CHAPTER - II

*The Branded*: A Study
2.1 The Oppressive Structures

2.1.1 Hunger and Starvation

_The Branded_ seems to be a realistic one that portrays the problem of hunger in _Uchalya_ community, a deprived class. Most of the portion of _The Branded_ occupies the description of hunger. Hunger and starvation were the main causes behind the activity of thieving in _Uchalya_ community. It does not mean that the _Uchalya_, a deprived class did not have any other problems except hunger. But the truth is that they have been victimized of hunger so much as they find no time to think about any other problem. Mentally, they were affected by the continuous thought of hunger. It was the priority of their life to put efforts sincerely to satiate hunger. The main stream society did not offer any work to this deprived class. As a result, they moved towards the act of thieving. There was no food without thieving in the life of these people. The people of nomadic tribe had to beg or steal to survive. In this regard Sharankumar Limbale asked the question to the established class and made them responsible for the inhuman status of the deprived people.

For the nomadic and criminal tribes, there is neither village nor home. They have to wander constant and beg to live. What kind of Shiva is this? These communities have to steal to survive. Human beings are deemed criminals by their birth. What sort of Shiva is this? (Limbale 21)

Nobody offered work to this community to live dignified life. Even the father of narrator Martand was also not offered work in the village. Purposefully the community mentioned in the present work _Uchalya_ was branded as a criminal tribe. The mother of writer named Dhondabai was also not employed even as a farmhand. The grandmother of the narrator named Narasabai used to visit fairs and markets to maintain the household. She removed gold lockets and earrings from children’s necks. She also managed to steal ears trinkets and necklaces from the
necks of women cutting them loose with her teeth or a blade, and sold them to money lenders and maintained the house.

The mission of thieving was not successful every time for *Uchalya* community. So hunger continuously followed these people. If there were nothing to eat in the hut of the narrator, the family member roved around and used to steal corn, chillis, groundnuts and *sajgure* from distant farms at night. Till they returned, the children starved at home. They used to beat the stolen ears of corn, gather the grains, grind them coarse, boil them and ate to satisfy their hunger. Yet, they had to eat any kind and numbers of animals such as rats, rabbits, mongoose, deer, iguanas, fox, partridges, ducks, cranes, doves, tortoise, fish, wild cats, pigeons, pins, crabs, sheep, goats, water-hens, peacocks. Sometimes the narrator Gaikwad himself also used to fulfill his hunger by begging with her sister-in-law. He narrates:

My sister-in-law would sometimes whine, “Madam, the poor child is hungry, please give him a few stale pieces of leftover Bhakar. So I would get the previous day’s Bhakar, curry or vegetable and butter milk. I used to take out hurriedly a small bowl from the bag and take in it whatever was offered. (Gaikwad 24)

Starvation was one of the major problems in the family of Gaikwad. Sometimes, there was nothing found for cooking in the house for four five days. They used to cook broken or coarsely ground grain. Mostly it was Milo, a chief grain. There were too many mouths to feed at home. They used to prepare watery gruel of coarsely ground Milo in a big pot. They used to coarse-grind it. It was full of worms and insect but they used to be so hungry that they greedily drank that hot insect-ridden gruel without ever bothering to filter off the insects. Gaikwad used to drink his share of gruel and also received some from the shares of his brother such as Anna and Bhau. Hence the narrator never sat for meal alone in the absence of his brothers. When his brother did not give him from their share, he used to lick
his hands after rubbing them on the plate, and then licked the plate with his tongue. He used to stare at Bhau and Anna greedily. So even when they were hungry, they angrily offered Gaikwad some gruel from their shares. Even then his hunger could not be fully satisfied. He used to scrape whatever was stuck at the bottom of the pot and ate it. In this way the writer Gaikwad and his family member never got even a single full meal a day. They were victims of hunger and starvation in their childhood.

The father of Gaikwad named Martand was the servant in Chamle’s farm to work. Chamle was the owner of the field where Martand was working. So the narrator was given the duty of bringing the meals of his father from Chamle’s house to the field after school. Gaikwad narrated the incident where he was unable to control his attraction towards the meal which was being carried by him. So he narrates:

I used to set out with this food to the farm where father worked. From the vegetable in the bowl came an enticing smell. When I saw those white Jowar Bhakar and buttermilk, my mouth would water. My conscience told me that the Bhakar given was just enough for my father. My belly, on the other hand, was all afire with hunger; moreover, never did we get such delicious bhakar and vegetable at home. I used to be so eager to reach the shepherd’s Panand that I wished I could instantly fly there, and eat Bhakar on reaching the panands looked about and inserted two fingers into the bundle in which the bhakar was tied and pulled out a piece of the bhakar and pot it into my mouth. I used to stir the vegetable curry in the bowl with a stick and drink a little of it. It tested so delicious that I felt like eating all the Bhakars and the vegetable–curry. (38-39)

The family members of Gaikwad did not get Bhakar, a piece of bread during Ashadha Sharavana. Therefore, they used to pluck leaves of sweet potatoes from the farm. They used to boil the leaves, throw out the water and grind the leaves into a paste and make Mutkebale of it. They fulfilled their hunger in this
way for many days. They could completely denude sweet-potato plants and leaves
the farm a leafless desert to complete their hunger. When sweet-potato leaves were
no more available, they starved almost to death. After all they were to eat all sorts
of leaves such as leaves of Gadhavkata, Tarvata, Kurdu, Dagdishepu, Carrot and
such other wild plants. One can observe that the poverty is very worst in the life
with the account provided by Gaikwad:

There was a time when even such leaves were scarce as we were passing through
a period of drought, once my elder sister-in-law had brought Kurdu leaves, we had
no food for four days and we fried these leaves on an iron pan, there was no oil,
so the leaves were fried by putting a little salt on them. My sister-in-law gave us
all our shares, even those Kurdu leaves without anything to go with them tasted so
delicious that I craved for more and still more. (40)

Nobody can guess what situation would prevail in hunger in the life. Uchalya
people had gone through such bitter experience of hunger and starvation.
That can be understood well with the life experiences of Gaikwad. It would be
beyond our understanding to realize the experience of hunger and starvation. But
the incidents of hunger and starvation are narrated by Gaikwad in *The Branded*
would certainly help us to know the real world of these deprived people. The
attempt of the narrator and his family members to fulfill their hunger makes us
thoughtful and considerate. Sometimes it also seemed ridiculous and humorous.
Gaikwad used to steal the food from the share of his family members in their
absence.

Most of the time, Gaikwad preferred the way to search for the offerings
made to the evils spirits when hunger gnawed at his intestines so much. If the
children were seriously ill in the village, the parents made offerings of food and
coconuts to propitiate evil spirits in the month of *Shravan*. The offerings were
found in cremation yards supposed to be haunted by evil spirits. Gaikwad has
forgotten all such forsaken reality in hunger and enjoyed the delicious offerings. He narrates:

Nobody dared to eat the coconuts and food offered to evil spirits. But my belly being all afire with hunger, I did not bother about spirits and ghosts, I used to kick the coconut thrice and take the food. The top of the food offered to evil spirits was smeared with oil and black soot. I did not feel like throwing away even such offerings. I scraped away the blackened part of the food, sat under a tree in a farm and ate it. I used to break the coconut and eat the kernel. But I always offered a small piece of the coconut and a little portion of the food to evil spirits to propitiate them lest they haunt me, only after eating the food did I go home. (41)

There are several accounts of starvation in Uchalya community reflected in the present work *The Branded*. The experiences of hunger noted by Gaikwad are the collective one of his entire community. They lived only on water for eight to nine days on certain occasions. The father of Gaikwad named Martand borrowed money and bought a quantity of jaggery and mixed it with water in a pot and gave a cup of the jaggery water to each member in the family of Gaikwad such as Dada, Bhau, sister-in-law, Harchanda, Kesarvahini, and took one himself. The struggle for food is rightly observed by Gaikwad as:

On these days I used to put my arms round father’s neck and weep bitterly for food. I used to make rounds of rubbish heaps and search for dried mango seeds and tamarind seeds, collect them and roast them and eat them. Sometimes Dada and father used to visit other villages and steal a pig. We roasted and ate it. Sometimes when I was hungry and there was nothing to eat I used to spread salt on the grind-stone and lick it avidly for whatever flour was stuck there. (41)

It was the routine of the people of Uchalya community to go to distant places and search for a farm with a good standing crop and stole full ears of wheat, *jawar* and *bajara*, chaillis and ground nuts. The people used different skill to hide their stolen loot with them. They used to beat the stolen ears, separate the grain,
make a fire and roast the grain. They took the precaution not leaving anything behind as evidence and burnt the entire husk. Thus they satisfied their old hunger with a little quantity of the boiled grain. The people of *Uchalya* community never got full meal even after much efforts. Gaikwad narrated his unfinished hunger as “But my hunger was even then not fully satisfied. So I would get up in the morning and pick and eat the particles that had popped out of the pot while the grain was being boiled, and eat those caked-with-mud morsels.”

Gaikwad reminded one terrifying incident occurred with his Dada while plucking ears of the grain-crop for the fulfillment of their hunger. All the persons of the Uchalya were followed the farmers shouting thieves. So they fled throwing down the plucked ears. But Dada, an elder brother of Gaikwad worried of their family members who were starving and anxiously waiting for him to bring something to eat. So he ran with load of plucked ears and lagged behind the other members of the gang. A stone, thrown by the farmer crashed into his head and was hurt very badly. Even so, unmindful of the deep wound, he kept on running with the load of ears to complete the hunger. The people of *Uchalya* community had to take a risk of their lives for their bread and butter. Namdev Dhasal rightly describes the significance of hunger in the deprived classes such as:

Hunger, your style is your own
No other calamity comes our way
But you.
Hunger, if we cannot mate you
Cannot impregnate you
Our tribe will have to kill itself (Dhasal44)

The people of this community attended marriage feasts, funeral feasts and village feasts to satisfy their hunger. Such occasions were the golden opportunity to satisfy their hunger. The people of this community used to inform about the
places of feast to all the members of their fraternity. Then they all men, women, children took their pots, bowls and used to walk to the place of the feasts. On these days they were careful not to drink water. It was common advice to all the children in Uchalya Community as “Children, don’t drink water. If you drink water, you cannot eat well.” (Gaikwad 44) The people of Uchalya were always deprived of the basic needs such as food shelter and clothes. Once there was the wedding of the son of the Patil of Bhuani. Bundi, a sweet item was being served in the wedding feasts. The people from different villages were invited. The people of Uchalya also went together at the spot of wedding without any invitation. They sat and ate in the first round of the feast. Then they continued to sit at the subsequent rounds. At every round they pocketed the bundi served at the feast. Thus they collected a good amount of bundi through two three rounds. Gaikwad honestly made an account of stealing bundi where he had lost his own identity and existence as:

All of us Sambha, Tukya, Tulshiram came close to our village. We took our shares of Bundi and went to our houses. Everybody gathered round the Bundi. I had brought as dogs do round a carcass they have sighted. They finished off the Bundi in a matter of minutes. Eating such food that we rarely got; I began to crave for it. I did not care if I was cursed, beaten and thrown out; I ceased to feel ashamed of such humiliation. I would do anything to get even a little titbit. (46)

The people of Uchalya used to be present in the village-folk ritual meals in honour and memory of their ancestors. They used to form a gang that regularly went to these meals. While the guests were having meals in the house, the people of Uchalya stationed themselves close by and stared at them greedily. They wailed loudly in the hope that the people dining inside might hear their wails and ask someone to throw some scraps at them just to keep them quite. So they kept on howling: ‘Give us some food.’ Gaikwad observed the low status of Uchalya in main stream society. These people were given secondary position in the village
affairs. The positions of these people were worse than the animals. These people were given inhuman treatment in every activity of the village. Gaikwad observed the lower status of *Uchalya* in the main stream society as:

Dogs barked and we wailed. Dogs also crowded with us for food to lick the left over from the thrown-out *Patravali* when the dinners had their food and left the hall, someone from among them would say, ‘Oh there, throw these Pathruts some food’. Then we used to get half a roti and some vegetable in a bowl. Something they would throw at us the leftovers from the *Patravalis* of the dinners. We collected the Patravali and ate there right on the street. (46)

Gaikwad also narrated the hostel experiences where he had to live in empty stomach. It was the time of admission for Gaikwad in hostel. He was admitted in the residential school named the Songaon Residential School. Actually, there was limited meal to each of the students. Gaikwad thought that they would be given full satisfying meals. The boys asked for some more *rotis* to the authority. But they were given two *rotis*, a piece of bread at each meal. Gaikwad did not feel anything amiss for getting less food in the hostel. He did not complain because he was not certain of getting even this much food in his village. He was satisfied with the meal got in the hostel and expressed his feeling: “Let it be, we are at least certain of getting daily meals. That is enough for me.”(72)

Gaikwad had to go through many obstacles in his childhood while getting education. He was denied to get admission in the school wherever he went. He determined to get education at any cost. So he was indifferent to arrest, beating, thefts and continued to attend school regularly. He set out an account of hunger which made him miss the school during interval and search for eatable things:

On occasions I had to go to school without eating Bhakar; and felt hunger gnawing in my belly; on such occasions Dagadya and I skipped school during the short recess and escaped through the window. We searched for beehives in the
woods, looked on trees for the nests of pigeons. If we came across an egg, we would smear it with cow dung, boil it and eat it. We always kept a catapult and a match-box in our school bags. We killed pigeons and khaduls with the catapult, roasted them and ate them without Bhakar. (74)

At harvest time all men and women of Gaikwad’s household were to go to a place with good crop to earn some money by working on farms. That was their yearly routine. At such a time he was to be in deep trouble. He was to be all alone in the house during harvest time. He was not left any quantity of food for his daily meals. Gaikwad narrated an account of his way of getting food as:

During those days, whenever I was terribly hungry, I would dig out and eat the roots of the Takali plant that grew by the Babhalgaon road. The roots tasted like coconut-kernel. In those days I was fortunate in getting a good friend—Ankush Mekle, a fisherman’s boy. If I went to the school without food, if I carried no Bhakar with me, he would go round and say, ‘Pathrut’s Lakshya is starving, has no food, let us give him a bite each. All of them would collect some Bhakar and give me. (76)

Gaikwad became joyful after getting Bhakari but at the sometimes there used to be pangs of sorrow for his poor miserable condition. He could not receive bhakari for a pretty long time from the school boys. They soon showed no more sympathy and refused to give him bhakari. Gaikwad had provided an account where he stole bhakari in his growing hunger to fulfill it. “On occasions when I went to school hungry and starving and could not bear the growing hunger, I would steal the Bhakari of my class-mates and go in to the woods to eat them.”(77)

The Uchalya community was excluded from every opportunity of Indian Independence. They lost their energy and time in collecting food from one place to another. They were treated as animals. Yet, the status of these people was equally lower than the animals. They were subjugated in every sector of life in the name of
caste and religion. Most of the time, they were deprived from the fundamental needs. They were not provided choice for thieving and begging. Gaikawad puts his experiences of begging in the form of Jogva to fulfill their hunger as:

Once as usual I was proceeding to the Goddess of Devtala and on my way I was visiting places and begging for Gogva. I received some alms. I sat under a tree and began to put the pieces of Chapattis and Dhapatya in my pocket. I also ate a few pieces. For I knew that Shevanta on her own would not give me good pieces. Unfortunately Shevanta arrived there at that juncture, she too was moving about collecting Gogva. She saw me munching the pieces and chided me angrily. (79)

Hunger in Uchalya community was one of the basic problems started at the very outset of their life. They had to starve for food and eatable things. They were ready to do anything to fulfill the demand of their stomach. They were neglected by the main stream society in every sphere of life. Gaikwad was intended to learn the skill of black magic to solve the problem of hunger. He supposed that by learning the skill of sorcery he was no more to starve for food. Thus he prepared the mind to learn witchcraft. He narrates:

Whenever I felt hungry, I thought of asking Anjalibai to initiate me into the craft of sorcery and of eating human excreta on five Saturdays, so that I would never have to starve. Should people from good families practice sorcery? If I did not acquire the craft even after eating human excreta, what then. These questions deterred me from asking Anjalibai anything. (85)

One day the writer Gaikwad had gone to the school at Babhalgaon. Bhau, an elder brother of the narrator, had also gone to his work. Nobody was in the house. The narrator had locked the house before going to the school. On his return he saw that the lock was broken and lying on the ground. The hasp was removed and the door was open. He was afraid of remaining in the house; he stood on the road weeping. Gaikwad narrated his own helpless condition such as:
My friend tried to console me and quiet me down. Even the Bhakar I had kept in a basket had been stolen. Bhau’s dhoti, coverlet; in fact, all the household items had been stolen, I was terribly hungry. Balacharya Guruji’s son, Arun was standing by. He went home and told his sister that there had been a burglary at Laxman’s house, even his Bhakar had been stolen, and that he was very hungry. So Sulbha called me and gave me bhakar and vegetable curry. I ate that and sat wondering who might have stolen the things. (88)

Every member of the *Uchalya* community had either to thieve or beg. Harchanda was an elder brother of Gaikwad who suffered frequent attacks of epileptic fits. So he could not carry on thieving. In such position father gave Harchanda a basket and a string of cowryshells. When starvation became unbearable, Harchanda was forced to beg Gogva in the village every day for his living.

Thus for every member of this community, it had been obligatory to thieve or beg to fulfill their hunger. Yet, no option was left for these people beside thieving and begging. They supposed the activity of thieving and begging were the legal work in their life. The attempt of the narrator drives our attention towards his urge for liberation and freedom from all kinds of manmade restrictions and controls. The narrator surpassed the problem of hunger and became active social worker to lead for Uchalya community.
2.1.2 Nature of Jatpanchayat

Jatpanchayat is seemed to be a dominant factor in Nomadic Tribes narrated in the present work. The representatives of Panchayat were to give more values in decision making. Generally the Panchayat used to be held in the farm as a crowded affair with all the people in Uchalya community. Everybody received travelling expenses and Patil had to be given either one hundred and one or one hundred fifty one rupees each as honorarium. All the Patils of the area used to attend the Panchayat. The accused, for which the Panchayat had been called into session, had to bear all expenses of liquor, meat, vegetable and other items of Panchayat meal. The members of the Panchayat would attend the Panchayat session in white dhoti, white shirt and white Uparana. Then Panchnayat used to begin to sit in judgment. The opinions were frequently divided. Some Panchas would hold the petitioner to be right while the other Panchas would insist that the accused was in the right. This created a state of confusion and as a result there were much argument.

The Panchayat continued to be in session for three days in a row under the same tree. At last a unanimous decision was obtained from all the Panchas. After much debate, the accused convicted of the guilt was fined. The fine would range from rupees five hundred and fifty to five thousand. If the accused had been convicted of false charges in their dealings with other members of the gang, his or her treacherous accomplices were required to go on thieving missions only for their bare living for two to six months as per the direction of Panchayat. They would not get their shares of the loot because they had betrayed the professional faith of the gang. Even if the person, so convicted on his or her own, stole anything, he or she had no right over it. If the convicted person refused to pay the fine, he was ostracized. The dominance of Panchayat in Uchalya Community is typically narrated in the present work by Gaikwad.
Gaikwad’s grandfather named Lingappa worked as a state informer to the police and helped them in catching culprits from their Uchalya community by disclosing their names and whereabouts. The community held the Panchayat against him and resolved that he must be killed. It was impossible in Uchalya community to meet police against the Panchayat. The result of this action was worst on the particular fellow. The narrator provides an account of his grandfather who helped police regarding the culprit as:

Our grandfather was cremated without anybody getting to know of it. Now that grandfather was dead, the people from our community resumed their usual business of thriving and picking pockets without the fear of being reported since then the entire household depended on grandmother. (Gaikwad 04)

If anybody dared to disobey the Panchayat resolutions, he or she was ostracized, nobody would even touch him or her, and they served him or her food from a distance. He was neither invited nor permitted to attend marriages. No marital relations were allowed with such an ostracized person. If he or she visited the house of anybody he/she was served food in a basket and given water in a plate. Yet if anyone dared to touch, give refuge or serve meal in a plate to the person ostracized, that relative or person too was ostracized. Such kinds of hard punishment were lodged against the person who went against Jatpanchayat.

Shankar from Salgara in the present narrative treated her daughter as a wife. The Panchayat came to the conclusion that Shankarya had used his daughter as his wife and thereby he had brought shame to the community and spoiled its name. The Panchayat, therefore, ostracized Shankarya and his daughter for two years. In this regard Gaikwad narrates:

We received the message of Shankarya’s ostracization at our village. Shankarya visited our village since once after he was ostracized. He was served water in a coconut shell. Just as Patil, Deshmukh keep separate plates for food and water for
the ostracized. For there would always be some person ostracized at a given time. So we also served Shankarya water in a plate. We gave him rotis and vegetable in an iron basket generally used while digging trenches. We did not take Shankarya into the house. We give him a tattered cloth to lie on and a tattered quit covering himself. (53)

The decision of the Panchayat was obeyed strictly in the Uchalya community. Nobody took amiss the treatment accorded as a result of the Panchayat’s directive. One thing is to be noted that the ostrasization was commonly practiced by upper class people on lower class. The practice of untouchability is observed in Uchalya Community in the case of accused person under the norms of Panchayat rule. No doubt the base of practicing ostracization is different in both the classes.

It was an incident to arrange the ritual bath for the bridegroom and the bride in Uchalya Community. The bath is customarily performed with the sacred ritual of thread – winding. The bathing bowl contains the vermillion turmeric-mixed water. The bowl is customarily wound with a sacred thread by married women who have not been ostracized. Then four married women pour the water from the bathing bowl on to the bodies of the bridegroom and the bride. According to the ritual Kashibai, a relative of Gaikwad’s family, began to wind the thread round the bowl. As she was about to twist and twine the thread, one of the old headmen, came up and snatched the thread out of her hand. He declared that Kashibai’s grandmother had run away with a Maratha. As long as her sons were not ritualistically purified and accepted back into the community, the married women from her family would not have the right to perform the thread-winding ceremony. In the result the panchayat of their community held its session against this case and framed charges against Kashibai. Gaikwad narrates:

So all the panchas deliberated, and the decision was taken in the panchayat that Kashibai was untainted from her father-in-law’s side, though a little tainted from
her mother’s side. So Kashibai should be fined twenty one and received in the community as purified. It was declared that there was no other taint in her.(55)

There were several accounts of Panchas decision exemplified in *The Branded*. There was no thoughtful base for the Judgment of Panchayat. The innocent people of the community also suffered due to the decision of Panchayat. Gaikwad provided one account of Panchas decision against the mother of the bridegroom in his community. The charge was that the mother’s mother of the bridegroom had lived with a Maratha fellow. So the girl’s mother was born of a Maratha father. Even if she herself had married a person of their community, the earlier taint was not there by washed away. The mother of the bridegroom had not yet got herself purified in their Panchayat. The Panchayat sat under a mango tree against the mother of the bridegroom. The Panchayat came out with their proposals, some said let the women eat shit, and some other said let her be fined 2000 rupees, while some others proposed that her nose to be cut off. Finally one of the Panchas proposed a viable middle course that the bride’s mothers head be shaved, the Panchas agreed to this proposal unanimously and it was decided that the women’s head would be shaved. Actually the mother’s mother of the bridegroom had no relation to the charges laid by the Panchayat. Gaikwad expresses his suffocation under the norms of Panchayat rules and backwardness of his own community as:

My head went numb with all that I had witnessed. How backward and superstitious could our community be! What a horrible scene was I witness to! On one side was the advanced urban society and on the other our community-panchayat. I found the functioning of the panchayat obnoxious and disgusting. I was, a small fry, however, before this gigantic social monster. If I dared to say anything, they would explore my own lineage to its roots. I was not yet married. If I said anything in opposition, father would curse me. The community would refuse to give me a girl in marriage because I opposed the community panchayat. So I mutely watched whatever was happening before me. (120)
Once, the community Panchayat was called at Kawatha against Gaikwad’s wife’s sister. Her name was Salubai. She was married to a man from Sholapur. Her husband was a versatile pickpocketer. But he had entered into a bigamous marriage. So Salubai’s mother obtained Salubai’s release from the marriage by paying Rs.251 as per the custom of Uchalya community. Salubai continued to live with her parents in Kawatha. She was young and healthy and she fell in love with one Ravan of her own community Uchalya. Ravan too courted her and entangled her in his love. He lived with her for two years assuring her that he was yet unmarried and intended to marry her soon. A daughter was born to Salubai from him. All the people of Kawatha knew of this. Yet nobody said anything for it and was taken for granted that they were married. Ravan’s parents, however, selected another woman for Ravan and their engagement was finalized. So Salubai complained in Panchayat against Ravan. People from distant parts had gathered to attend the Panchayat. It was resolved in the Panchayat that since a girl had been born to Salubai from Ravan, he should accept Salubai as his wife. He was ordered not to solemnize another marriage. The decision of Panchayat was quite good till his. But the Panchayat ruled that Ravan must dip his nose in Salubai’s urine. Such decision of panchayat was quite foolish and against humanism and democratic rules. Actually laws are for reformation and morality in the society. Thus the domination of Jatpanchayat was always crucial in the life Uchalya community narrated in *The Branded* by Gaikwad.

2.1.3 Humiliation, Exploitation and Deprivation

Laxman Gaikwad’s ‘Uchalya’ translated as ‘The Branded’ by P.A. Kolharkar narrates the life story of a boy born in a community traditionally stamped as pilferer by the British Raj. Gaikwad suffered from all sorts of humiliations and exploitation for his only being born in the community branded as thieves. The Plight of such a boy resulted from prejudiced social and criminal laws of the land. Police used to arrest the member of *Uchalya* caste whenever there was
a petty or prime theft in the region if not always for their direct involvement in the act but to save their own faces in the Government. The Police and government authority always lodged injustice upon untouchable and downtrodden classes. The treatment of police and magistracy is always objectionable in the case of Dalits and lower communities.

The Hindu has the police and the Magistracy on his side. In a quarrel between the untouchables and the Hindus the untouchables will never get protection from the police or justice from the magistrate. The police and the Magistracy are Hindus, and they love their class more than their duty. (Dr. Ambedkar 31)

The formal education and traditional work skills were snatched from this community. Therefore the people of Uchalya were deprived of a respectable employment and reasonable source of sufficient income. Men and women of the community had no other way but to resort to wayside pilfering in the face of acute starvation. Police used to capture Uchalya young in case they failed to nab the real culprit. Sometimes police forced them to steal so that they could meet their personal expenses.

We come across a pitiable and helpless condition of Uchalya community narrated in the present work. Their life was marked by perpetual hunger, relentless humiliation and continuous deprivation. They never got sufficient food to eat. It is needless to talk about the question of shelter in their life. The entire family of Gaikwad had gone through without food for days together. Laxman Gaikwad roasted rats, pigs and ate to fill his empty stomach. He ate leftover, stale food in the marriages for days together. The present work describes the attempt of Gaikwad to fulfill his hunger along with his relatives and family members as:

There were plenty of rats in our hut. Tata used these rats in his thefts. Tata and I used to keep traps in the hut and catch rats. Then Tata would set the rats free at night in a field with full grown wheat. The rats would gnaw and cut off the ears of
wheat from the stalks and store them in rat holes. After the farmer had harvested and garnered the crop, Tata and I would dig the rat holes with a panchkola and bring up the ears of wheat that rats had hidden. I would quickly gather them in a shoulder bag. (09)

Most of the time Laxman Gaikwad and other members of his community were inhumanly treated by the police for no reason. Some of them were beaten to death even if the smallest suspicious event happened in the area. Policemen did not spare children, pregnant women and the aged members of the suspected gang. Most of the people belonging to this community had fractured their backbones due to the barbarous thumping of the policemen’s boots on their backs. Almost everyone bled in the police attacks. Gaikwad’s Grandmother revealed her humiliation and harassment by police as “When the police catch me, they hang me upside down by the legs and lash the soles of my feet with a whip, thrust burning cigarette-butts into my anus. If I don’t confess to the theft, they bring shit near my mouth and force me to eat it and keep on beating me.”(08) The punishment given to the grandmother is a blot on the humanity and democratic India. The people of Uchalya Community were brutally punished in the name of law and order. These people were frequently lodged with false charges and punished.

Once, the police caught Anna, an elder brother of Laxman Gaikwad while he was stealing an oil tin from the market. The police thrust chili powder in his rectum and eyes and beat him. They stripped him naked and walked him round and round through circular thorough fares. The police dragged him to his hut. All the inmates of the hut were made to line up. The evidence of torture and humiliation of Uchalya community is rightly observed by the narrator:

The police whipped everybody. They thrashed the women and the children from our hut all over, wherever their hands led them. Dhondamai never knew stealing. She never went that way. Yet they pressed and squeezed her breasts and grilled her: Tell us where yours sons have hidden the stolen goods? She only wept
bitterly. There was nothing in the hut, what could the poor mother show? They snatched away her Manglasutra and another cheap necklace. (15)

The misbehavior of the police with these people was crucial on the part of morality and ethics. Actually the security of the people is the responsibility of the government. Unfortunately the people like *Uchalya* were misbehaved and dehumanized by the government authority in the name of inquiry. The life of these oppressed people seems to be unsecure and deplorable after Independence of India.

Jatpanchayat was a team of selected members of a caste who used to settle the disputes of the people in the caste. It mostly played a negative and at times constructive role in the overall development of the community. Though the Panchayat was constituted with high ideals, it created hurdles in the individual progress of ambitious men. Arbitrary decisions of members of the Jatpanchayat were aimed at suppressing the dissents of the innovative youth rather than discharging their duties as impartial judges. The weak men and women were crushed under the rules of Panchayat. Women were the worst sufferers in the system. Laxman Gaikwad quotes an example of a father who raped his own daughter in the community. Panchayat neither penalized nor excommunicated him. The only punishment for culprit was an order to dip his nose in his daughter’s urine. Similar irrational judgment was passed on a husband for his misconduct to his wife. This shows their ignorance of constitutional provision made for the Indian citizens.

Laxman Gaikwad and his friends used to go on thieving missions so that they could bring some cash for their bread and butter. Surprisingly, major portion of their loot went to policemen, local political leaders and goldsmiths. They could keep only a meager ten percent of the actual cash. Remains were pocketed by
police officers, other people of the village headmen, goldsmiths and merchants. Others filled their coffers through the thefts by the Uchalya.

The policemen and politicians were the major beneficiaries of their thieving skills, vigor and forbearance. Policemen sent them on stealing missions to meet their own financial needs at home. Politicians employed them as informers to nab others thieves in orders to pacify public outburst. If they succeeded in giving the right information on time which helped police departments to arrest robbers, the imprisoned culprits take revenge on them. If they could not dig out information well in advance, policemen doubted their role in the entire case. Thus they were at the receiving end forever.

The false charges of stealing were frequently laid on *Uchalya* community. Gaikwad and his family members were alleged to be thieves by the police. Gaikwad’s father went to his employer and begged and borrowed a full year’s wages. Her mother borrowed some amount from a money lender at the interest rate of rupees five for eight days. It was only when the father offered money that the police did not arrest them.

Lingra Chamle is one of the characters who was quite rich, offered decayed and vermin-infested jowar grain as though he was performing a great act of philanthropy, when people starved almost to death in *Akhad Shravan*. He used to offer three to four kilos of decayed grain and forced the *Uchalya* community to supply in exchange compost manure at a ridiculously cheap rate and exploit them. The villager and the dominant people were so cruelly indifferent that nobody paid any attention when a poor man was being beaten and whipped mercilessly.

Sopan is another character mentioned in this memoir. He was known to all the police in Usmanabad district as the most versatile pickpocketer and lifter of goods. He had contacts with the police in various police station and markets. The moment the police came to know that Sopan had a windfall ring in pickpocketing;
they used to come for searching him all the way. Whenever Sopana met the police, he threw big parties for them. Gaikwad narrates: “Sopan often told us that if these dogs were given money, they never harassed you. On the contrary they supplied you as much tea and as many *bidis* as you wanted.”(122) Here the corrupt nature of police is observed. The police authority always viewed that *Uchalya* community is criminal by birth typically narrated through the dialogue of Sopan. There were several accounts of humiliation and exploitation by the police. Many people of this community had been permanently disabled by the police beating.

The dominant people of the village exploited *Uchalya* in their ignorance and poverty. They were treated inhumanly and mercilessly. The dominant people gave loans to this deprived class, charging a rate of interest of ten percent for eight days. Whatever the people of Uchalya returned from thieving trips is adjusted against the interest only, the principal amount remaining ever untouched. The Police Patil of the village charges a monthly tax on every *pickpocketer* and unscrupulously recovers it from them.

In the villages in which they live they cannot engage in any trade or occupation, for owing to untouchability no Hindu will deal with them. It is therefore obvious that there is no way of earning a living which is open to the untouchables so long as they live as a dependent part of the Hindu village. (Dr. Ambedkar 31)

The people of *Uchalya* community visited crowded fairs, festivals and markets of all over Maharashtra. If an entire gang gets apprehended at any time the members of their family face hard days and they often go without food. On such occasions the Police Patil pleads with the rich people in the town to get the arrested people released. There are also lawyers who have built their houses and feathered their own nests on the money extorted from the people of *Uchalya* community. Gaikwad attacks the corrupt nature of lawyers as “I know at least one lawyer in Aurangabad, who personally visits the places wherever our people are
arrested and secures their release but extorts exorbitant amount from them in the bargain.”(181)

Laxman and his friends went on thieving missions so that they could bring some cash for their bread and butter. Surprisingly, major portion of their loot went to policemen, local political leader, money lender, proprietors, goldsmiths and liquor vendor. They could keep only a meager ten percent of the actual cash. The remained were pocketed by police, village headmen, the merchants and goldsmith. Others filled their coffers through the thefts by the Pathruts. The corrupted police and the dominant people made the Pathruts/ Uchalya miserable and helpless. The narrator narrates:

Police inspectors–in-charge of the areas where the people of our communities reside in large numbers have filled their coffers and had fattened on the spoils received from the community. They stick close to political leaders to ensure that they do not get transferred from these places. Our people live in Kawatha, Salgara, Bhadgaon and live on picking and stealing. The money brought from outside goes into the pockets of the people of these places. And the rich people of these places latch on to our people. The money lenders, the proprietors of gambling dens, and the liquor vendors of these places have built their fortunes by exploiting our community. (Gaikwad 181)

Once, the people of Uchalya community were assaulted at Kawatha, a popular village of Uchalya community. The influential people of higher castes had united and attacked Uchalya community for the reason that they had refused to pay exorbitant contribution for the Mahadeo Fair. As Mahadeo Fair approached near, Uchalya community used to go on thieving trips. They collected large amounts and paid the Mahadeo Fair Tax before meeting even the daily expenses of the household or spending money on their own children. These dominant people of village flaunt the name and prestige of Kawatha and arranged wrestling
contests with the money extracted from the *Uchalya* community. Such exploitation of *Uchalya* is typically narrated by Gaikwad in one way or the other.

The rich people of the villages squeezed the life of *Uchalya* community. They lend money at high rates of interest. If a debtor fails to return the loan, he is caught, tied and kept under unlawful restraint in the house. Gaikwad puts an account of his brother-in-law who was exploited and blamed. He was also denied justice and punished under the false charges. The narrator made an account of the incident such as:

Once a shopkeeper grabbed my brother-in-law, beat him severely and locked him up in his shop. He was not released till money was paid. In fact our people in Kawatha live a slave’s life. Where can they go to seek justice? If they go to the police with the complaints of the beatings and harassment, the police arrest and lock them up in prison. Hence the meek and silent surrender to these harassments.

(193)

Once, Maratha hooligans from the village Sindhwadi had attacked the *Wadar* community because they had taken water from a public well. Hanamant *Wadar* was killed in the attack. Then Maratha brought pressure on the *Wadar* forcing them to bury in the village. They prohibited the Wadars from going out of the village lest they inform the police and the news become public. Similarly a Pardhi family of Moha in Taluka Kalamb was harassed and misbehaved. The police and the landlords of this region in Usmanabad district had deliberately created condition in which the *Pardhis* were forced to resort to thieving and poaching.

The circumstances forced the *Uchalyas* to steal. The police built houses and feathered their nests on the earning of these thieves of *Uchalyas*. They confiscated the alleged stolen goods and other articles of these people. But they did not show in their register the particulars of all the confiscated goods; only damaged and
useless property was registered. The goods that were in a good condition were shared by the police among themselves. The narrator Gaikwad provides an account where Pardhis were badly alleged as:

On many occasions the Pardhis show receipt for the goods confiscated. But the police tear these receipts and misappropriate the goods. The poor Pardhis are helpless. Their plight is like that of miserable dumb women in a well-known saying: ‘A dumb women complains, but there’s neither a whimper nor a howl.’ (198)

The police and the Government administration brought false charges against innocent persons like Hirabai and poor child in this lower class. They were arrested instead of giving this tribe opportunity to develop. Many children of Nomadic and De-notified Tribes were accused of being criminals and jailed in their childhood. In fact, it was the police who pushed the young one of these tribes into criminal activity by such barbarous treatment.

There are several accounts of humiliation and exploitation in the present memoir. There was a quite sizeable Laman Tanda, situated at Murum in Taluka Umrup. Some landlords from that place forcibly raped a young girl from this Tanda. Babu Rathod reacted against the assault and debauches the people of Tanda. In the result, these hooligans in a drunken condition descended on these poor people and indulged in all sort of debauchery. Gaikwad narrates: “Their landlordish ego was hurt by this admonition; they returned to their place and collected hooligans, plied them with drinks, brought them to the Laman Tanda and attacked the people mercilessly.”(202) Babu Rathod, his wife and mother were seriously injured in the attack. They were beating Babu Rathod so severely that his wife threw herself on his body begging the hooligans not to beat him. Her three year old daughter was in her arms. The landlords along with their hooligans attacked them so cruelly that they did not spare even the young child. At last she
was so badly wounded and died on the spot. Thus the deprived classes were frequently harassed by the police and landlords of the villages in this memoir.

The innocent people of the deprived classes were unnecessarily blamed as a thief and arrested by the police. These people were beaten brutally by the police on false charges. Gaikwad made a detailed account of exploitation of Masanjogi in Salukwadi in Ahmedpur Taluka. The Masanjogi’s of Salukwadi lived in similar way begging and asking for meager livelihood of life. Once, a landlord of Kingaon was robbed. He was a man of high repute in the town. He was after the police to find the culprits. The police went directly to Masanjogi’s locality without going to any other place. The police began to ask each and every person to show cash memos of their objects. The police asked for cash-memos of the clothes worn. The Masanjogi’s began to weep embracing one another. The merciless police continued beating these innocent people with sticks all the while. Actually there was no relation between the robbery occurred in the house of landlord of Kingaon and the Masanjogies.

Similar terrifying incidents occurred with Jayaba Gaikwad who belonged to the Pathrut tribe lived at Ganjur in Taluka Ahmedpur. He lived by farming and supplemented his income by operating a tile polishing machine for building contractors. He also worked at a lake project under the Employment Guarantee Scheme. The police went to Ganjur to arrest Jayaba, the reason was that he belonged to the Pathrut tribe, that was one of the tribes notified as criminal. On this occasion he begged and pleaded, “Sahib, I’m working here by this lake for the last six months. I’ve committed no unlawful act. Why do you arrest me?” (208)

Thus the innocent Jayaba was arrested simply because he belonged to one of the criminal tribes. Yet he was cruelly beaten so much that the skin from his body had peeled off. He was hung by his legs with his head hanging down and lashed on the soles with a whip many times a day. Finally he could not bear the
beatings and tortures for a long time. So he confessed that he had committed the theft. In fact Jayaba was not involved in any unlawful act. There are innumerable incidents of exploitation, degradation and humiliation occurred with these deprived tribes narrated by Gaikwad in this memoir.

2.1.4 Narration of Poverty

Dalit Autobiographies have enlisted a number of problems such as superstition, hunger, poverty, exploitation, casteism, illiteracy, humiliation, Jatpanchayat, subjugation of women in the oppressed classes. The reflection of poverty is a major aspect of the oppressed classes narrated in the presented work. The poverty is the root cause behind the oppression of Dalits at the hands of the higher caste people. An unequal distribution of wealth has supported the dominant people of the society to enjoy power and freedom while the deprived are forced to live miserable lives. The suppressed voice of these down trodden classes was mute and passive due to their poverty. Dr Agarwal comments: “They could not do anything to get rid of these circumstances as their economic dependence on high caste people, does not allow them to raise their voice against injustice done to them.”(63) The life of these underprivileged classes passed under oppression and exploitation. These subjugated people could not raise their voice against injustice for centuries. Poverty was one of the major barriers in the life of these deprived classes. The dominant people of the village were responsible for poverty among the down trodden classes.

The Branded is the milestone in Dalit memoirs which narrated the problem of poverty in Uchalya community. It is one of the lowest classes existed by thieving, lifting and pickpocketing. Actually the people of this community had no choice of work. They were branded as born criminals by the so called established class. So they were not allowed to do regular work in order to survive like other people of the village. The main stream society had fully exploited the Uchalya people for their own selfish purposes. They were not basically intended to steal for
survival. The established system compelled them to steal for their selfish purposes. These people were denied of all the decent and lawful means of livelihood. The tribes were branded and distrusted socially so much that no one offered work to them. They were not employed even on chores done in the woods. Subsequently, the poverty was an essential part of their life. Laxman Gaikwad had experienced from his childhood the poverty and miserable life of his community in which he lived and struggled. The narrator regrets to say that the so-called intellectuals, middle class have no idea of the sorrows of his community. So he brought into notice of the learned people the sorrows and plight of his community as:

It is high time that the established political and social leaders and classes set aside their prejudices and preconceptions about my community and began to rethink, in humanistic terms. At the same time those of us who have acquired the benefits of modern education must not forget the inherent bond and must ever remain committed to the betterment of the lot our mother community. It is with this dual purpose that I undertake to write down the following ranking account of my life. (Gaikwad viii)

There were several situations and incidents where the aspect of poverty is keenly observed in the present work. Gaikwad did not know his native place and birth date. He tried to bring to our notice the realistic account of the Uchalya community and their existence. The sorrows and painful life portrayed by the writer is definitely the worst on the part of humanity. The condition of the hut where the writer grew is completely in dilapidated condition. Gaikwad narrates:

It is there that I grew through childhood and youth. I still remember our hut. It was nothing more than a low, hay thatched roof. All of us had to crawl on our hands and lances to get in or out. (01)

The people of the Uchalya community could not receive their fundamental needs such as food, clothes and shelter even after the Independence of India. They
hardly received new well-fitting clothes. The clothes they received were by stealing and begging. The women of *Uchalya* bought sarees at cheap rates from person who had stolen them from markets. Torn clothes were used for making quilt. They lived in the hut which was dirty. They were crowded thick in it like a cluster of fleas. The brother of narrator Harchanda and himself slept beside their sheep in one and the same hut. The member of the family shivered and froze in winters. There were only one coverlet between Harchanda and the narrator himself. Sometime the dogs snuggled down in their coverlet. Lamb was also tied nearby them. The lamb pissed and the hot water trickled under their bodies. The lamb’s hot piss felt comfortably warm like a warm covering. They wished lambs kept on pissing so that it warded off the chilly feeling.

The accommodation facilities of the people were not better than the cattle itself. The people of the *Uchalya* community could not get proper food too. They had to wander for food from place to place. Most of the time, they remained with empty stomach. The problem of food was an essential problem in their life. Poverty laid these people towards miserable condition. Yet, the people of *Uchalya* had no provision for two time meals. Gaikwad narrated the critical condition of his community while fulfilling their stomach as:

We not only gathered the wheat found in rat-holes but also caught the rats. Tata and I would carry flint with us. I would collect sticks and dry grass and make fire, with the help of the flint. Then we would roast the rats caught in the fields. We did not wait to eat fill we reached home, we ate right there in the woods and the remains we carried home for my mother. Tata had filled four *mutkule* with this stolen wheat. Our Dada and Anna were married on the strength of this wheat. As I always accompanied Tata on his hunting expeditions, I had eaten any kind and number of animals: rats, rabbits, mongoose, deer, iguanas, fox, partridges, ducks, cranes, doves, tortoise, fish, wild, cats, pigeons, pigs, crabs, sheeps, goats, water-hens, peacocks. (10)
The mainstream society made the position of the community of *Uchalya* to beg door to door. They were not offered any work in the village. The life of *Uchalya* was equally as a beggar. Gaikwad rightly narrated the begging of his sister-in-law in poverty as: “Madam, the poor child is hungry; please give him a few stale pieces of leftover bhakar.” (24)

There was the hectic activity of stitching and repairing the roof in the hut of narrator in every rainy season. The poverty in the house of the narrator can be observed through the following abstract.

The hut used to be wet over, there used to be pools of water. One person had to remain at home only to remove the rain water. Whatever it leaked, we placed a basket, a tin bowl or a flat metal plate to catch the rain water. It leaked at so many that even all the utensils were not enough to take care of the leaking spots. We had to sleep on the wet floor with rain water dripping from above. (24)

The narrator’s mother worked herself to the bone to maintain the family. Once she was down with fever. So the milk-selling business was stopped. The father of the narrator sold some sheep and managed to get meager food. They sold their animals one by one just to get something to eat. The family member of the writer had not enough money to take his mother to a hospital. Gaikwad narrates: “We did not have even a couple of rupees to take mother, who had carried the burden of the household on her shoulders, to Jawali.”(29) This critical condition was prevailed upon the narrator due to his dire poverty. It is rightly said that poverty should not touch anybody.

Dhonbadai, the mother of the narrator at last died in her illness and left behind her whole family in most difficult days without food, all the people in the house began to weep and wail after knowing that Dhondabai has expired. Dada, a brother of narrator was to go Jawali to see mother’s body. So he took two plates and a copper pot to raise money against them. Actually the pot had their own
names engraved on them; even then the village people thought that the pots might be stolen property and they refused to advance money against them. The village people did not believe in Uchalya community. So the people of Uchalya had to go through every difficulty in their path of life. The narrator, his brother Harchanda was not unable to see their mother’s dead body for the last time due to lack of money. Poverty brought every obstacle’s in their routine life. Yet, these people never got even a single full meal a day.

There were no comfortable days in the household of Uchalya community. It was always poverty and a wretched, groveling life. Only on major festival day’s narrator and his family could prepare Chapattis out of hardly a quarter kilo wheat. Such kind of dire poverty was an essential part in Uchalya community. There were difficult days for the narrator to live in poverty. Many times he was not able to maintain his family. Her brother Harchanda was prone to frequent epileptic fits. So he did not work. The narrator was tired of looking after Harchanda. Though the narrator was his younger brother, he used to abuse him for having no work; sometimes he beats him or rushes at him in anger. Harchadra worked as a helper under a mason and bring home five- ten rupees. But he fell down in a fit while working. So masons were reluctant to give him work. The narrator’s father used to visit Latur once in a while. He used to enquire about the state of affairs. The narrator complained against Harchanda for his helpless condition. Out of frustration in poverty the narrator threatened and ordered to his own brother to leave his house.

Go, get out die or beg and eat. Let me not see you in Latur tomorrow, otherwise I’ll hand you over to the police. The police at ready have your name in their list of thieves’. That really frightened him and he prepared to go. (145)

The father of the narrator was always positive. He looked after his family in a dire poverty. He was an independent at the very end of his life. He always
insisted Gaikwad for schooling. He purchased a notebook and a pencil for him in an adverse situation. The father fell ill while struggling with poverty at his house. He used to live with Bhagwan Anna for a fortnight, and then he used to come and live with the narrator himself. The father of narrator used to get good meals at the landlord’s house where he had served for many years. Whatever he could get with the narrator and his brother Bhagwan Anna in two meals a day was not enough to satisfy his hunger. There was harassment of father in a dire poverty. The narrator honestly accepts his inability to provide food to his father as:

Father very well understood that I told him to go only because of the acute scarcity of food at my house. In fact, I used to look after him as well as I could. Baba always preferred to live with me. Sister-in-law would treat him curtly and starve him with scanty and untimely meals. While she would serve her children she would grumble: ‘for how many days shall we maintain you, you lazy lout. This harassment had broken him. My father was a tall man with a good bone–structure. Now he looked only a skeleton. (171)

Tata, mother, Harchandra and father were neglected due to poverty. These family members could not receive proper treatment in the house due to their dire poverty. They had not enough money to pay dispensary expenses to come out from their diseases. Tata died in fever and with a severe pain in stomach. The mother of Laxman Gaikwad also died in illness. The father fell ill and was harassed due to poverty in their house. He had not received medicines in his illness. So he also died in such a dire poverty. The poverty became worst in Gaikwad’s family. So he narrates: “Poverty took away my mother. She died miserably a poor woman. Harchanda was missing. Father was the only sustaining link with the rest of the family. Now, that too was snapped. He could have lived some more years. But poverty deprived him of medical aid, starvation killed him. His thought made me very sad.”(173) Poverty created every problem in the family
of the narrator. It made their life miserable and helpless. The narrator realized the crucial reality of poverty.

Poverty followed after the death of the narrator’s father is a realistic account made by Gaikwad through the present memoir. The narrator had no money for the cremation of his own father’s dead body. There was a Marwadi woman whom the narrator supported as his sister. She helped him by giving one hundred rupees to carry out funeral procession. Thus poverty followed the narrator and his community even after death too. It is rightly observed in the poem entitled ‘Poverty As My Own Independence Piece of Land’:

Destiny willing, the form may change or may not
Even then poverty itself is my own independent
Piece of land
And as I cultivate it my days rise
And my days fall… (Dhasal 73)

2.1.5 Superstition and Blind Belief

Superstition is also one of the major problems in Uchalya community narrated through The Branded by Gaikwad. The energy and time of Uchalya community was lost in struggling for bread and butter. The problem of hunger and poverty started from the birth of these people. Illiteracy was also a common problem occurred in this community. They remained uncivilized and unsettled in their wandering from one place to another in search of their food. The social and economic status of these people was lower and inferior. They lived in superstition due to their lack of education. The community mentioned in the memoir Uchalya was far away from education. Eventually, the problem of superstition was an essential part of Uchalya community. If anybody of their community wished to leave the village, they had to obtain permission from Police Patil of the village. So
everybody had been given a pass of their own identity. The people of Uchalya community believed in their pass and worshiped it. The narrator puts an account of blind belief in his family as:

Thus the ‘pass’ came to be worshipped as god and the ‘blade’ Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, in our family. Whenever my grandfather, grandmother, and the others in my family set out on a thieving mission, they bought a cock and sacrificed it to the blade, sprinkled some drops of its blood on the blade and the pass; and prayed: O God! Grant us success; let our thieving operation be blessed with success, save us from the police.’ Then everybody, in turn, bowed in obeisance before the blade and the pass just as people do before gods in temples. (Gaikwad 03)

The situation was all strange when Gaikwad had started going to school. All the urchins from the school started harassing him by throwing stones at him. The reason was that Uchalya’s child had dared to attend the school. The student from upper class was unpleasant to see Uchaya’s child in school. Suddenly, the children living nearby narrator’s hut were affected by loose motions and vomiting. Actually there was no relation between narrator’s going to school and loose motion among children living nearby. But the neighbors of Gaikwad accused him for being responsible for the epidemic illness occurred in the village. The detail account of such experience of narrator is observed as:

Because you have admitted your son to school, our children are suffering from loose motion and vomiting. Never had our lane suffered from cholera before. No illness or epidemic had touched our lane. Look, Martanda, since your bastard of a son has started going to school, diseases are visiting us. We are not merchants and Brahmins to admit our children to school. Has anybody from the thieves community ever gone to school? Oh Martand! Schooling was never good for us. Has anybody from among our forefathers ever gone to school? If our children started going to school, our race would be doomed. Goddess Yellamma will be
furious. Look Martanda, if your son continues to go to school, we shall call the Panchayat and ostracize you. (16-17)

The people of *Uchalya* Community remained savage due to their lack of education. There was no awareness of education among these people. So they lived their complete life in superstition and ignorance. Superstitions and blind beliefs were always barriers in the progress of the community. The education was far away from these deprived classes. They never realized their real problem in their illiteracy. The main stream society never tried to bring these marginalized groups in the flow of education. Yet, they were oppressed and subjugated in the name of religion and caste.

*Uchalya* community is caught in the number of problems such as poverty, hunger illiteracy, casteism, corrupt system, exploitation, injustice, humiliation in their every path of life. Every problem of the community revolved around superstition and illiteracy. Gaikwad brought into our notice the beliefs of his own community by providing different incidents occurred in his life. The narrator says, “As we neared the hut, after fishing, Tata would spit and ask me to spit too, When I asked him why we should spit, he replied, ‘A ghost, an evil spirit, accompanies us’ We should spit so that it runs away.” (19) Such kind of common belief is keenly observed in this community.

Gaikwad puts his own account of his childhood when he was covered with boils all over his head. There were so many boils that pus and water oozed out of them. His hair was stuck up together in places with sticky pus and water. The narrator’s mother believed in Mother Goddess and promised her to offer a goat to cure his son from disease. But the promise was not completed by the mother. So she regrets for her mistake to forget the goddess. She supposed herself as a victim of the anger of the Goddess.
This disease seems to be the cure of the Goddess. Harlot that I am, I gave up fasting on Tuesdays and so my poor son is afflicted with this dirty disease: She brought ash of the cow dung-cake from the store and prayed, ‘Oh! Goddess-Mother! Please cure my child of this disease. As long as I don’t sacrifice a goat to you, I shall fast both in Fridays and on Tuesday. She smeared my head with that ash and applied it to the sores. (25)

Such superstitious belief of mother is viewed by the narrator. Actually there were many members of this community victimized with the problem of superstition and illiteracy. There were innumerable practices of superstitions based on irrational things in Pathrut Community. They lost much of their time in following their rituals and customs. Gaikwad puts an account of her grandmother’s belief.

Gaikwad’s family had built a temple of the Goddess in their village. The image of the Goddess which was installed in the temple was brought by narrator’s grandmother from Tuljapur, a sacred place of Goddess Bhavani. The mother had gone there on a thieving trip. In fact she had brought it as a pumice stone for cleaning the feet and body while taking a bath. Here mother supposed that the Goddess of Tuljapur came in her trance and said: “I’m not a pumice stone. I am the Goddess of Tuljapur. Install me here; the pumice stone was installed there and the temple was built. So our family had the honor and privilege of worshiping that mother Goddess. Oil and red ochre were applied to the image. With repeated applications the stone mother now weighed sixty-seven kilos.” (26) The strong belief of the mother in the Goddess of Tuljapur is observed. There were a number of people in Uchalya community who became the victims of such blind beliefs.

Once, mother of Gaikwad Dhondabai was down with fever. So the milk-selling business stopped. It was a question of bread in the family of narrator. So father sold some sheep in the house and managed to fulfill the stomach of the family member for some days. But soon they found it difficult even to get meager
food. They began to sell their animals one by one just to get something to eat. Even they were unable to provide for dispensary expenses to the mother in their dire poverty. No doubt poverty was also one of the major factors behind their every struggle of life. So they could not take mother to hospital. But at the same time the people of Uchalya community believed in black magic. Gaikwad says, “We only applied sacred ash to her and said Ma is afflicted by an evil spirit.’ Ma said,’ There is a person at Jawali who knows how to exercise a spirit. Take me to him” (29) The superstitious belief was supposed to be an essential part of the Pathrut’s life observed in the present memoir.

Once, Gaikwad set out with his elder brother on thieving mission for Tuljapur Fair. On the day of departure Bhau, an elder brother of the narrator stole a cock and bought a Bharat blade. He cut the cock with the blade; its blood was sprinkled on everybody’s passes and the family Goddess. All bowed in respect before the blade, the passes and Goddess, and prayed: “O mother Goddess, Tulja Bhavani! Bless us with success in our thieving mission! Bless us with valuable things!”(48) As usual they all prayed and bowed in obeisance before the basket and the beads of the Goddess and set out on the mission of thieving. Actually there was no relation between the mission of thieving and sacrificing a cock before Goddess. But the community is followed their blind faith in Goddess since ages. It is imbibed such tradition of sacrificing animal before goddess to complete the desire of every human being.

_Uchalya_ people were victimized in various problems. Gaikwad as a member of this community put every ups and downs of this society. He has tried to put every account of good and bad practices of the community truthfully. The people of Uchalya never saw comfortable days in their household. It was always poverty and a wretched, groveling life. They prepare Chapattis out of hardly a quarter kilo wheat only on major festival days. These people were under the haunting fear of the evil black magic of a sorceress. They suspected that their
neighbour, Gaikwad’s cousin’s wife Anjali indulged in sorcery. So they always kept marking huts and cowries shells at hand while boiling Puran. Gaikwad’s sister-in-law resolved to teach Anjali a lesson on one festival day. She believed that Anjalibai took away their Puran and left her bhakar with them by using witchcraft. So Gaikwad’s sister-in-law started a fire in the mud-stove and put a utensil filled with water on it, as if she was boiling gram dal in it. Then instead of chanadal she put cow dung in the utensil. Such a blind belief in sorcery of Gaikwad’s sister-in-law received nothing in hand after waiting for result. The futile attempt of believing in black magic is narrated by Gaikwad: “We waited, watching eagerly on that day, but nothing happened. Then the sister-in-law explained: The harlot has found out our trick and it has boomeranged on us. I’ll take care of her on the next Festival day.”(85)

Actually there was no reality in sorcery but the members of the community indulged in such activity blindly. They lost their time and money in such a false activity. We have also observed the superstitious belief hidden in the advice of Gaikwad’s fathers that if one sat continuously for a month between arui and a berry tree and then buried a rupee between these trees located in cemetery, one would always be left with a rupee. The foolish attempt of the narrator is also revealed through his belief in the advice of his father. So Gaikwad searched for a place where a felt plant and a berry tree grew near each other. And he relieved himself between them every day for a month without fail. He also parted with a rupee leaving nothing in his pocket. It was all in vain. This failure had put him in suspicion about such superstitious belief.

Gaikwad confessed castes and sub-castes of his own community. He also noted the records of some rituals in these people. One Varma Bangar had returned from a pilgrimage to Balaji. The Wadar Community was one of the sub castes which arranged a function in his honor at Lamjana. Many people of this community from Andhra and Karnataka had come to this function. Gaikwad was a
witness of such a different form of worship. He saw a form of worship of Balaji that was quite different from that of the other Hindus. Varma Bangar had gone on a pilgrimage to Balaji and the belief was that when he returned it was Balaji himself who came back in the person of Varma. The function started and all the people of the wadercaste began to sing a Telugu song. They danced to the beat of Tumdyas. Tumdyas are made of iguana-skin. The food for the offering was prepared in the house. Varma Bandgar was bathed after the offering was taken. He was taken outside the town in wet clothes to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Gaikwad narrates the incident:

I was watching the function very attentively. The entire participant sat on a road outside the town. Varma was given the holy offering to eat on a piece of wet cloth. One more offering was placed on the road followed by an invocation in Telugu in loud voice: Oh God Balaji, now you may return to your place. Now do not worry about us’. While they were shouting thus, Varma went into a trance and when he came out of it, all the people returned to their homes. (192)

Thus the different kind of worship is observed by the narrator in the community of Wadar. The customs and rituals of these deprived classes were the extra burden in their way of life. They were victimized in the name of religious belief from their birth to death. These oppressed classes were fully involved in completing their fundamental needs. They had not enough power to struggle with outer agencies which were dominating since ages in the name of God, religion and caste. It was obligatory for these people to follow customs and traditions which were out of their expenses. The mainstream society had looked down upon these people on various issues of their day to day life and inflicted number of restrictions and exploited them. Most of the time these oppressed classes were participated in illegal and unlawful activity by the force of dominant class. Actually there was no relation of a Hindu tradition and culture with these down
trodden classes. But these enslaved classes had mandatory to follow the spiritual culture in the name of God directly.

*Uchalay* community was also grateful to follow the customs and rituals. The narrator himself was also exploited under the norms of religion and rituals in this oppressed class. Once there was no one to carry the earthen pot with a fire in it in coir net after the death of Gaikwads elder brother Anna. So everybody asked Gaikwad as the youngest brother to carry the fire-jar toward funeral place. Actually it was against his wishes and beliefs. He narrates: “I had no faith in the tribal customs and tradition and did not in the least care for God or Godhood. Yet I had to bow to the wishes of the gathered relatives. Anna’s corpse and I were given a ritual bath. Coir net was prepared. In the coir net was placed an earthen jar with the ritual in it” (216)

Gaikwad had observed humorous account of his Anna’s funeral procession. It was an occasion of unhappiness and sorrow. The community celebrates the funeral procession under the influence of liquor. The people were ready to do anything in the name of rituals and customs. Thus the controversy is observed by the narrator through the abstract.

All present lent their shoulders in lifting Anna’s body and carrying it to the cremation ground. All of them were fully intoxicated. Drums were being beaten in front of the funeral procession. At one time, Manikdada, fully under the influence of liquor, tried to pass Anna’s body on to somebody’s shoulder. In the attempt he let go his end of the Anna’s body. When it was about to fall on the ground the person nearby supported it and saved it from falling to the ground but they too were drunk. (216)

Thus superstitious belief of the community was also one of the recurring problems analyzed by the narrator. Gaikwad has provided several accounts of their community involved in superstitious beliefs and customs. They were paralyzed by
such beliefs and traditions. Yet, they made a difficult condition to survive in such a critical situation. The problem of basic needs and superstitious belief in Uchalya Community were common and made their life miserable and sorrowful. Thus traditional beliefs caused backwardness in this community forever. Gaikwad attempts to liberate this deprived class from the age old customs, traditions and rituals. It is observed through his own words: “I had no faith in the tribal customs and tradition and did not in the least care for God or Godhood.”(216)

2.1.6 The Status of Woman

Indian women were considered as a commodity and trivial object by men without their distinct status as human being. The patriarchal culture was supported by so called caste, religion and scripture which made the life of Indian women miserable and not better than a beast. It is ironical that on one hand women were worshiped as goddess and entitled to high status in society; on the other hand they were subject to several bonds of slavery and operation. Cruel and lawless rules of Manu and several others imprisoned Indian women in solid bonds of Varna, caste, religion and patriarchy. She was crushed under the debris of slavery in the name of religion and customs. The position of Dalit women was even more crucial under the influence Hindu culture. “Dalit women also were under the spell of Hindu rituals, blind faiths due to ignorance and inferiority complex” (Bhave 16).

The underprivileged people were brutally exploited and humiliated in the name of social stratification by the mainstream society. The role of women was always denied and exploited her being at centre. It is analyzed the real status of Dalit women as:

Condition of Dalit women was deplorably pitiable. They faced dozens of problems simply because they were females. Upper caste people in society always looked at them as consumable commodity. Men and boys teased, molested, seduced them and at time misused their womanhood. Dalit women were treated in
a fashion as if they were public property like urinals and toilets. People satisfied their sexual hunger through immoral and forceful relations with them. Girls were sold and purchased like a beast in village. (Jain 9-10)

The identity of the women was unnoticed by the established social system. She was always forced to remain at a subordinate position. She was frequently exploited and tortured in the name of caste, gender and religion. Her world was revolved around to beget child and kitchen. Dr B. R. Ambedkar got down to the root of the stratification which based on caste, gender and religion. According to him ‘Women are gateways to the caste system’. Women were restricted to a certain environment to make sure that they would never have contact with a man from other caste. Patriarchy always tended to control female sexuality. The status of the women belonged to lower castes was not equally better than the women of upper caste. Even they were double slaved.

The women of lower caste were exploited and harassed not only by their own community but also by the upper class dominant people. Her life was full of struggle and pain. Her existence was not equally considered at all in both the classes of lower and upper. It is rightly talked about Dalit women: “Most disturbing was the awareness that there is a hierarchy within Dalit, within the last lowest rung of the caste system, ladder. One obviously example is that of Dalit women.” (Phadke 57) No doubt the women of lower community were caught in the various problems such as patriarchy, gender and caste.

The women of lower caste were deprived of every kind of freedom. They were continuously struggling for bread and butter along with their husbands. They involved undoubtedly in household activities. They followed their husband like shadow in every difficulty. They looked after their children and broken hut. The women of lower caste worked with their husbands continuously. Yet, they worked more than their husbands in their household. They took care of their family
members ignoring their needs. Mostly the persons of lower class were addicts of liquor. Thus they were lodged with every kind of trouble and burden of their families. Such oppressed women are viewed in helpless condition in all the Dalit memoirs.

The women portrayed in the memoir Balut by Daya Pawar are the victim of all kinds of exploitation and operation. The mother of Daya Pawar was always supportive in her family. She praised her husband and involved him in every activity. She nourished her children after the death of her husband. The Grandmother of Daya Pawar struggled in her life without any kind of comfort and pleasure. The beautiful woman named Banu is divorced by her husband and lived an isolated life without her husband. Vithabai is also one of the women characters in Balut. She was born in scheduled caste family. But she used to live like upper class woman and her language was also seemed sophisticated. She always felt nervous due to her problem of barrenness. Jamna aunty had a different sorrow. She looked beautiful and it was her offence. The beautiful woman born in lower class had to live a life of harlot. So Jamna had lived like a harlot. She loved Daya Pawar and showered shadow of affection. But Daya Pawar did not show his identity to her so far as to damage his image. Taibai is also a hard worker woman who lived all alone and stood on her legs and supported her brother.

Shantabai Kamble is another Dalit woman writer. Her autobiography entitled Mazya Janmachi Chittathararak Katha is a representative of bold and independent women. The husband of Shamtabai Kamble was a teacher and left her alone without any support. The women depicted in Outsider by Narendra Jadhav are also unfortunate. Masamay, Chandamai, Santamay are the women portrayed in the memoir Outsider are divorced and left by their husbands. These women are treated inhumanely by touchable and untouchable for their self-interest. They had to live their life with full of miseries and trouble in the society. Chandamay had no
children. So she is left with her only child by her husband. Thus women in *Outsider* are misbehaved by the people and their husbands.

The women seemed to be an enemy of herself is narrated by Baby Kamble in her autobiography entitled *The Prisons We Broke*. The woman married in their early age is portrayed by Baby Kamble. The women are exploited with different reasons at her sister-in-law’s house, viewed in this memoir. The mother of Kishor Kale was also dishonored and humiliated at every path of her life depicted in the memoir *Against All Odds*. Shantabai, mother of kale accepted Krushna Wadkar as a husband illegally leaving her own children behind her. But she was beaten and exploited by her owner at the very end of her life. One and all the Dalit memoirs reflected the pitiable and helpless condition of Dalit women. ‘Baby Kamble demonstrated how caste and patriarchy converge to perpetuate exploitative practice against women’’. (Pandit xv)

The women portrayed in *An Outsider* by Laxman Mane are significantly considerable and thought provoking. There are many notable incidents where Kaikadi women are tortured and subjugated on various grounds in their way of life. The oppressed and deprived women are mentioned in the present work such as Narrator’s Mother Anwari, Nani, Paru, Gajara, wife of Pingala Joshi, Sharda, Sari, Sari of Holar community and narrator’s Aunt Pari. The women presented in the memoir are influenced by the rigid conservative thoughts. These women are not allowed to go out without the permission of their husbands. Pingla Joshi took an objection when her wife came late. She says:

I spend all my life with this man each bone of my body has been out in his service. And seeing him in this condition, I could not possibly let him die. I went out to fetch the medicine prescribed by this brother of mine. And look at him suspecting me of no reason whatever. (Gaikwad 87)
The status of narrator’s mother was also not equally well in the family. She was badly treated and given secondary position in household activities. Even she was frequently beaten and abused in a rustic language. Her harassment can be observed in the words of her husband as “You bitch of a wife! You don’t treat him to be a beggar? I will certainly send him to school and make him a teacher or an officer. Who are you to poke your filthy nose into my affair, Women?” (22)

Parumami is another beautiful woman character raped cruelly by the villagers. As a result she is divorced by her husband. To be beautiful in Kaikadi Community seemed to be worse in the case of Parumami. In this regard a woman said, “A beggarly woman should always behave like a lady, she must not behave like a natch girl from the tamasha in makeup. Otherwise she will meet the same fate as Paru.” (85) Once, the husband of Parumami noticed her while combing her hair. He dropped her to the ground and sat on her chest snatching the mirror from her hand, he began hitting her the face with it. Actually nothing was wrong with Parumami when her husband was beating her. It is observed that the women of lower class were not given the right of combing. It is worst on the part of humanity that women had to go through such humiliation and exploitation. On one incident she is raped brutally by the young men. Her painful condition is observed in her own language as “It was terribly painful. The wolves didn’t leave me…my body has become a rotten log of wood now!” (84) The existence of women in lower class is completely collapsed. The incident occurred with Parumami is unlawful and inhuman.

The next oppressed woman character is Pingla Joshi’s wife. Once she came late after getting fathers prescribed some herbal plant which had got from the hill. Then Pingla Joshi suspects her and abused her “Bloody whore! You brazen bitch! I’ll get your mother screwed by a donkey. You old bitch! It is all over between the two of us….Out! Get out! I cannot stand the sight of you! Have gone crazy in your old age.” (86) The role of Pingla Joshi’s wife was constructive one. She is a
helpful character. But she was abused in rustic language by doubting her chastity. Gajara is another woman character dishonored for her adultery. The people of her community did not eat with her. All the Kaikadi houses stood together whereas Gajaras house stood apart.

Thus the women depicted in the memoir *An Outsider* are victimized and exploited on various grounds. The women are mortgaged for the need of money. Punnapa have mortgaged his wife to Dharme for last four years in the present work. Sharda is also one of the women characters attacked by the young fellow to fulfill their sexual hunger. Later on she is thrown away. As a result she died in her extreme pains and agonies. Thus all women characters presented in this memoir are deprived in one way or the other from beginning to the end of their life. The death was only one option before the women of the lower class to rescue from the bondage of slavery.

The women presented in the memoir *The Branded* are hard workers. They took every kind of responsibility of their family. It was regular in this community to subjugate woman under various issues and torture. Gaikwad’s Grandmother Narasabai ran the household whereas Lingappa, the father of narrator, was completely useless. He had to report the police station twice a day. Dhondabai is the mother of Gaikwad is not treated well by her husband Martand. He always tortured and beat her suspecting her infidelity. Whenever mother came late from her milk-selling rounds, father used to suspect and doubt her chastity, “You spend your time with your paramour! Saru is not my daughter.” (22) It was regular in this community to subjugate women under various issues and torture.

Saru was the Narrator’s elder sister. Whenever Saru came to visit her father’s house from her husband’s house, her father used to treat her very unkindly. Father’s negative approach towards Saru is observed. He always grumbled on mother in the case of Saru by saying, “Why do you take her in? Why
do you give her a sari and a blouse?” Yet, father used to force mother to do sit ups as a punishment. Dhondadai ran her family by milk – selling. She had bought three corrugated iron sheets out of the earnings from the milk- business. She replaced the grass-roof and the bamboo structure by the sheets and a stone wall. She blamed herself and worshiped goddess when her son’s head was covered with boils all over. She addresses:

This disease seems to be the curse of the goddess. Harlot that I am, I gave up fasting on Tuesdays and so my poor son is afflicted with this dirty disease. She brought ash of the cow dung- cake from the store and prayed, ‘Oh! Goddess – Mother! Please cure my child of this disease, As long as I don’t sacrifice a goat to you, I shall fast both on Friday and on Tuesday” (25)

The women are care takers of their whole family. She is worried of every member of the family. So she struggled to run her household smoothly at her level best. Every woman narrated in the present narrative is responsible of her household activities. They never lost their will power to struggle in any adverse situation. They accepted the reality and challenged every hurdle in their path.

Yellava is the bold woman narrated in the present memoir. She cut necklaces, Manglasutras and other trinkets very skillfully with her teeth. She was extremely smart and agile. On every round of thieving she collected about one to two ‘chhataks’ of gold. Elava was not dependent on any one kind of thieving. She used to steal anything. She used to lift bundles from shops, Pickpockets of groan-up men in large fair, cut necklaces, Mangalsutra, Vajratika, Bormaal from women’s necks or pilfer gold earring from children’s ears. Elava was agile enough to cut with her teeth gold ornaments of women. As Narasabai she was also an active thief and a hard worker. Every woman narrated is active in The Branded. They shared the responsibility of their household. The women are involved in rituals and tradition of their community. The bath is customarily performed with the sacred ritual of thread winding to arrange the bath for the bridegroom and the
bride. The role of four married women is required to pour the water from the bathing bowl on the bodies of the bridegroom and the bride. Kesarvahini, of the narrator, wound the ritual thread. Then Kashibai, elder sister-in-law of Gaikwad would begin to wind the thread round the bowl.

In the case of divorce, the women were given equal right in *Uchalya* community. If a husband or a wife is unwilling to continue marital relationship with his or her spouse, he or she is required to reimburse the marriage expenses in the panchayat settlement. If a husband severs marital relationship with his wife, he has to reimburse whatever the marriage expenses, claimed by the wife’s father. Conversely, it is the wife who must reimburse the marriage expense claimed by the husband, if she desires to sever the marital relationship.

Narsabai and Dhondabai are respectively Grandmother and Mother of Gaikwad. Both are treated inhumanly by the police. There are several accounts of their harassment and exploitation. The police grabbed Narsabai by her hair and thrashed her all over. They squeezed grandmother’s breasts asking her to show the stolen goods. Dhondabai is also inquired about her sari and its cash-memo by the police. The shameless police dared to ask her, “You harlot, where did you get such a costly sari? Do you have the case-memo for this sari? Show the cash-memo or take off the sari and hand it over to us”(61) She fell at their feet and touched their feet repeatedly. She prostrated herself on their feet and the police kept on kicking her. Thus the police treated Dhondabai inhumanly.

Padmini is a woman brought up by Dada, an elder brother of Gaikwad and sold her for two hundred fifty rupees. Here women are assumed as a commodity. One of the sister-in-laws was sleeping in the yard. Somebody came and brazenly lay on her. He pressed his hand on her mouth and lay by her side. Such harassment of women is ever occurred in this memoir. Once, the bridegroom’s mother’s mother had lived with a Maratha. So the bridegroom’s mother was born of a
Maratha father. Even if she herself had married a person of Uchalya community, the earlier taint was not thereby washed away. So the Panchas agreed to punish the woman by shaving her head. The narrator narrates the incident:

At last one of the panchas brought a razor, wetted the women’s hair with water and began to shave her head. The woman’s heart wept mutely in her agony. The sin of the mother was visited on the daughter. Even while the husband was alive, the panchayat shaved her head clean. Not satisfied with that, the panchas smeared her head with ochr. The bride’s mother had pushed the end of her sari into her mouth, lest her weeping be heard (121)

Thus such a punishment given by the panchayat to the women is a blot on humanity observed in the present memoir *The Branded*.

The wife of Gaikwad Chhabu is beaten on a mere suspicion. Actually she was quite fair. Gaikwad’s sister-in-law misguided him about his wife Chhabu. The domination over the women in this memoir is vividly observed by Gaikwad. He himself felt guiltiness towards his treatment given to his wife Chhabu.

Gaikwad’s wife’s grandmother hunch walked her back. She told that police beatings had broken her back. She narrated her story of harassment as:

I had a son, Ram by name. He was a versatile thief. While your wife was still a young girl, he had cut and picked a pocked. He got ten thousand rupees from it. The police came to know of it. About 25 to 30 police constables and an Inspector descended upon our village. They thrashed us all, kicked us with boots, and trampled on our prostrate bodies. They grilled us to tell them where we had kept the money. (143)

Thus the innocent women, children are also beaten and made permanently disabled by the police. The women of Uchalya community were not only
exploited by their own community but also the outer agencies like police and established upper class people.

Once Hirabai Kale, a Pardhi woman had given birth to a child. She had nothing to eat after her delivery. Her husband had been arrested under the charge of a theft. The woman lived only on water. At last she underwent a tubectomy operation under the family planning scheme for which she received Rs.200. She bought half a gunny-bag of high-quality Jowar out of the amount she received. A farmer of a neighbouring village happened to register a complaint of the theft of jowar at the time. The police could not trace the thief anywhere. At last they found half a gunny-bag of high quality jowar brought out of the amount the woman received. At last they found half a gunny-bag of high quality Jowar in the hut of this woman, who was still recovering from her recent delivery. In this regard she interacts with police:

The police grilled her: ‘From where did you get this half a gunny – bag of jowar”? Poor Hirabai begged and entreated piteously, ‘Saheb I’ve just delivered a child, and I’ve noting to eat. My husband, thanks to you, is in jail. I got myself operated under the family planning scheme. Out of the Rs.200 they paid for it, I’ve purchased this half a gunny – bag of jowar. Saheb, I’ve become so weak that I’ve no milk in my breasts for my offspring. That’s why I’ve purchased this jower. (199)

She even showed the medical chit that had recorded her operation. But the police simply ignored it and arrested Hirabai and put her in custody along with her offspring.

Changuna is Gaikwad’s wife’s cousin lived in Sholapur. She visited Kawatha village off and on. She maintained a household of eight members. She had three Husbands. In one trip she would bring back necklace, lockets pendants, Mangalsutras weighing several tolas. No one ever dared to apprehend her for she
dressed superbly and moved around bedecked in gold ornaments of three four tolas. Nobody even thought that such a woman could even stoop to stealing. Hence nobody ever suspected her. If a man or woman ever attempt to catch her, she could beat him and used to say, “You think I’m a thief, eh! I’ve servants like you in my employment”. She could drink three-four liters of toddy every day and eat half a kilo of meat. The Goldsmith who built a three-story building on the business Changuna gave him. She however died leaving her children naked and destitute. They were left without any means of livelihood for them, Thus she lived for others beneficiary.

There are many women who belong to Uchalya community struggled for bread and butter from the very outset of their life. All the women of lower castes are oppressed by different agencies. They are subjugated in the name of castes and gender. The women are victimized by the various man made forces. The narrator attempts to depict the marginalization of women in the name of caste, gender and religion through the present Dalit narrative.
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