

# The Constrained Position of Dalit in Society- Bama's Seamless Effort for the Evolution of Dalit Community with Reference to *Karukku*

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### Abstract

The novel 'Karukku' plays a tectonic role in Dalit society. It was written by Faustina Mary, her pen name is Bama. Karukku probed into the conflicts between the community and the author. It portrays the thirst of a Dalit woman for her progression. She worked not only for her development but also strived a lot for the evolution of her community. This novel depicts three different types of discrimination in the life of Dalit people. It encompasses the caste, class and gender discriminations. The protagonist went under many social tribulations throughout her life. She struggled a lot in the patriarchal society to let her community free. Bama wanted her community to be united and she explained this desire in her novel. Dalits were treated by high borns as untouchables. Bama's certainty on shrine's endeavor over Dalits evolution become a failure conception. She only experienced failures in all her endeavor for the betterment of Dalits. All her efforts end in vain. According to her no one leads a civilized route for the evolution of dalits than her, so she quit from the shrine as a nun and started working for her people by her own. Dalit believes that they were created by God because of his likeness. So no one could disdain them. Even though they have lots of issues which beset them they have thousands of reasons to sustain their loyal life. They believe themselves as superior. Above all they too are humans like others. They were segregated by the ethics of human but not by God. Bama want to change this identity of Dalit by becoming an Identity for her 'Dalit' Community. She wanted to educate and impart knowledge to her people which is the basic right of human. She used Karukku as a weapon to instill the thought of upper born as wrong. She is the first person to talk about all these taboos faced by Dalit people. As a victim of this tribulations she portrays her pain using this novel. And insisted the need of independence and liberation. This paper aims at revealing Bama's efforts for the evolution of Dalit Community.

**Keywords:** Dalit, Community, Untouchables, Discriminations.

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Dalit denotes a group of people who are treated as untouchables by the people of higher community. They tried a lot in the society to create a constructive identity. In this novel, Bama described her personal life from childhood as a Dalit. Bama belongs to the Catholic Christian community. According to Arjun Dangle, "Autobiography is a growth and extension of a socio-cultural description".

Bama published her autobiographical novel *Karukku* in 1992 at her 34 years and it was later translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom in English. According to Lakshmi Holmstrom, “*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”. As *Karukku* has sharp edges at its two sides, it hurt when one approaches it. Bama used the term *Karukku* to define her life, which is also getting hurt from all sides.

There are many hardships in the journey of the women life, they frequently enter into tribulations. As a Dalit, Bama faces many such tribulations without any obstructions. She depicts her pain and portrays her difficulties in her work. She has the thirst of independence and freedom. It is a story which deals with discrimination towards lower caste community. Bama herself was a victim of it, which instigate her to present this work. She recognises that her Dalit identity was occluded by high born and Christianity. She segregates her life into works, games, education, hope, etc., She is a person who is skilled in differentiating professional from personal life.

In the beginning of the novel she described her village beautifully and told about rocks and ponds which were used by all communities separately. As the story moves she discussed many incidents, in which she quoted how Naickers treated Pallars and Paraiyers. They treated them horribly. Bama’s community will do all kind of work in Naickers house but they were not treated properly. They were provided with water and leftover food from a distance without touching their vessels. All the hard works are done by them without relaxation but they are paid with low wages. This kind of treatment hurts Bama which provokes her to think why should they do all, as a person born to work. She rightly states that, “Even though they worked so hard and suffered bodily pain, our people laughed and were cheerful. This is a community that was born to work. And however hard they toil, it is the same *kuuzh* every day”.(Lakshmi 47)

She witnessed these discriminations when she was in her third standard. As a child, she can’t bear with these kind of actions, it pricked her a lot, she was shattered into pieces on dealing with this, her heart melted worsely all these made her angry. She wanted justice for her people.

At that time she was advised by her brother that education will give you all you need including your expectations. You will gain proper respect and given with right position you prefer in society. This remained as an inspiration for her, she worked a lot and passed out successfully in all her courses. she described the communal as well as economical discrimination in society. Further she continued that even though a person is from high born society they will be treated with disrespect without money. Bama talked not only about the suppression of lower caste by high born but she also insisted the quarrel among their own community people. She wanted her people to be united. She focuses on the problems faced by the women, at the same time she appreciates their physical and mental stamina. She explained it beautifully by describing the incident, when police entered into their place in search of their men they faced it tactfully. Though the women were treated bad and been abused by men they stand strong in their stand. She discussed three types of discriminations which includes class, caste and gender.

After completing 10 years of teaching, she decided to become a nun because she believed that there will be no discriminations in churches. In order to support her community she entered into church and practised as a nun for 7 years. But her hope failed, she discovered a world of corporate inside the church. She witnessed suppressions of Dalit inside church, which presses her to come out of it. She quit Church and she entered into the outer world, to rediscover her own self. She decided to stand on the side of her people by using her own identity. In her life she took two major decisions but both ended in vain. Initially, on hearing her brother’s inspirational word she studied sincerely and got good Marks and become a teacher. Then she became a nun to help lower caste people through church.

But both her efforts end in vain. Churches practices more discriminations than others. They use Dalits for their upliftment. They were not given with chances inside the church it was not a place for Dalits. It was a place for luxurious soul. She made her people to believe the fact that they were born out of God's likeness.

Her way of telling the stories pull me towards her, I felt her presence while reading it and it was a picturesque novel. She used local languages of her place, this way of using local language in novels enter into a big controversies. At the same time it touched the heart of the readers. This novel become a voice for Dalits through the pen of Bama. Whatever struggles she faced, she never faint out. She motivated herself and worked seamlessly for Dalits evolution. In the end of her book Bama's says that, "Each day brings new wounds, but also new understanding, new lessons that experience teaches, sufficient mental strength to rise up even from the edge of defeat. I have seen the brutal, frenzied and ugly face of society and been enraged by it. But at the same time, I have danced with joy because of the sweetness and simplicity of a life that is in touch with nature. Even though I have walked hand in hand with anxieties, I have also recognized a strength and zest within myself, flowing like a forest stream, and this has refreshed me"(105).

Bama says in an interview to Suchetra Behal: "I identify myself as a Dalit woman writer . . . There are many writers available to write about other issues but few for Dalits and there are many issues that have to be tackled. If and when Dalits are respected and treated as equal human beings then only can I write about other things." (The Hindu).

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