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SUFFERINGS OF DALIT WITH REFERENCE TO BAMA'S KARUKKU

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ABSTRACT

For thousands of years, Dalits continued to live as meek and submissive creatures, leaving their degrading and disgraceful conditions to fate and accepted as being in the normal way of life. Some people in this community exploded themselves and expressed their sufferings as a call of protest. They gave voice to the marginalized people and condemned the social brutalities. Bama, one of the Tamil Dalit writers portray the sufferings of Dalit community. Bama through her autobiography "Karukku"(1992) reflects how she has suffered and being challenged throughout her stages of life as a Dalit. She portrayed the brutal, frenzied and ugly face of the society and been enraged by it. Her writings explicitly illustrate about the subjugated Dalit people, who have been exploited politically, economically and suffered humiliation in innumerable forms and ways at the hands of the dominant caste forces. They have been brutalized by upper caste society. Their agony and pain are endless. This could be evidently seen in research paper entitled "Sufferings of Dalit with reference to Bama's *Karukku*" as a voice of Dalits' traumatic experiences and the text as the representation of marginalized people.

Dalits are 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatria, Vaishya and Shudra classes; they are considered impure and pollutant and therefore they are physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society. Dalit literature is designed to reveal the Dalits' atrocity experiences. There are only selected bands of exceptional writers who have put their heart and soul together in depicting sorrows and sufferings of the Dalits. Few writers are listed in the book *Encyclopedia of Dalits in India*"They are Premchand in Hindi; MulkrajAnand in English; Keshaoodeo in Malayalam; MadhuMangesh in Marathi and few writers in Tamil"(172). Bama, a tamil Dalit writer depicts the traumatic sufferings and their atrocity experiences through her autobiographical book

"*Karukku*" so this would be seen in my project as follows swiftly.

"*Karukku*" starts with the line 'Our village is beautiful'; Bama narrates the beauty of mountains from the peak and slowly descends to the low castes sufferings and ugly discrimination of castes in the society. Unlike other castes, Dalits starved for their basic needs. Dalits are discriminated by the caste persistence. This caste discrimination is severe in rural areas. Even in day today life the names of the localities have changed but the residential quarters of the Dalits are still isolated enclaves on the outskirts of the villages. The Dalits are discriminated or marginalized from their village. This could be evidently seen in "*Karukku*" Bama says,

"I don't know how the upper caste communities and the lower caste communities were separated like this in to

different parts of the village. The other castes such as Thevar, Chettiyar, Nadar, Naicker, Udaiyaar had their own settlement for themselves were Dalits are not." (6)

This clearly suggests that they are discriminated from the society. It is so painful to see them to live without a home. It reflects that they have no identity in the society.

Discrimination often takes in violent forms. Crimes against the Dalits, in essence caste atrocities are rampant killings, mutilations, physical assaults, rapes, public humiliation, attacks on their houses and localities, burning down the houses and crops, social boycotts occur with a fair amount of regularity, income in rural areas are basically low, poverty is intense, the rate of dropouts after primary school is quite high. They are psychologically affected by all these discriminations either politically or economically. Bama burst out and says her unbearable miseries of her life:

"In this society, if you are born in to a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after your death, caste-difference does not disappear; Caste discrimination stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us in to frenzy." (Karukku 22)

Unlike upper caste, Dalits starved for their basic needs. They should make their living only by doing menial jobs to the upper caste as bonded labour like driving cattle in pairs, to tread out the grain from the stray, firewood etc.

"They could live what the cheapest they would get it." (Karukku2)

Dalit children are not provided clothes. Through clear illustrations in *Karukku*, we could see the children used to wander bare bottomed. Even if a few boys wore pants, they would usually have slipped down, hardly covering what they were supposed to cover. This incident shows the pathetic conditions of Dalit children who even suffer for basic needs.

Dalit suffered in the name of 'Untouchable', they should not touch the upper caste people; if they did they believe that the upper caste people have been polluted. The man was holding the

package of vada by its string without touching it and gave to his Mudalaiyar (*Karukku*13). In another incident which is disquieting to watch, Naicker women should pour out the water from a height of four feet while paati and others received and drank it with the hand cupped held to their mouth. These types of conditions would make them to feel worse than animal. The sufferings and pain undergone in the name of untouchability was unable to express in the words. Gandhiji in his book "*The removal of Untouchability*" remarks,

"I have to be reborn, I should be born as 'untouchable' so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and affronts leveled at them."

Upper caste people ill-treated the Dalits brutally. Terrible scenes such as sweeping out the Cowshed, collecting up the dung and dirt and then bring home with leftover rice and curry. The food given to them is unwanted which are ready to throw away. The Naicker lady came out with her leftovers, leaned out from some distance and tipped them in to paatti's vessel and went away. If her vessel were touched by paattis hand or vessel it would be polluted (*Karukku* 14). In Banduma Dhav short story "The poisoned bread", Grandpa begged Bapupatil for the bread crumbs, which oxen seemed to have refused to eat them which were smeared with dung and urine. Grandpa has taken those crumbs to the home as a token of food.

The upper caste innumerable atrocities are evidently projected in media and journals throughout the years. On 16th Oct2001 in 'Hindu edition' - a Dalit woman in her ninth month of pregnancy was stripped naked and dragged on the streets at Dharmapuri. The practice of manual scavenging was existed in some states of India where these people worked as slaves. They swept, swabbed and washed the upper caste premises and even cleaned out the dry latrines (no plumbing) manually. This could be evidently seen with the illustration in the book "Dalit human rights violations, volume1" (124). All the menial jobs are done by Dalits but they are abused all the time and treated in a shameful and degrading way. Dalits continue to be oppressed and discriminated against in villages, in educational institutions, in the job

market and on the political battlefield (India Today). These obscene incidents unveil, Dalits hardly considered as human.

Dalits have been enforced to suffer pain and humiliation. Upper caste always become so elevated and low castes are been denigrated. Even when they are good as upper caste (or) even better in their hearts, because of one issue of caste alone they are forced to suffer pain and humiliation. Dalits fight for their human rights in Tamil Nadu with more violence than any other parts of India. In a land which knew a powerful movement directed against Brahminism, caste and superstition, it is shocking to read some of these incidents; Dalits being forced to eat excrement, massacred by the police (*Hindustuva and Dalits* 14). The police atrocity is seen in *Karukku*; the police had beaten the paraya's black and blue. They had beaten in hand and drove the men back mercilessly, ruthlessly even, the parayan's yells "AyyoAmma" in unendurable pain(32). Even after seeing them vomiting blood, the policemen whip them like they whip animals. In the book "Dalit Human rights violation" insisted, 'In some cases police and state authorities were the main culprits'(91). Thirumaavalavan quotes, "Even all the police commissions have thrown impartiality in the streets and have given reports in favor of the governing authorities"(*Talisman* 28). Therefore, Dalits have suffered more due to police atrocities instead of preserving them.

Dalit women and children are suffered more by the atrocities of the upper caste. They are suppressed within and outside of their community. Bama says,

"women suffer more than men, even if they did the same work, men received one wage, women another... Men are always paid more." (*Karukku* 47)

Violence has been imposed on women. Men behaved deplorably towards women. They used obscure language and swore at them that since their husbands were away they should be ready to entertain the police at night (*Karukku*124). The police man put his boot against Maariyappa's mother stomach and kicked her (32). The Dalit women are raped, attacked by landlords (*Dalit Human rights and violation-case paper* 51). In

feminist perspective, women were dominated and treated worse by men in our society. The sufferings were intolerable for being as a Dalit woman.

The discrimination and suffering of Dalit, starts from the birth of child and continued till they become old. Even the children are ill-treated by the teachers at schools. They had been insulted and shamed (Bama16). Children are misguided for being Dalit. The tiny crab-like children in *Karukku* work at match box factories, involved in making fire cracks for the whole day. The children are struggling for even to fill their bellies. The deficient of basic needs and struggles in tender age might turn them to maladjustment children. Hence, they are affected and turn up as evils in the society (*Talisman* 4). It was a hindrance to child's future for being a Dalit. Bama in her autobiography states that she has suffered mental conflicts at school; "I watched this, the more frustrated I felt my mind was disturbed. My conscience was battered and bruised." (*Karukku* 67)

Even the attitude of the common people in the society would make them to suppress and suffered more from generations to generations. Wherever they go they are humiliated and insulted. The Dalit, however hard the toil, never seen to be able to have cash in hand. They work so hard that wear themselves out like potsherds. They live on gruel every day, they were nothing more than a couple of rages, and they own neither property nor land even a decent house to live in. In such condition, they work only for the good of the rich but they cannot even hope for luxuries. Beyond these struggles and sufferings, they should come up in future. As Ramesh Kamble pointed in his essay 'Dalit-Hindustuva Alliance': Despite of their worst forms of discrimination, struggles and sufferings, Dalits have sought to redefine their social status and transform their character of Indian society. Bama's "*Karukku*" laid the best example of Dalit writings by revealing the sufferings and agony of Dalit. Bama herself shared her real-life experiences as victim and resistance. We are in democratic republic yet justice, equality, liberty and fraternity - the four basic principles are not available to all. Obviously Caestism makes human and humanity to be mad. It

is unendurable to exploit human race in the name of Dalit.

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