



Evaluation Of Laxman Gaikwad's Uchalya: The Branded

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ABSTRACT:

Gaikwad's refuge from caste-based violence throughout this stage of his psychological and moral development takes the form of a holy haven. Similar to the previous three narratives, Gaikwad's gives a different view of Sanskritization that he encounters in the form of sacred space, which contrasts with the formal education received from an institution. His affiliation with the holy order, which he views as a purging force for his caste-polluted body, results from his desire to flee caste persecution. Gaikwad reflects the environment of instability faced by the Uchalya people, where the concern for survival takes precedence through this tactical action. They are always viewed as possible threats to the normative society because of the imposition of colonial identity, which caused their social and economic stratification, and as a result, nobody gives them any jobs. In this article, Laxman Gaikwad's Uchalya: The Branded has been evaluated.

Keywords: Laxman Gaikwad, Moral, Psychological.

INTRODUCTION:

Laxman Maruti Gaikwad is renowned for his autobiographical narrative of his life and that of his branded community in Uchalya, "The Branded." He was born on July 23, 1956, in Dhanegaon, Latur District. For his autobiography, he received the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Maharashtra Gaurav Pursakar. Dubang, Chini Mathachi Divas, Samaj Sahitya Ani Swatantra, Wadar Vedna, Vakila Pardhi, Utav, and Swathantra Konasat are only a few of the novels he has written. Uchalya: Laxman Gaikwad's The Branded is a story about the social and occupational stratification of his group, which keeps their situation deplorable and exposes them to many forms of exploitation by the government and other dominating communities. As part of his autobiography, it describes Gaikwad's life, his interactions with society at large, and the lives of his community. Laxman Gaikwad's autobiographical account outlines the past and present of his Uchalya group, which the English administration labelled as a community of "born thieves" during the colonization of India and from which this novel gets its name. The text opens by outlining the predicament of his community and how being a born thief leads to situations that perpetuate their reliance on the state apparatus for survival. In the context of the Uchalya community, where people have historically been associated with being born thieves, the law serves as the superstructure. The Uchalya community's history can be traced back to the early years of British colonial rule in India, when those who opposed and stood against the policy of colonial expansion were viewed and labelled as criminals, especially those who used armed struggle against them. [1]

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

Through this episode, which shows a child being exposed to a new kind of pedagogical process by stealing as a child rather than being sent to school, a different and unrecorded version of growing up in Indian society is depicted. This raises questions about traditional ideas of education, educational goals, and educational vision because they teach students how to exist rather than how to participate socioeconomically in social structures. A desire to serve encourages the development of a counter-pedagogical culture that is founded on collective survival.

The Uchalya community has been permanently branded by English authorities, and despite their valiant efforts to distance themselves from the conventional identity attached to their community, they continue to be considered branded communities. This invisible Dalit subjectivity is compensated for and replaced with forced, apparent damaging or negative subjectivity, such as eating the flesh of dead animals, cleaning poop, or being labelled as a thief. Through these signifiers, their identities are stolen and replaced with objects that are degrading and have negative connotations. The autobiography of Gaikwad shows the state and ideological machinery used by upper caste and class ideology to create conditions surrounding the Uchalya community that drive them to continue acting as a thieving community in order to exist. [2]

Gaikwad's use of the allegory of the lamb walking into a pack of wolves to describe him as not fitting there is an effective one. It demonstrates that the educational environment does not belong to members of the Uchalya community, and caste consciousness, which is ingrained in Indian society, serves as a deterrent in this situation. Here, the eating habits of the Uchalya community are compared with those of the ruling caste, which appears to be predominately vegetarian or does not consume crab meat. This allusion to eating customs strengthens the effects of caste on the child's body and mind. The youngster becomes socially isolated as a result of gaikwad and child-teasing and is unable to interact with the other students in the class. The psychological atmosphere that is created by this teasing tactic gradually encourages the child to leave the school and return to his or her home surroundings. According to Balmurli Natrajan, these types of social segregation operate as a semi-permanent social separation or apartheid of the various bodies. They create cultural apartheid for the lower group and keep them trapped in the caste-based vicious circle of theft. (xvi) These kinds of culturally specialised experiences aim to ingrain caste into the child so that he is aware of his place in society and behaves appropriately.

The illiterate Uchalya community thinks Gaikwad's wrongdoing is what caused the plague to spread to the community's youngsters. Gaikwad encounters difficulty in obtaining education since he deviates from the custom of robbing and enters a territory he does not belong in. They culturally acquire from their community the idea that one should not deviate from one's conventional career, which creates a bad position for Gaikwad. They are unaware that the cultural instruction they receive each generation keeps them in place and prevents their society from mobilizing. As a result, instead of supporting his endeavour and

encouraging their kids to pursue an education, they try to alter Gaikwad's course in an effort to maintain their caste identity.

Gaikwad describes another occasion in which the neighbourhood used his poverty to entice him to the thievery trade. Gaikwad's community members who are engaged in the thieving trade prey on his most vulnerable aspect of life—poverty—in order to add him to their gang of thieves. The community's reluctance to embrace Gaikwad's school-going attitude is largely due to personal jealousy and attempts to obstruct his modernization. However, he claims that our neighbors were somewhat resentful of me attending school and pestered my father, Martanda, to teach Laxman our thievery techniques. What purpose does his education serve? My father was once approached by Bhadgaon residents who wanted to borrow me for stealing. They had commanded Martanda to assign Laxman to work for their group. In a year, we'll teach him how to swindle. You'll enjoy yourself to the fullest. There will be a lot of money made. But father was adamant that he would enroll his son Laxman in school so that he might receive an education. Because of this, I received an education; otherwise, I would have followed the norm in our community and become a thief as well. [3]

In addition, given their roles and behaviours inside the system, the existence of the rest of society within it also becomes apparent. The community's residents rely on the occupation of thievery as a result of occupation-based stratification and being labelled as "born thieves." Thieving becomes the one and only means of existence as a result of the lack of any other occupations outside the caste and the British Government's role in labelling their caste as "born thieves." These encounters give Gaikwad, as a young child, knowledge about his society and his own place in it, which he learns and acknowledges.

Education becomes a tool through which a person with a developing character can shed their caste identity and live a respectable and dignified life. These kinds of events collectively have a symbolic impact on the fate of the experiencing character. They serve as a determining factor in helping people write a positive life narrative in which they live fruitfully. Their transformation from a position of oppression to a modern figure did not occur suddenly; rather, it was the result of a shared experience, gradual growth, and an examination of their lives since birth. It details the character's physical abuse and emotional abuse from childhood through maturity. In a caste-based society, education becomes a determining factor that aids in psychological and economic development.

As a result, I memorized a number of abhangas. I would beg and beg other singers to let me sing at least one song when a concert of devotional songs started at night. They'd let me sing, they said. I had no knowledge of the song's beat, rhythm, or melody. When I read a poem aloud to the class, I used to sing. All of the individuals there would chuckle. My abhanga would be picked up by someone else, so it wouldn't be left unfinished. I was able to strike the cymbals to the proper beat as I gradually developed a sense of the beat. I continuously imitated other vocalists as I gradually started singing abhanga. As the days went by, I started visiting respectable people's homes with the group of pious singers. I was no longer an untouchable pariah, as all of them started to touch me. Simply put, I was overcome by that sense of kinship. [4]

Body changes that alter its spatiality do not improve the ceremonial position connected to caste identity. Only positional changes—from poorer to higher in terms of economic and educational standing—occur as a result of sanskritization because the caste system doesn't change. This cultural backdrop aids in understanding how dalit consciousness is created in a broader sense. The construction of a Dalit identity is influenced by the spatiality of the body and the materiality of experiences. The literate untouchable experiences inferiority complex when they integrate into a Brahminic sociocultural environment.

The caste system that defines the structural space where the untouchable character was a part of places educated young in a predicament where the identity conflict is obvious. The character is trying to flee from the cultural area that the child once occupied and from which its history is deeply ingrained. The modern environment, whether semi-urban or metropolitan, defined by caste and class, continues to be a key indicator of one's identity. When the educated self enters this area, which is dominated by the "other" of the untouchable, it creates a sense of conflict since it becomes a significant marker for identifying one's affiliation and identity.

A person's caste identity is defined by space in the context of Dalit texts. The historically oppressed subject of rejection and humiliation is dominated by the spatiality of the modern ex-untouchable subject; as a result, the cultural space that the educated and modernized self-occupy becomes a metaphor of critique of the partition of spaces based on caste lines.

The psychic development of Gaikwad at this stage of growth is marked by continuity in terms of performing a separate higher caste identity while concealing the genuine birth identity. He starts to use hiding his caste as a way to obtain the benefits of belonging to the upper caste, and this causes him to want to keep hiding his caste. Gaikwad discusses the advantages of his identity-hiding strategy, but he takes a step further when he begins working at a mill in Latur and becomes friends with upper caste individuals and stops identifying with his own group. All had excellent things to say about me as I started studying while working, he writes. I also felt content that I was respected. From honourable families, I made pals. I had acquaintances in the Gurav, Maratha, and merchant communities, and they graciously invited me to their houses and engaged me in conversation. I thought back to the times when I was rejected and even yelled at, "Lakshya! Pathruta!" However, the Marathas here in Latur addressed me as Laxman Gaikwad. I believed that my status had improved. I reflected, "What was I like before? Look at the respect I have today!" This truly made me happy.

This developmental stage represents a momentary satisfaction of adolescent aspirations to be recognized and accepted by the upper caste. Similar to what he encounters with the kirtan singing group in the temple, this too results in a brief fraternity among the castes, but because this relationship is built on purposeful deception, it is not guaranteed to last. His rejection of his own cultural and community identity results from his creation of a commonwealth with the higher caste and imitation of their cultural ideals. When visiting his boyhood buddy Tukya in his village home, Gaikwad describes the effects of his internal conversion to a higher caste. Narya was still committing theft and pickpocketing, the author adds. Then Tukya commanded, "Lakshya, stay here for a day." For lunch, I'll murder a pig for

you. I declined and enquired as to his total number of pigs. Tukya retorted, "I wed a Sonoti girl. The father-in-law handed me a pig instead of a dowry. There is currently a sizable litter of them. Additionally, I have two to three donkeys. I guess I'm doing okay. I now eat every day, therefore I no longer experience starvation. I consequently listened to Tukya's life narrative. He pushed me to stay once more, but I resisted and went. [5]

Gaikwad's refusal to eat at Tukya's house is another example of the oppressive structure's value judgement of the subjugated caste. His psychological conversion into Hinduism, where vegetarianism becomes a necessary act to signify adherence to its cultural standards, is the main point of argument in this case, not just his eating habits. Food habits are crucial for upholding caste hierarchy and distinguishing higher-caste cultural practises from lower-caste ones. Therefore, Gaikwad's unwillingness to eat meat at his friend's house represents his unwavering acceptance of Brahminic culture in order to gain respect and equality.

This is a case of reflexive blindness, in which the character loses all control over his actions and enters a condition of imitation in which he considers the culture of the "Other" to be superior to his own culture. [6]

From Sanskritization to Westernization, this phase is the transition. The British colonial presence in India and its effects are linked to westernization. Westernization is seen as donning western clothing, speaking in western dialects, eating western foods, etc., which covers caste mobility by allowing characters to pass for anyone in settings where their caste identity and past are unknown. One's class identification is also seen to be indicated by their outward look. It conceals one's caste identification in a very misleading way, which Gaikwad and his pals use to get away from caste-based treatment. Gaikwad and his friend maintain the façade of upper-caste culture not only psychologically but externally as well by dressing expensively so that there would be no doubt about their genuine identity.

Readers are informed by Gaikwad that we had on pants when we reported for duty. In the past, we used common fabric that cost about 4-5 rupees per meter. Because of how much better our clothes were than theirs, the workers assumed that we must be from wealthy households. With our pay, how could one purchase such clothing? We pretended to be Marathas to our coworkers so that we could dress in posh clothes without raising the possibility that they had been made from stolen materials.

Sanskritization and westernization are two terms describing a process of cultural camouflage used to access privileges only available to the dominant caste, where the traditional dominant caste has exclusive access to authority, wealth, and social prestige. It is a cultural shift, and neither structural nor positional modifications are being discussed. These instances, which are presented as autobiographical stories, provide empirical proof and unbiased insight into societal trends. [7]

Dalit chetna, or consciousness, is the awareness of one's place in society and the injustices they encounter on a daily basis, as well as the desire to dismantle the existing systems of discrimination. In the text chosen for consideration, the emergence and development of Dalit consciousness result in a struggle between two forms of identification for the

developing self. Sanskritized caste and class ideals and respect are one type of identification that fills the hole left in childhood by the humiliating experiences connected to caste identity. The other is a method of identifying with the character's birth identification that rejects caste-based exploitation and uses his caste identity as a strong political tool to combat casteism. In order to combat casteism in Indian social reality, Dalit Chetna is a crucial practise.

Theoretically and philosophically, all of them are connected and powerful concepts that together make up Dalit consciousness, which functions as a force for emancipation from the hegemonic caste's cultural imperialism. The rational way for Dalits to awaken outside of Manichean and post-colonial forms of identification is through Dalit consciousness. Since Dalits have historically fought against the externally imposed "untouchable" identity in an effort to redefine their caste community in positive and self-assured terms, the ex-untouchables must fight to redefine their identity as positive and community-based, through which a sense of self-worth would become a part of their identity.

From this point on in Gaikwad's autobiography, *Uchalya: The Branded*, the paradigm shift begins to operate in the context of creating Dalit consciousness and identity. Gaikwad, the main character, embarks on a movement to rediscover his roots as he develops political consciousness. He establishes a meta-narrative space for their lives and stories of how they were taken advantage of by higher caste people in order to politically and socially identify with the greater community. His autobiography includes three to four narratives of other people in which he describes the struggles of untouchables in the quest for social mobility, some of whom succeed. According to Navleen Multani, Gaikwad represents upper caste and class exploitation of lower castes in his autobiography. In *The Branded*, he expresses the struggle of the Uchalyas against exploitation, starvation, and poverty because the atrocities committed against them by law enforcement agencies continued even after India's independence. He makes the case for humane treatment of the branded by making them visible. [8]

Participating in the community and wanting to see things better fosters a sense of community with the greater group, which frees the character from his slavish imitation of upper-caste culture. In order to help the rest of society organize and flee caste injustices, he draws on his personal experiences with the emancipatory quality of knowledge that has helped him reach this improved position. He thinks that if less fortunate groups, particularly untouchables, had a modern education on par with that of the ruling caste, their situation would improve. The most socially and educationally backward segment of Indian culture, particularly the Uchalya community, whom the colonial authorities labelled as criminals and born thieves, can be improved via education. They can be freed from colonial identity and occupational segregation through education, which would also pave the road for economic mobilization.

These principles have the power to transform traditional India and move it closer to being a secular state. Gaikwad's life story simultaneously documents a number of unvoiced subaltern narratives of others who were unable to communicate their experiences with the literary community due to the stagnation of their status. It is a new cultural identity where

a community is initially formed along the lines of untouchability and discrimination but moves beyond that initial commonality of oppression and imagines itself in a new political consciousness and a re-embracing of certain Dalit cultural symbols. Their inclusion in the larger narrative creates a new collective cultural environment.

This vignette demonstrates a cold, impersonal, and mechanical business relationship between the goldsmith and the bargainer, who is selling stolen gold for a low price. The economic relationship is another example of the upper caste society's worldview, which desires to maintain an unjust relationship with members of the uchalya group in order to further their own monetary interests. When she was alive, the jeweller was able to make extravagant profits from the body of the untouchable Uchalya woman, which allowed him to prosper both financially and socially. However, the goldsmith does not give her offspring any financial assistance as a result of her contribution. The narrative's core encapsulates the exploitative relationship between the dominant community and the Uchalya community, turning it into a micronarrative of the entire community.

A bigger framework of narratives that theoretically and empirically link the particular expressions and experiences of the character to the larger masses is formed by the network of stories, where each meta-narrative of an untouchable is inherently related to other narratives. The writing and giving the community a voice demonstrates the significant role the community has had in raising people's consciousness, sense of brotherhood, and sense of collectiveness. Dalit identity represents a collectivity among the past, present, and future. Community denotes experience, fragmented identity, humiliated past and present. To develop a sense of rootedness and belonging that contributes to the formation of a collective identity and fosters Dalit consciousness among people, the Dalit community stands for collectiveness, fraternity, togetherness, solidarity, and collective mentality. This collectiveness offers a framework and underlying assumptions for the politicization of the casteism issue. [9]

The politically and culturally aware character does not wish to distance himself from the community's greater history of oppression and injustice, which is reflected in the community. The individual body of humiliation, as the site of violence, evolves into a collective body as a result of his linking of individual experience to collective traumatic experience of pain and humiliation. As the social status of the body, which becomes a collective body, is inscribed with a history of discrimination, the individual body transforms into a social body.

The incorporation of other people's stories broadens the theoretical scope of the exploitation discourse, which theoretically and politically transforms a person's autobiography into a biography of the entire Dalit society and portrays it as a social record of the Uchalya community. The expansion within the context of creating a Dalit identity keeps detailing numerous forms of exploitation and oppression experienced by lower caste groups. Gaikwad keeps narrating and documenting the stories of exploitation victims and their worries that are thematically related to Gaikwad's story. Gaikwad's story goes on to tell another Ithi tale. This first-hand account of Ithi illustrates the social stratification and extreme poverty of the Uchalya community members, which makes it difficult for them to

survive and occasionally necessitates the sacrifice of a newborn child in order to do so. Ithi's experiences show the genuine agony of the uchalya community and family, who sell their newborn female child in order to survive.

Economic insecurity, a typical trait and unifying factor among larger populations, is a key cliché that fosters assimilation and reinstates the Dalit character in the Dalit universe. People who belong to lower social strata frequently experience economic uncertainty. Gaikwad experiences economic hardship in a similar way at this stage of development, which completes the process of identification with the underprivileged group. After all, it is the shared experience of those from untouchable communities that brings them together and transforms the dalit autobiographies into a social document of the society. Gaikwad writes: "I started having severe financial problems." Unimaginable hardships were endured by the household. I believed that neither a service nor a store would assist me in getting over these challenges (219). Another recurring theme that can be seen in all the autobiographies used for study and that paints a more complete picture of Dalit writings is this one. [10]

The narrative voice shifts to exposing the abuses and exploitation experienced by the entire community at the hands of the upper caste portion after documenting certain significant stories within his narratives. Here, Gaikwad documents one of the occurrences.

Once, there was an assault on members of our Uchalya group who lived in Kawatha. Because our group had declined to make extravagant gifts to the Mahadeo Fair that year, the powerful members of higher castes had unitedly attacked us.

Every year, the residents of Kawatha forcibly extort money from our neighbourhood to support the Mahadeo Fair. The Patil and the Sarpanch of the area have long been sworn enemies to the Uchalya community. Our people flee and take a different path if any of them are seen on the road. These powerful individuals have terrorised our people for years while wielding brutal authority. People who are actively involved in theft and pickpocketing must pay up to Rs. 251.

As the Mahadeo Fair draws closer, our people embark on heist missions, amass substantial sums, and pay the Mahadeo Fair Tax before covering even the most basic household needs or providing for their kids. And with the money they have taken from us, these powerful individuals organise wrestling matches to flaunt the reputation of Kawatha. These matches feature well-known wrestlers from far-off locations, and spectators assemble to watch.

Gaikwad simultaneously enters the building contract sector in an effort to endure economic uncertainty, just like other people. But in this place, he encounters a different kind of reality, one in which the powerful people in society remain silent and the oppressed are treated unfairly. When it comes to receiving a contract from the government, the contractor is expected to please everyone by paying bribes at various levels to have his work done. He exposes the operation of state machinery and corrupt government employees and authorities. I asked about the percentage, and he writes:

A framework for identification with the greater oppressed population is provided by this comparison. The individual self combines and identifies with the wider untouchable

population as well as the more expansive and politically aware identity of the Dalit. Gaikwad's involvement with political parties, his participation in the electoral process by running for a Lok Sabha seat, his observation of the political processes, his dealings with the Congress candidate, and his withdrawal from the election in support of the candidate all provide insight into his involvement with the Indian political system and his attempts to educate low-caste communities about politics. From being a naive character to becoming politically aware, Gaikwad transitions from childhood to adulthood with the same ease that he does from his wholly non-political existence to his avatar as a political activist. His unassuming demeanour is unaffected by the process. 166; Deshpande

The horizon of narrativity is expanded by the shift from a subjective to an impersonal portrayal of the suffering group. It offers a subjective as well as an unbiased perspective on the social situation of the residents of Uchalya village. According to Deshpande, this tactic widens the field of experience that gives the book its authenticity of experience and distinctive qualities as a communal and community-based story. The earnestness of its narration and the veracity of its experience set it apart from prior classics. It also has another feature. The book's first-person narrative shifts constantly between two levels. This is a first-hand account. It is also an objective viewpoint from an outsider. An experience in the present is also an experience in the past. The chronological perspective is not the only dialectic at play in this story. Additionally, a totally personal experience is perpetually transformed into a social reality, which then transforms back into a personal experience.

The process of combining and transforming a personal autobiography into a biography of the entire community illustrates the social realism of Indian society, which is not accurately depicted by dominating literary movements. The socially realistic element is crucial to Dalit autobiographies because it allows the politically aware, mature adult figure of the dalit to look back on his or her life trajectory and map out its progression. The adult narrator intervenes in the narrative development throughout this evolution to offer his thoughts and opinions about certain incidents as well as his feelings in relation to them.

However, what distinguishes their narratives from others is the honesty with which they convey their identities to readers and the accuracy with which they depict their personal histories and societal contexts. They follow a trajectory in which they do not acknowledge their development as admirable national figures but rather portray caste atrocities as a constant part of their existence. Their tales, which ultimately led to the drafting of their autobiographies, are theoretically supported by these caste crimes.

CONCLUSION:

In light of this, Rangrao Bhongle further states that "the "I" in these autobiographies is not an individual; he is a representative of all the oppressed races in the globe" and that the "I" in the autobiographies of ex-untouchables denotes the "we" of the entire community. These autobiographies are poignant tales of people's misery and helplessness. Dalit autobiographies stand out from other works in the same genre because they express group consciousness rather than the life of a person. According to the same line of reasoning, Prof. Raj Kumar contends that Dalit autobiographies emphasize intricate interpersonal

relationships and a sense of community with regard to a much broader range of issues, including social relations at the micro-level involving the village, family, caste, peer group, school, factory, urban streets, slums, and the like.

Similar to Bahujan, Dalit identity is democratic in nature and upholds the ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity, and togetherness among oppressed people. It contributes to the development of a shared worldview that upholds and promotes human dignity and equality among all people and condemns any form of oppression and exploitation on the part of any group. Arun Prabha Mukhrjee claims that "Dalit" is a political identity rather than a caste identity in the same context. It conveys the Dalit people's awareness of their oppression and their determination to seek freedom through the revolutionary change of the oppressive system. Dalit identity is a metaphor for many different people; it represents being treated differently as the other, being oppressed, crushed, and raped, as well as inclusivity, solidarity, collectiveness, generating political discourse, dignity, celebration, and the equality, liberty, and fraternity preached by the Buddha. Ambedkar's ideas of freedom do not hold water in a caste-based society that rejects modernist conceptions of growth and progress. Democratic social and moral systems cannot flourish and survive in this setting under the Hindu value system. The caste-based environment is dominated by injustice and inequity. Casteist knowledge is produced that exposes and critiques the caste-based Hindu ideology as a result of experiences with unfair treatment and the perpetuation of caste hierarchy. When Ambedkarite freedom is restricted in the name of caste, it sparks a modernity debate and demonstrates how Hindu modernist ideas hinder the liberation of former untouchables.

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