

Representation of Dalit Women's Struggles in Bama's Karukku



Dr. R. Abeetha

*Assistant Professor of English,
Vels Institute of Science, Technology
and Advanced Studies, P. Allavaram, Chennai*

Karukku is an important book because it shows the struggles of Dalit women in a patriarchal and caste-based society. The protagonist constantly suffers from patriarchal or conventional oppression. Women are routinely relegated to the status of subalterns as a result of sufferings of this kind. Dalit women face a number of obstacles stemming from conventional caste contexts that follow them around wherever they go. However, patriarchal values

This essay is founded upon patriarchal norms, under which women have to adapt to the norms established by males within the home or the community. Where this occurs, women are driven down the channels society has found most formidable for them; they are discriminated against and marginalised due to their gender.

hold them captive at home. Many patriarchal and cultural norms imprison them. They end up being pushed into the "other" category as a result. The terrible reality of Dalit women is portrayed by Bama in the chosen literature. She delves into the cultural and patriarchal context of her Dalit upbringing to examine the role it played in her own personal tragedy. In his story, Bama states, "In this society, those who are born into lower social classes are doomed to a life of shame and disgrace. Disparities in social status persist even in the afterlife.... Every minute of your life is a hardship if you are born into a lower social class" (Holmstrom, 26, 27).

Historically, society has been organised in a way that makes it difficult for those in the lower classes to achieve autonomy. There is a constant assumption that those in the lower castes are the worst of humanity. They aren't given the chance to advance that would be necessary. In Indian culture, so-called "caste" and "community" act as arbitrary divisions between various social groupings. The main character belongs to the Paraya caste, a socially inferior class that is common in Tamil Nadu. They are surrounded by many members of higher castes like the Nadar, Naicker, Chettiyaar, Aasaari, Thevar, etc. Bama talks on how the higher classes mistreated them in terms of culture and custom. The Paraya caste's female members are required to serve and defer to men and women with higher social standing both within and outside the home. Dalit women experience two types of discrimination.

According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's paper *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, it is a dual colonisation. Their situation is a result of both the colonisation of the west and the inherited patriarchy and traditions in their own households. In a culture where caste components were so rigidly preserved, there was little place for women. There is more than just one line separating Dalit women from ladies of higher caste. It only serves as a boundary between various facets of humanity. This claim destroys everything in its path like a bolt of lightning. The senior approached the Naicker directly, bowed respectfully, and extended the package his way while cupping the hand that was holding the string with his other hand, according to a narrative Bama remembers from her youth. Bama says, "He claimed everyone felt Naickers were superior caste and couldn't touch Parayas" (Holmstrom, 15).

Bama first saw this Paraya senior bowing down to a Naicker. This experience fundamentally changed the author's perspective. At a young age, when she was still too little to comprehend what was happening to her, she had seen the caste system and untouchability. Because of the harshness and power of the upper castes, lower castes have historically suffered. They

have had complete control over the Dalits. Dalit women are more susceptible to all types of discrimination. They are forced to follow the rules of their caste. Due to societal discrimination, the Dalits endure many difficulties as a minority community. On the other hand, the idea of untouchability permeates the whole text, stoking prejudice. When Bama inquires about the exploitation of the people, Bama's grandmother replies that the family's rank and riches prevent them from intervening. They won't have anything to use against them in combat since they will eventually have to leave their homes in order to make a life.

Higher caste individuals often treat Dalit women with cruelty. Because of the atrocities perpetrated against the community's men, the lives of Dalit women are often more negatively affected than those of the men. Bama remembers a similar incident from her own childhood. The guys in her village had to spend days hiding in the jungle as a consequence of the horrible incident:

"Unexpectedly, a sizable contingent of police officers with batons left the Chaaliyar neighbourhood. They used merciless efficiency to drive our men back, harshly assaulting any they caught before putting them into prison. We could hear the thud-thud of police boots stomping up and down, the piercing sounds of blows as our guys were repeatedly struck, and the cries of "Ayyo Amma," of unspeakable suffering" (Holmstrom, 34, 35).

Extreme caste-based prejudice has resulted in an all-out attack on the male elders of the hamlet. The upper castes abuse the Dalits violently. For the sole purpose of preserving a small area of land designated as a cemetery, they attempted to eradicate the Dalits. Even though these upper-caste tribes owned substantial amounts of land, they attempted to rob the Dalits of their graveyard. Because of prevailing societal conventions, Dalits are today seen as social outcasts. The lower classes are offensively preoccupied with the governments and organisations. The police, who are supposed to uphold the law, mindlessly support the upper classes in the story. To motivate them to apprehend the Dalit males, the police force as a whole is being fed. What would these ladies do if they found themselves in such a hopeless circumstance, and where would they turn for assistance? They keep quiet in the face of difficulty, hoping without hope that things would improve tomorrow.

From a young girl to a crone, the struggles of women in the Dalit community are portrayed in the book *Karukku*. Various patriarchal norms that oppress women in our culture are called into question in this work. Bama examines the struggles and routine existence of Dalit women in this work. She imagines herself challenging the numerous post-colonial and traditional institutions that perpetuate Dalit oppression. The women in the story earn a paycheck and play an important part in keeping the household running. However, they lack respect and admiration inside the family because of this. Women's pay in the workplace is sometimes far below that of males, despite the fact that they do similar work. In addition, women's earnings are put to good use in the family's day-to-day operations. On the other hand, males are free to spend their money whatever they choose, regardless of the needs of their loved ones. These restrictions force women to shoulder the burden of family caregiving while males continue to shirk their obligations at home. It's also important to note that sexual harassment is portrayed as a major problem in the literature. The only value males see in women is as a sexual object. Dalit women, whether in the job and at home, are sexually exploited, as shown by Bama.

They are targets of sexual harassment at work from guys of higher social status. Kumarasami Ayya mistreats Mariamma by the pump established in her seminal book *Sangati*, but as soon as he recognises his mistake, he notifies the local headman and manipulates everyone for his reputation. Kumarasami Ayya "at this time, fearing that his reputation may be in ruins, raced to the hamlet, and went and protested to the headman of the paraiyya community, the naattaamai" (Holmstrom, 20). Everyone in the meeting sought to place the blame on her during the incident. However, domestic sexual violence against women is common and often occurs at the hands of their own spouses. After a long day at work, wives have to give their weary bodies over to their husbands as soon as they've finished all the chores around the home.

The two worst ills of every civilization are poverty and hunger. The Dalits have struggled with these problems for centuries. Extreme poverty is the driving force behind the Dalit practise of genuflection to those of

higher social status. In addition, Dalits are driven to the dirtiest of jobs in the higher castes' houses by their hunger. Poet Namdeo Dhasal's poem "Hunger" highlights the hardships endured by Dalits as a result of food scarcity. In addition, it embodies the Dalit people's defiant anger and determination in the face of starvation. The issue of how to stay alive takes precedence over all others. It may be by enduring the wrath of the higher caste in the form of physical abuse, or it could be through cleaning up their garbage. Bama depicts a sequence of episodes in Karukku that show Dalit poverty and hunger.

"The Naickers claimed the vast majority of the territory. The Naickers' fields were rather far dispersed. There were miles and miles of fields, and yet our guys knew them all by name and showed up precisely when and where they were needed " (Holmstrom, 6).

From what you've read above, it should be very evident that Dalits are systematically dispossessed of their ancestral lands and property. Upper castes do not provide farmland to them so that they may grow their own food. Moreover, Dalits are restricted to living on certain streets. Land and property ownership for Dalits is a bad idea, which the higher caste lords are well aware of. They would stop working for them if they were given the money. They may become too powerful for the higher castes to accept if they were to acquire wealth. The Dalits do not get sufficient food or property. For them to continue functioning as a service to them, just the barest minimum of resources are provided.

The passage describes how their communities are densely inhabited in straight lines (Holmstrom,7). This leaves them with little choice except to labour in the fields of higher classes. The Pariyar and other dalits, however, had no such rights to the land, but conducted the real farming labour for the mirasdars, as Webster notes in his famous tract *The Dalit Christians* (Holmstrom, 32). They are forced to become social outcasts because of their dependence on the higher classes. Dalits will continue to be unemployed and underpaid if they do not follow the rules set down for them by the higher castes. Not many people want to deal with the reality of what it takes to stay alive, yet that's the norm. The Dalits are subservient to the ruling castes because of this. As a result, the pain becomes secondary to the dilemma of whether or not to contin-

ue living. If there is a way to ensure their existence, then any kind of tyranny is justified. There has been a continuous cycle of persecution by the higher castes against the Dalits, passing from one generation to the next. When discussing women's struggles, Bama writes:

"Both of my grandparents were maids for Naicker households.... The second Paatti I had was identical. She would get up at the crack of dawn and go to the Naicker homes to clean the cowshed, remove the excrement and grime, and retrieve the leftover rice and curry. And for some inexplicable reason, she'd act like she'd been given a cup of manna from heaven" (Holmstrom,16).

Dalits are expected to be grateful for any reward they get from the higher caste in return for their work. And for some reason, which is the only real response to the topic of hunger, is reflected in the phrase in the passage mentioned above. When the meal was accepted, it raised questions about who they were. However, these meals serve as nectars to empty bellies by satiating hunger. These elderly ladies had no choice but to get up and go to work. If they were to arrive late to their masters' homes, they would be denied even the leftovers. All day and all night, these unfortunate ladies had to resort to shattering their bones. They spend all day in the fields tending to their crops, then return home late at night to sleep before starting the cycle again the next day.

Overall, it is safe to say that women in Dalit communities face a number of obstacles. They are subjected to injustices during every stage of their life. There is consistent depiction of resistance in the writings despite the presence of horrors. Women from oppressed groups often express their frustration with injustice by many forms of rage, reprimand, screaming, acts, etc. The various democratic and constitutional regulations put in place to protect their rights today have not been found to be sufficiently effective. Dalit women are still routinely exploited in our culture. They are often relegated to subordinate roles by both indigenous and colonial institutions.

Works Cited

- Bama, Karukku, trans. Lakshmi Holmström, Macmillan India Limited, Chennai, 2000. Print. Bama, Sangati (Events), trans. Lakshmi Holmström, New Delhi: OUP 2009. Print.
- Bama. Dalit Literature. Trans. M. Vijayalakshmi. Indian Literature XLIII.5\ (1999):97 98. Print.
- Jogdand, P.G. Dalit Women. Gyan Publishing House: New Delhi. 2013. Print.
- Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd, Why I Am Not a Hindu (Sage Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2019)
- Kothari, Rajni. Caste in Indian Politics. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan. 2010. Print.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. Feminist Review, No. 30 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 61-88. PalgraveMacmillanJournals.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. Feminism Without Borders. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2003. Print.
- Muktibodh, Sharatchandra. "What is Dalit Literature?" in Arjun Dangle, ed., Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature (Delhi: OrientLongman, 1992), pp. 267-270. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. Can the Subaltern Speak? In Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 217-313. Urbana: University Of Illinois Press. 1988. Print.
- Webster, John C.B. The Dalit Christians. ISPCK. 2009. Print.

The One Nation One Ration Card Scheme: *Enhancing Food Security for Migrant Workers*



Aaquil Ahmed
Political Science and Economics,
Jamia Hamdard University

Suppose a family of migrant workers walk out of their village in search of a better job, but with the understanding that in doing so, they will be denied the same food rations that have been keeping them safe. This was the sad state of things in India. Though our Public Distribution System

(PDS) offers subsidies on food to more than 800 million people, it used to be linked to home address of a person, which rendered it useless to millions of people who migrate to work. This was to be corrected in 2019 by the launch of the scheme known as the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC). It is a great concept, and in this essay, I would like to take a look at its goals and applaud its achievements, and in a more honest manner, I would like to see what more needs to be done to ensure that all people who require it get it.

This essay analyzes India's "One Nation One Ration Card" (ONORC) scheme, a transformative policy that allows migrant workers to access subsidized food anywhere in the country. It applauds the program's success in enhancing food security and transparency through technology, while also critically examining its ongoing challenges, such as the digital divide and lack of awareness, which hinder its goal of leaving no beneficiary behind.

Policy Objectives and Implementation.

The very essence of ONORC was quite simple and beautiful: to provide citizens with the opportunity to purchase their food rations in any corner of the country. There were three motivations behind this reform. First, it was an effort to empower our migrant workforce in the sense that their right to food security follows them wherever they go, not only with their physical ration card. Second, it was to enable the PDS to be more effective through the application of technology to prevent leakages and filter out duplicates of beneficiaries. And lastly, it aimed to establish a new dimension of transparency and accountability in the whole food distribution network.

This wasn't a small feat. A huge digital infrastructure linking Aadhaar to the national food security database