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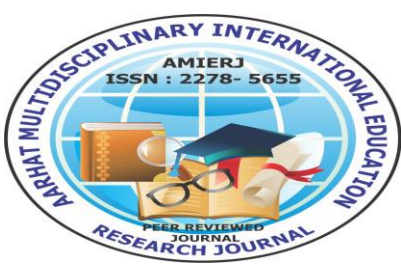
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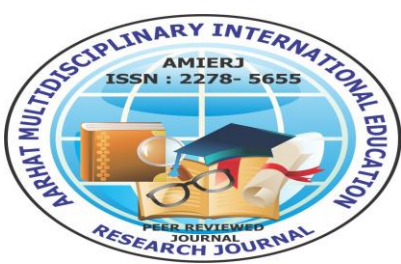
**JOURNEY OF WOMAN THROUGH SOCIAL HUMILIATION AND TRIALS
PORTRAYED IN SELECT DALIT WRITINGS**

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*In the auto narratives of the narrators Kishore Kale, Laxman Mane and Laxman Gaikwad, the women portrayed are from deprived descent, destitute and in miserable condition. There is immense violation of the rights of women guaranteed by the constitution and also human rights proclaimed in various international declarations and conventions promulgated by the United Nations. The narrator describes the miserable and painful condition of the oppressed caste woman under the influence of the various factors known as the established society. The dominance of a handful of people in the mainstream society is brought to the notice of the readers. They have narrated series of incidents of humiliation, exploitation and deprivation of this lower caste women. The struggle of the parents of these writers was also remarkable one and full of hard work. The experiences of demons, sacrificial goats, festivals and ceremonies are generally described in their auto narratives. In these memories many details of childhood are narrated by both the author. The struggle for education is a common aspect that is stated by the writers. Due to their extreme poverty, they go to school without uniforms and books to acquire knowledge. The women in the memoir *The Branded* and *Against All Odds* were hardworking who take up responsibilities of their families. It is a regular occurrence in this society that the people of the villages, subject to women on various issues and atrocities, indulged in sexual relations with these lower caste women by having immoral and forced relations. Lower caste girls are bought and sold like animals in the market. It is undoubtedly true that the upper caste men of the society used to oppress these deprived women. But it is also true that their own men were not protecting them, as for them their daughters were a guaranteed source of income.*



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Uchalya received the Sahitya Akademi Award in Marathi in 1988 and is also a winner of the National Award.

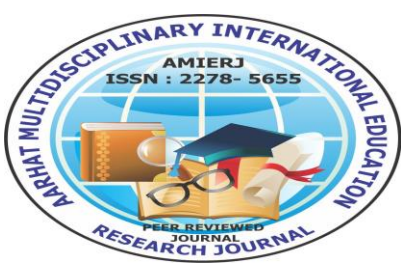
The international body does advocate for gender equality and eradication of all forms of discrimination against women. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions and specifically Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the General Assembly, asks its member countries to ensure safe and secure work places for women and end all sort of gender biases and discrimination. This paper attempts to look at the plight of the women portrayed in the Dalit autobiographies.

Keywords: *Helpless, subjugation, humiliation, exploitation and deprivation.*

People belonging to the *Uchalya* caste were living in their own world in their own system. Their main business was robbery and theft. Their own internal groups were divided and their newborn child was handed over to one of them as the perfect thief or sold them. They literally had no standard of living. In his autobiography, Laxman Gaikwad how his people wandered from place to place for land and to live on, food to eat, trade, small jobs, etc. Women were bought and sold and harassed by the Jaat Panchayats, even if they were victims of caste atrocities and also the domestic violence by their own husbands. Women were also involved in petty thefts and they would have their group of women who would steal from fairs and markets.

Police would often catch them in search of stolen gold and other valuables, even when they were not involved in the thefts. Police would beat all the women in the house and arrest all the men and take them to the Police station. During such times women had to take the responsibility of the family and feed the children and old and run the family. They would also try to rescue their men by begging and borrowing from the upper caste landlords for the bail amount.

These castes *uchalya*, petty thieves, were branded as criminal by birth by the colonial rulers, after the independence the same communities were rebranded as the habitual offenders. Laxman Gaikwad was the only tribal boy to attend a nearby school. He used to feel embarrassed when he was the only child of a small caste and tribe in the class and the rest of the students were making fun of him. The same thing happened to him not only in school but also in his tribe where to break the many years old trend of not sending any child to school, he was admitted to the school

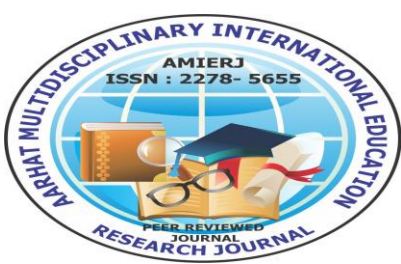


by his family. The girls from these tribes are hardly sent to school and they are married off at an early age and employed in the business of stealing and supporting the family.

The tribe did not want to wash their clothes regularly. Their clothes were washed once in several months when they had the opportunity to go near the river. Laxman Gaikwad used to put a piece of sleeping cloth on the roof of his hut when he woke up every day. These tribes did not have sanitation facilities or well-built cement houses. Their space was used for multiple tasks at the same time. On the one hand, some people used to cook food on the other hand, the same place was used for garbage.

Laxman Mane's autobiography *Upara*: is a successful attempt to show all the pain and suffering caused by the society or the person in it in the dark darkness of oppression, marginalization, exploitation, oppression and alienation. He is a Marathi writer and social activist from Maharashtra. He has done his best to express the grief of the minority people through his autobiography. After his autobiography *Upara (An Outsider)* was published in 1980, it suddenly came to light. His autobiography is considered a milestone in Marathi Dalit literature. He received *Padmashri* in 2009.

Kishore Kale's famous autobiography *Against All Odds* depicts a man with bones like ours is made secondary by another man and brought to the lowest step. Treats him badly, this is the story of *Kolhati's* son who struggled with the society and created an independent identity. It is unknown at this time what he would do after leaving a certain position. His mother quit dancing, but life's affordability did not stop there. This child, however, stays in the brothel and bathes in the river of education. The boy later became a doctor. The question arises who will take such kids out. *Kolhati* parents forced their daughters and sisters to sleep with men who paid them the most. The women depicted in both authors' autobiographies are hardworking and deprived. They were excluded from opportunities and facilities. In the pictorial writing presented, women are being subjugated and humiliated in every sphere of their lives. Laxman Mane's mother begged for stale food and brought while wandering with donkeys around the rich colony. And she gave that stale food to her children and also helped in her husband's work. She has given birth to all her children in a critical condition. She always struggles for her children.



In *An Outsider*, a beautiful woman named 'Paru' was raped and molested by other upper castes, at that time she cries out for help in that critical situation, which gives the reader sympathy. Later, her husband also treats her very cruelly. It seems like being beautiful was her fault. The practice of selling and buying a beautiful woman as a commodity in a lower caste society had been going on for many years. Due to this, the mother of the writer Gaikwad died due to her bitter poverty and superstition, which proves that the condition of the woman in the memoirs of these lower caste authors was very pitiable.

While studying about these three writer's memoirs the woman presented by the author Mane in the *Kaikadi* community is full of oppression and humiliation. The woman also plays a dominant role in her domestic life and Mane describes the struggles in the *Kaikadi* community from her birth to her death. Author and critic of English literature Raj Kumar properly observes the exploited women on the basis of Jaat Panchayat and Patriarchal Orders:

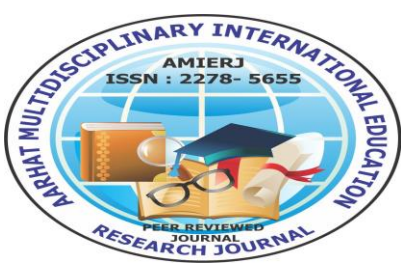
"The panchayat was a manifestation of a patriarchal system in which women did not expect much justice. As a result, *Kaikadi* women are often the cross-bearers of society". (Kumar 183)

Women of this lower caste are brutally treated not only by the dominant caste but also by the Police. Gaikwad has described the exploitation of women in the *Pathroot* community in the following given words. He says:

"When the police caught me, my grandmother told me that they threw me underfoot and forcibly whipped, thrust burning cigarette butts into my anus. And if I did not confess to the theft, they brought the garbage near my mouth and forced me to eat it and beat me". (Gaikwad 164)

A woman from *Kaikadi* community was brutally treated by the Police and it was a matter of shame and embarrassment from the point of view of humanity. The condition of a woman from *Kolhati* community was very bad. The plight of women in *Kolhati* society is such that it is okay to sell a woman in the market to buy something and run a family. The writer Kishor Shantabai Kale has written his memoir, *Against All Odds* that shows the real world of *Kolhati* women and the struggles of their life.

In *Kolhati* society, their women were forced to dance and attract the attention of men. Young girls from the *Kolhati* community used to give 'young adolescent virgins' to a rich man of higher caste in a ceremony known as *Chira Utarana*. For a young girl's virginity, the man would pay a



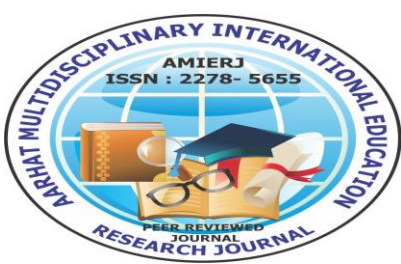
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fixed price until she visited him and had to earn money for her parents. Thus, in *Kolhati* society women were subjugated and humiliated by their own men and by the dominant people in the mainstream society. The present memoirs describe the lower caste community of *Uchalya Kaikadi* and *Kolhati*. Thieving was the main occupation of *Uchalya* community, begging business was the main occupation of *Kaikadi* community and dancing of women was the main occupation of *Kolhati* community. Fairs and festivals are an essential part in the lives of these communities for their livelihood.

The marriage practices of each of these communities and their caste panchayats, patriarchal informal judicial systems are also different. The old method of "*Chira Utarana*" had become a common practice in *Kolhati* society. Each of these castes have different religious sites and deities in different forms. Their work is complemented by the cultural experiences of these nomadic tribes. There are many incidents in these memories that help the reader to understand the culture and customs of these people and make them aware of the reality of these deprived nomadic tribes. These writers were initially from rural areas and they had entered urban life to satisfy their hunger. Mane's *An Outsider* indicates of the experiences are rural and urban life whereas Kale's *Against All Odds* has a fairly accurate estimate of rural and urban life. The mix of rural and urban culture is a special feature of their work. Half of the life of these writers have been developed in rural areas. They entered into the city life in their later phase of their lives for the various social activities.

After completing their basic education, they took to writing their life experiences and joined social work to inspire their community. The recent memoirs have shown that hunger and poverty were common things. The communities mentioned in the current paper have not met their basic needs. Their hunger was the main obstacle in their life. He had been fighting for bread from the very beginning of their life. They are deprived from their basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. They never get enough food in their lives. Most of the time, they lived on the leftovers from the nearby village. Sometimes a whole family of ten to fifteen people slept without food for many days at night. Laxman Gaikwad recollects from his memory of his childhood that he had to even eat the roasted rats, pigs to fill his stomach. They ate leftover food



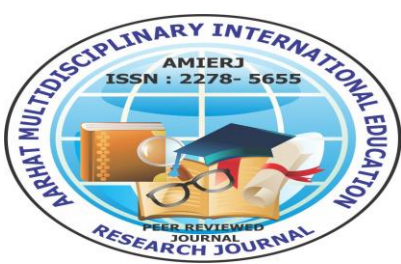
all day at the wedding. In this sense, the notable critic Lulekar rightly says the picture of *Pathrut* community in his words. He says:

“Stealing for the stomach, punishing for stealing, stealing after the sentence is completed, this is how the life of the *Pathruts* turned out.” (Lulekar 186)

There were numerous famines during those days and at such times the marginalized caste and tribe communities such as *Pathroot*, *Kaikadi* and *Kolhati* were deprived of everyday livelihood. They were always suffering from poverty and hunger and they were struggling for their existence. These writers repeatedly portrayed poverty and starvation in their autobiographies. These writers are the real saviors of their society. They have shown that their society is the real victim of poverty.

The Jaat Panchayat, which played an important role in these caste tribe societies, was considered as a major factor. It was a team of selected members of the caste who settled the disputes of their caste people. It used to play a negative and destructive role for the overall development of the community. In order to maintain unity and solidarity in these societies, there were high standard Jaat Panchayat. But the individual progress of this community was hampered. Justice was often denied in the panchayat. The present writers are trying to fight against the cruel domination of Jaat Panchayat in the society. Laxman Mane, Kishore Kale, Laxman Gaikwad are trying to overthrow the permanent fear of caste panchayats. Weak men and women from this oppressed cast are falling prey to the tyrannical rule of the Jaat Panchayat. According to the strict rules of Panchayat in this society, women have to suffer the most. The Jaat Panchayats are conservative, feudal and the real protectors of patriarchy. In this attempt they have always exploited and subjugated their women with heavy and weird fines. They have always sided with the man even if he is the preparator, and fined and executed the women even if she is the real victim in the personal or societal life.

The Indian caste system was a major obstacle to the acquisition of fundamental rights in the lives of these privileged writers. Oppressed people like *Uchalya*, *Kaikadi*, and *Kolhati* were born into these lower castes as victims of poverty, slavery, illiteracy, ignorance, injustice, untouchability and oppression. The man-made ethnic classification of religious scriptures is supported by all the castes of Hindu religion. Therefore, the hegemonic Hindus inflicted uncontrollable suffering on



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these deprived communities. *Savarna* Hindus had forced these oppressive castes to live outside the villages and had not given them the task of living a dignified life. Unfortunately, the plight of these unwanted people is not portrayed in mainstream Indian literature.

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