

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact universally acknowledged that Dalit consciousness and literature emanating from this consciousness are differences created by religion. Although, religion is an important constituent of human life, yet its impact on human beings over the years and due to the development of science and technology is much too different from what it was expected. By religion, we mean a person's faith in the ultimate truth from which (s)he draws inspiration to work for the society as well as to enhance the moral and ethical ways of life. But today, for being a religious fellow it is enough for a person to believe in some particular deity, perform some rituals and fight and kill others in the name of God. Swami Vivekananda has rightly asserted that modern man's thinking has become narrow as he says:

So we find that in almost every religion these are the three primary things which we have in the worship of God- forms or symbols, names, God-men. All religions have these, but you have find that they want to fight with each other. One says, my name is the only name; my form is the only form; and my God- men are the only God-men the world; yours are simply myths. (*The Complete Works* 42)

Though, the above notions about religion are absolutely wrong, yet most of the established religions do strongly believe in this notion which, ultimately, leads to dogmatism, limited vision, narrow religiosity and above all casteism, which is the mother of all evils. In order to escape the narrow walls and also to attain self identity people choose the path of conversion. The intent and purpose of religion was *Vasudhav- Kutumbkum*, that the entire Universe is the emanation of the Absolute Reality and in this sense all men and women, animals and other living beings are inter- related to each other like brothers and sisters. But with the

passage of time, the meaning of religion has been diluted, violated and corrupted. Instead of talking about happiness for all, a particular religion expects happiness for its own fellowmen. Religion should have been a uniting force but it has shown its horrible face as a mammoth of division and differences among people.

India is a country of so many religions, caste and creeds. All religions have the right to live and progress the way they like. Durga Das Basu in his book, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, also notes down from the Article 25-28 of the *Constitution of India* that, India under the Constitution, is a “Secular State”, i.e., a State which observes an attitude of *neutrality and impartiality towards all religions*. A secular State is founded on the idea that the State is concerned with the relation between man and man and not with the relation between man and God which is matter for individual conscience. The attitude of impartiality towards all religions is secured by the Constitution by several provisions.

Some important religions of India are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. Each religion has a different philosophy around which its own principles revolve. Almost all these religions have their own theories of origin of the Universe. It will be in the fitness of things to touch upon these religions in this thesis while tracing the history of Dalits in India.

Hindus have divided the entire community into four castes- Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Shudra. According to the *Rigveda*, these four castes were created by God from the four parts of his own macrocosmical body. The Hymn in the *Rigveda* says; “The Brahmin (priestly class) was his mouth, both his arms were the Rajanya (all Kshatriya the warrior), His thighs became the Vaishyas (traders); from his feet the Shudra (serving caste) was produced (qtd.

in *Poisoned Bread* xix). On the basis of this hymn, orthodox Hindus believe that the four fold division of Indian society exists from the earlier times. All those human beings who did not fit into that fourfold structure were considered outcaste, outside the purview of God's body (qtd. in Massey 12).

The text of the *Rigveda*, written about 1000 B.C.E, was followed by the Upanishdic Vedic period from around 800 B.C.E, until the end of the 6th B.C.E. Certain references in Upanishads deepened the predicament of Dalits. For example, in *Chandogya Upanishad*, Dalits are called the Chandala (outcaste) and are compared to a dog or a swine. The place of all the four castes is evident in the following shaloka:

Those who are of pleasant conduct will enter a pleasant womb either the womb of a Brahmin or the womb of a Kshatriya or the womb of a Vaishyas. But those who are of stinking conduct here... they will enter a stinking womb either the womb of a dog or the womb of swine or the womb of a Chandala. (qtd. in Massey 107)

The above verse makes clear how the caste system in India in the prehistoric times functioned to the degradation of Dalits. As the text shows, the womb of an upper caste woman is described as "pleasant" whereas that of an outcaste is "stinking" one. It also indicates that one's caste status was determined by the conduct of a previous incarnation. Hence, the notion of caste system in Hindu society was established by birth.

After the Upanishdic period comes the period of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which falls between 600 and 500 B.C.E. This period shows the further deterioration of the Dalits. The *Ramayana* shows that only three upper castes were allowed to do tapasya (meditation). A story of *Ramayana* goes like this: "When a Shudra named, Samvuka undertook tapasya in order to

attain divinity a fifteen year old Brahmin boy died as a result. The father of the boy complained to Rama, who, after learning the circumstances of the death, went in search of the Shudra and on meeting him asked:

Tell me in which caste have you been born! I am Rama, son of Dasaratha. Out of Curiosity I have asked you this question . . . Are you a Brahmin, Kshatriya or a Shudra? The ascetic replied, “Oh King! I am born of the Shudra caste. I want to attain divinity by such penance . . . I will not tell lies. I am a Shudra by caste and my name is Samvuka”. As soon as the ascetic uttered these words lord Rama drew his sword and severed Samvuka head. The moment the Shudra ascetic was killed, God restored the Brahmin boy to life. (qtd. in Massey 14)

In the times of *Mahabharata*, the condition of dalits got much too degraded as per the anecdote about Eklavya. Eklavya was an indigenous boy, who because of being a Shudra, could not be initiated to Guru Drona. He made a statue of Gurudrona and started doing practice in archery before the statue. When Guru Drona came to know that Eklavya was a better archer than his dear disciple Arjuna, he demanded the right thumb of Eklavya as gurudakshina. In this way, he snatched his power of archery by this trick. The point is that low castes and the dalits in the *Mahabharata* times were denied the right to education. The *Bhagvad Gita* establishes the belief in four castes insisting that these were created by Lord Krishna himself. In chapter eighteen of the *Bhagvad Gita*, Lord Krishna advises that the members of each caste should follow faithfully the duties prescribed for them. The shaloka runs like this: “The duties of Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishyas as also of Shudras, O scorcher of force are distributed according to the gunas born of their own nature (Chapter 18, shaloka 41)

After the *Bhagvad Gita*, another literary source which sheds light on the downtrodden state of dalits is the ordinance of Manu called *Manusmriti*. Manu was the philosopher of ancient India who gave a code which has been termed as 'Varna System'. According to this system, Indian society has been divided into four castes- Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas, and Shudra. It is believed that Brahma, the creator of the Universe, created a macrocosmical man having a mouth, two arms, one stomach and two feet. The mouth of Brahma was called Brahmin, his arms were Kshatriya, and his stomach was Vaishyas and his feet (including the other lower parts of human body) were called Shudras. Manu divided these parts into Varna System (*Manu Smriti*). In the beginning, all the four parts were regarded as integrals of Brahma but in the historic period, the code of Varna came to be misinterpreted and entire weight of human body fell on shudra, so that by and by they got 'crushed', and in the Modern times they are known by the word 'Dalit'.

The second important religion in India is Islam. The basic tenets of Islam is that God is one, without form and shape. Islam is not affected by any caste and creed and all those who have faith in one 'Allah' are brothers and sisters. All people, big or small are supposed to live together in the name of God Absolute. Theoretically, there are no differences of any kind in Islam but in practise, with the passage of time, many differences have crept in. The social laws in Islam are very strict and it has a different law, called Mohammadan law in India.

The concept of dalits as exploited or ground down people should not have existed in Islam but it has been seen that in the Islamic society the feeling of the low and the high does exist. The low class people are made to work only as cleaners and some carry human refuse on their heads. There are a lot many class differences among Mohammadns. There are quite a few

separate denominations in Islam such as Shia or Sunni. An altercation between these denominations is well known to the entire world.

Another religion which was founded by Guru Nanak Dev about 500 years ago is Sikhism. This religion believes in one Absolute God who is the doer of all actions. He is shapeless and is called Nirankar. He is the only truth, the knowledge of which may be found in *GuruGrant*, the only holy book of the Sikhs. The followers of the Sikhism do believe in Miri (materialism) and Peeri (spiritualism) and regularly visits their Gurudwars for the worship of their God

Since Sikhism is a part of Hinduism the evil of casteism also entered into Sikhism and nowadays, Sikhs are also divided on the basis of their castes and therefore, untouchability does exist in Sikhism. The low class untouchables among Sikhs are called Mazbhi Sikhs. People of other caste do not have their social relations with the people of Mazbhi caste. D.Murali Manohar highlights this reality and says, “Chura Sikhs were called Mazbhi Sikhs and were generally kept at a distance by other Sikhs, despite being scrupulous in their observances as well as giving up polluting work” (14). At one point of time Babasaheb [Ambedkar] announced his choice of Sikhism but when the things could not materialise he changed his opinion. (Jeffrelot)

There is yet another major Religion in India after Hinduism. It is known as Christianity. It became popular among Indians because of the British rule in the country. The British had a tough with Indians in the governance of the country. They were convinced that the people of India are religious at heart and it is difficult for them to rule over the Indians with their dominating indigenous religion. They started popularising Christianity among the people. They gave a lot of allurements to them to convert into Christianity. Christian Missionaries cited illustrations from the *Bible* to prove that Christianity is a democratic religion and people of all

castes are welcomed. The moment they join Christianity their sins will be washed in the blood of Christ. A famous quotation from the *Bible* is sufficient to attract low caste Indians to get conversions:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge but to be its saviour (John 3, verse 16-17).

People thought that in Hinduism one has to go to God, but in Christianity God comes down on the Earth to love people and save them from their sins. On account of such verses in the Bible, to many downtrodden people in India who were fed up with the caste system got conversions into Christianity even Bama's parents got conversions (33)

Christianity was an alluring religion for Ambedkar to join but he thought that becoming a Christian would not solve the problems of the Dalits and it will swell only the population of Christians in India. Murali Manohar opines, "Perhaps this was envisaged by Dr. Ambedkar. That is why he did not consider Christianity to convert himself". (34)

One of the most modern religions of India is Buddhism which revolves around the religious practices of Lord Buddha, who sacrificed everything at home including his royal hood in order to know the truth of the world and of God. Lord Buddha was an enlightened one and hundreds and thousands of disciples accepted monkhood and a new religion got started which, by and by, spread through the entire world over. The great king Ashoka was also a Buddhist convert who followed Buddha's eight fold path.

The religion of Buddha does not believe in God or any external power that is controlling

the entire Universe. It believes in Man's discipline to renounce the world physically, mentally and spiritually. Buddhism does not believe in any caste consciousness and all people belonging to all castes are welcomed in it. It is a religion of humanism and humanitarianism. Babasaheb Ambedkar was highly impressed by the life and personal discipline of Lord Buddha. Buddhism was an ideal choice because it was easier to reinterpret and adapt to the modern world than other religions. Therefore, the best religion left for him to be followed was Buddhism and as such on 14th October, 1956, after a long deliberation with his people considering the pros and cons, Ambedkar consciously took diksha in the Buddhist religion at Nagpur in the company of five lakh Mahars who all converted to Buddhism. For the times to come, Buddhism became a way of life among the Indian Dalits. Ambedkar became a great personality of India with the inspiration of whom Indian constitution and Indian life started moving on the rails of normalcy. Ambedkar's philosophy against untouchability in India, against the Vedic Shrutis, and against the code of Manu had created a consciousness among the lower caste people of India against the evils caste system in the country. When this consciousness became famous in the country, even non-dalit writers of India had started writing on the problems of Dalits. Premchand wrote of Dukhi, Anand wrote of Bakha, Arundhati Roy wrote of Velutha and Mahashweta Devi wrote of Doulati. Over the past few decades, a Dalit literary movement has been giving to the readers a firsthand experience of how the Dalit community lives by the 21st century. The Dalit movement in literature has become so influential that almost every university in India has Dalit texts on its curriculum and now the academic interest has gone global with the Dalit texts making their way into universities in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and France. English translations of Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003), Narender Jadhav's *Untouchables* (2005), Baby Kamble's *Prisons We Broke* (2009) (Markand Kaushik) and Bama's *Karukku* (1992) and *Sangati*

(1996) have become popular dalit texts of this century.

This researcher is tempted to give an illustration of Dalit consciousness through the brief reference of M.R Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). Anand's debut novel which is also regarded as Magnus opus, deals with the story of a single day in the life of Bakha, the Dalit protagonist. Bakha is regarded as an untouchable boy by the upper class people of the area. He is a victim of caste ridden society as he belongs to the community of sweepers. He is hefty, hale and hearty young boy but reluctant to perform the duties of a toilet cleaner. He has to clean toilets and bring about sanitation at the cost of his own hygiene. Every now and then he is called defiled and polluted. Things so happen that a little boy is injured and Bakha lifts the boy instead of receiving good remarks from the mother of the boy, she screams "polluted, polluted" (52) and Bakha is utterly despaired. After bearing this abuse and also after Bakha's father turns him out of the house he feels totally unwanted. He could feel the emptiness around him, and the sympathy which he was expecting could never come to him. However, he was not aware of Colonel Hutchinson, chief of the local Salvation Army who had come to visit the outcastes' colony. He meets Bakha when is in a state of disillusionment he introduces him by saying "I am a padre, and my God is Yessuh Messih" (115). Even though Bakha is not aware of 'Yessuh Messih' still the Colonel persuades him towards Christianity and asks Bakha to convert so that all his problems can come to an end. Bakha is afraid of the thought of conversion though the Colonel tells him of Christ in detail, but Bakha doesn't understand a word. Also this feeling is cut by the voice of Missionaries wife who hurts by referring to Bakha as a "dirty bhangi". So the appeal of Christianity didn't seem him that alluring. He envisages a ray of hope when Mahatma Gandhi visits the place and calls upon the people to regard untouchables as 'Harijans' (Children of God).

Bakha makes a search for his identity throughout the novel to be recognised as an important man of the society but the upper class society denies him this right. This novel on publication created a great consciousness of Dalits and impelled people to understand them as human beings rather than untouchables of the society. E M Forster asserts about this novel, “*Untouchable* could only have been written by an Indian. . . . No European however sympathetic could have created the character of Bakha, because he would not have known enough about his troubles. And no untouchable could have written the book, because he would have been involved in indignation and self- pity. (Preface vii)

Ambedkar’s example encouraged Christian missionaries to woo Hindus of all castes to join Christianity. The Christian missionaries drilled into the minds of the Hindus that Christianity is a religion of the casteless people. They also propagated that God in Christianity is a democratic God who comes down on Earth to save the suffering Humanity from their troubles and sins. According to the Hindu indictment, people, after their extreme devotion to God, go to Him, but according to Christianity, God comes down to people. They thought that Christian concept of God is more congenial and democratic than the Hindu concept. Therefore, the non Dalit Hindus started embracing Christianity en masse. Before we proceed further, it will not be out of place here to throw light on the meaning of conversion. In its most transparent meaning as a change of religion, conversion is arguably one of the most unsettling political events in the life of a society. This is irrespective of whether conversion involves a single individual or an entire community, whether it is forced or voluntary, or whether it is the result of proselytization or inner spiritual illumination. Not only does conversion alter the demographic equation within a society and produce numerical imbalances, but it also challenges an established community’s assent to religious doctrines and practices. With the departure of members from the fold, the

cohesion of a community is under threat as just as forcefully as if its beliefs had been turned into heresies. (Vishwanthan, Preface)

When caste Hindus objected to the mass conversion inspired by Christian missionaries, they floated the idea that according to the Constitution of India and the Fundamental Rights enshrined in it, one may join any religion as one wishes, conversions at people's own will came in vogue. Indeed, a large population of Dalit Indians converted to Christianity and Ambedkar's Buddhism. According to Stanley Jones, Hindus, particularly of lower castes, got converted at will into Christianity because of the following reasons:

Members of the Shudra caste who were so exploited by the higher caste that they lost their identity. They thought that their conversion into Christianity would grant them identity as independent human beings after the principle: "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man." They would be able to educate their children and marry them off in respectable Christian families. Several examples of this conversion can be cited from the records of Missionaries. (194)

Hence, Dalits converted into Christianity because of religious reasons. They thought that the poor downtrodden low caste people had respect in Christian religion. According to Hindu religion, God does not excuse the sins of people but as per Christianity Lord God redeems the sins of all the sinners who publicly confess their sins. "Meet the Father through the Son" was the Christian formula that inspired the downtrodden Hindus. Another reason for Christian conversions was the poverty of the downtrodden Hindus. Those, among Hindus, who were hopeless, faithless, disillusioned, and poor in the society, joined Christian groups with the hope

that they would get social and economic security as Christians wanted better education for their children and jobs for economic security. For example, a large number of poor Dalits from Hindu community in Punjab converted to Christianity. They termed their conversion as Salvation Army and Christian Community who lives in Mission Compound Jalandhar, Punjab. Another reason for contextualising of Christian converts was the marital interest among Hindus of all castes, higher or lower, to get material benefits that accrue to their Christian partners who were considered backward classes. Although this reason of conversion is not common but it is no less popular. Boys and girls of castes Hindus choose to marry their partners from the Christian religion after getting converted as Christians. Although established examples of this kind of conversion are not available but examples of lower caste Dalits, Hindus and Muslims marrying girls from higher caste Hindus are several.

Since the British were the rulers of India and they provided social and economic security to Christians all over India, Christian Conversions could be seen through the length and breadth of the country. There are several denominations of Christianity actively propagating among the Indian masses, particularly low caste Hindus, to convert them into Christianity to look at all these denominations are involved in the service of the downtrodden but behind the pretext of the Church service there actual aim is conversions of Hindus into Christianity. On the basis of their quotes from the Bible they imitate their propaganda that Lord Christ was the only Son of God who was sent down on the Earth by God to save the people from the sins. All people on the Earth are sinners and out of those who have their faith in Christ will wash the sins of people in his blood. Those who wish to meet God the Father must go to Christ, the Son of God so that he will redeem the sinners into the consciousness of God.

In addition to brainwashing the people on the basis of religion Christians declare attractive, social and economic measures for conversions. The most important measure is that those who convert into Christianity will be given jobs, food and shelter by the Christian Missions. Due to all these attractive offerings by the Christian Missionaries the strength of the Christian converters is increasing in India by leaps and bounds. The British are no longer in power now and B.J.P is in power, therefore these days conversions are on the move of taking U turn.

Now that B.J.P has come to power in the centre in 2015 and its policies are largely directed by R.S.S they have taken advantage of the situation through “re- conversions”. In some parts of the country R.S.S is gathering the converted people and getting them re-converted into Hinduism on the plea that these re-conversions are being done at the will of the people. They term it as Ghar- Vapsi. A lot of political controversy has started in the country on the point of Ghar-Vapsi but there are some serious problems that follow the principle of Ghar-Vapsi. The main problem is Hindu society is a caste-ridden society and after Ghar-Vapsi no caste would embrace the people into its fold. Secondly, the marriage of the children of those who come back to their original religion will be difficult. There are some other problems that come with the principle of Ghar-Vapsi. It will not be out of place here to take a bird’s eye view of Ghar Wapsi or Home Coming. The concept of Ghar Wapsi is an ambitious plan initiated by the Sangh Parivar and Vishwa Hindu Parishad during the B.J.P political government in power at the centre and as also in the states. The leaders of Sangh Parivar and the V.H.P have started a country level drive to ‘re convert’ Muslims and Christians to Hinduism on the plea that they were originally Hindus and had converted into Muslim and Christian religions by the sword of these religions. However, Swami Vivekananda denies the role of sword in the process of their conversion into these

religions. He rightly says, “Why amongst the poor of India are so many Mohammadns. It is nonsense to say that they were converted by the sword. It was to gain liberty from zamindars and priests . . . (*The Complete Works*, 330).

However, the leaders of R.S.S do not seem to agree with Vivekananda and float a theory that the poor in India were converted as Christians and Mohammadns ‘by force’. Mohan Bhagwat, the supreme leader of the R.S.S, has already declared that India is ‘our’ Hindu Rashtra and their aim is to re-convert all Muslims and Christians to Hinduism by 2021. He has commissioned his monkey brigade to accomplish this task, calling it ‘Ghar Wapsi’ or ‘Home Coming’. The fact is that the government of today is set to increase its political power so that India ultimately becomes a country only of the Hindus. By doing so the it is wittingly or unwittingly going against the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. The opening words of the Preamble to the Indian Constitution.

The Constitution of India says: “WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby
ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION

In the light of this Preamble any attempt made by any individual or political party against its spirit will be against the democratic principles of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, the idea of turning the entire country into a Hindu Rashtra through re-converting Muslims and Christians into their so-called 'original' religion will surely blemish the spirit of the Preamble and will hurt the fundamental right of the people to adopt any religion as per their will.

Trying to make the political reality understood behind this latest campaign, Majri Katju of the University of Hyderabad says, "The Hindutava drive to 're convert' Muslims and Christians to Hinduism is essentially about sharing up the numerical strength and political power of the Hindu community and has little connections to religious persuasion" (21). Katju opines: "that since the Muslims and Christians are growing in numerical strength by way of conversions, the Sangh Parivar is doggedly promoting the concept of re conversions or Ghar Wapsi. (21)

Anand Teltumbde, a civil right activist of the committee for the protection of democratic rights, also feels that the concept of Ghar Wapsi is "Welcome to the Hell Hole of Hinduism". He opines that "most converts to Islam and Christianity being from the lower class who had converted to escape the yoke of caste bondage of Hinduism would be incarcerated into the hell house of Hinduism which their forefathers strove to escape" (10).

Although the move of Ghar Wapsi is altogether a non-democratic move as it does not serve the basic principles of the Constitution yet its promoters are adamant on promoting it. On December 8, 2015, about 57 families (of nearly 350 persons) in Ved Nagar in Agra were converted to Hinduism by Dharm Jagran Samanvay Vibhag of Bajrang Dal activist and R.S.S

outfits. The event made big news when it was disclosed that the pavement dwellers, rag pickers and other destitute persons were promised that if they participate in the Ghar Wapsi function they would be given Ration cards and B.P.L (Below Poverty Line) cards. In another case, a Muslim minister from Uttar Pradesh decided to give land to the poor for constructing their houses in case they become Mohammadns. The fact is that Ghar Wapsi is a sectarian move, and if allowed to continue, it can create many problems of disharmony and destroying this multicultural nation. Likewise, Rudolf C Heredia, an independent researcher, asserts that “Ghar Wapsi [is] political agenda in religious garb. It has been initiated by non secular powers of India who wish to see India through the spectacles of Hinduism” (17). They wish even to affirm that Ambedkar’s Neo- Buddhist Navyana Movement which does not consider Buddhism as a part of Hinduism. But nobody is going to listen to them in Asia to consider Buddhism as part of Hinduism. Hence re conversion is only a horrible dream of Hindu enthusiasts which is likely to be broken astray with the passage of time if India is destined to live as a country of various religions, caste and people.

Thus, from the above account of description, it is clear that the concept of conversion may have come from the atrocities of the Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishyas but it is, by and large, part of politics. Although, as mentioned above, Dalit literature has become global and is spreading far and wide yet in India Dalit literature is less voluminous than other kinds of literature. Dalit studies in Tamil came quite late into existence as compared to its counterpart in Marathi or Bengali. Of the several Dalit writers in India Tamil writer Faustina Soosairaj Bama has made slight contribution to the development of Dalit literature. Bama has written three books in all and they are *Karukku* (1992), *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002). In all these books, Bama has not produced a regular genre of literature. *Karukku* is a kind of an autobiography in

which the author has painted a picture of the adverse conditions in which Dalits are constrained to live. Although, the book has all the qualities of a novel yet it is not a proper novel. In *Sangati*, Bama has depicted the problems of the female world of Dalits and in *Vanmam (Vendetta)*, she passes a message that the Dalits have to be united if, at all, they have to attain political power. She brings in Dalit sub-castes, among several others, such as Parayars and Pallans who practice Christianity and other Hindu religions. Apart from that she has written three collections of short stories, *Kisumbukkaran* (1996), *Oru Thathavum Erumayum* (2003), and *Kondattam* (2009).

Since these literary works are yet seminal a lot more work needs to be done with respect to research on Bama. Thinking on these lines the researcher has decided to conduct research on the works of Bama. The present dissertation is made up four chapters the first one Introduction, the second chapter will explore Predicament of Christian Dalits in *Karukku*, the third chapter would deal with the Dilemma of Dalit women in *Sangati* and Conclusion.

Bama Faustina Soosairaj is the pen name of a Dalit woman from Roman Catholic family of Tamil Nadu. She took a revolutionary step to write her autobiography named *Karukku*. In the authors' preface she says, "The book has been written as a means of healing my inward wounds I had no other motive" (*Karukku* x). After the publication of the book her kith and kin and even friends read it and discovered that "it was a new genre in Tamil Literature" (*Karukku* ix).

Lakshmi Holmstrom translated the Tamil version of *Karukku* into English and the English version was published by Macmillan Company. The English translation of *Karukku* enjoyed great reputation as a part of marginal literature, in translation, autobiography, Feminist literature, and Dalit literature and the English translation made it a part of World literature.

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