

UNIT III (DRAMA)

ARAVAAAN

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

Summary

Aravaan is a character taken from the story of the Mahabharatha. Aravaan is the illicit son of Arjuna and a tribal girl Chitrakadhai. Aravaan's existence is not acknowledged by the Pandavas until the eve of the great war. Krishna advises the Pandavas that only human sacrifice would give them success on the battlefield. The sacrificial victim should be of noble descent and possess all virtues. Nobody knows a proper person until Krishna remembers Arjuna's son. Arjuna himself goes back to the forest to bring Aravaan 'home'. Krishna then convinces Aravaan of the importance of the sacrifice. In order to please his father Arjuna, Aravaan volunteers. His family asks him whether he needs anything in return. Aravaan expresses his wish to marry. But no one came forward to marry him. Again Krishna turned himself as a woman for that night as Aravaan's wife. The next day at dawn Aravaan is sacrificed.

In the final segment of the play the severed head of Aravaan addresses the audience. As Aravaan was given the boon, his severed head would be able to witness the Mahabharatha war.

Essay

The play Aravaan was first performed by Karuna Prasad of Moondram Arangu theatre group in 2004. The story of the play is taken from the great Indian epic and tells the story of Aravaan Arjuna's son by Ulupi. Arjuna married Ulupi the tribal princess during his travel. Aravaan is noted for his courage and love for his father. That's why he agreed to become the war sacrifice before the 18-day Mahabharata war began.

A strong-willed person alone can sacrifice his life. Here Aravaan a man of purity and valiant was made to sacrifice. On his last night alive Aravaan reminisces. He recollects that though born to Arjuna he was not acknowledged by Pandavas until the eve of the great war. Now he was being ennobled so that they could quench the thirsty earth with his blood to favour his royal father, the exploiter of his tribe. He reflects on how King Dridarashtra having blindfolded himself, had found the easy way out by not looking at such injustices around him and escaped into introspection. Blind to the horrors of war Aravaan also decides to blindfold himself. Blind to the world he is able to face himself more clearly. He decides to satisfy all his cravings to the fullest before he falls.

Aravaan is led away and sacrificed. The beheaded Aravaan returns head in hand. He hears lamentations. It is not his mother who weeps silently but Krishna. Aravaan wants to live again, somewhere, even as a blade of grass on a hill. Will someone not put his head and body together?

About the Author

S. Ramakrishnan is a well-known writer in Tamil literature. He is a full-time writer who works for enriching tradition and contemporary writing in a mystic and with vast imagination. He has written and published 9 novels, 20 collections of short stories, 3 plays, Children's literature and translation. His short stories and articles have been

translated and published in English, Malayalam, Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada and French.

His novel Upa Pandavam, written after a deep research into Mahabharata was selected as the best novel in Tamil. It was widely well received by the readers. He is the first writer in Tamil to have created a broad circle of readers for his columns. The compilation book of the articles, Thunai Ezhuthu, has created a new history by selling almost a lakh of copies.

His short stories are noted for their modern story telling style in Tamil. He received Sahitya Akademi award for his novel Sanjaaram.

Short Questions

1 Why was Aravaan selected to war sacrifice?

2 Who was the reason for Sacrifice?

3 How did Krishna help.?

4 Who is Aravaan?

5 Who weeps after Aravaan's sacrifice?

UNIT IV (SHORT STORY)

THE WEED

AMRITA PRITAM

Summary

“ The Weed” story explores the theme which is the vulnerability of women who fall prey to the lure of men, symbolised through the metaphorical weed, and how males exploit the females for sensual pleasure and discard them. In this story ,the narrator Bibi describes Angoori, the younger character and the new bride of the old servant of a neighbour’s neighbour’s neighbour. The narrator takes care in her relation of events to establish that Angoori is a joyous and cheerful and attractive young woman recently married to a much older husband and is very traditional in her beliefs.

Angoori has been taught that it is sinful for a village woman like her to know how to read. she also believes that it is a great sin for a woman to fall in love with her husband except through the intervention of a father. The acceptable tradition is that a girl child when five or six’ adore someone's feet’. she is directed by her father's wishes because he has placed money and flowers at the man's or boy’s feet. In this way the father decides to whom the girl shall marry. There are some exceptions also. Some girls who have love affairs or thought to have eaten of a mysterious “wild weed” which has been placed in a sweet or paan and given them to eat. Angoori has seen a girl in her village in such a situation and she says that the girl sang sad songs a lot and never combed her hair and can behaved in a different manner. Angoori regards this as a very unfortunate situation and is happy that she is married to Prabhati the old man who does not always live at her home because he is a servant and eats at his Employers’ household.

A few days later the narrator finds Angoori's odd behaviour and the younger woman asks to be taught to read and to write her name. The narrator makes a guess that seems to be correct that it is because Angoori wants to write letters to someone and to read letters back. The narrator asks Angoori whether it is not a sin for her to learn reading and writing..Angoori does not answer but when Bibi sees her later, Angoori singing a sad song and nearly crying as she had told Bibi about the other girl in her village had done. Bibi further asks Angoori if this was a song the girl in her village had sung and she accepts it. She tries to force Angoori to sing the song to her but Angoori refuses firmly. Instead she recites the words. The narrator finds that because Angoori’s husband does not eat at home and the nightwatchman Ram Tara who has been taking tea with milk as a regular guest at Angoori and Prabhati’s house as is the tradition has been away on a visit, the girl has had not only not much food but also not even any tea with milk.

The narrator remembers about Ram Tara a good- looking, quick-limbed and full of jokes. He had a way of talking with smiles trembling faintly at the corner of his lips.

Essay

The short story, The Weed begins with the marriage of Angoori ,the protagonist of the story .She is married as a second wife to Prabhati , a widower who came to his

village for the funeral of his first wife. Prabhati was deeply worried and at this time Angoori's father approached and offered Angoori to Prabhati as a new wife. Angoori was a sweet young lady with a dark complexion but her husband was just opposite to her. Prabhati is a servant of the neighbour's neighbour. Even though Angoori got married to Prabhati they had to wait for five long years because of the tender age and her mother's paralytic attack. Finally after five years Prabhati was invited to take away his new bride. When Prabhati's employer protested in arranging of food for Angoori, Prabhati assured that Angoori would manage her own. Angoori's new life in city started. In the beginning she hesitated to come outside. She used to wear Purdah and stayed indoor always. Gradually, she began to use jewellery and also began to show them off as almost all young ladies. Amrita Pritam used to talk to her and she could understand Angoori's love for jewels, anklet with hundreds of bells etc. Now Angoori began to see the outside world. Amrita could understand many things about village through their conversation especially superstitious beliefs about education, love and so on. In village, it is believed that education is a sin to girls, not to men or city women.

There is a strange belief about love in the village is that a wild weed is the matter of love between two persons. The narrator came to know that marriages are done according to the elders wish not of the girl. Angoori also adds that her mother warned her not to take pan or betel leaf from anyone because weed is a matter of love.

At the end of the story Angoori asks Amrita to teach her how to read like all other city women. At this time Amrita ridiculously asked her what she wants to write and also won't she be sinning if she learns writing. One day when Amrita approached her under the neem tree, after her usual afternoon nap. She was sad, sitting and singing a love song. Now Angoori realised that Ram Tara, a young energetic, night watch man betrayed her by that wild weed. And now she has fallen in love with him. Angoori Prabhati and Ram Tara usually take their cup of tea together. Angoori cried that she has never taken sweets from him; not even betel but she couldn't finish. Tears rolled down.

This story portrays a superstitious custom and a patriarchal setup in Indian society. Angoori, a village girl imbibed all the traditional superstition while growing up. This story tells that education is a sin to village girls not to men or city women. This illustrates the Indian face of patriarchy and it also depicts that in olden days women had to stay in doors and they had no right to go outside the world and they had any rights to wear their ornaments also. They had to cover their body under a Purdah not only from men but also from women also. This story also portrays the wide gap between rustic and city life. When Angoori starts her life in city she moved all her barriers and beliefs which were in her life. The story also portrays the village belief about love. They used to believe that girls fall in love only because of a wild weed. Angoori says this to Amrita and about her friend who falls in love with the boy because of this wild weed. She assured that love comes only through this weed not from anything else. When she falls in love with Ram Tara she accepts this as real. Village people believe that without a wild weed love is impossible. And they believe love is something unreal or unnatural. This story also portrays the marriage set up in the village. In village, the father decides the husband for his daughter not by herself.

About the Author

Amrita Pritam (31 August 1919--31 October 2005) an Indian novelist, essayist and the first prominent female Punjabi poet. She also wrote in Hindi. She has produced more

than 100 books of poetry, fiction, biographies, essays, a collection of Punjabi folk songs and an autobiography that were all translated into several Indian and foreign languages. People from both India and Pakistan borders loved her.

Short Questions

- 1 What was sin according to Angoori?
- 2 Why did Prabhati marry Angoori as a second wife?
- 3 What is the superstition in the village?
- 4 Why does Angoori wear a Purdah?
- 5 What role does the weed play in the story?

THIS TOO SHALL PASS

P.E SONKAMBLE

Summary

The story exposed many facets of the Indian social system and the social and economic injustice nurtured by it. This story depicted a picture before the readers heart-rending picture of the plight of tender Pallya due to the evils of casteism. The young boy's physical and mental conditions could be understood from his words. He used to do odd jobs till he was completely exhausted. His life made the reader not only restless but also kept the protest alive and aroused a strong dislike for the unjust society. Casteism created a desert in the social life of Pralhad and Pof Sonkamble successfully rendered its variety in his autobiography. The village did not value Pralhad. It did not treat him as a human being. There was no love, warmth or affection for him. Yet Pralhad forged ahead for education bare footed and on an empty stomach. He confronted all hard ships, bore thorn-pricks, on his way and endured whatever came in his way to seek education with a desire to improve his lot and position.

Essay

In an autobiography Atvaninche Pakshi from which the short story This Too Shall Pass has been selected tells about the wounded psyche of a young boy from a backward class. The story depicts about a young boy Parlhada. He has two sisters. Dhondiba is married to the elder sister and Kishan to the younger.

After the death of the boy's parents he lived with Dhondiba. He was humble and looked after the camels belonging to a high caste people.

His brother-in-law Dhondiba earned a meagre amount and the sister found it difficult to run the family. She was helpless and she was unable to take care of her brother. When his sister was beaten at chera, he would at once go to Jagalpur. Then there the younger brother-in-law Kishan would also not welcome him happily. Pralhad was scared of him. At times he would remain at the temple instead of going to his sister's house. The sister would come and take him to the house. Sometimes he would go back to Chera without going to his sister's house at all.

A strange incident happened after Parlhada passed his fourth. His younger sister was brought to the elder sister's family for delivery. They used to keep the oil lamp lit for the whole night as it was a thatched hut. One night the lamp set the house on fire. The fire was uncontrollable and the house turned into ashes. Everybody started gossiping about the fire. Some were sympathetic towards them and came forward to offer clothes for the children and pulses.

The elder brother-in-law was very stubborn and was not ready to do any other work. Some asked the sister not to send Pralhad to school. They also suggested him to go for work. Pralhad also thought if he went to work it would be of a help to his sister.

The sister got him employed. He went to work at Kishan Rao Patil's place for Rs 2.50 per month. He was offered food at times. He liked the food offered at Kishan Rao Patil's which was different from his sisters. Later on they began to make him eat closer to the piles of cow dung cakes or near where the children sat to relieve

themselves. Pralhad felt that he could have better gone to school. It was difficult for him to survive there. He was made to work hard. He noticed a few school boys who enquired about his position.

Pralhad thought that if he had his parents they would have brought his sister Mukta home for delivery and his sister Sakhu's home would have spared. The young boy was overburdened with work at Patil's house. His elder brother-in-law was angry with his sister for having sent him to work. The next day the young boy Pralhad did not go for work. Patil came home and asked why Pralhad had not turned to work. He used to go for work and to his bad time there was no school in the village. One day his brother-in-law at Jagalpur came and invited him to work at his shop. He told them that they have opened a new shop. But his aunt and the elder sister asked him again and again not to go to Jagalpur but he did not heed to what they said. Days passed by and again his position was bad. The brother-in-law did not treat him properly. He sent him to work at Appa Rao's farm. The young Pralhad thought of his sister and aunt who advised him a lot. Despite their warning he went to Jagalpur and now he was not able to run away from the place. He felt that his condition was either the frying pan or the fire he would say to himself as This too shall pass.

About the Author

P.E. Sonkamble is a representative example of the Marathi dalit autobiography of the period. His Athavaninche Pakshi is said to be the first dalit autobiography. It contains the memories of Pallya (Pralhad) who after the death of his parents for sustenance he lived his life with the support of his elder sister 'Akka.' Sonkamble has not let his mature adult and civilized personality interfere with the simple innocent and childish personality of Pallya or Pralhad.

Short Questions

- 1 How did Pralhad work in Appa Rao's fields?
- 2 What did the elder sister advise when Pralhad left with the younger brother-in-law?
- 3 Was the young boy happy after his parents died?
- 4 What did the neighbors do when the hut turned into ashes?
- 5 Where was the young boy served food at the Patil's house?

THE REUNION

VOLGA

Summary

Volga's Liberation of Sita is the revisioning of the epic Ramayana through Sita's eyes. Sita raises her sons by herself in Valmiki's ashram. She has been abandoned by her husband Rama, king of Ayodhya. Rama rescued Sita from the king of Lanka Ravana but isolated her. Ravana abducted Sita after Rama cut off Ravana's sister Surpanakha's nose and ears.

Sita lives alone with her two sons in the forest. She loves the peace and beauty and wildness of the deep forest. Sita is not afraid of wandering in the forest and seeking her own adventures. These adventures form the stories in her narrative of liberation. Sita depicts about the past which is full of pain and confusion. She also tells about Rama's abandonment and also about a stubborn confidence in his virtue and love.

As she meets one woman after another the minor women characters of Valmiki's Ramayana Surpanakha, Akalya, Renuka and Urmila, she questions her husband and his dharma, her own identity and complexities of the ideas of truth and fidelity. She expresses that she does not need anyone even her husband Rama.

Her first adventure the story called 'The Reunion' takes Sita to the 'demonness' Surpanakha the sister of Ravana who has circled around ever since Rama damaged her for declaring her love for him. Sita thinks that she and Surpanakha are similar in certain ways. Though they belong to different kingdoms and races they have been spoiled by Rama's love. Sita finds Surpanakha in a forest home where she has cultivated a beautiful garden. Surpanakha conquered her anger and avoided taking vengeance. She teaches Sita that joy need not depend on a man or anyone at all.

In the end then Sita chooses to hand over her sons as Rama's heirs and to leave him. She liberates herself while he remains changed.

Essay

The Liberation of Sita written by the well-known Telugu writer Volga and translated into English by T. Vijayakumar and C. Vijayasree tells of a very different heroine from that of Valmiki's and Rama's Ramayana.

In the Liberation of Sita, Sita encounters with Surpanakha, Ahalya, Renuka and Urmila. Her meeting with these women forms a series of dialogues. Their voices are heard by Sita again and again and from her own inner voice finally gained strength. Their voices, speaking to one another, reinforce a spirit of sisterhood and contrast from the Ramayana of war and rivalry.

A woman from demon clan working at the orders of a brother learns to love herself the way she is. Surpanakha's face, being disfigured by Lakshmana led her into discovering her that there is more than one way in which a woman could love beyond her physical beauty through her creations of art, her belongingness with nature and just realizing her work as a complete individual. Surpanakha while being lonely in the concrete world, was content through the true realization of the self.

The story The Reunion begins with Sita waiting for her two children Lava and Kusa. They used to go to forest daily and return with wildflowers in the evening. Sita was not afraid because her two sons knew the forest very well. But she did not know

the reason for the delay. Sita's heart was filled with an anxiety. The two boys returned Lava gave his mother the variety of flowers he brought in. The two sons were proud of their find. They looked pretty. Sita was eager to know the place from where they got the flowers. Lava and Kusa replied her that they had found a beautiful garden and added that they had not seen such a one earlier. They also told that the owner was ugly to see. Sita understood that she was none other than Surpanakha and asked her sons not to comment on anyone's appearance. Memories of the past confronted Sita. She thought of Surpanakha on the day on which she came to the ashram and the blood shed. Now Sita wished to see Surpanakha and she was in a doubt whether she would be angry or not. Sita went with her two sons on the next day to meet Surpanakha.

Sita went closer to Surpanakha's garden and called Surpanakha. But she was not able to recognise Sita and she enquired about her. On the reply given by Sita made Surpanakha unbelievable. The appearance of Sita made her to think like that because earlier Sita used to wear jewels but now only flowers. Sita told her that Rama has abandoned her. Surpanakha could only see peace and dignity on Sita's face. There was no trace of distress.

Sita expressed her grief for what had happened in Surpanakha's life. A feeling of friendship sprouted in their hearts and thrilled them. Surpanakha told about her past life and how she overcame the sufferings in her life to Sita. Both Surpanakha and Sita conversed with each and knew about each other. When Surpanakha enquired about Sita's position, she replied that she was not able to discharge the duties as a Queen but she could at least give the heirs to Ramarajya. Sita also added that her sons were not aware of Rama as their father. Sita finished that she would take refuge in her mother, Bhudevi. We would become the daughter of Mother Earth. Their conversation stopped as Sita's children returned. Surpanakha gave the children ripe fruits and they ate with relish.

Lava and Kusa enquired about Surpanakha on their way back to the ashram. Sita replied that she was her dear friend. She also told her sons that they would come to know about everything when time comes and asked them not to forget the path to the beautiful garden.

About the Author

Popuri Lalita Kumari, popularly known by her pen name Volga, is a Telugu poet and a well known writer, born on 27, Nov 1950 in Guntur. She is famous for her feminist literary works, novels, articles, poems portray women with modern, progressive ideologies. The Reunion' story tells of a different Sita from Rama's Sita. It is not a simple retelling of the Ramayana, but reliving of it and a new bringing to life.

Short Questions

1. What did Sita do after she was rescued by Rama?
2. Who abducted Sita?
3. Did Lava and Kusa know about Rama?
4. Did Sita meet Surpanakha? How did Surpanakha react?
5. Why did Rama abandon Sita?

UNIT V (FICTION)

KOOGAI

CHO .DHARMAN

Cho.Dharman's Koogai is the best example for the unique narration of the region-Karaisal region that includes three districts of Southern TamilNadu.The novel weaves a vibrant tapestry of human conditions and dalit oppression.The narrative includes descriptions of little traditions, folk deities, animist lore, aboriginal beliefs and faith in magic. The stories of the main characters along with the branch stories form a basic part of the novel. Koogai was selected by the Canadian Tamil Literary Association for its annual Best Award .

Koogai is a nocturnal bird almost like an owl but not an owl. It is considered ominous. The novel Koogai spans three generations in the life of Cheeni ,a dalit Pallar in the post- independence period. Koogai is gigantic and ugly and not interested in changing its place. It uses its strength only when it hunts for its prey. It is blind as a bat during the day and helpless when it is hit by other smaller birds .It tries to hide itself in the thick branches of the peepal tree or in the hollows of tree trunks.

Traditionally, people of Tamilnadu have looked upon the Koogai bird with contempt and considered seeing a Koogai or even hearing its hoots as ill-omen .Koogai becomes a suitable symbol of the dalit community that continues to be insulted and harassed by the upper castes.

The protagonist Cheeni considers Koogai as a symbol of faith and hope. He believes that it was a Koogai that helped and saved him during his hard times .Therefore Cheeni builds a temple for the bird under the Peepal tree .Cheeni believes that it is a bird's blessings that bring them good luck. The kind hearted land owner Nataraj Iyer decides to distribute his lands to the palace on lease when he shifts to Chennai. They work hard and harvest a rich yield.Due to Nataraja Iyer's benevolence, the Pallars regain their self-confidence, refused to be bullied by others. Division comes with the conversion of some dalits to Christianity. The new converts act superior and discard their own brethren. The non- converts want to build a temple more costly than the new church that has been built with funds from foreign missionaries. According to some people the Koogai temple is ridiculous and they want to build a new temple with powerful God or Goddess. Where as Cheeni worries that if a temple is destroyed then it would lead them to destruction. But the villagers plan to build a temple in the place of Koogai temple. Cheeni is not able to bear this and totally leaves the village with his wife and child. As there is no unity among the various sections of the dalit community once again self-esteem is loot. The people who once tilled and toiled in the fields of their masters now break stones in the quarries of their masters .

Summary

Cho.Dharman's novel Koogai tells about the life of Cheeni.The first part of the story covers the life of two young dalits who plan to eat in a hotel nearby .Instead of taking the assigned place given to dalits they dare to enjoy their meal with the upper caste men.Muthaiya Pandian ,an upper caste man,punishes them and Cheeni the elder and saviour of the Pallar community rescues them .Muthaiya Pandian behaves like a

dictator and decides the fate of the dalits in the village .He exploits the couple Sanmugam and Karupi. Exploitation of the upper caste people pushes the oppressed to protest and break the bondages when Muthaiya Pandian takes advantage of sanmugam's daughter ,sanmugam no longer tolerates it burns him in his hut.

The Landlord Venkatrama Iyer decides to lease the land to the Pallar community because they are the ones who worked in his field since his forefathers time. The upper caste men oppose this fearing that they might lose their's if the Pallars are provided with land for cultivation. Ayyanaar and Appusuppan slay some uppercaste men. Appusuppan escapes from the police to Kovilpatti where he meets Peichi a destitute woman who accomodates him in her house.They share each other's past. She introduces him to her daughter. The zamindar in kovilpatti starts to give trouble to the dalits by lodging false complaints saying that they had sown thorn seeds in his land .As a punishment he forces them to remove the weeds without giving wages. In this situation Peichi and Appusuppan rescue them with the help of Nataraja Iyer.so they become the heroes and formidable enemies to the Zamin and the police. They fabricate a false case against Appusuppan and send him to jail. Peichi hears the Koogai, a bird of the night hooting. She takes that a good omen for revival.It is Cheeni who brings a new life to the Pallars by acquiring the land for cultivation. But his people start to hate him because of their improved lifestyle. They also gradually lose faith in the Koogai god. They plan to destroy the Koogai temple and replace it with Kali temple. Cheeni takes the Koogai statue and starts his journey into the magical land. At the end of the novel some boys drag the powerless Koogai on the road. This comes to signify the exploited dalits and their past glorious history .The Koogai once reigned in the night with its nocturnal power. But now during the day its powerlessness makes even insignificant birds to attack Koogai.The hierarchy of caste is present in the novel.Peichi who lives in subramaniapuram surrounded by dalits is Kali Devar's wife. Her daughter Maari is happily married to a Thevar boy. Krishna Parayar has converted to Christianity and is named Peduru.The protagonist Cheeni who belongs to Pallar community mocks at that name.

About the Author

Cho Dharman was born in 1953 and grew up in Urulaikudi, a small village around Thuthukudi district of Southern TamilNadu. Dharman's maternal uncle Poomani, a leading figure in the Tamil Nadu Progressive writer's movement who introduced Dharmanto the joys of reading.He is one of the few writers from the Pallar community.He has authored nine books,won several awards.He won Sahitya Akademi award in 2019 under Tamil language categorizing for his novel Sool.Dharman's first collection of stories ,Eeram was published in 1992.A second collection of stories ,Sogavanam appeared in 1997 and his collected works ,Cho.Dharman Kathaigal in 2002."Vanakumaran" was published in 2004.Dharman's first novel ,Dhuurvai was selected by the Sahitya Akademi for translation into Hindi and English

Short Questions

1 Whose life is described in the novel Koogai?

2 The protagonist considers Koogai as a symbol of what?

3 Why did the protagonist leave the village?

4 What happened to the Koogai temple?

5 What did the villagers plan to build in the place of Koogai temple?

KARUKKU

BAMA

Summary

Bama's karukku is an autobiography. It is not about a single person but her community. Karukku is both fiction and an autobiography. In this unusual work a young woman, Bama looks back on her life from a moment of personal crisis as she leaves the religious order to which she has belonged for seven long years. She reminisces her childhood in her village through a series of poignant memories and reflections. When she left the seminary, Bama was struggling to find her own identity. She examined the simple faith with which she grew up as a Roman Catholic and restates it in the light of her experience as a dalit and a woman.

Bama focuses the vulnerable condition of dalit people and they are victims of circumstances owing to their poor, economic background. They remain landless agricultural labourers who are politically powerless. She also focuses on other major problems such as untouchability, discrimination in the new religion Christianity.

Karukku is concerned with the single issue of caste oppression within the Catholic Church and its institutions, and presents Bama's life as a process of lonely self-discovery. Karukku stands as a means of strength to the multitudes whose identities have been destroyed and denied.

The central character faces nothing but humiliation due to caste and class discrimination. She carries firewood, works as a labourer at farms; and does menial jobs. The protagonist faces the problems of caste and creed, mainly untouchability from the beginning of her life to the places where ever she went.

The novel ends with the protagonist's moving to Madurai where she tries to get a job with the help of her friend. She remains a spinster and learns to live alone through her painful experiences.

Essay

Bama's autobiography entitled Karukku can be understood as a Dalit metaphor. Karukku means palmyra leaves which with their serrated edges on both sides are like double-edged swords. It is used to thatch the roofs of Paraya huts. The seared edges of the leaf hurt one who handles it. The pain experienced then is negligible compared to the wounds inflicted in the society. Karukku is the first autobiography to appear in Tamil. The narrative shows how Bama has grown from a village girl with an acute sensibility to a woman disillusioned and later energized by the odds she faced. Though she received higher education and was lucky to go out of a village to pursue a career in teaching she feels the same pain as any dalit living in the dark world of the village. She aims at the liberation of Dalits through her writing. Bama emphasizes that Dalits should break free from the socially constructed pseudo prison in order to fight against the forces of oppression and segregation.

Bama faced many obstacles in the process finding her identity. Caste oppression was prevalent everywhere even in the Catholic church also. The Tamil word for the Marathi dalit is called Taazhtapattor which translates into oppressed or downtrodden. Hard work is part and parcel of dalit life. Caste to her was her identity. It is from this state that Bama wants the community to liberate themselves. She attempts to awaken the Dalit consciousness through the medium of writing.

About the Author

Bama was born in 1958 as Faustina Mary Fathima Rani in a Roman Catholic family at Puthupatti. She is also known as Faustina Soosairaj, a Tamil Dalit feminist, teacher and a novelist. *Karukku* (1992) brought her fame.

Bama, the pen name of a Tamil dalit woman from a Roman Catholic family has published three works. *Karukku* 1992 an autobiography, *Sangati* 1994 a novel and *kisumbukkaran*, 1996 a collection of short stories. *Karukku* is an autobiographical novel which gives an account of joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. Bama wrote the novel in a dialect of Tamil that is unique to her community.

When the novel was published Bama was excluded from her village for portraying it in poor light and was not allowed to enter it for next seven months. But then *Karukku*, won the Crossword Book Award in 2000. It has since become a text book in various courses like Marginal Literature, Literature in Translation, Autobiography, Feminist Literature, Subaltern Literature and Dalit Literature across many universities.

Short Questions

- 1 What is the meaning of *Karukku*?
- 2 Who is the protagonist of *Karukku*?
- 3 Why did Bama face obstacles?
- 4 What kind of problems did the protagonist face?
- 5 Who motivated the protagonist to study well?