Chapter IV
Exclusion and Marginalization in
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Exclusion and Marginalization in *The Branded: Uchalya*

This chapter reveals the life and literary works of Laxman Gaikwad. It explores Laxman’s social work as well as leadership. The chapter has dealt with Laxman’s negligible existence in family, threatening of school boys and police, his political exclusion, his working without wages, and denial of rooms. It also deals with the exclusion and marginalization of Uchalya community by the upper-caste Hindus, Police-Patil, Policemen, and their thieving profession. Gender-based marginalization and exclusion is also a part of this chapter.

4.1 Biographical Sketch of Laxman Gaikwad
Laxman Gaikwad was born on 23 July, 1956 at Dhanegaon in Taluka and District Latur in Uchalya community, a tribe classified as ‘criminal’ by the British Government. He is a social worker and writer by occupation. Laxman Gaikwad works relentlessly for social awareness of the de-notified and nomadic tribes in Maharashtra. Laxman’s father Martand and mother Dhondabai were very poor. They lived in hut having a low and hay thatched roof. His grandfather Lingappa was a well-known and respected thief in the all tribes in the Nizam State. His grandfather and grandmother maintained the household by picking pockets, lifting valuables and odd things at market and fairs. Laxman had five brothers and two sisters. His brothers—Manik, Shambhu, Harischandra and Bhagwan always dressed in loose, stolen shirts and shorts which were shapeless and ill-fitting. Laxman had two sisters—Ratna and Parvatibai. Laxman Gaikwad married to Chhabu an uneducated woman. He had two daughters—Sangita and Manjusha and a son, Prafulla. His children went to school. Chhabu helped him a good deal in his social work. She participated in rallies and exhorted women to work for their own upliftment. In his family, the pass given to them by the police Patil to travel from one place to another was
worshipped as ‘God’. The Bharat Blade was worshipped as Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth. And the police were received as the Yamadoot, the God of death.

Laxman actively participated in the movements of workers, field-labourers, hotel boys and women’s freedom. He was the organizer of Notified Tribes’ Latur-Mumbai Search journey during 1984. He expressed his thoughts on the Dalit society in the first Global Marathi Parishad (council) in Mumbai. To solve the questions of Nomadic Tribes, Gaikwad discussed with Rajiv Gandhi, V. P. Singh and P. V. Narasinhrao, three ex-prime ministers of India. Being one of the members of a delegation of writers, Gaikwad visited China to study the Chinese life style in 1994. He actively participated in the International Seminar Kanpur, Global Seminar on Adivasi Bhopal Madhya Pradesh, National Level Sahitya Sammelana Kochin Keral, State Level Seminar organized by Sahitya Akademi New Delhi, and Adivasi’s National Problems in Vadoda Gujrat.

4.2 His Literary Works
Laxman Gaikwad wrote about the various castes and tribes of Nomads in different monthlies and Diwali issues of dailies. He wrote in Marathi language. His literary career started with a ballad expounding the agonies of the exploited lot, in 1977. His autobiography Uchalya received several awards including Sahitya Akademi award in 1988.

1. **Uchalya** (The Pilferer), Sahitya Akademi Award-Winning autobiography by Laxman Gaikwad is a personal account of the life of a downtrodden that brought up in Uchalya community. *Uchalya*, originally written in Marathi, is translated into English by P. A. Kolharkar entitled as *The Branded*. ‘Uchalya’ literally means ‘pilferer’.

2. **Dubhang** (Fisher), a novel speaks of the consequences of Kilhari earthquake and deaths of men. It reveals how a village had turned into a graveyard.

3. **Chini Matitil Divas** (Days in Chinese Land) a travelogue based on his journey to China.
4. **Wadar Vedana** (Wadar Pains) a novel explains the condition and pains of Wadar tribes like Wadar, Patharwat, Mati Wadar, Gadi Wadar and Gimi Wadar. Though the protagonist, Tukaram, is a fictitious character, the life and living of Wadar community is real. Wadars live with various social problems. The main purpose of writing the novel is to expose the social reality, social growth and the selfish officers’ ways of living for themselves by forgetting his brethren. His forthcoming books are *Uthav* (Revolt) and *Freedom and Society*.

4.3 Awards and Honours

Laxman Gaikwad was awarded and felicitated by various agencies. He was awarded by National Sahitya Akademi New Delhi, Maharashtra Gaurav Award of one lakh rupees by the auspicious hands of late prime minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Samta Award Panghanti Pune and Sanjivani Award. By taking into consideration his work for exploited and humiliated, Municipal Corporation of Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Kolhapur and Aurangabad have felicitated Gaikwad Laxman as Civil Citizen. Moreover, he was the member of Jury in National Sahitya Akademi, Society for Communal Harmony, Delhi and also the member of National Human Rights Commission.

4.4 Influences

Gaikwad began to articulate his experiences for the poor Denotified and Nomads. His writing has been inspired by the stimulating encouragement of Laxman Mane of *Upra* fame and Shri Balkrishna Renke, the secretary of the Nomadic and Vimukta Tribes’ Association. It was the support and help of Sri Sharankumar Limbale of *Akkarmashi* fame that enabled him to tide over the difficulties in writing. Sri Bhagwanrao Deshpande, a Marxist, with unstinting and tireless efforts moulded Laxman. Gaikwad further gained confidence in the company of Sri Asaram Guruji, Prof Motiraj Rathod and Yallappa Vaidu Guruji. Bhagwanrao Deshpande was a card-holder of the Communist Party of India. Laxman had attended one of their camps and he was slowly coming under the influence of the Communist ideology.
4.5 Laxman Gaikwad as a Social Activist

Gaikwad experienced the poverty and exclusion of his community in which he was born, lived and struggled. He took a firm stand in the cause of his people with a resolute faith in their ultimate emancipation. He often gave voice to the Uchalyas' plight, trials and tribulations through lectures and discussions. He knows that his people need to be educated and taught to think. He also recognized that the Uchalyas must live decently and honourably eschew criminal and immoral ways of earning livelihood. They must educate themselves and unite in strength against the injustices inflicted upon them. To make aware of the sorrows of his community, Gaikwad began to write and appeal to the so-called intellectuals, important people and the middle class people. Gaikwad appeals to the established political and social leaders and classes to set aside their prejudices and preconceptions about his community and rethink in humanistic way. He says that the educated people who have acquired the benefits must not forget the inherent bond and must ever remain committed to the betterment of their mother-community. Laxman Gaikwad registered the Nomadic, De-notified Tribes' Educational Institution at Kawatha in Latur district in 1979. He established the Pathrat Samaj Organization. He also started Vimukta Cycle Mart on the Barsi Naka in Latur.

Gaikwad asks why the looters of crores of rupees are not branded. Ironically not those who pile up crores by sheer corruption and nepotism but those who pilfer a paltry sum of ten or fifteen rupees just for daily bread are branded as thieves and treated with leprous disdain. The people who are well-off and blessed with comforts in their worldly life, in his view, are greedily indulging in immoral, unlawful and corrupt ways. To gain the very fundamental rights to live as human beings, Gaikwad awakens the new consciousness among the Uchalyas.

As a social activist Laxman Gaikwad often travels and meets the people from several strata of society. His meetings with the people made him aware of and sensitive to the differences in ethical values and notions of honesty. He understood that the Indians have
different frames of reference in respect of the morality and integrity of each community, class and caste. Thus the Indians, as he says, evaluate each group with a yard-stick prepared exclusively for it. The entire Indian society, in consequence of these multistandards, lives a hypocritical and snobbish life section-wise within the framework developed exclusively for each section. According to him, the people who are poor branded, rejected and forsaken are ruthlessly exploited and denied any opportunity of living an honest life, however strongly they may desire to do so. Laxman Gaikwad learnt to change all this. Being a non-Matric man, Gaikwad has dedicated his life to awaken and to unite the Uchalya community. He realized that this was very much needed for furthering of the mission of transformation that he had undertaken.

4.6 Gaikwad as a Workers’ Leader

In the spinning Mill at Latur, Gaikwad became a leader of the workers. He spoke of the workers’ wretchedness and sufferings in the Mill. In the free motherland, he says, the workers are thrashed with sticks. He also speaks of the treatment that the jobbers and the supervisor meted out to the workers in unlawful and abnormal way in the mill.

He was elected as the representative of the workers on the Managerial Board of the Mill. He began to study carefully the quantity of the yarn produced every day, the prices at which it was sold, the daily turn-over, and the daily wages of the workers. He made a workers’ union. On that occasion, he delineated the harassment and injustice inflicted on the workers of the Mill. The chairman and the Manager came to know that the workers were going to strike against management. They called Laxman and threatened him with dismissal. He decided to go on strike for the workers’ demands. It was the strike for pay-scales, bonus and permanent jobs for those who had a minimum of three years of service to their credit and double wages for overtime. Gaikwad endured everything but the workers lost their courage and the strike failed. Then Gaikwad sat for a fast unto death for the workers’ cause. The workers finally won the struggle. Gaikwad then was suspended from the service. He lost his job at the Mill.
Laxman Gaikwad along with Prof. B. L. Gaikwad, and D. S. Gaikwad organized the first gathering of the nomadic and Denotified Tribes in 1978. The aim of the gathering was to organize the people of Uchalya Community and to send their children to schools instead of teaching them to pick pockets and steal. He started a hostel with arrangements for lodging and boarding to the Uchalyas at Kawatha in district Osmanabad. He was obsessed with the idea of improving the lot of the Uchalya people and making them change to respectable ways of living. He thought if the Uchalyas' children could be sent to the school, the next generation of his community would come into the respectable mainstream society. So he managed to secure the registration of the Nomadic, Denotified Tribes' Educational Institution at Kawatha in 1979 after much effort in various directions. Having poor, illiterate and uneducated members of the organization Gaikwad gave up his ambition of starting an education institution for his people.

Laxman Gaikwad became a member of the Communist Party of India. He began to organize the unions in slum localities and in the spinning mill. He also began to visit people at night and urge them to start unions. He often gave speeches and, impressed by these, people were inspired to start unions. He took active part in political activities and organized several unions. He worked for the 'causes of farmers. Gaikwad decided to march to present the demands of slum-dwellers to the Deputy Collector of the District. He submitted the charter demanding that slum areas be converted into permanent residential areas and for the slum-dwellers electricity and water facilities must be provided. But the Morcha was cancelled.

Gaikwad was now fired with the idea of doing something for the people of his community. He began to visit places in Marathwada to rouse his people against the injustices inflicted on the Nomadic and Denotified Tribes. Sometimes he took lawful steps and sometimes he arranged Morchas to bring pressure on the concerned officers to stop the injustice. He organized processions and gatherings on a large scale involving thousands of participants on taluka and District levels at Bhoom, Ambejogai, Beed,
Gaikwad took part in the agitations and Satyagraha to rename the Marathwada University as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University. He was arrested and put into the Yerawada Prison. He visited all the places from where reports of injustice to and harassment of the Nomadic and Denotified Tribes flowed to him. He involved himself a good deal in the welfare activities concerning the ND Tribes spread all over Marathwada.

4.6.1 Laxman’s Sickle and Hammer Morcha
Gaikwad organized a Sickle and Hammer Morcha. The motive behind the choice of this name was his determination to fight with the sickle and the hammer against the perpetrators of injustice. The rally was organized on 25 November, 1982. The people of the Nomadic Tribes from all over Marathwada had gathered in such a large number that the rally drew attention and became the subject of discussion all over Maharashtra.

The people belonging to several tribes and castes had participated in the rally in their traditional colourful costumes. More than ten thousand people of Masanjogi, Raindar, Vasudeo, Gondhali, Wadar, Pathrut, Gosavi, Kaikadi, Vaidui, Pardhi, Mang Garudi, Katkar, Bhoi, Lamani, Shikalkari, Ghisdi, and many other tribes had participated in the rally bringing with them donkeys, dogs, pigs, cocks and brandishing in their hands sickles and hammers. They had gathered in such a large number for the first time and shouted slogans, ‘Save us from injustice’, ‘Give us houses’, ‘Give us work’, ‘Brand not the tribe as criminal merely because of its name’ (213). Gaikwad was observed to foster and strengthen tribal movement intellectually so that a complete transformation could be achieved of the Nomadic and Denotified Tribes, the SCs, and the exploited and the downtrodden underdogs.
4.7 Locating The Branded: Uchalya

Laxman Gaikwad’s autobiography *Uchalya* was originally written in Marathi in 1987 and published by Shri Vidhya Prakashan, Pune. It exposes the prejudices of people and brings to the notice that these tribes are human beings. They are in need of a helping hand from all to bring them into the mainstream of social life. Gaikwad has written his life narrative to awaken the so-called intellectuals, important people and the middle class to the sorrows and plight of the Uchalya community. This bourgeois society had absolutely no idea of the sorrows of his community. As Gaikwad appeals, “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 of our mother-community. It is with this dual purpose that I undertake to write down the following ranking account of my life” (Gaikwad 2005: viii). The word *Uchalya* literally means pilferer. Uchalya is the name of one of the communities notified as criminal tribes. The tribes like ‘Uchalya’ have been living in India almost unknown, unfamiliar to the so-called sophisticated society for thousands of years. They satisfy their hunger by doing the seasonal odd jobs such as harvesting, cattle-tending, stone-cutting, hunting wild animals, and foraging for wild herbs, roots and fruits. The education, economics, religion and politics of the mainstream society never touched them. They were automatically pushed into the dark world of superstitions, of ignorance and of primitive norms of wild justice. The Uchalya community therefore is reduced to outcaste lower than the lowest untouchables and thrown on the margins of the social hierarchical structure. As Laxman Gaikwad retrospects about his and his community’s reduction to subhuman condition in the opening sentences of his personal life narrative, ‘No native place. No birth-date. No house no form. No caste, either’ (Gaikwad 2005:01). The Uchalyas have been denied their very fundamental right to live as human beings. They have been living the life without economic goods and services, prestige and power. Being extremely marginalized, they existed only by thieving, picking pockets, lifting valuables and odd things at markets.
and fairs. The police-patil, the police officers, and the local moneylenders act as the oppressive feudal agencies in the life of Uchalya community.

‘Uchalya’ is one of the socially and legally branded communities which was notified as a Criminal tribe in the All Indian Criminal Tribes Act first passed in 1871 and subsequently amended from time to time. The stamp ‘criminal’ could not be removed by Independence. It remains as the inborn identity which carries the social stigma of the pilferers. This nomadic ‘denotified tribe’, Uchalya community, undergoes inhuman treatment by the courtesy of law-enforcement agencies as police, court and jail. The forced occupations thieving, lifting and pick-pocketing became hereditary and compulsory because of the denial of all decent and lawful means of livelihood. The Uchalya community clings to the thieving profession to survive. Beating and termination thus attached to their lives. The Uchalya community is banned as criminal. The Uchalyas were considered as criminals by nature therefore deserved no sympathy.

To foster and strengthen tribal movements intellectually and to achieve a complete transformation of the Nomadic, and Denotified Tribes, the Scheduled Castes, the exploited and downtrodden underdogs, Laxman Gaikwad was engaged in the activity of writing. The text has compelling tone—militant as well as frank. The non-Matric Gaikwad’s style is not polished. The original book suffers from many shortcomings but the translator has tried to stick to the way of narration adopted by Gaikwad.

4.8 Caste-based Exclusion and Marginalization

4.8.1 Threatening of Upper-caste School Boys and Fear of One’s Own Caste

The upper caste school boys began to harass Laxman when he went to the school. Laxman’s father, who was doing his service with his master Chamle, understood that his child must learn to read and write. Instead of a Bharat blade, he put in his hand a slate and pencil. He enrolled Laxman’s name in a primary class for children. Laxman began to go to school. When he started going to school, all the classmates started harassing him. As Gaikwad says, “I had just started going to school...All the Uchins started harassing
me, as if a poor lamb had entered a pack of wolves. They threw stones at me because an Uchalya’s child had dared come to school” (16). Laxman faced the harassment at the hands of the school boys because he belonged to Uchalya community. The Uchalyas had been in a way “outcastes lower than the lowest scheduled caste, on the bottom-most rung of the social hierarchical ladder” (Kolharkar 2005: v). The classmates mocked at him saying that “Laxman Tata eats Crabs curry”. He was harassed by the children of Merchants and Brahmins. As the young one of another bird left in a hen-coop, he was pecked at viciously and tormented. Throwing away the ‘Bharat blade’ and hereditary profession of thieving Gaikwad dares to take a slate and pencil with the help of his father. But when he starts going to school there he faces the harassment from the urchins. The upper caste boys threw stones at him because an Uchalya’s child had dared come to school. They mocked him saying ‘Lachiman Tata Crab-curry khata’. Whenever Laxman went to school, the urchins would crowd round him shouting: “Here comes a thief! Here comes a Pathrut!” (62). The Uchalya community that trains their children for thieving opposed the schooling of Gaikwad. The people of this community thought that ‘If our children started going to school, our race would be doomed’ (17). It is the result of prevailing ideas of caste system in the society. The upper caste children’s view towards lower castes is clearly brought out here.

Even his neighbours accused and chided his father for Laxman’s schooling. The lower castes like Uchalya or Pathrut had an idea that the education was sanctioned by religion and tradition only to brahmins and merchants. They thought that their children were affected by loose motions and vomiting for Laxman’s admission in the school. They related their child’s suffering to the schooling of Laxman. As Gaikwad states, “All the people from our fraternity cursed me saying that I was a white-footed wretch, arguing ill and charged that since I had began to go to school their children were afflicted with diseases” (17).

The members of Uchalya community did not understand the importance of education. They had an idea that the schooling was never good for them. They had a fear if their
children began to go to school, their race would doom. Their goddess, Yellamma, would be furious. They supported their arguments saying that nobody had ever gone to school from the thieves' community. Education, in their view, was only allowed to the merchants and Brahmins, and not for the Uchalyas. They confessed that the high-caste Hindus only had a right sanctioned by religion and tradition to learn, to read and to write. But education to them was prohibited. Thus the Uchalya community and its members have ever been rejected and ostracized by the caste-ridden hierarchy among which they have been fated to live. “For thousands of years this man-forsaken community, denied its innate humanness by all and sundry, has been forced to live a life no better than that of a godforsaken animal” (Gaikwad vii).

4.8.2 Denial of Rooms
The rooms were denied to Laxman on the rent. Everywhere he was asked his caste. After knowing his caste, the room owners denied the rooms on rent to him. Laxman was tired of the life in Chandrabhagabai’s building. He no longer liked the ways and the standard of life obtained there. So he began to search for a room elsewhere. He searched for the room everywhere but his caste became a huge obstacle in this task. As Gaikwad confesses, “Everywhere we were asked our caste. If we told our caste, we did not get rooms” (121). The lower caste people like Laxman tried hard to get a room on rent in the town. To get the rented rooms, Laxman told a lie that he belonged to the Maratha caste. He bluff ed at one place in Salegalli that he was a Maratha by caste. Only then he could secure a room. Laxman had changed his accommodation no less than nineteen times in Latur. Even though he used to conceal his real caste, it would be discovered sooner or later. When a landlord came to know of his real caste, he would be thrown out and forced to look for another room.

4.8.3 Ban on Speech against Jaat Panchayat
Laxman was made to act like a dumb man. He was not allowed to speak of the cruelties of his Jaat-panchayat. He never ridiculed the Panchayat although he found its functioning obnoxious and disgusting. As Gaikwad says, “I was, small fry, however, before this
gigantic social monster. If I dared 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).

The fear of being made an ‘ostracized person’ prevented him from speaking against the community Panchayat. If he spoke against the community Panchayat, he would be boycotted from his community. If anybody dared disobey the Panchayat resolutions, he would be ostracized, nobody would touch him. His relatives served him food from a distance. He would neither be invited nor permitted to attend marriages. No marital relations would be allowed with such an ostracized person. If he visited the house of an in-law, he would be served food in a basket and given water in a plate. So Laxman had to keep quiet regarding his community’s wrong beliefs and superstitions.

4.9 No Job for Uchalya

Uchalays were not given any job in the village for their criminality. The caste-ridden society doubts their credentials and does not give them any employment. Since they did not get any regular job, poverty has become their constant companion. The individual’s position in society—his social identity—his economic standing, his social status, his own self-esteem are all to some extent dependent on his occupation. A large part of his adult life is devoted to it, and much of his early life is a preparation for it. The children of Uchalays are trained to thieve instead of schooling. They have earned the money by stealing and pick pocketing. Laxman would not prefer thieving for his living. He did not go on the thieving trips along with his brothers. So he was denied the decent clothes and food in the family. His sisters-in-law never liked Laxman to eat and enjoy the life without working. Even they expressed their anger and discontentment to his schooling. To them educating Laxman meant making him worthless and lazy. Not only his sisters-in-law but also his tribesmen had the same view regarding education. Laxman’s brothers were forced to steal instead of schooling. Thus, the children of Uchalya community were
denied access to education by the ignorant and superstitious tribesmen for the occupation of thieving.

The occupations like thieving, lifting and pick-pocketing made the Uchalyas as 'criminal'. Being uneducated the Uchalyas had to rely upon the thieving and pick-pocketing. To earn money, they stole. The stolen money or articles from the fairs and markets were used to live their life. There was no alternative or decent way of living the life. So the Uchalyas began to train their children for thieving. The trained Uchalyas would bring a fair amount during their thieving trips. They brought with them the stolen gold, garments and grain. Henceforth, the Indian society branded them as 'inherent criminals' and denied all decent and lawful means of livelihood. As Gaikwad says:

“Nobody would offer work to my father, Martand, as we known to belong to a branded tribe of criminals. They would not employ my mother, Dhondabai, even as a farmhand” (02).

Nor did the tribesmen get jobs as they were known to be thieves by profession. The Uchalyas were quite capable of doing odd jobs. But so branded and distrusted was the Uchalya community socially that no one offered work to the people of the Uchalya tribe. The dominant villagers—Yalama, Vani, Brahmin, Marathas etc.,—did not employ the Uchalyas even on chores done in the woods. It was widely believed that the person from the Uchalya community worked and watched by day and stole by night. So nobody employed the members of Uchalya community. The Uchalya were “criminals by nature and, therefore, deserved no sympathy” (Kolharkar v). The stamp of ‘criminals’ put the innocent members of Uchalya community behind the bars. The innocent Uchalyas were threatened and mercilessly beaten up by the police and the dominant villagers. The Uchalya women and little children were punished for their men’s thieving and pick-pocketing. A man or woman who belonged to the Uchalya community was considered as criminal and banished from the houses and fields. The name ‘Uchalya’ was permanently linked with ‘crime’. As soon as the person told that he belonged to Uchalya community,
he was denied the house work and banned to enter into the village locality. The Uchalyas had been rejected or ostracized by the caste-ridden hierarchy for thousands of years. They were branded as inherent criminals by birth.

For the thieving occupation of Uchalya, the policemen never filed the charge sheet against the dominant upper caste people. The policemen did not support the Uchalyas in the quarrel with the influential villagers like Maratha, Vaani and Brahmins. Though the dominant people mercilessly beat and severely injured the Uchalyas, the police blamed only the Uchalyas. Thus, only those who are poor and branded, rejected and forsaken are ruthlessly exploited and denied any opportunity of living the honest life, however strongly they may desire to do so. For their thieving occupation, the Uchalyas are marginalized and excluded by the dominant villagers, police-patil and policemen.

4.10 Untouchability-based Exclusion

4.10.1 The Forbidden Uchalyas
The Uchalyas are forbidden in the Hindu society. The Uchalya community or a social group of Uchalyas is forced to live outside in the nation. The upper castes and classes of Hindu hierarchal society never treated them as human beings. The theory of purity and pollution granted by Hindu philosophy and religion discriminated and excluded the Uchalya community and segregated them from the human capability and capacity building processes. It also isolated them from the upper caste Hindus like Maratha, Deshumkh and Brahmins. The Uchalyas lived on the margins of the village where ‘women from the village used that spot for shitting . . . In the morning heaps of human-dung could be seen all over the place’ (12-13). Shit-yard becomes their dwelling place where they roasted the pigs and ate them. Their eating animals and birds ostracized them as untouchables.

In the village, the upper caste Hindus did not allow the Pathruts to take water from the public well. Even they did not touch and not allow the Pathruts to visit their temples. As
Gaikwad explains 'Kunbi women (Maratha women) removed the flour from the grindstones before an untouchable worker, who was usually from our community, touched it... for after we touched the grindstone, the flour in it was regarded as polluted, and unfit for consumption by high caste people. Such polluted flour was given to us' (23). The Uchalya community was living on such polluted flour, leftovers from the 'patravalis' of diners of marriage feasts, funeral feasts, and village feasts of the high caste people. The Pathruts were thus humiliated and reduced to the level of animals. The village people did not allow the Uchalyas to take water from the public well. The villagers gave Uchalyas water from a distance without touching them. Besides, the villagers did not allow the Uchalyas or Pathruts to visit the temples. The Uchalyas or Pathruts were considered as 'impure' due to their eating of domesticated cats, in the village. The village Patil did not eat flour and salt from Pathrut community but accepted the pieces of meat. The Patil regarded dry flour and salt as taboo, while he could readily receive the wet sticky meat offered by the Uchalyas. No body from the thieves’ community had ever gone to school. If someone from the Uchalya community went to the school, the children of merchants and Brahmins would never touch him.

The principle of rank and gradation of the caste system is the core of different Hindu communities or castes. It provides the provisions of strong social, religious and economic ostracism supported by social and religious ideology to maintain the Hindu social order. The community panchayat of Uchalyas here maintains the Hindu social order by ostracizing the community people in the form of social and economic penalties. The importance and impact of community-panchayat can easily be traced in this life narrative.

The Dhobi boy Narya who was brought in Uchalya community was rejected and restricted to marry the daughter of Uchalya. Marital relationship was not allowed to the dhobi caste. The decision of the Panchayat must be obeyed. Nobody takes amiss the treatment accorded as a result of the Panchayat’s directive.
The ritual bath for the bridegroom and the bride, the sacred ritual of thread-winding and such customs were performed by a married woman who had not been ostracized. If the woman is impure and tainted, she is not accepted in the sacred rites and rituals. She must be ritualistically purified by the Panchayat. By offering economic penalties to these impure and tainted people, the Panchayat purifies the community and its members. The functioning of the Panchayat, according to Gaikwad, is obnoxious and disgusting. He terms it as the 'gigantic social monster' (120) because its penalties were so dreadful and bitter to bear the human beings. The fire of hunger forced the people of Uchalya community to eat all sorts of leaves and animals. Their thieving and pick-pocketing to avoid starvation descended upon them the wretched calamities.

4.11 Gender-based Marginalization and Exclusion

Beating by husband and suspecting of misconduct are the common grounds on which the Uchalya women are marginalized and ill-treated. The father of Laxman Gaikwad always “tortured and beat his mother suspecting her of infidelity” (Gaikwad 2005: 22). Dhondabai, Chabhu, Elava, and Chandrabhagabai are the women who were marginalized in this Uchalya community. All are illiterate and are the victims of patriarchy. The village-patil, policemen, dominant caste men and Uchalya men exploit these women. Padmini’s silence, it must be noted, is a systematic withdrawal from the gossiping womenfolk who accentuate all the male modalities of oppression, and thus this silence serves as a resistance against both the male centered feeble nature and the differential women equations of the clan. At times, this positioning of the gender renders in a meek surrender of the female self out of self-control and the norms of the community (Krishnan 2006:164).

The caste council or jat-panchayat is also the agent of subjugation of women. The jat-panchayat has its own codes that direct or control the behavior of Uchalya women. It makes women pure while judging their crime or taint. Without the purification of woman in panchayat, the marriages never happen in society. The women have to take the test of
purity. Laxman Gaikwad explains the rigidity of jaat-panchayat in the life of women. He provides an incident that throws light upon the sorrows and plight of unfortunate women.

“The mother of the girl, who is to be married in Salgara, is tainted. She had not yet got herself purified in our panchayat... The girl’s mother’s mother had lived with a Maratha. So the girl’s mother was born of a Maratha father. Even if she herself had married a person of our community, the earlier taint was not thereby washed away... The panchayat/panchas came out with their proposals. Some said let the woman eat shit, some others said let her be fined 2000 rupees. While some others proposed that her nose be cut off... it was decided that the woman’s head would be shaved” (120).

The panchayat purifies the woman by shaving her head off but her heart weeps mutely in her agony. She was made mute or ‘silent’ in the branded community of men. “In Indian society, sexuality, reproduction and social production are regulated by patriarchal values expressed through specific cultural metaphors. Overt rules existing in the society prohibit women from specific activities and deny equal rights to them. The sexist ideology expressed through various symbolic ways give messages of inferiority through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women through the ritual practices that day in day out emphasize the role of woman as a faithful wife and devout mother” (Pradgna 2010: 196).

The policemen also torture and beat these tribal women. The police beating has broken their back. Both the innocent and guilty women suffered the beating meekly. The brutality of policemen can be easily seen in the following sentences of Gaikwad’s grandmother. As Laxman’s grandmother explains “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 grandmother, mother and many women of Gaikwad’s race are mercilessly tortured and humiliated. Chandrabhagabai and Elava are the typical women of Uchalya Community. They are bold enough to throw
away the male supremacy in their family. Changrabhagabai, a landlady of the building, has parted with her two husbands. She has quite a large and multi-faceted business. “Everybody addressed Chandrabhagabai Jadhav as ‘Mahamaya’... the entire household was under the strict control of Chandrabhagabai... everything including the plot, the building, the household utensils were in her name” (104). In fact, she was a coward. She was frightened of her husband and tried to keep his words. She was also known for her lowly, vulgar ways of unsophisticated life. Elava was a versatile thief. She would pick ornaments from women’s necks and stole the parcels from markets. “She never attempted to steal without imbibing a drink. She needed liquor everyday and always smoked ganja and bidis” (123). The women of Uchalya or Pathrut community were marginalized by their men. As Gaikwad says, “Father took my mother into the hut and forced her to do sit-ups. Then he brought her out beating her violently all the while”. (22).

Laxman’s father always tortured and beat his mother suspecting her of infidelity. Whenever his mother came late from her milk-selling rounds, his father would say that she had spent her time with her paramour. His father would beat his mother severely by saying that Saru was not his daughter. His mother was not allowed to take the familial decisions. Saru, an elder sister to Laxman, was not given respect in the family. Her father used to treat her very unkindly. He never offered his daughter a sari and a blouse and never allowed his wife to offer Saru a sari and a blouse. He prevented her from entering into the house. Saru’s father did not accept her as his daughter or child. In the world of Uchalayas “the sons are cherished as assets but daughters are sold and wives are thrashed and promptly deserted” (Multani 2001:192).

4.12 Little Laxman No Existence in Family
Laxman was a neglected child in his house. His sisters-in-law were quite fed up with him. They would often grumble of what use was reading sacred books, singing bhajans and of going to the school. They complained that instead of going on useful thieving expeditions he went to the ‘useless school’. To them he was an idler. The sisters-in-law of Laxman did not want to feed him. They sarcastically remarked who would ever make him a
teacher. They looked after their husbands well. But Laxman was utterly neglected. Nobody was willing to shoulder the responsibility of looking after him. Even his brothers told that they had to look after their wives and children. They showed their inability to spend money on his books and notebooks. Meanwhile, the house was divided along with the property. Laxman was allotted to Sambhabhau with an agreement that all the brothers should share the annual expenditure on his books. Since the brothers separated and lived apart from each other, looking after and keeping him was a problem. So he decided to live in the boarding at Babhalgaon.

Laxman had borrowed some ten-twenty rupees from his brother. When he decided to leave Latur for Aurangabad, his brother insisted that he should refund the borrowed amount before proceeding. In spite of blessing him, his brother snatched away all his belongings: one coverlet between Harchanda and he, one durrie to spread on the ground, one utensil for cooking vegetables, an aluminum carafe for water, two plates, a couple of framed pictures of God.

Laxman was kept out from the process of choosing a bride for himself. Manikdada tried to arrange Laxman's marriage with Chhabu, a daughter of his step mother-in-law who was Babusha’s sister. And Anna fixed Laxman’s marriage with Chingu. Moreover, he gave his solemn word to the mother-in-law that he would get Laxman married to her daughter. Thus, both the brothers of Laxman—Dada and Anna—had neither consulted nor discussed things with Laxman before negotiating his marriage. They negotiated his two separate marriages with two different girls. Without taking his consent, his brothers arranged his two marriages. They took the help of their custom that put restriction on the boy to see the bride for him. As Gaikwad says, “The boy who is to be married is never consulted or taken into confidence about the match. The young one must not act too smart and meddle in matters that the elders are supposed to deal with affairs with his over-smartness” (127).
The elder brothers of Laxman never consulted him or took him into confidence about the match. The elder brothers excluded their younger brother in the matter of choosing a bride. These elder brothers did not show any sympathy towards the marriage of Laxman. They did not spend a single rupee on his marriage. In turn, Dada sold off the eight sheets of galvanized tin as Laxman’s share of the family property. He sold all these tin-sheets for Laxman’s marriage. But actually Dada did not give anything to his marriage. He spent all the money on himself.

Even his sister-in-law who lived in Aurangabad drove him away from the business of Dairy. While assuring his sister-in-law, Laxman became a Secretary of Dairy co-operative society registered by her. His sister-in-law exploited the poor members of society. For the cause of exploitation of the poor, Laxman quarrelled with his sister-in-law. As Gaikwad states, “I completely lost my head over this defrauding of the poor members and one day I violently quarreled with my sister-in-law taking the side of the poor members. So my sister-in-law drove me away and I returned to Latur without any money after three months of work in Aurangabad” (169).

4.13 Clothes and Dirty Habits

The Uchalyas were not included in the common activities for their clothes. They always dressed in loose, stolen shirts and shorts. These dresses were shapeless and ill-fitting. None of the Uchalyas ever received new well-fitting clothes. All their clothes were stolen ones. Even women bought saris at cheap rates from persons who had stolen them from markets. They washed their clothes only once a year on Dusserah festival day. They had no idea to wash the clothes. The children of Uchalyas who went to school began to wash their clothes not with the soap but with the sticky mud of the Ingle-lake. Laxman used to wear the worn and torn shirt. He put on the stolen shirts which were often either too loose or too short. He had only one pair of shorts and shirts that too were infested with lice. As Gaikwad says,

“I had only one pair of shorts so I used to wind the shirt round my waist and take off the shorts, and wash them. I never got soap to wash with. My soap was the sticky mud of the
Ingle-lake by the side of the river. I used to wash my shirt and shorts with that mud. Clothes washed clean with it” (33). No boy in the school was willing to allow him to sit by his side.

Laxman never had a pair of decent shoes to wear. He roamed about bare-footed. Constant trudging about bare footed had made the soles of his feet hard and calloused. Having a pair of shoes was an opportunity of a life-time. He wore the shoes that were too small for him. When he showed these shoes to his classmates, the classmates sneered: ‘How can Lakshya be offered such a costly pair of shoes! His brother must have stolen it’ (68). He would return home crestfallen as if he was thrashed with boots. “If the Uchalyas wear clean garments or buy new footwear, they are looked upon with suspicion as if they have no right to enjoy such things. They are kept permanently under dependency relations by everyone in the village” (Punalekar 2001:232). Laxman did not take bath for months. Nobody from his household ever told him to take a bath. Washing clothes was not even thought of him. He used to wipe the snot of the nose with his shirt-sleeve and chew the snot-smeared part of the shirt.

Food of the Uchalyas made them polluted and ostracized. The Uchalyas ate various wild and pet animals like pigs and cats. The dominant villagers—Yellam, Vaani, Brahmins and Marathas—would think how these Uchalyas were dirty. Even these villagers grumbled that these bastards of Uchalya or Pathrts ate even domestic cats. By howling that the Pathrts had eaten a domesticated village cat, the upper caste villagers never allowed the Uchalyas to take water from their well. Nobody gave water to the Uchalyas when they went to the village well.

4.14 Poverty and Exclusion

Laxman struggles with abject poverty that made him poor, wretched, miserable and untouchable. Because of poverty Gaikwad lost everything. Poverty took away his mother, brother and father. His father could have lived some more years. But poverty deprived him of medicine and starvation killed him. Laxman, after his mother’s death, was nearly
starving. Sometimes for four-five days there was no cooking in the house. There were too many mouths to feed at home. He never got even a single full meal a day. In his home, he had to go half-starved all the year round.

Laxman was cursed, beaten and thrown out of the dining hall in the wedding feast. Laxman along with Tulsidas, Sambha, Narya and Tukya always attended marriage feasts or funeral feasts, wherever they might be. He used to skip the school and accompany them to these feasts. They always kept a close watch on the nearby villages for the feasts. If they would come to know about the village feasts, they would inform all the people of their fraternity. Without drinking a drop of water and thinking to eat a lot of food, they attended the feast. When Laxman went to attend the wedding feast in a village, he was served the Bundi. He continued to sit at the subsequent rounds. At every round he pocketed the bundi served at the feast. One of the servers suspected him. He kept a watch on him. When Laxman sat in the line once again, the server held him by the ears. He beat and threw him out of the dining hall. The server gave him resounding slaps on his face. The server cursed at him saying, “Fuck his mother, the bastard, don’t know what Mahar, Mang caste he belongs to! He has polluted the feast by his unholy attendance and come and ate through two-three rounds” (45). For eating the food, Laxman was cursed, beaten and thrown out of the dining hall. The starvation made him to do anything to get even ‘a little tidbit’.

4.15 Political Exclusion

Laxman was excluded and marginalized in the parliamentary election. He consented to contest the election as a candidate of Bahujan Samaj Party. He felt if ever he was elected as a representative of the poor and the workers, in their cause, he would be able to make his voice heard not only in Marathwada but in Delhi as well. He would be able to speak on behalf of those he had been working for all these years. He had only eight to ten thousand rupees which he had saved in his business. After arguing with the people of Bahujan Samaj Party, he decided to contest the Parliamentary elections. The Bahujan Samaj Party had assured him that it would spend fifty to sixty thousand rupees on his
election campaigns. The BSP asked him to contest the election on their party ticket. He attended two or three of their meetings and was quite elated with the thought that he would contest the parliamentary election with their backing. In fact, Laxman did not know how one would contest even a grampanchayat election.

The Bahujan Samaj Party failed in its assurances. The party did not spend money on his election campaigns in the way they had promised to him earlier. The party did not keep its promise for the simple reason that it had no powerful monetary backing. His opponents were wealthy persons. They had many funds at their command. They spent lakhs of rupees on parties and other enticements. The Bahujan Samaj Party had promised to send a jeep and money for the campaign at least twenty to twenty-five days earlier to the election. But Laxman received neither a jeep nor any money for his campaign. As Gaikwad says,

"I was bankrupt. Some of my workers borrowed money from their friends and we utilized that money to feed our campaigners. Rikshawalas and suppliers of loudspeakers and other campaign material squatted in protest in front of my house for I had failed to pay their dues. Some of them started abusing and cursing me and refused to leave till they received their money" (227).

Meanwhile, Laxman's leading and responsible campaigners like Wanzarshe began to campaign for the rival candidates. He told Laxman's faithful workers that Laxman Gaikwad was a poor beggar and had no money. He could not give them even one meal a day. The campaigner forcefully asked them why they did not come with Laxman. Wanzarshe thus took away many of Laxman's workers. Even the rickshaw-owners came to Laxman every day not to campaign for him but to curse or abuse him. As Gaikwad confesses, "I was so much harassed by this that instead of going on campaigns, I began to leave the house at five early in the morning to hide from these people" (228).
Laxman himself canvassed, moving around in the jeep and shouting the slogans - *Vote the poor to help the poor; vote for Laxman Gaikwad*. The Bahujan Samaj Party had sent only Rs. 500 for diesel expenses though it promised to spend 50-60 thousand rupees for his campaign. Laxman cried why the party had treated him so shabbily after persuading him with sweet words and tall promises. He continued his bewailing with the reflection of what wrong he had done to them for that punishment meted out to him. He also told that he had nothing to say against party workers’ honesty and sense of discipline. But he still did not understand why the B.S.P as a party treated him so shabbily, why it did not extend full co-operation in the election campaign.

The canvassers of the opponents had arrived from several places with a specific communal bias. They had canvassed for votes on the ground that the candidate was of the voters’ community and caste. “The casteist approach was openly and brazenly used and very conspicuous in their campaigns” (229). The Bahujan Samaj Party did not come to his help at the critical time. Laxman lost his every penny in the election expenses. At last, Laxman, unable to carry on the election campaign, supported to a candidate who was contesting on a Congress ticket. And all his colleagues from Nomadic organizations were displeased with him. The Congress candidate did not remember his help. There were discussions and slanderous innuendos were thrown out among the people to the effect that Laxman Gaikwad was offered rupees one lakh fifty thousand to keep his mouth shut.

Laxman was defamed and disgraced on all fronts. As Gaikwad states, “If workers like me ever try to assume prominence in the political field, they are vilified, disgraced and reduced to worthless nobodies. Such workers from the lowest rung of society are publicly denounced as evil persons and finally tied down like slaves just as cattle are tethered to pegs” (231). The opponents succeeded in victimizing him. He recognized that “in this country it is not enough to possess good workers and volunteers to win elections; you must also possess wealth, social prestige and the quality of having been born in one of the higher castes. In addition, you must be well versed in the art of hooliganism, mobocracy, and making false promises and assurances. Only with these accomplishments you are fit
to enter the arena of politics” (230). In fact, he thought that he had no right to take part in
the Parliamentary election as he was not endowed with even a single of these
accomplishments like wealth, social prestige, caste, hooliganism and faking.

4.16 Courtly Agencies of Marginalization

4.16.1 The Insignificant Treatment of the Police

The police-constables tortured Laxman for he belonged to the Pathrut community. As
soon as he disclosed that he belonged to the Pathruts of Dhanegaon, the police-constables
began to beat him. They investigated him about his brothers and other people of his
community. When he told them that he was a brother to versatile thief Mankya, the
constable gave him a resounding slap on the face. The constables abused him as ‘a brat of
thieving community’. The police mocked him while listening that he was studying in a
school. Even they retorted him whether his father had ever gone to school. They then
dragged him to the village saying that his schooling would be in the prison. The police-
constables made him fearful even though he was not engaged in the thieving. He was
forced to disclose the names of his thieving fraternity. The police treated Laxman as
insignificant and abused him.

4.16.2 Reduction of the Uchalyas

The Uchalyas had to obtain permission from the police-Patil when they desired to leave
the place. To get the permit from the police-Patil, the Uchalyas would give him a bribe.
The Uchalyas were reduced to the level of animals. As Gaikwad confesses:

“We were reduced to the level of animals; for just as permits are needed for cattle to be
moved to other places or to be sold in the market, we had to have passes to move about.
We had to show them to the police-Patil and tell him where we were going to and even
then, we could not stay there for more than three days. Barring me – a child – everybody
had a pass. If we ever traveled without a pass we were invariably arrested on trumped-up
charges, beaten up, and set free only after exorbitant amounts had been extracted from
us” (03).
The local money-lenders and the village Patil bribed the police from the Uchalyas' deposit with them. The police Patil of the village or town levied a monthly tax on every pickpocket and unscrupulously recovered it from him. Every time the Uchalyas returned from thefts, they had to pay an installment of up to 50 rupees to the police. If ever a purse containing a large amount such as Rs 5000-10,000 had been picked by any Uchalya, the police would trace him to his place and threaten to punish him. The police and the police Patil got half of the earnings. As Gaikwad says:

"On admission of the guilt, the culprit has to part with half his earnings to the police-Patil and the Police. The police-Patil then suppressed the case. Hence the pickpockets never failed to give the police Patil a part of their earnings" (180).

The Uchalyas visited crowded fairs, festivals and markets all over Maharashtra. If an entire gang of Uchalyas got apprehended at any time, the members of their families would face hard days. And the family members of arrested often went without food. To release the arrested Uchalyas from police custody, the tin sheets from the roofs of their huts were pawned and money rose. The lawyers had built their houses and feathered their own nests on the money extorted from the people of the Uchalya community. The Uchalyas were so reduced that they had "No native place. No birth-date. No house or farm. No caste, either" (01).

4.16.3 Police Forced Uchalyas to Thieving

The Uchalyas were tormented and tortured insufferably by the police. The Uchalyas were forced to work as state informer and to help the police in apprehending culprits from their own community by disclosing their names and whereabouts. This made the Uchalyas many enemies in their own tribe. The tribemen would beat the informer-Uchalya mercilessly and call the jaat-panchayat in session for this. The jaat-panchayat then would resolve that the informer-Uchalya must be killed. Moreover, the Panchayat informed that the death was not reported to the police. The police would beat and torture the Uchalyas.
and would snatch the gold ornaments of Uchalyas. After all, the Uchalyas were thieves by profession, who could the Uchalyas, lodge a complaint with? So the Uchalyas had to keep quite.

The police would thrash the womenfolk, grilling them to find out the hiding places of their husbands. The policemen did not find out the Uchalyas in the daytime. The harassed angry police then would come early at dawn, arrest everybody and thrush even children mercilessly. Whenever the police came to Laxman’s hut, they thrashed his mother. Dhondabai prostrated herself on the police’s feet and the police kept on kicking her. The police had often visited the Uchalya basti and took a few brass utensils, chaddar in good condition. The police would demand for money to not arrest the Uchalyas.

The police would descend upon the Uchalyas like a pack of wolves, and beat them. The policemen threatened the Uchalyas with arrest and imprisonment and would depart after extorting money from them. The policeman’s threatening and humiliation would disgrace the Uchalyas in the eyes of the villagers. The news of a certain thief having been beaten up would spread like a wild fire. Even if someone of Uchalya community desired to do honest work, in the village, nobody would employ him. The police would beat the Uchalyas making false allegations of thefts, even when, in fact, no theft had been committed. As Gaikwad states:

“The police themselves were responsible for creating condition in which we were left with no option but to steal. We would borrow money to give to the police. Dada, Anna, Bhau were forced to resort to thieving to pay off the debts of Money lenders. And my mother and I were the innocent victims. I, simply because I was the youngest brother, and my mother, simply because she happened to be in the hut, suffered thrashings at the hands of the police, though we never had any hand in the thefts” (62).

Being an Indian, Laxman and his brethren were not treated as human beings and given jobs, land and decent houses. Laxman Gaikwad used to wonder why if all Indians are
brothers and sisters then the Uchalyas are beaten with false allegations of theft. As Gaikwad says:

"Even now I often wonder why if Bharat is our country, we are discriminated against, why our race is branded and treated as a thieves’ community. If all Indians are brothers and sisters, why are not my brothers given jobs? Why do we not get land, decent houses? If we are all brothers, why are my brothers forced to resort to thieving in order to feed our people at home" (62).

The Uchalyas are forced to take to thieving because they are denied the lawful way of working. They are denied opportunities to live a decent life. For their thieving, they are branded as thieves. While branding the Uchalyas as thieves, the police and the countrymen denied the human rights to them. As Gaikwad interrogates:

"Why is it then the whole community is branded as thieves? Why are we denied opportunities to live a decent life? Why is my mother forced to borrow from moneylenders to the police? And when the burden of loans piles up, why are my all brothers forced to resort to thieving to pay off the debt? Are we to be proud of this varied heritage because we have been inured to these conditions for ages?" (93).

Police inspectors-in-charge of the areas where the Uchalyas reside in large numbers had filled their coffers and had fattened on the spoils received from the Uchalya community. "Instead of giving these people opportunities to develop, the police and other officials of the Government bring false charges against them. At times children from his community are accused of being criminals and are sent to jail at a very early age. It has been found that the police often push the people of his community to participate in criminal activities to get a share" (Kumar 2010:200-201). The money brought by the Uchalyas from outside went into the pockets of the dominant village caste people. As Gaikwad points out:
"Our people live in Kawatha, Salgava, Bhadgaon and live on picking and stealing. The money brought from outside goes into the pockets of these people. And the rich people of these places latch on to our people" (81). Thus the money-lenders, the proprietors of gambling dens, and the liquor vendors of these places have built their fortunes by exploiting the Uchalya community.

4.17 Economic Marginalization

4.17.1 Working without Wages

Laxman was made to work without the wages. He began to work in the spinning mill at Latur. Primarily, he was not given the job because he was too young. The job was denied to him. He went to the owners of mill and begged for the work. Then the spinning master seeing the recommendation of owner assigned him to Ring frame section. Laxman was thus appointed as a worker. He was the youngest of all the workers in the mill. So the salary was not paid to him. The new comers received no salaries till they picked up the work to piece the snapped ends of the yarn wound around the revolving spindles. To live decent life Laxman joined the spinning mill as a worker. But the exploitation of worker by mill owner, the abusement, beatings of jobber and supervisors muted the worker and reduced to miserable condition. No one dared to speak about the beatings and cruel treatment that they were subjected to. The workers were being paid miserable wages and bonus. "Wages were not sufficient even to meet daily requirement of the household. As a result workers were forced to borrow money at exorbitant rates of interest raging from 10 to 15 rupees for ten days. Workers took loans even at this rate of interest to face the acute household problems" (154).

He requested the spinning master to start him paying wages. But he was told that as long he could not stop a spindle and knot the yarn, he would not be paid any wages. He worked unpaid for one hundred and twenty five days. After working hard for many days, he held the spindles and knotted the ends of the yarn. Then he was recommended to pay sixty rupees as his wages. As he became a salaried worker, he was given heavier work.
Much of it was coolie-work. For his too youngness, Laxman was kept away from the work in the mill. And the wages were denied to him.

4.17.2 Prevented to Speak of Less Wages

Laxman was prevented from sharing his ideas in the meeting of the managerial board. Laxman delivered a speech on the flag hoisting ceremony of 15th August. In his speech, he revealed the ill-treatment given by the jobbers and the supervisors to the workers. His speech made the jobbers and supervisors irritated. They began to watch him with a different sort of expression in their eyes. The jobbers began to chide him and take him to ask even for slight mistakes. Though his machine was even slightly unclean, they issued him memos and inflicted the fines on him. This treatment created unrest among the workers and Laxman. So the workers elected him to the Managerial Board. He got an opportunity to sit close to the big bosses of the mill. The owner and the managers discussed the market price of the yarn and the production of the mill in the meetings. The owner and the directors were wary of Laxman’s presence. As Gaikwad says, “Whenever they did not want me to know of any important point under consideration, they resorted to English. Then would understand nothing. I kept quiet” (153).

Laxman was not allowed to speak of the workers, wages and bonus. He did not express his opposition on any occasion although he attended many meetings. He just signed the resolutions and came away. He was excluded from the process of decision making.

4.17.3 Termination from the Job

Laxman was removed from the job. Laxman, as a representative of workers, began to argue against the injustices and cruelties enforced upon the workers. He decided to go on fast- unto-death protest for the workers’ demands. All the workers supported him in it. They finally won the struggle with the management. But the management tried to bring the representatives into disrepute and let loose divisive forces among the workers. For the slightest mistakes, the directors began to issue memos to the representatives. Laxman and Jagtap were issued a notice of temporary suspension of their service. The management
made false allegations against Laxman and Jagtap. The workers protested against the allegations of the management and demanded to take the representatives back on the job. But a criminal case was filed against forty workers including Laxman, accusing them of assaulting sub-Inspector Nimbalkar and breaking his head. The manager retrenched one hundred workers from service along with the representatives. Laxman was made to leave the job.

Being jobless, Laxman was insulted by the supervisors of the mill. As he was thrown out of service, these very people jeered and laughed at him. Laxman thought to go and work in the spinning mill at Aurangabad during his monetary difficulties. His elder brother, Sambha, was working in that mill. But the owner of the mill did not offer him a job.

4.17.4 Dominant Villagers and Extortion of Money of the Uchalyas
The dominant village people extorted money from the Uchalyas on one pretext or the other, and wallowed in comfort and luxury. The village farmers became rich by taking the Uchalyas' money. The dominant villagers had built spacious buildings for themselves and had two-three trucks by extorting money from the Uchalyas. The poor gangster of the Uchalya community, after returning from the trip to his home, would pay 4 to 5 hundred rupees by way of interest to the money-lenders and again borrowed money from them even while they had some money left out of his earnings. The poor gangsters hardly ever lived a happy comfortable life even for a fortnight, in spite of such heavy earnings. The gangsters of Uchalya community were always in debt and ever-starving. The dominant village people would enjoy themselves on the incomes of these poor ignorant Uchalyas.

The dominant castes like Marathas treated the Uchalyas inhumanly in the village or town. The dominant villagers enjoyed themselves on the incomes of the Uchalyas from Kawatha, Salgara, Jawali and Badgaon. In the village or town, the Marathas gave loans to the Uchalyas, charging a rate of interest of ten percent for eight days. Whatever the
Uchalyas brought back from thieving trips like bundles of cloth and gold was adjusted against the interest only, the principal amount remaining ever untouched.

The influential people of higher castes would attack the Pardhis or Uchalyas on their refusal of exorbitant contributions for the fair. The influential people—the police Patil and the Sarpanch—had struck terror in the hearts of the Uchalyas and had wielded ruthless power for years. The higher caste influential and rich people of the village or town squeezed life out of these Uchalyas. The higher caste rich people would lend the money at high rates of interest. If a debtor who belonged to Uchalya community failed to return the loan, he was caught, tied and kept under unlawful restraint in the house (193). If the Uchalyas refused to pay the Fair Tax, the Patil, the Sarpanch and other bigwigs of the village would become furious.

As Gaikwad says:

"The Patil, the Sarpanch and the other Marathas were furious to hear the Pathruts—professional thieves—arguing and talking back to them. Then Sarpanch and the Patil boiled with anger and their faces went red with fury... Some vagabonds from the village came brandishing sticks and axes. These vagabonds attacked our people ferociously, muttering. These Uchalya people have gone berserk and they dare argue with the Patil. Let's teach them a lesson" (194).

The Uchalyas were beaten up for the refusal of Mahadev Fair levy by the Sarpanch, the Patil and other rich Marathas of the village. Even then the police refused to help the beaten Uchalyas who belonged to a branded community of criminals. The police refused not only to register a complaint but also to send these Uchalyas who were severely injured to the hospital. The political leader without helping the marginalized Uchalyas threatened them. Thus, the Pathruts, the Pardhis and the Wadars were persecuted and harassed by the influential people of the higher castes.
The police built houses and feathered their nests on the earnings of the thieves. They confiscated the alleged stolen goods and other articles of the Pardhis. But they did not show in their registers 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. On many occasions, the Pardhis showed receipts for the goods confiscated. But the police tore these receipts and misappropriated the goods. The society refused to accept the Pathruts, Pardhis for their thieving and the police instead of protecting them harassed the Uchalyas. The British Government had decreed that the Pardhis and Other Nomadic Tribes were thieves by nature and birth. The British Government prepared a list of all such tribes. On the attainment of Independence, Pandit Nehru had declared that no community or tribe, which were regarded as criminal, were denoted. In a way the tribes were set free from such social and legal stigma and branding. But even today in free India the police and Government administration instead of giving these tribes opportunities to develop, brought false charges against innocent persons like Hirabai and her poor child and arrested them. Many children of Nomadic and Denotified Tribes were accused of being criminals and jailed in their childhood. In fact, it was the police who pushed the young children in the jail into criminal activity by such barbarous treatment. Once a person from these tribes — Pathruts, Pardhis, and Wadar—is shoved into jail right at his birth, he gets inextricably bonded to it. Even if anybody tries to retrieve such a person from this prison or the person himself tries to escape from it he cannot come out of that hell. Because his wings are clipped in early childhood. He bears the indelible brand of a criminal on his forehead for all to see. Even if a criminal tries to improve himself in all honesty and sincerity, he is not allowed to do so by the society in which he lives. The Pathrut/Pardhi boys were not allowed to work honestly and live a decent life. The sub-Inspector of police arrested the boy who worked in the mill. The boys of Uchalya community were taken to the police station and beaten severely with a warning that they were not to enter the Osmanabad-Latur region again. They were put into a police-van and taken to their room. The Sub-Inspector arrested them. The Sub-Inspector uprooted these boys from the decent life that they were trying to live. And he threw these boys into the hell of the criminal world. The Police Sub-Inspector thus had
the lion’s share in turning the Pathrut or Pardhi boys into criminals. The Uchalyas were born with the mark of a notified criminal tribe branded on them. They were arrested simply because the Uchalyas belonged to one of the criminal tribes. Thus, the higher castes and classes have fully marginalized the miserable and helpless Uchalyas for their own selfish purposes.

In his life narrative, Laxman Gaikwad “raises a question of selfhood and dignity, and comments caustically on the intricate social arrangements which systematically block their upward mobility and progress. They are denied access to land, education and health facility. Their daily movements are closely monitored by others—upper castes and upper-class gentry” (Punalekar 232). Thus, it is shown that the Uchalyas have no other alternative but to steal and lift things from weekly markets or village fairs. And when they succeed in their stealing operations, the shopkeepers, moneylenders, village chiefs and policemen take their share from Uchalya’s earnings. If they are caught while stealing, the lawyers also take their share from the Uchalya.

Works Cited


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