PREFACE

Simon de Beauvoir’s statement, “One is not born a woman, one becomes one”, has relevance in India where religious conventions and social taboos dictate and inhibit woman’s individuality. The behavioural patterns for the Indian women are pre-determined by caste, in which one is born, and the values and traditions of a culture that upholds archetypal women images. The male domination in woman’s life is a natural phenomenon in a patriarchal society and Indian women has stressed the need for women to break free from the fetters of their traditional position. It is beyond controversy, the reason for this deplorable, disgusting and dangerous situation has been unlimited, ultimate powers resting in the hands of men by the patriarchal culture.

Bama valued as undoubtedly one of the Tamil Dalit writers, voices not only the feelings and emotions of Dalit woman, but also the sociological and psychological troubles that encounter and lacerate woman’s heart. She highlights the social evils that shake the very bedrock of our society. Her deep insight regarding Dalit women’s problems and dilemmas, help in depicting a natural ill favoured, life of an Indian Dalit woman. All the incidents that one comes across in her works seem to have been culled from actual life experiences. Her obsession to reveal truth has achieved great recognition. Her works never miss the crusading spirit for the welfare of the humanity and sympathy for the alienation of human suffering and the longing of a desire to erase the difference between the genders that crumble and crush the ancient customs that India was praised for. Bama makes use of her gift of writing a means to expose the social evils that encounter the realms of the Indian Dalit home.
Her characters are from all walks of life, pronouncing that the very feminine gender is at stake. Within this framework of life and marriage, she shows that Dalit woman in general desire - a pond of love and a penny of recognition. One can clearly understand that Bama does not create a woman’s world but longs to mirror the real world as it exists now. The ever nagging question, the question that remained a riddle is, why, a Dalit woman has to suffer insult, injustice, abuse tyranny, discrimination, marginalisation, rape, sexual assault, and divorce without any solid reason and for no fault of hers. Bama, while delineating the women of the patriarchal culture shows how Dalit women were ill-treated and underestimated, even, while performing their selfless services. Bama by the dint of her talent as a writer and her preference of option to depict only the reality has won her the recognition as one of the first and excellent Tamil Dalit Novelists of this era. She makes use of her pen to protest the prevailing and facing injustice, social inequalities, which occur due to the erosion of social values. It is relevant and apt to quote on her contribution to the fiction world and also her option of themes. The central themes of the works of Bama is an urge for social equality and the acquisition of knowledge and education by the Dalit masses for a decent living as well as for a respectable place in the society. She strongly believes that only through education and inter-caste marriage is a change in society is possible.

Bama presents the Indian Dalit wife in the customary role of Sita-Savithri archetypal pattern and thus expose how women are trained from birth to learn and accept their triple marginalized status.
There is a tradition, perhaps not only in India, that woman should not be worried, that the best way to ensure this is to keep them as far as possible in ignorance -- certain domains belong to men alone and Indian Dalit women learn early not to encroach (1955: 117).

Bama writes about Dalit women in her novels in her capacity as a Dalit woman herself. She makes it evident that writing from the margin – the act of writing for a Dalit woman is a political act. She seeks to subvert dominant perception, representation and articulation of Dalit women’s lives. In Bama’s writings, there is a close link between education, writing and empowerment that Bama posits as tools that could liberate women of her caste from leading a degraded existence. Dalit literary writing is a mode of activism that seeks to free Dalits from the clutches of dominant ideology and casteist oppression. Her fiction argues for an activist intervention in the context of Dalit empowerment in Tamil Nadu. She believes that, “Reading and writing are political practice” for a Dalit. She likes to foreground Dalits resistance to oppression rather than merely records their victimization on account of their caste.

The thesis makes an attempt to highlight the issues involves in the Dalit Texts particularly with reference to the works of Bama. It is observed in the process of research that Dalit literature is no longer emotive expressions of pain and suffering. Bama being liberative in nature, talks about the Dalit lifestyle, ceremonies, rituals and rites that from the background of their expressions. They also intertwined with their real life experiences. These literatures have to survive against distortion and misrepresentation by market forces, both by the mediators within and outside India.