at first, Bama enlightens the people of the marginalized community through her own experiences and wants society to understand the consequences of being unaware of our rights. As a result, Bama's literature reflects Dalit women's conceptualized marginalization in India. Her writing honors Dalit women's lives, tenacity, and creativity at the same time and questioned that whose fault is this, with her words "I have to struggle so hard because I am a woman. And exactly like that, my people are constantly punished for the simple fact of having been born Dalits. Is it our fault that we are Dalits?" (Bama). On behalf of her community, she speaks out against women's oppression in all aspects

of life, as well as their resilience and demand for action. It has sent a message to everyone that not only does Truth win, but that only the Truth triumphs. Through the select text, Bama draws attention to the suffering of Dalit women in upper-caste society. Bama goes through a lot of emotional trauma and conflicts and realized that only education can empower the Dalit community and help them to lead a life full of dignity and pride. Her art is considered as a celebration of repressed women's inner resilience. Therefore, we can take her text '*Karukku*' as a spokesperson for the downtrodden and attempt to portray oppression and hegemony.

Along with this, as Bama communicates the problems of Dalit women, she also portrays them as strong, who survive appalling circumstances of life. They have immeasurable strength and stamina to fight against all atrocities. It effectively conveys the importance of education and self-reliance in achieving social position and empowerment. Women Empowerment via education, followed by a battle for human dignity and identity, has become a component of Dalit culture in the twenty-first century. Previously, Dalits were the silent victims. They raise their voices against injustice after finishing their education and settling into their new lifestyles in order to recover their human identities. Their struggle is centered on obtaining recognition as individuals with inherent human worth and dignity within a democratic India, not about encouraging violence or chaos. So, if the violation of Dalit women's human rights is rectified, we may be glad for their brilliance and potential, which will undoubtedly contribute to the nation's progress. Bama believed that education was a crucial weapon for women's emancipation. Thus we can say that, '*Karukku*' is written with the intention of extending the voice of the voiceless beyond their context to a wider audience. Despite the fact that various democratic and fundamental regulations have been established to protect their rights, it has been discovered that these rules are ineffective. Taking a step forward in her life by creating '*Karukku*' Bama believes her words have positive dimensions to lift the Dalit background and hopes that she can become the Dalit voice to help society, and to proclaim a world of Respect and pride which flourish high .

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