

## **Gender And Caste Conciousness In Bama's Karukku**

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**ABSTRACT:** India is considered to be the patriarchy society. Though India is considered as an Independent nation, women is not given equal rights still now. Dalit Feminism is about the struggles faced by the untouchable people. Bama is one of the most famous and first dalit women writers. In all her work she explains about disillusionment, despair, pathetic condition, sexual harrasment, and painful memories faced by dalit people. Karukku means palmyra leaves which has two edges on both sides which is like double-edged swords. This paper deals about ambivalent attitude towards Christianity. Unlike other dalit texts this is not memoir, linear narrative and not traumatic. This is an autobiographical novel. Bama's dream was to become a nun, but she returns to her village to empower their people. She beliefs that a women can survive in this world only through her empowerment.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender discrimination, Class division, Oppression, Patriarchy

Feminism is all about the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of sexes. Dalits are the people who are called as "untouchables". Dalit feminism is a feminist perspective that includes questioning caste and gender role among the Dalit population and within feminism and the larger women's movement. There is an organizational institution movement which was made by the leaders of Dalit for the liberation of the downtrodden masses, termed as Dalit movement. It protest against untouchability, casteism and superstitious. Bama's Karukku is an autobiographical novel which resolute about dalit feminism.

India is considered to be the patriarchal society. Though India is considered as an Independent nation, women is not given equal rights in our society still now. Women are always considered as an oppressed victim of male domination. The predicament of dalit women in our Indian society is disagreeable. They are oppressed by their caste. Now-a-days we can see so many protests conducted by women's against class discrimination, injustice

and oppression. They are trying to create their own spaces and rights in the society. This context clearly shows so many women writers are came out from the conventional society and explain the problems faced by the oppressed women in the society which is highly notable. In our society there are large numbers of women writers who explained about women struggles to the society and who fight for the empowerment of women. The writers in dalit hold forth dalit texts into mainstream of visibility in our society. The writers who belongs to dalit community create their own identification as a women and as well as dalit in our society. Bama stands as an example of this context.

Bama Faustina Soosairaj was born on 1958 in Puthupatti village in Viruthunagar district in Southern Tamilnadu. She is an writer, teacher. Bama is the first Tamil Dalit Feminist .Bama became very famous by her autobiographical novel of Karukku. Another notable work of Bama is Sangati and kisumbukkaran. Both the works shook the country because of her theme, language and uniqueness. Bama's works are considered as self-reflection. Her life was considered as recovery from the institutional and social betrayal. Dalits autobiographies are exemplar which reflects the lifes of dalits. Karukku stands as a torpedo which change and captured the attention of readers.

Karukku describes about Bama's life from childhood to adulthood. Karukku was first translated in English by Lakshmi Homstrom . Karukku means palmyra leaves, which has an edges on both sides like an double-edged sword. It reflects self esteem and social consciousness of dalit people. Bama considered Dalit literature as Black, feminist, communist, socialist literature which stands as a liberation of literature. Bama's work was contributed to her society by her oral folk language, which was used by her community people. According to her "there are traces of the agony and ecstasy of the dalits, the direct and emotional outbursts, the collective identity, the mockery and caricature of the immediate oppressors, the supernatural powers of oracle and the mythical heroism: these elements are considered as rebuilding conscious of dalit literature"(97-98).

Karukku was noticed and warm welcomed by the readers and the critics. Bama handled the theme of condition, struggles of dalit women. It is portrayed through the protagonist of the play. This novel is the first person narrative, which articulates the traumatic condition of dalit women in caste discrimination. Bama represent her past and present life in this story,

explaining various incidents happened in her life based on the caste discrimination in her society.

In south Indian Culture they gave more importance to caste than to the human beings. They forget the value of life, due to their discrimination there are so much of murders and violence occurred during that period. Women are treated like slaves by men. Women play a major role in the society. They have to do all the house hold things, they have to take care of the children's and home. At night they have to sacrifice their husbands too. Women in dalit community became weak by both mentally and physically. If they didn't obey to the words of their husband they will be beaten in the streets like an animal, no one will stop that injustice. While they are doing the work in the fields most of the dalit women are molested by the upper caste people.

In Indian society dalit women are oppressed by caste, class and sex. Dalit women are denied their voices, education and also caste race bias. Women in dalit community are considered as alienated objects which are used for sexual satisfaction and reproduction. They were never treated with respect.

Women are considered as a marginalized creature by the patriarchal society. The civilized people only create a barrier among the male and the female. Dalit women are lowered in their society they were lowered and lowered by their gender; those who are unemployed and unmarried are not treated with respect.

Bama's works were considered as an celebration of dalit womens life. It stands as a mirror for the people who suffer and humiliated by the society . Karukku became an testament not only for Bama but also to all the dalit women. Karukku is an discussion between the self and the community. In Dalit community the major problem faced by all the women is that they are denied of education. The women are controlled by the male and the whole society believed that women are born to do the household things and to satisfy the men. In this novel Bama mainly focused on caste and religion which breaks her heart. The great grief in Bama's heart made her to write this novel.

Bama first decided to become a nun but later she realized that all the women in her society are living the same life, nothing is changed in her society. That time there is a question raised

in her heart, why, I have to live my life like a normal women in her society, why shouldn't we get educated and empower our society? The answer for her question is her works. She stands as an example of empowerment of women in her society.

Many leaders fought for the equal rights of women in the society. In that Periyar supported Dalit women. He believed that the only way to empower the women is education. Education stands as a tool of **freedom** for the dalit women. Bama portrayed the full picture of the church who controlled and influenced dalit catholics life. Ponthan, the thief, Kaaman village idiot, and oodan the wife beater by these character in Karukku Bama explains about the oppression, discrimination faced by the women of her kind.

Bama explains about the ambivalent attitude towards Christianity. Bama doesn't want herself to insist in the religion of Christianity. This novel signifies about the oppression faced by the dalit Christians by the church. They were not allowed to sing in the choir of the church they are totally deprived by the church. During that period the schools have been started that too based on class discrimination. There were separate schools for non Christian rich, upper caste Christians and other for poor dalit Christians. She clearly explains about the caste level followed by the upper caste people to the dalit people.

The argument of this book explains every aspect of a child is bind together with Christian religion. Every new day is starts by religious ritual. Every year we celebrate some festivals according to the religious processions. Quite parallel to this religious life is socio-political and self-education which stands as an informative moment. By this moment she understood what untouchability means. By the empathy and double perspective she understands the deep breach between the Christian beliefs and the practical life. She understands the values of equality, social justice, and revolutionary aspect of Christianity by the social vision on Christian scriptures.

By this novel Karuku, Bama understands the various dimensions of her own society and dalit identity. Patriarchal society are always considered the women as a weaker sex, they are engaged in constructing and destroying the identity. Dalit women should understood their perspective not only by the identity of women but also by the identity of their caste. Even though dalit people have lots of hardships in their life they work in the fields of day and night

which resembles their strength, though they had an hard life they remain cheerful with an great smile. The denial of education especially for the girls is just because of their poverty and manual jobs.

Bama stands as a best example for her society by shattering the unemployment and poverty by education. She becomes a teacher she thought to empower her people through education. She teaches to the unprivileged people and emancipated them. Bama knowledged the acknowledged people and stops them to live like an slave. Bama understood the foolishness of myths and superstitious belief in her society and battles against that.

Bama portrays her painful memories, desperation, depression, delusionment and pathetic condition in culture, religion faced by dalit people. This work is considered as an rework of dalit history. Bama has been reinterpreted and renarrated all the incidents which express the oppression of dalit people. Karukku was considered as an voice of the dalit literature. Her work clearly explains about the atrocities caused by men and women struggle in her community. Bama clearly highlights the brutality of gender discrimination, caste and class division. This work is considered as an imaginative entry to the world where we found an different experience and political struggle faced by the society.

Many leaders have fought for the freedom of our nation. Though we got Independence still there is no freedom for women in our society. Harsh truth in our country is 30 percent of women in India in the age group of 15-49 have experienced physical violence in every second. In each and every second, every minute some violations is occurring towards women. Real Independence is considered when the women are walking in the street without any fear at late night. Women can change the impossible things to possible. Many leaders are fought for the women rights. Their sacrifice fights and independence will become meaningful only when the women are empowered in our society.

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