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Socio-religious Discrepancy in the Society with reference to Bama's 'Karukku'

ABSTRACT

Bama is very sensitive since her childhood. Her minute note taking nature could not allow her to sit silent without reacting at the barbarity in the society. This is one of the reasons that she prepared herself to be a nun in the convent school. She used to get disturbed at the time of prayer of the nuns in the morning. For the essence of their prayer is to treat all the people and children as children of God. As soon as they finish the prayer, they forget it at the very next moment. They never treat kindly, especially poor children. On the other hand they entertain rich students and their parents. In actuality they say in their prayer that the service to poverty ridden people is service to God. But the reality is far different. The writer says during her college days the love and devotion that had towards God diminished piecemeal. There was turmoil in her mind. The nuns used to behave very differently towards the destitute children who were in boarding school. They asked to do every menial task from them. Their attitude was as if they were queens there. A few of them had a little bit human perspective, so they had difficult time. Overall view of the nuns at the dalit children was to make them demoralized. Now and then they were pointing at them by saying there would not be any drastic change in their lives and making them very negative.

Dalit literature is the saga of oppressed people. It creates the curiosity of society and its people to know the subjugation of the suppressed ones since thousands of years. What is it that makes the oppressors to behave likewise and do unjustness over the innocent people carrying the burden of high caste persecutors since generations together. Nobody has been rescued from its clutches such as – workers, labours, writers, government and non-government servants even students. The oppressors didn't want to bring them into the main

stream of the life. However, after a long period of subjugation, the leadership like Mahatma Jyotirao Phuley, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Maharashtra and Narayana Guru and Periyar Ramaswami Naicker in South India paved the way for all the people from depressed community and showed them a light of liberation from the slavery of higher class cruelty.

Ambedkarites commenced their writing to represent their torment in 1950's in Marathi. In the course of time, the writers started writing in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, English, Punjabi, Gujarati and Hindi. Initially, the learning was the only profession of upper caste elite as they had the right of learning since their childhood. When non-Brahmins started writing, the so-called started commenting adversely on their grammar and language abilities. Dalits' writing is the narrative and his story of his pains. They have reflected their exploitation almost through all the genres of literature like drama, novel, poetry, short-stories, biographies, autobiographies, etc.

During the journey of writing, women too have not lagged behind. Some of them as – Kumud Pawade's 'Antasphot', Baby Kamble's 'Jina Amucha', Urmila Pawar's 'Aaydan' "The Weaves of My Lives, Bama's 'Karukku'; short stories like Rajat Rani Meenu's 'Sunita in Hindi; Kusum Meghwal's short stories in Rajasthani'; novels of P. Sivakami in Tamil, etc.

The focal point of Ambedkarite women writing is refusal of social oppression in their autobiographies. The present paper aspires to the interactions of the readers and researchers and the social elites on the burning issues of oppression in general and on women at all level in particular.

'Many Dalit women, for whom toil is their very life-breath, who lead vigorous lives in spite of all their weariness and anxieties, have been a great inspiration as well as a constant help to me. I have been restored by the love, friend, support, and advice of all these people and enabled to live with fresh courage and resolution.'¹ (p. 1338-139)

To fight against the social illness if an oppressed one gets at least support like this, he or she prepares himself or herself mentally strong and becomes hopeful to win the social battle. Women like Bama have to undergo through lot of mental stress to prove themselves an activist in such casteist ambience. She affronts on sanctimoniousness of peculiar upper caste mentality. Her thoughts take issue with the authoritative caste on mind of the oppressors. We find many women writers' standpoint towards the prevailing caste system like Urmila Pawar, Shantabi Kamble, Baby Kamble, Kumud Pawade, etc. as Bama has.

Bama's remarks are disparate when she comments on the subjugators atrocities and the attitude mainstream Christian society the dalit community through her well-read autobiographical work *Karukku*. One of the reasons of upper caste people to look at the lower caste people with hatred is that they eat beef. And nobody can deny it that these people have their main dish of beef but Maichaelamma has a question when she says, **'So many people of other castes eat beef secretly these days, it's getting more and more difficult for us to get any meat. All of them eat their fill, but see; it's only we people who are called low-caste.'**²(p. 64)

She thinks if food matters to treat somebody as a low caste person then why it is so that we are only treated inhumanly. Omprakash Valmiki also raises the same question in his autobiography *'Joothan: A Dalit's Life'* when upper caste people come secretly at night in their bastii. e. mohalla and eat pork and drink liquor. Still these guys abuse badly when they become violent towards the Chuhara people. So we find social contrast of behavior of the people.

Bama has very emotional since her childhood. Her keen observing nature could not allow her to keep mum without reacting at the atrocities of the dalit children. This is one of the reasons that she prepared herself to be a nun in the convent school. Her mind used to get disturbed at the time of prayer of the nuns in the morning. For the essence of their prayer is to treat all the people and children as children of God. As soon as they finish the prayer, they forget it at the very next moment. They never treat kindly, especially poor children. On the other hand they entertain rich students and their parents. In actuality they say in their prayer that the service to poverty ridden people is service to God. But the reality is far different. The writer says during her college days the love and devotion that had towards God diminished piecemeal. There was turmoil in her mind. She used to ask certain basic questions such as-

"Why should I go to Pusai every day? Why should I take communion?"³(p. 102). She had learnt that God comes through priests and nuns to serve the people. But her ideas flew away and started to believe that God can never reside with them. There after she repudiated their every act and started arguing with them saying – **"Chi, they are all hypocrites and frauds."**⁴ (P. 102)

The nuns used to behave very differently towards the destitute children who were in boarding school. They asked to do every menial task from them. Their attitude was as if they were queens there. A few of them had a little bit human perspective, so they had difficult time.

Overall view of the nuns at the dalit children was to make them demoralized. Now and then they were pointing at them by saying there would not be any drastic change in their lives and making them very negative. One of her sisters advised her to think minutely before entering the order and to become nun. But Bama wanted to be different kind of nun that is loveable and kind hearted towards all the children. She used to notice terrific contrast between the wish of God and the job of nuns. God always favours needy and poor people whereas these so called priests and nuns exactly behave opposite to Him.

Bama has another mental stress of caste conflict. In South there are Paryar and Chaaliyar castes. And Bama represents dalitParaya community. The headmaster who belonged to Chaaliyar caste treatsParayar children indifferently and punishes those students for no reason. She perceives another inter-caste battle between Pallar and Parayar communities that is representative within the same oppressed class. She has got shaken by discerning it. G. n. Devylooks at it as-

"The subversive historiographic path of personalizing history."⁵

Bama has been very serious regarding the uplift of the destitute people. She is of the strong opinion that the wish of God could be filled only after the buoy up of the neglected mass. In the name of God, upper castes Christians enjoy the benefits and luxurious life by holding high positions in the church. In fact, these people dupe poor low caste dalitChristians and take share of money to thrive themselves. Apart from this,Bama contemplates that dalit woman is twice marginalized –firstly, by the upper caste women who don't treat them equally as they too belong to the female category and by dalit male of their own community. She remembers when she was with her Patti and the lady from Naicker family came out with leftovers. She leaned out from same distance and poured the food into her vessel. Bama didn't like it and said that she should not do like it because it doesn't seem good. Paatti replied as –

"These people are the maharajas who feed us our rice. Without them, how will we survive? Haven't they been upper caste from generation to generation and haven't we been lower caste? Can we change this?"⁶(p. 17)

In throughout the core theme of Karukku, Bama has been very restless. She suffers mentally a lot because of the treatment given to her by the nuns in the school. She thinks a many of the nuns in the church possess plaster saint attitude towards her and the poor children. In fact

they behave complete opposite of the philosophy of Jesus who worked for the destitute persons only. In the prayer they say that our God is forgiving one but reality is poles apart. The administrators of the convent don't take even breathe to praise Him as He took birth in the poor family, lived with poor and even died as a poor. But as soon as any poverty ridden person entered the campus, they fall upon that person like rabid. Hence Bama couldn't tolerate their hypocrisy and left her job when she had nothing to survive afterwards. She was quite confident of her survival without any job. She decided her last job at the cost of her unbearable respect. Her inner voice used to tell her she had to worked for the poverty stricken and penniless children.

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