



Vernacular Resistance in South Asian Literature: Linguistic Authenticity and Subaltern Voice in Bama's *Karukku*

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Abstract

Faustina Soosairaj Bama's *Karukku*, first published in Tamil and later translated into English, is a literary text from South Asia that transcends local and national contexts and resonates with global concerns for a just and equal social order. As a life narrative, it delineates the journey of a struggling Dalit woman who fights patriarchy and caste discrimination, yet it is not just the story of an individual. Within the post-colonial perspective, *Karukku* stands out as an extraordinary literary achievement from South Asian Literature that represents the lived realities of its people in a language that rejects hegemonic control. Bama's linguistic resistance is heightened through her vernacular authenticity which uplifts the regional speech of Dalits in Tamil to the status of a literary tradition. *Karukku* deploys the localized Dalit Tamil vernacular and "ketta varthai" (abusive language) as a deliberate linguistic decolonial practice. This strategy does not merely record trauma; it actively dismantles the dual supremacy of upper-caste pure Tamil and elite English literary standards, transforming a marginalized dialect into an authoritative literary archive that reclaims Dalit feminist agency. This paper examines Bama's work in the backdrop of South Asian Literature and argues that *Karukku* embodies vernacular authenticity by challenging not only the dominant sections of the society but also its language to reclaim her identity as a woman.

Keywords: South Asian Literature, Subaltern Voice, Resistance, Agency, Vernacular Authenticity, Cultural Reclamation.