

Triple Marginalization Portrayed in Bama's Karukku

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Abstract

A double-edged stem of a palm leaf known as a "karukku" symbolizes the existence of Dalits in Indian culture. An autobiographical work that details the struggles and obstacles that the author has endured by her at various points in her life. She explains the oppressed Dalit people and the embarrassment that the upper class's rule brings. Dalits are brutalized and discriminated against by upper caste society in addition to being used as a resource both politically and economically. Dalits are viewed as "outcasts" by society. Dalit women experience discrimination, abuse, including sexual abuse at the hands of males from higher castes, as well as prejudice in hiring practises and pay. They were merely treated by the upper class as slaves. In Indian society, caste-based discrimination is viewed as being susceptible to exploitation and pain.

Keywords: karukku, dalit, caste discrimination, marginalisation, education.

Indian literature counts Dalit literature as a very important component. Dalit women are portrayed as being naked and sexually exploitable in Dalit narratives dating back to the 11th century. Beginning around 1960, Dalit literature became well-known in languages including Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil in the form of poems, short stories, and autobiographies. Dalit literature is characterised as a fight against oppression, Dalits' past humiliations, and their current sufferings. It represented Dalit people's realism and contribution. Only when Dalit reality is presented from a Dalit perspective can a flawless piece of Dalit literature be created. The liberation of Dalits is the driving force behind Dalit literature, and the tales found there are entirely based on personal experience.

Karukku was written by Bama as a genuine reflection of her personal experiences. Bama notices many parallels between her life of hardship and the saw-edged Karukku, which symbolizes palmyra leaf. Karukku is a memorial to the neighborhood where Bama grew up. She describes the beautiful life there while never giving the impression that it is characterized by a single caste identity. Nevertheless, it is a place that never forgets and is never permitted to forget its caste identity. She writes about amusing childhood memories, fun activities with her friends, delicious meals with her family, and the oppression of her community by the police, upper castes, and the nunnery all

at the same time. In this way, she illustrates how widespread caste oppression is, how it infects all aspects of daily life and even persists in collective memory. (Ancy Sruthy et al., 2018)

To escape caste-oppression by orthodox Hindus, the Paraiyar, the caste of funeral drummers who play the parai drum, converted to Christianity. However, they are disappointed because they are oppressed within the church and they are not eligible for reservation benefits because they are Dalit Christians. Bama supports the Communist philosophy, but she disagrees with the Tamil Nadu Communists since many of them emphasize economic advancement and equality without addressing caste issues. Due to her caste and gender, Bama suffers twofold exploitation. Bama's status is further affected by the fact that she is a Dalit Christian. Hence Caste, gender, and religion are the three main factors that cut across and pierce Bama's existence in Karukku.

Despite her lifelong struggles, Bama understood the value of education. She suggests, "If you are born into low caste every moment of your life is a moment of struggle". Bama is not afraid about her torn wings; instead, she is positive and upbeat. She wishes to take flight once more, this time with the power of education and human rights as her wings. However, according to Bama, if we are born into a low caste, we must endure shame and misery all the

way up to our death. Social distinctions persist even after death. Caste discrimination chases us in every nook and cranny, no matter how much we learn or what we pursue, it sends us into a frenzy. Bama paints a clear picture of how Dalit Christians are oppressed on the basis of their caste not just by upper castes but also by the Catholic Church. She recalls being enraged as a young student when she "saw that all the mundane work was done by Lower castes who were humiliated all the while, and addressed in a disgusting and demeaning way."

Bama is ostracized as a Dalit Christian as well as a Dalit woman. She was soon to complete her training to become a nun. She was startled to learn of caste-based discrimination from a Sister before she was ordained as a nun. Bama wanted to serve Dalit children by teaching in a village school, but due to her caste, she was unable to do so. She was baffled as to why Jesus did not practice caste discrimination yet the Sisters did. She was reminded by the leaf's saw-like edges of both the daily "societal blows" she received and the more crucial reality that she had to break through this repressive framework. In India, caste and status is so closely associated with the individual that it persists even after death. The graveyard in Christianity has a caste designation, which is why Bama claims that "The upper-caste Christians would have their own graveyard." This demonstrates how caste, gender, and religion are all used to marginalize Dalits. Therefore, Christian Dalits have double psychosocial identities that include being both Christian and Dalit, and they must deal with the problems that come with that dual identification. ("Bama's Voice against Violation of Human Rights")

In this context, Bama's grandmother stands in for the helpless dependent segment of the Dalit community, which after years of oppression has accepted its status as its destiny. The Dalits' minds have been crushed for years by living in such a lowly environment and being treated like slaves. The Dalits accept their situation due to their lack of awareness and sense of despair. But such embarrassments are intolerable to the younger generation, like Bama. They are unwilling to engulf themselves in mute submission and enslavement. Bama makes the point that a voice must be given to those who have been

marginalized in order to free them from the constraints of their inferior status. The dread of changing her identity while living in the convent, which Bama has never found acceptable, is one of the factors Bama quits the convent. Bama is able to distinguish between the surface and actuality of priests due to her life experience. By talking about the Dalits' commitment and renunciation, poverty, and chastity, they spit in their faces. But in reality, they loot the Dalits while living luxuriously. Bama's faith in Christianity wanes as a result of her newfound understanding of these concepts. Despite losing trust in Christianity, she never loses faith in God. They only show respect for the Dalits as people. According to Bama, the Dalits' consciousness has begun to grow. Bama never wants her identity to change; instead, she longs for Dalit identity to be acknowledged. She never criticizes the system; instead, she concentrates on the particular plight of Dalits. She is well aware that the Dalits cannot escape marginalization until they comprehend and value their identity as "different." (Pandit, 2019)

"Karukku" is a story of the Dalit struggle, much like the slave narratives of African Americans. Bama advocates for the Dalits' emancipation throughout the entire book. Her autobiography depicts the struggle of an outcast to achieve emancipation while serving as propaganda for identity crises. Bama wants to remove the caste-related ideologies that prevent the low caste from being acknowledged in societal structure. She establishes a marginalized voice for her group as well as herself because she identifies as a Dalit by explaining her own marginalized experience. She strives for harmony amongst the many socioeconomic and religious sectors. Bama, a writer from the underclass, tries to explain the distinction by emphasizing the idea of oppression and marginalization.

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