MARGINALISATION OF DALIT WOMEN AND THEIR TUSSEL

Abstract: The chief rival of women is patriarchal society. This patriarchal society suppresses and degrades women in all possible ways. It is always linked with the nature of patriarchal minds. Dalit women are known for their revolt and struggle that they face in daily life. The suffering of women is in general and the suffering of dalit women is in particular. Dalit movement is lead by dalit men and the women are suppressed and their voices and rights are not even noticed. This paper deals with the Bama’s works. Bama gave voice for those unspeakable souls. She not only speaks about dalit women but also for the marginalised upper caste women who suffer silently in the hands of men.

Index Terms - Identity, abuse, tormented, submissive, cremation

Indian Dalit literature began in 1960s. It began in Marathi literature later on to Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Tamil literature. This caste division stays in society for long period. But the voices of these marginalised people are not given importance. Bama Faustina is known as distinguished dalit fiction writers in Tamil. In all her works, she talks about the theme of dalit. Bama herself, victimised in the name of ‘dalit’ and also in particular as ‘dalit women’.

Patricia Waugh says,

Women writers are beginning to construct an identity out of the recognition that women need to discover, and must fight for, a sense of unified self-hood, a rational, coherent, effective identity. As male writers lament its demise, women have not yet experienced that subjectivity which will give them a sense of personal autonomy, continuous identity, a history and agency in the world.(6)

Bama never fears or ashamed to convey her dalit identity. From her childhood she tries to overcome everthing that degrades her as dalit women. She never does it by hiding her own identity, she breaks it through education. Bama became independent through education and that makes her give voice to the oppressed dalit society and always stands against the act of untouchedables.

This society separates people as the upper caste and the lower caste. The upper caste marginalises lower caste people. The upper caste people hold acres of land and they allow the lower caste people to do the labourer work to them. But, they are not given respect and also no proper wages in the name of caste.

Dalit women face problems due to this ambitious upper caste people as well from dalit men. But, they never tires even after heavy work. Dalit men expect dalit women to be supportive in family financially, economically, emotionally. They give these supports after the hard labour work throughout the entire day. Men expectation never ends there, they want women to be submissive to them inspite of their body pain which is caused by heavy work. If they donot obey their husband, then they are abused to the extreme. The patriarchal idea is dominant among them. Men can do anything which they like but women must remain as slaves in the hands of men.

Bama shows the troubles caused by men to their own women. She also narrates though women are tortured, tormented and abused they are not at all inferior to men. It is shown through the incident of burial of small boy in bama’s Karukku. This incident happens at the time when the issue broke out between parayar and chaliyar. Chaliyar calls “Reserve police” to destroy parayar community men. Many are given blows by policemen. There was a dispute between parayar and chaliyar community. Chaliyar bribed policemen to control parayar community. Every men of parayar are given blows and taken under the custody of police. Only few men are escaped into woods. At that time, women of this community took care of their family without the help of any men. Women are that powerful, they can take care of themselves. During this period, a boy died. The cremation process has to be taken care. All the rituals are done entirely by the women. Ladies decided to bring the boy’s father to see his son’s face for the last time. Group of ladies reached the woods at night,made the man to wear saree and brought him to graveyard. Before the sun shines, those ladies took him back to woods. The very next day, everyone spoke about this achievement of women because they themselves proved their ability.

“They decided that two women would go to the mandavam fields where the boy’s father was hiding. They would take a sari with them when they went. They would find him and fetch him home in the darkness of the night. They’d make him wear the sari, disguise himself as a woman, cover his head, and pretend to be a mourner attending the funeral. At the same time that evening, some others would go to the cemetery and prepare a grave for the burial.” (Bama pg 42)

Many dalit women who have faced tortures throughout the life has lifted up their hand and stood tall. They showed their bravery to the world. They can act on themselves without the help of men. But, men always want women to be dependent on them.

“Many dalit women, for who toil is their very life-breath, who lead vigorous lives inspite of all their weariness and anxieties have been a great inspiration.” (Bama pg 139)

After the incident of arrest of men, at night, the police again walked round and round. The next morning, the women continued to their routine work. The police were surprised and angry that the women are clever to handle their work without the help of men.

“The police were furious that the women were smart enough to continue working and taking care of their children even without their men.” (Bama pg 40)

Dalit women are such a powerful group. They can do what they wish without the help of men. But they are slaves in the hands of men. The days are yet to come to break every chain of this patriarchal society and spread their wings to fly on their own.
Work cited