

## CASTE STRATIFICATION AND THE NARRATIVE OF UCHALYA: AN ANALYSIS OF LAXMAN GAIKWAD'S UCHALYA: THE BRANDED

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### **Abstract:**

*The Book Uchalyas of Laxman Gaikwad and the Cast Stratification shown in the Book are discussed in this article. Massive abuses of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights occur as a result of caste prejudice. It is frequently illegal in nations where it occurs, but due to a lack of enforcement and caste bias in the criminal system, victims are largely unprotected. The book is the voice of those who have been marginalized and oppressed by mainstream Indian society, and who have been compelled to remain silent for a long time. As a result, the article aims to investigate the nature of the Uchalya community's painful identity of being continually labeled as criminal, as well as the obstacles faced by the community as a whole in their daily lives. The British government has branded this group as criminal tribes. Finally, the book calls for the abolition of imposed social and legal limits, as well as social justice, rights, and many forms of reformation and transformation of the Uchalya community.*

**Keywords:** *Caste, Stratification, Uchalya, Laxman Gaikwad, community.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The study examines the reasons and consequences of the Dalit communities of Uchalya, Kaikadi, and Kolhati, as told in the supplied Dalit memoirs. The Dalit narratives are a record of the marginalised community's social awareness and experiences. These Dalit memoirs truly show the socioeconomic reality of these underprivileged strata. The true records of social situation, social action, and social struggle are Dalit narratives. Dalit memoirists represent a collective voice of their own oppressed people. The narrators are key characters who use their own experiences to illustrate societal problems in their town. The plight of the underprivileged groups is depicted in Dalit storytelling. Every 196 Dalit storyteller recounts their society's unhappy and hard life. These narratives are attempting to rouse their culture to a sense of self-identity and liberation. The current tales have attempted to depict the Uchalya, Kaikadi, and Kolhati communities' neglected worlds. These narrators are likewise attempting to respond against the existing unjust social system. They urge the underprivileged classes to become more socially aware. The anguish and misery of the lower castes are shown in Dalit narratives. The selected Dalit memoirs illustrate starvation, poverty, superstition, women's subordination, and Jatpanchayat dominance.

- **Uchalya:**

The Branded Novel is the subject of Uchalya community. the author of this book is Laxman Gaikwad. He was born on July 23, 1956, in the Uchalya community of Dhanegaon, Latur District, and he is the first child from his community to attend school and receive a formal education. The British government in India declared his community criminal under the

provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871. The author of this novel described the plight of the inhabitants in that village. Under the Tribal Act of India, the British labeled the Uchalya tribe as a criminal tribe. They dwelt on the outskirts of the settlement, subsisting on the high caste's leftovers. Contact with the untouchables was thought to be "polluting," and even their shadows were thought to be defiling. Untouchables had no access to public facilities such as wells, rivers, roads, schools, markets, and so forth as late as the early twentieth century.

## **2. STRATIFICATION OF THE CASTE**

### **2.1 Cast System**

The caste system in India is an excellent illustration of stratification. Caste is a hereditary social group in which a person's status and rights are determined by the caste into which he is born. The Hindu religion, for example, has castes such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras. A person's caste allows them to inherit their parents' position and function. While Brahmins are the highest caste, they have access to all of the advantages that a lower caste person does not. Because of their caste, people are denied access to certain things. This causes a great deal of discord in Indian society.

### **2.2 Classification System**

Then there's the class system. This stratification is based on a person's social class. The class system has harmed modern civilization the most. Similarly, it determines a person's social standing based on his or her accomplishments and income. Furthermore, the class structure divides people based on their educational qualifications, property ownership, and other factors. In the class system, superiority and inferiority are widespread. The upper class perceives itself as superior, whereas the lower class perceives itself as inferior. To put it another way, the class system is divided into three parts: high class, middle class, and lower class. Unlike the caste system, however, the class system is not absolute. A person from the lower class, for example, can move up to the upper class and vice versa.

## **3. UCHALYAS' NARRATIVE**

"I have no native land. There is no date of birth. There is no house or farm. In a Uchalya community, there is no caste." Under the Tribal Act of India, the British labeled the Uchalya tribe as a criminal tribe. The people of Uchalya lived in their own world, with their own set of rules. Theft and looting were their main businesses. They were divided into internal groups, and a newborn child was given or sold to one of these groups to be groomed as a perfect thief. They had no living standards at all. In this book, Laxman recalls his boyhood days of bringing a little piece of fabric to use as a bed on desolate terrain. The liquid from nearby livestock urinating in the night used to run to this fabric that was being used as a bed. When this urine was utilized to soak the towel or the kid's body, it provided warmth to him. And that was only a temporary respite for those children during the winter months. They didn't

have any concrete structures or roadways. They used to migrate from place to place in search of land, food, trade, and modest occupations.

Police would frequently visit the tribe in pursuit of stolen gold and other valuables. Laxman was the tribe's only child accepted into a neighboring school. He recalls his humiliating days in school, when he was the only child in the class from a low caste or clan, and the other students teased him. Not only in school, but also in his tribe, where his family was chastised for breaking the years-long tradition of not sending any of their children to school in this tribe, garments were not washed on a regular basis. Their garments were only laundered once every few months when they had the opportunity to go near a river. Otherwise, every morning after waking up, Laxman would place the piece of fabric he slept on on the roof of his hut. They've been cast into a world of ignorance, prejudice, poverty, and ugliness. As a result, the Uchalyas are relegated to the status of outcasts. They carry the imprint of their criminal tribe with them as an inborn identity. The thieving profession provides a source of income for this tribal tribe. Pilfering, theft, and pick pocketing are the only sources of income for the inhabitants. The Uchalyas are compelled to live on the outskirts of society. They are never treated as human beings by the superior caste.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF LAXMAN GAIKWAD UCHALYA**

Laxman Gaikwad's book *The Branded* is a community about his community's social and professional stratification, which has left them downtrodden and subjected them to various forms of exploitation from the state and other dominating communities. As part of his autobiography, it tells the storey of Gaikwad's life, his interactions with society, and the lives of his community. It is an autobiographical account of Laxman Gaikwad that delineates the history, past and present, of his Uchalya community, which was branded as a born thief community by the English government during colonization<sup>1</sup> of India, and from which the title of this text is derived. The inhabitants of the Uchalya community have been forced to remain in an excluded and unidentifiable position by the social and legal constraints imposed by the mainstream Hindu social order, according to Laxman Gaikwad. They are unable to establish a permanent residence. They continue to move from one location to the next in quest of work. They have no legal identity except from being branded as criminals and living at the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy the country's so-called democratic institutions, including as economics, education, politics, and religion, have always ignored them and never recognized them to be a part of society.

In the name of their inferior caste, these people are oppressed socially, economically, and culturally. Gaikwad and his community are fighting to conquer their hunger. The dominating local members and police authorities have falsely branded the people of the Uchalya community as being thieves. On the one hand, the Uchalyas are forbidden all legal means of subsistence, forcing them to steal and pilfer to survive. The so-called educated, on the other hand, amass crores of rupees and live a dignified life. Laxman Gaikwad brings this disparity to light. Because of their inferior caste, members of the 193 Uchalya community are routinely

exploited and mistreated. They are struggling to make ends meet. This community's women are subjected to two types of slavery. The work addresses the issues of superstition, untouchability, and destructiveness.

## 5. THE BRANDED UCHALYA

The Branded Uchalya is a book about that community's way of existence. The Branded: Uchalya depicts the daily lives of the Uchalya community, which Gaikwad is a part of. The narrative of the scavenger community of Chuhras is told in Joothan: A Dalit's Life. With relation to their occupation, the Uchalya community had its own set of conventions and beliefs. Blade was associated with Laxmi, the goddess of riches. They bought a cock and sacrificed it to the blade whenever they went on a stealing errand. In addition, when Gaikwad's grandpa became a police informer, the Panchas of the community Panchayat resolved to eliminate him, and he was slashed to death as a result. Gaikwad gives a detailed account of the Uchalyas' day-to-day thievery. He also goes into detail on how they were taught and trained in various pilfering arts and skills. Young apprentices (boys and girls) in his community begin their training by learning how to be beaten. They were trained to undergo psychological beatings and other forms of torture so that they would not reveal the names of their coworkers if they were apprehended and tortured for information by the police. The Branded reveals the Uchalya community's abuses and horrors. The book depicts a world in which people must survive for days on end on nothing but water. Cats, rats, roots, and leaves are commonly used as food in this area. Life in the Uchalya community is deplorable. Poverty, injustice, oppression, and humiliation are all prevalent themes in this narrative. Laxman's personal struggle encapsulates the Uchalya community's dilemma. Laxman, on the other hand, demonstrates certain methods of resistance and emancipation for Dalits living on the margins. The book, like all other Dalit texts, is infused with Dalit consciousness and secular principles that serve as the foundation for a just social structure. The book depicts the plight of the Pathrut community, who were labelled "criminal tribes" under the British Raj's All India Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. The colonists have fled, but the stigma has remained with them for the rest of their lives. The state's cruel treatment of this nomadic "denotified tribe" is well-documented. These folks are never exposed to the light of the so-called civilised world. They've been cast into a world of ignorance, prejudice, poverty, and ugliness. As a result, the Uchalyas are relegated to the status of outcasts. They carry the imprint of their criminal tribe with them as an inborn identity. The thieving profession provides a source of income for this tribal community.

## 6. OBSTRUCTIVE STRUCTURES

Hunger and malnutrition were the primary motivators for thievery in the Uchalya community. This disadvantaged class had no job opportunities in mainstream society. As a result, they began to engage in thievery. In the uchalyas, there is humiliation, exploitation, and deprivation. This community's formal education and customary labour skills were taken away. The Uchalya community's life was suffocated by the village's wealthy residents. They

lend money at exorbitant interest rates. If a debtor does not repay the loan, he is apprehended, bound, and imprisoned in the house. In this book, the underprivileged classes were routinely persecuted by the police and village landlords. The police unnecessarily accused and detained innocent persons from the lower socioeconomic groups. The police mercilessly battered these victims on spurious charges. They couldn't do much to change their situation since their economic dependence on upper caste people prevents them from speaking out against injustice. The lives of these oppressed groups were marked by oppression and exploitation. Poverty was one of the most significant obstacles in the lives of these disadvantaged people. Poverty among the village's lower classes was caused by the village's ruling class. In their travelling from one region to another in quest of food, they remained uncivilized and unstable. These people had a lower and inferior social and economic position. Due to their lack of education, they lived in a world of superstition. The community mentioned in Uchalya's narrative was not well-educated. The issue of superstition eventually became an integral element of the Uchalya community. Due to a lack of knowledge, the members of the Uchalya Community remained savages. These people were completely oblivious to the need of education. As a result, they lived their entire lives in a state of superstition and ignorance. The community's progress was always hampered by superstitions and blind beliefs.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Gaikwad regrets his parents' past and current pain, as well as the suffering of his community members who continue to live in the same conditions. He condemns the country's entire social, economic, political, and religious systems, which, despite promising to provide all forms of justice in the face of various injustices and atrocities, as well as better opportunities for the welfare of his community's members, have always discriminated against and exploited them. Today, Gaikwad is totally committed to his long-term purpose of creating a space for the Dalits in general, and the DNTs and other oppressed parts of society in particular, where they can live with self-respect and dignity. He concludes his autobiographical narrative with a call for total societal transformation so that the country's numerous tribal/ Dalit movements might be strengthened in the proper path. In other words, the book concludes with a serious call for the abolition of imposed social and legal limits, social justice, rights, all sorts of reform, and the change of the Uchalya community as a whole within the country's existing social framework.

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