

## A CRITIQUE OF CASTE CONSPIRACY AND INSTITUTIONAL BETRAYAL IN KARUKKU

NagarjunWadekar

School of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
YCM Open University, Nashik – 422 222 (MS)

### Abstract

*Indian villages are the hotbeds of local ego, the violent caves of ignorance, the burst mindset, and the hotbeds of casteism and racism. The caste system in rural areas is a kind of obstacle to national economic development. Certain castes have to endure economic slavery and some groups that have been stuck in the caste system for generations as a result cannot make their own economic progress. Therefore, it is clear that without breaking the chain of the caste system not only certain groups but also the country will not be able to progress holistically.*

*However, in rural, maximum agricultural land has been concentrated among the upper castes only. As a result, the lower castes in the rural have been doing traditional works, that's why agricultural work is the main economic resource of landless laborers and hence they live captive life. The seasonable agricultural works and the fewer wage and less income make an insecure and unstable life of rural Dalits. Hence, they were being exploited under the pressure of the dominant class. This unfair behavior of the upper caste towards Dalits will not solve the problems unless breaking the framework of the traditional rural economy. (Dr. Ambedkar 355).*

*Their financial instability and uncertain life convert them loss of confidence, negative and unconscious to take any decision. As a result, on any small issue they become upset and irritate to face the problems. On this ground, Bama's Karukku (1992) is a key text that exposes these shameful and ugly secrets of the mainstream Indian society that emphasizing the flawed, unjust opinions of those who work hard in the name of caste hierarchy in the agriculture and at the upper caste houses.*

**Keywords:** *Marginalization, Discrimination, Dehumanizing Caste System, Resistance, Karukku*

All human actions and aspirations are affected by economic events. Wealth is the real source of power and political, and social reform is a big illusion. Meeting the minimum needs of an individual is important for the success of democracy and the existence of democracy. It is important to establish economic equality to eliminate economic disparity in the country. In fact, economic equality is the key to true freedom. No man can dream of a bright future for democracy without meeting the minimum needs. In this sense Dr. B.R. Ambedkar says:

The process of exploitation of the exploited class in society cannot be stopped unless the privilege or monopoly of a particular class should be terminated. If the economically and socially weaker sections of the society are given equal rights in education and trade, then a new dawn will naturally come in the life of these lower sections successfully (Dr. Ambedkar 365).

Bama tries to unfold the Tamil Dalits' unsteady daily life condition that they have to live on the behalf of upper castes' direction and command. Sometimes the upper caste people create disputes among the lower caste to take benefit themselves. Upper caste dominant people know very well that their quarrels make them unstable and irritate each other. In this context, Bama's Karukku records the anguishes and atrocities of a large section of the population. Bama says:

Today I am like a mongrel-dog, wondering about without a permanent job, nor a regular means to find clothes, food and a safe place to live. I share the same difficulties and struggle that all Dalit poor experience. (Bama 68)

To achieve their own benefit the upper castes would discriminate between the lower castes; they never want that the lower caste should live a happy and joyful life. They would find out some reason to light a quarrel between the two lower castes and they keep themselves happy life. Caste pride is the main base of the Hindu religion, this caste ego has been playing a vital role in Indian society, and each Indian gives more importance to caste and religion than humanity. For any trivial reason, lower castes outcry, and this converts to big dispute. Bama describes this in the following words:

One evening there was an outcry that the chaaliyar had stabbed Izhava's husband who was from North Street. Our entire settlement was in shock, people running about here and there, lamenting and shrieking. (26)

The caste factor has become the prestige to one and all higher caste Indian. Lower castes, directly and indirectly, have been influenced by this caste system mentality. There is a proverb in the Marathi language, "One should eat soil for the pride of one's own caste but no one should disrespect to own caste". As per this proverb, to avenge the caste insult, both the lower castes come in front of each other with weapons to attack. In Karukku, the upper castes call the police to settle the dispute of two lower castes. Bama pictures the caste pride things in her words. She says:

We have to get our headman to organize us, house by house. Then we must collect all the weapons we will need. That boy, Katterumbu's son, he knows how to make country-bombs. We must have some ready. We'll show them. We won't let them off. (Bama 29)

Bama's narrative life is concerned with the serious issue of caste oppression within the Catholic Church. It describes the tension between the self and the community and the life of Bama's presents. As a process of self-illumination and self-realization Bama's text highlights Dalit social insult, abuse, and mistreatment from upper caste and also institutional betrayal from the government servants, such as the oppression borne by Dalits at the hands of State Police, Village panchayat, the upper castes, bureaucracy, and the church priests. Bama describes here as; she says:

“It seems that the Chaaliyar folk invited some people known as the ‘Reserve Police’ all the way from Sivkasi, butchered a sheep for them and arranged a feast. They have taken an oath to destroy our boys, they say so without counting the cost they are slaughtering at the rate of two a day and feasting the police. It seems that every single man they could catch sight of they beat up and then arrested.” (Bama 31)

Bama’s text describes an essential verification of deprived, marginalized, falsification, and ill-treatment experiences of Dalits. It is an incisive analysis of casteism that conquered India. They are proud of their higher caste, they would come to know any new person during traveling, and they at first inquire about the caste to which she or he belongs to. Bama inscribes how ‘higher caste Christians’ inquire the Dalits leave the seat and shift elsewhere while traveling by the government buses. Dalits didn’t have any permission to sit in the empty seat if there would be a higher caste person travelling on the same bus. These insulting episodes Bama describes in writing. As she defines the things in the following words Bama says:

How is it that people consider us too gross to sit next to when travelling? The look at us with the same look they would cast on someone suffering from repulsive diseases. Whenever we go, we suffer blows. And pain. Is there never to be any relief? It doesn’t seem to matter whether people are educated or not. They all go about filled with caste hatred. (Bama 24)

Tired of such an abusive life, Bama decided to become a Nun and she arrives at the convent as a teacher so that she could acquire the chance to serve other teenagers who fight against inhuman things as Bama had gone through. She wants to encourage the lower caste children by telling her to fight against the bad experiences and reach up to success. But again she doesn’t get any absolute answer on her disappointment, she revealed that the convent does not know the meaning of poverty and it is indifferent to the cause of the Dalits. Hence; Bama says:

According to their notion, low caste people are all degraded in every way. They think we have no moral discipline nor cleanliness nor culture. They think that this can never be changed. They speak such words all the time, without even thinking. (Bama 23)

The more Bama noticed this, she felt more frustrated. Her mind was distressed and her perception was bruised. She leaves the convent and starts writing. Bama writes from the heart about her dreams, her ambitions, and her longings that should be completed. Her lettering proceeds from the description of bitter caste experiences and gesturing at the ways in which she victims and has to fight and overcome the diseases of casteism, and survive the socio-economic equality events. Bama tries to uplift the Dalit self-respect and at the same time appeals to the Dalits to realize the importance of educating themselves to

elude all forms of oppression. To change and reform their lives, she tells her people from individual to communal seeking justice. She raises her autobiographical tone as:

We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustices of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate, as if we have no true feelings, we must dare to stand up for change. We must crush all these institutions that use caste to bully us into submission, and demonstrate that among human beings there are none who are high or low (Bama 28).

Bama's autobiographical book records transcendental progress both through the fostering of her trust as a Catholic, and her steady recognition of herself as a Dalit. In *Karukku*, the "absence of the self" and the presence of the "collective we" is evident. Instead of favoring her own speech and roles as her a site for the intersecting of numerous speeches from inside her community. *Karukku* becomes a manuscript where the collective people outlook for the entire public. Bama speaks for an entire community. Hence, In the Preface of *Karukku*, Bama says in the following words. She states:

To change this situation, all Dalits who are deprived of all basic rights should work hard and act like the Word of God. Instead of beating them as much as possible, they should unite, fight for their rights. (Bama xxiv)

*Karukku* has not only protected its writers but in the last, especially Indian Dalits and all Dalit victims of oppression, in general, have been given the status of scriptures. What makes this basic, radical literary text special is that it raises concerns not only about related issues and events but also about the persecution of women victims on the basis of gender, caste or class, and suggests the practical measures to prevent it. And overcome those difficulties and problems. Most strong angle, it underscores the relevance of 'education' as an important tool for Dalits' growth, development and authorization, their right to freedom, and human self-respect, Bama asserts in the following given her words. She mentions:

The story told in *Karukku* was not one of my stories. It was a description of the collective fronts of my community whose length cannot be measured in time. I just tried to freeze it forever in a book so that there would be something content to remind me of the atrocities that have been going on for several generations on one element of society. (Bama ii)

*Karukku* is not only confined to caste discrimination and racial oppression but also shows solidarity with members of the society who ignore Dalits. This manifesto has been made for Dalits all over India. Bama urges her colleagues through her writings; to counter the harassment of so-called mainstream hegemonic forces through only education and to recognize, to redefine the place of their own rights in Indian society persistently, especially among the higher caste, and reinstall their own identity as a good human being.

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