



THE CONDITIONS OF MAHAR IN NIZAM DYNASTY

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ABSTRACT

The society of the Nizam period consisted of Bramhins, Marathas, Kolis(Fishermen), Sutar (Carpenter) , Lohar (Ironsmith) , Koshti, Muslims, Mali, Vanjari, Mahar, Mang, and Chambhar (Cobbler) castes. The Mahar, Mang, Chambhar and Dhor were included amongst the Dalits. They were mentioned as untouchables or atishudras. Mahar was a major caste amongst the Dalits. Then comes the Mangs and the Chambhars. In 1941 the population of the dalits in Hyderabad state was 2928040. Here it is necessary to have a look at the history of the dalit castes and their social and financial position.

KEY WORDS: society , atishudras , social and financial position.

The History of the Mahars

Mahar community is very ancient and in medieval Maharashtra, every village had a Maharwada. The significance of the Mahars can be gauged from this. The documents in the Nizam period mention Mahars as 'Antyaj' (Last born) 'Bhumiputra; ('son of the soil') 'Adihindu' (First Hindu), Atishudra, Dhed, Naglya, Taral, Veskar, Vatadya (Guide) Margadarshak, Padewar, Naikwadi, veshisakha (Friend on the boundary) Kotwal, Asprushya¹etc.

There are various opinions and legends about the birth of the Mahars. But these opinions and legends cannot be supported. Vitthal Ramji Shinde says "the word "Mahar" is apabhramansh" of the word "Mhar"². H L Kausare says that "The word Mahar was converted into "Mahar in Maharishtri"³. Hence an inference can be drawn that the word Mhar was derived from original Mahar and was subsequently converted into Mahar.

Mahar : the descendants of the Naag

The Naag dynasty is one of the most ancient dynasty in India. Nag race had its kingdoms in the ancient period. The Naga culture prevailed before the Aryans. The ancienity can be judged from this fact. Mahars are the descendants of the Naagas. Kashyap gave birth to Naga from Kadru⁴. Hence Kashyap is the original ancestor of the Nagas. Hence the Naaga people are of the KashyapGotra. The descendents of the Nagas are today's Mahars. RajaramshastriBhagwat⁵ has opined that Naga people means today's Mahars. This theory has been supported by V K Rajwade⁶, P N Deshpande, and H S Shenolikar⁷, H L Kosare⁸, N G Bhawre⁹, Dr B R AMbedkar¹⁰ and Dr.Anil Kathare¹¹. As per the tradition of the Mahars, their first king was Nag¹². The Naga people and Naga Kings in the ancient period suffixed the words Naga and Nika after their names. For example Ganpati Nag, Kuber Nag, Bhim Nag, Bhav Nag, Dev Nag¹³. Similarly the medieval Mahar cast suffixed the acronym Nak after their name. Nak is the apabhamanshof the word Nag. Nak means Mahar. For example, Khandnak Mahar, Siddhanak Mahar, RamNak Mahar, DhakNak Mahar etc. In addition to this the names of Naga families are the surnames of many Mahar families. For example, Aharat and Kharat. Similarly people of the Nag race are also called Som race (Vansha). Mahars in spite of being Nag Race (Vansha) call themselves Som race (Vansha)¹⁴.

Hence it is clear that the Mahars are original of the Nag race and are the original inhabitants and rulers of the soil. Maharashtra was the motherland of the Nag race. Hence the Mahar people are found all over Maharashtra.

Maharashtra : Nation of the Mahars

The Mahars are original Nag race and are original inhabitants and rulers of this land. Maharashtra derives its name from them only. John Wilson¹⁵ has given the derivation of Maharashtra as the Nation of the Mahars. He has relied on the proverb "GaavthetheMaharwada" meaning in every village there is a place of Mahars. He further mentions that the nation of Gurjars is Gujarrashtra = Gujrat and the nation of the Mahars i.e. Mahar + Rashtra = Maharashtra. In this context the opinions of other experts are significant and decisive.

- 1) Shri Wamanrao Bhat : In ancient period, Mahars were a nation¹⁶.
- 2) Shri Dattatray Khanapurkar : Mahars are the original inhabitants of Maharashtra and once rulers of Maharashtra¹⁷
- 3) Shri RajaramshastriBhagwat.: Mahars are the genuine natives of the ancient period and are Naglokas. Similarly the nation of the Mahars is Maharashtra¹⁸.
- 4) Shri S L Kausare – The Mahar gan of Nag race had established colonies in Maharashtra in ancient period. People from other Gan were also in this land. But the Mahar Nag Gan was the major amongst them. The part of land mass occupied by these Mahar Gan and the land mass which they ruled, that landmass acquired the name "Maharashtra"¹⁹.
- 5) Shri S V Ketkar- Mahars are the original inhabitants of Maharashtra and Rathth are also another inhabitants in Maharashtra. The word "Maharashtra" is a combination of the two words Mahar and Rathth, and the nation of the Mahars is "Maharashtra"²⁰.
- 6) Dr Anil Kathare – Mahars were Nag race people. Their culture existed in Maharashtra since the Pre – Aryan Period. This region derived its name Maharashtra from their name²¹.
Dr N G Bhavre²², Alexander Robinson²³, and Mahatma Phule²⁴ have also accepted that the name Maharashtra is derived from the word Mahar.

From this it can be concluded that - the name Maharashtra is derived from the word Mahar. Mahars were the original inhabitants and rulers of Maharashtra. They reached their Nadir due to political defeat. The Konkan region mainly constituted the Mahars, Mang, Bhills, Thakur, Koli and Kongs. But the Kadambas defeated Mahars, Chalukyas defeated the Mangs and Mauryasdefeated the Kolis and won their kingdoms²⁵. Hence Mahars the sons of the soil became astray.

Sub castes among the Mahars

There are many sub castes amongst the Mahars. Some of these castes derive their name from their occupation. " 53 sub-castes in the Mahar caste have been recorded in the 1911 census report of the Mumbai State. Shri S L Kosare has opined that there are twelve and Half sub-caste in the Mahar caste. Half of the caste is of that people who have been outcaste for some reason or the other"²⁶. Alexander Robertson²⁷ has supported this opinion. In addition the sub-castes amongst the Mahars are as follows : "Avane, Andhavan, Anant, Kulath, Auth Kamble, Valhi, Balkamble, Barke, Bavana, Bavcha, Bavise, Bel (Bele or Belia) Ben, Bankar, Bole, Cholkar, Dole, Dhed, Dharmik, Dom or Domb, Gardi, Gavsai (Gavse), Ghadsi, Ghat Kamble, Godvan, Gopal, Heds, Dolar, Aade, Jogti, Junare, Kaburle, Kadvan, Kamble, Kasere, Khase, Khochre, Ladvan, Mathkamble, Somaibal, Sutar, Tilvan, Pan Mahar, VInkar, Gasevar, Deskar, Hatkar, Godalima, Rapure, Dharmik, Dongarwar, Zadevan, Zurati, Barke, Panini Dharmik, and Mhali"²⁸

In the Mahar caste, the number of SomvanshiMahars is the largest and it is the major caste in the Mahar caste. The charter of 52 rights was granted to the SomvanshiMahars only. Earlier, the sub-castes of the Mahar caste use to have their own Panchayat. These sub-castes dine with each other, but marriages are a taboo.

Residence outside the Village limits

The Mahar caste was included in the Atishudras and untouchable classes. Hence their touch was a taboo. They also were not allowed to stay in the villages. There is ancient practice to built a village wall (Gavkus)²⁹for the protection of the village. The huge wall surrounding the village is known as Gavkus³⁰. This wall contained many entrances. During the Nizam period i.e. Medieval period, every village³¹used to have a wall. The Mahars and other untouchables use to reside just outside this wall to the east of the village. Today also Maharwada and Mangvada is to the east of the village. The theology³² also instructed that Antyaj should reside outside the village. Mahar, Mang and Chambhar were also known as Antyaj.

The 52 rights of the Mahars

The Mahar was a Vatandar and a first rank Balutedar of the village. He had to serve the Government and the village. He used to get some land as gift for serving the government. But he did not receive any cash but some rights and honor for serving the people. Somvanshi is the original and main caste of the Mahars. The fifty two rights were granted to the SomvanshiMahars only. The Bahamani Emperor Sultan Mohammedshah II of Bidar conferred the charter of 52 rights in 1475 AD to the Mahars. The same year there was Durgadevi's famine in the south. Many people passed away as hunger victims. So the Kamavisdar of Mangalvedha, Damajipant distributed the grain in the Government godown. The emperor held him accountable for it and so he was concerned. In this hour of calamity, the Yeskar of Mangalvedha, Vithu Mahar, directly deposited his gold buried inside the soil with the Emperor. Damajipant was pleased by the loyalty and service of Vithu Mahar and asked about the gift. Vithu Mahar asked for 52 rights for the Mahars. Accordingly Damajipant granted the charter of 52 rights to the Mahars under the Emperor's Signature. This charter bears the name of AmbarNak. Hence this charter was granted to AmbarNak or AmrutNak Mahar³³. The revision of this charter was done at Paithan during the Nizamshahi regime in Saka 1563. It has been clearly mentioned in the charter that "You and the 18 lacssomvanshis and the Pandhari be informed that this charter has been conferred in the Eknath Maharaj temple at Paithan "³⁴. Out of the fifty two rights as per the charter, some of the rights were as follows :

- 1) Right to collect tax of Rs 2.25 to Rs 3.50 on the marriage of any caste in the village.
- 2) Right to collect tax of Rs 1.00 to Rs 3.50 on every dead body of any caste in the village.
- 3) The Mahars can take out the procession of their bride groom on a horse while the Mangs should take out procession of their bridegroom on a Male buffalo.
- 4) The Mahars also got the right to collect octroi. The Mahars got the right to collect tax @2% on every incoming vehicle or animal
- 5) Pad means Animal flesh. The animal flesh in the village belonged to the Mahar. The Mahars used to get the skin of dead animals. But the skin would be returned to the owner of the animal in exchange of one maund of jowar.
- 6) On a wedding occasion at the Mahars' house, the Mang and his wife should supply wood fuel for five days and the Mahars should give them meals. Mang should also give rope and broom.
- 7) At the Jaggery production unit, the Mahar will get 1.25 jaggery per khandi, daily ten cane sticks, ¼ sher rice on three sloths and one pitcher juice for 18 pitchers.
- 8) Right to collect Hurda during Sankranti.
- 9) Share in offering for Holi and right to collect bullocks' offering on Pola occasion.
- 10) The Mang should give Nine yard saree and Blouz to the Mahar during marriage time.
- 11) The right to welcome the bridegroom at the village boundary and to collect offering from him.
- 12) Right to take food from peasant.
- 13) Share in the silo.
- 14) The rights at the time of marriage, festivals, Helga during Vijaydashmi occasion.³⁵

The Mahars were granted 52 rights during the Nizam Period. But for that, they had to be in the service of the society and the government for 24 hours. Their social and economic status did not change due to this. The Mahars remained in the slavery of the upper castes due to this charter of 52 rights. In short the charter of 52 rights turned out to be a fetter of social and economic slavery.

Untouchability

Untouchability means unfit for touch. Out of the 8000 castes in India, 429 castes were declared as untouchables. A person born in the untouchable caste died as an untouchable only. Mahar was an untouchable caste. The upper castes felt desecrated due to the touch of the untouchables. They had to undergo some expiation for removing the effect of desecration. Even though the theology did not recognize untouchability, the Mahar, Chambhar and Mang people were treated very badly with contempt and insult. The untouchables were oppressed by the Hindus and the Muslims during the Nizam period. Hence the dalit castes became slaves of the Hindus and the Muslims. The untouchables were banned from entering temples³⁶ and public watering places. They were made to sit separately. The teachers also did not touch the untouchable students, but beat them with a wooden stick. On 24th of December 1934, Dr Ambedkar went on a picnic to Ellora caves along with his colleagues Shrivastkar, Pradhan, Asaikar, Kavdi, Madkebuva, DiwakarPagare, DevjiDolas, AmrutraoRankhambe, BhadujiBikale and Tukaram Kale. On his way to Ellora, they halted to see the Daulatabad(Devgiri) fort. They refreshed themselves on a water tank outside the fort and washed their hands and legs. So the Muslims used slang language towards Dr Ambedkar³⁷ and his colleagues for making the water tank unholy. The Muslims were abusing that the untouchables have become arrogant and have forgotten their religion. To be ribald and cheap is their religion and they should be taught a lesson. One should obey his level in the religion. Ultimately they permitted Dr Ambedkar to see the fort on the condition that he will not touch water in the fort. Since they were untouchables they were not allowed to enter public watering places, temples and schools. Hence the untouchable workers submitted a memorandum to the Nizam demanding digging of separate wells for the untouchables. Then the Nizam dug separate wells for the untouchables and made arrangements for their drinking water.

Mahar - Village Vatandar

Mahar was the Vatandar of the village just as the Kulkarni and the Patil. " Vatan means a hereditary reward or honor conferred by the society on a person, serving for the village or the country, for his livelihood" ³⁸. The Mahars used to have MaharkiVatan. They used to get rent free land from the government. This land was called as "HadkiHadola" . Similarly Mahars used to get some honor and rights from the people. Even though there was similarity in the vatan of the Patil, Kulkarni and the Mahar, their economic powers and conditions were not similar. Patil was the Chief officer of the village. But even though the Mahar was a Village vatandar, he was an odd job man and a bonded laborer of the village. He served the village and the government, but instead of any return in cash, got baluts and stale food. This was his means of livelihood. Hence in spite of being vatandarsMahars remained economically weak.

Mahar - A crucial Vatandar

During the Nizam Period there was Balutedari System. There were 12 Balutedars in each village. They were Mahar, Mang, Chambhar (Cobbler), Sutar (Carpenter), Kumbhar (Potter), Nhavi (Barber), Parit (Washerman), Lohar (Ironsmith), Joshi, Gurav, Sonar (Goldsmith), and Mulana³⁹. Even though the Mahar was a crucial Balutedar, he carried maximum work load of village work. All these balutedars served the village free round the year and used to get return in kind during the hey season. That was called as Balut. Since Mahar was a first ranking Balutedar, he received the maximum Balut. But no Kunbi gave the Balut to the Mahars out of own. Hence his livelihood cannot be run on the baluts received by him.

The jobs of the Mahars

The Mahars were the servants of the Government and the people. They had to do every job of the government and the people. The Nizam Government had an unwritten instruction that the Mahars should do all the work in the village. The Mahars also considered it their duty to do all the work. They performed all the following work in the village. :

- 1) Jagla (Watchman) – Since the Nagalki was a subdivision of the Mahar Vatan, the watchmen belonged to the Mahar caste. Nagla means the Police of the village⁴⁰. The Jagla was a inferior servant than the Patil and the Kulkarni. Jagla was the watchman of the village. This watchman was called as Taral in Karnatak, Mahar in Maharashtra and Jagla⁴¹ in Khandesh.
- 2) Veskar- Since Vesarkari was also a Subdivision of the Mahar vatan the veskars in every village also belonged to the Mahar caste. Veskar means a person patrolling under the guidance of the steward at night and searching for criminals in the village⁴². Since the Mahar appointed for the purpose used to sit at the village boundary all the 24 hours, he was called a Veskar . He kept a watch on the persons entering and exiting the village.
- 3) Rabta (Working) Mahar - A Mahar working for a particular person or Kunbi in the village is known as Rabta Mahar⁴³. He performed all the work at the house of that particular person.
- 4) Padewar – The Mahar appointed for doing all the work in the village was known as Padewar⁴⁴.
- 5) Bethbigar(Bonded Labor) – Mahar was an all purpose peon and bonded laborer of the village. Bonded labor means getting all the work done without any return⁴⁵.

The Nature of Work

The Mahars were the servants of the people and the society. Since he was an all purpose peon and bonded laborer, his salary, nature, area and timing of work was not fixed. The government and the people expected him to toil day and night for them. And that was the rule. “If the Mahar was not available for work, it was mandatory for his wife or son to work for the people.”⁴⁶.

Return for work

As the nature, area and timing of work was not fixed, so was their salary. They were expected to get land as gift, balut from the people and cash salary from the government. But all the three types of honorarium were not given everywhere. IN some places land was gifted, in some places it was not. In some places only baluts and land were given. Mahars used to get cash salary of Rs 5 to 6 per month. Mahar was the vatandar, Balutedar and village servant and his vatan was known as Maharki and the land gifted by the government was called as Hadki- Hadola. The Mahars used to get Baluts during the hey days every year. Similarly they had got 52 rights and honor from the people⁴⁷. In short Mahar was the all purpose peon and bonded labor. He had the vatan, but no permanent source of income. Hence the Mahars became the slaves of the government and the people.

Administrative Jobs

1) To clean the village

To clean the village was the main duty of the Mahar appointed in the village. All the dirty work in the villages was done by the Mahars. Since the Mahars were untouchables, all the dirty linen was allotted to them. To clean all the village roads, to dump the dead animal stock out of the village, to clean the village office, and to meticulously maintain the cleanliness of the village were the main duties of the village⁴⁸.

2) To protect the village.

To protect the village from thieves and dacoits was the chief duty of the Veskar and Jaglya Mahar. The Veskar always kept a watch on the persons entering and exiting the village sitting near the village border. The Veskar and Jaglya patrolled the village along with the Pail during the night. For that purpose, they had to keep guard at night. The Jaglya had to keep a watch to protect the crops in the

fields⁴⁹. Jaglya Mahar was the Policeman of the village. Jaglya Mahar also investigated the thefts occurring in the villages⁵⁰. The Patil investigated the thefts with the help of the Jaglya.

3) Beating the Drums

The Mahar used to inform the people about any government order by beating the drums and shouting. It is called as proclamation. The Mahar did the work of proclamation. The Mahar proclaimed in every square of the village. The Mang accompanied him. Mahar used to proclaim and Mang beat the drums.⁵¹

4) To stand as witness and give evidences in village disputes

Since the Mahar was all purpose peon and bonded labor in the village, he had to wander everywhere in the village all the time. Hence he knew all the secrets and ins and outs of the people in the village. The Mahar was invited for giving witness and evidence in disputes between the two villages and borders of the farms. This was because he knew all the developments in the village. The witness of the Mahar was held valid and important in the civil and criminal cases in the villages. It has been recorded in the continuous report of 1878-79 of the districts in Hyderabad state that there are that 422 witnesses of Mahars have taken place⁵².

5) To serve the Government officers

It was necessary for the Mahars to perform all the work told by the village worker and Government officers. If any Government officer comes to the village, he was served by the Mahar. If any government officer comes to the village, Mahar used to erect tent for him, bring firewood, to massage and brush his horse, and had to sit near him. Mahar also informed about the arrival of the government officer in the next village and also carried his load. Mahar also went to the tehsil place to fetch the government dak for the village⁵³.

6) To take and give delivery of the mail.

Mahar also performed the important task of carrying the government mail. Mahar also carried the government documents, record of the government officers and administrative messages from one village to another. Mahars also delivered the government and private messages given by the Patil. Mahar also went to the tehsil place to fetch the government dak for the village⁵⁴.

7) Work in Revenue arrangement

Mahar played an important role in the revenue set up. Since Patil was the chief Government and revenue officer in the village, it was his responsibility to collect the village revenue and deposit it with the government. But it was not possible for the Patil to do this without the help of the Mahar. Mahar informed the villagers to deposit the revenue, call them to village office and follow up, took the recovered revenue to tehsil place and gave the receipt to the patil and Kulkarni of the village⁵⁵.

8) To keep records of birth and death.

Mahar also recorded the birth and death in the village and submitted it to the Patil and informed this to the relatives of the deceased person in neighboring villages. Apart from this, he helped the Patil to dispose off the unclaimed bodies. Being the government peon in the village, Mahar had to perform these duties.⁵⁶

9) Path finder and Guide

Mahar also worked as a path finder and guide for travelers and government officers. He knew every nook and border of the village. He also knew the paths in the jungles. In short Mahar was the eye of the village. Since the travelers did not know the routes, Mahar reached the travelers safely beyond the jungle and guided them beyond that. Besides the travelers were scared of the wild animals in the

thick forests. But if a Mahar accompanied them, they were not so scared. Any new traveler invited the Mahar through the Patil of the village. Thus it would become mandatory for the Mahar to accompany the traveler as his path finder and a guide⁵⁷. No dodging was allowed here.

10) Bonded Labor.

Mahar was also all purpose peon and bonded labor of the village. He worked for the people and the government free of cost. Patil, Kulkarni, Deshpande, Saranjamdar, Inamdar, Jahagirdar, and government had the right to get done the bonded labor. Bonded labor means getting the work done compulsorily from any person free of cost⁵⁸. Bonded laborer means person from whom such work is done. Mahars had to perform all the government work since they were bonded laborers. Mahar carried the load of people and government officers, performing all the vatani work in the village, managed the crematorium, and supplied fire wood at the residence of Patil Kulkarni, Deshmukh, Deshpande and other government officers, as bonded laborers⁵⁹. Mahar served at the residences of the Amin and Tehsildar free of any wages.

PRIVATE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

1) To do cleanliness of Kulwadis' residence

Mahars performing the work of the village were known as Village workers, Village Mahars, and Padewars and Mahar working at the residence of any person or farmer were known as House Mahar and Working Mahar and the person was known as Kulwadi. The entire Mahar caste seems got entangled in this because every Mahar worked with any or the other person. Not only the Mahar, but his wife also worked along with him. Mahar and his wife cleaned the house, the premises, supplied the firewood and cut it into proper pieces and daubed the walls of the houses of the Kulwadi.⁶⁰

2) Delivering the information about death.

If any person in Kulwadi's house passed away, this information was delivered by the Mahar to their relatives⁶¹. Mahar had to travel barefooted from one village to another without bothering the weather conditions. Nobody thought of his bread and butter during this occasions. Mahar could not refuse to do the above works since it was mandatory on him to do this work.

3) Bringing the firewood and cutting into pieces.

Mahar supplied the firewood and cut it into pieces at Kulwadi's residence. If any person passed away at Kulwadi's residence, rice was cooked on the third day. It was necessary for the Mahar to cut the firewood into pieces for this occasion. The Terarvi program was performed on the thirteenth day and Mahar cut the firewood into pieces for this occasion and invited the persons for the function. He was given the left over food in return and Mahar considered it as their right⁶².

4) Working on the farm.

Mahar had to perform many jobs during the hey season. He performed all the work from making the manure to delivering the harvested crop at home⁶³. Mahar and his wife worked as bonded laborers at the residence and farm of the kulwadi⁶⁴. They got handful of grain and mud laded grain in return.

5) Jobs at the time of marriage

When there was a marriage at Kulwadi's residence, Mahar and his wife performed all the trifle work till the end of the marriage. They had to cut fire wood if any marriage function was there. Similarly they held the airs at night. Mahar received a Dhoti and head gear and his wife received a sari in return⁶⁵. If the Patil of the village or the person had to travel to another village in connection with the

marriage, Mahar had to accompany him. The arrangement of his bullock cart was done by the Mahar. In addition, the presence of the Mahar was a prestige point for the person and the Patil.

6) Taking the dead animal out of the village.

It was the duty of the Mahar appointed on village duty to take the dead animal out of the village. The domestic Mahar carried the dead animal in the house of the kulwadi or person out of the village. Mahar extracted the skin of the dead animal. There was a dispute in 1890 at Parbhani as to who should own such skin between the Mahars and the people. Mahars claimed that they had the right to take the skin of the dead animal and lodged a complaint with the First class Talukedar. But since the Talukedar did not possess any record as to who had the right to the skin of the dead animal, he referred the said matter to the revenue department of the government. The government ruled that the Mahar should take the flesh of the dead animal and give the skin to the owner. Else if Mahar takes the skin, he should give a pair of shoes to the owner.⁶⁶

7) Work on the day of Holi and Pola festivals.

The work to be done by Mahar and his wife was scheduled. To cut fire wood into pieces was the main job of the Mahar. Cow dung cakes had to be supplied at the person's residence during the Holi festival. Mahar appointed to do village duty, had to supply cow dung cakes at the Patil's residence and for village Holi. Mahar also fetched fire to lit the Holi. He received the food and Prasad in return. This was the right and honor of the Mahars⁶⁷.

Mahar had to provide wall hanging at the person's residence on the Pola occasion. Similarly he supplied red ochre. Village Mahars tied a wall hanging of Mango leaves at the village border and office⁶⁸. They received leftover food in return.

8) Managing the Crematorium

If any person in the village passed away, Mahar performed all the work in the crematorium. Bringing and cutting the firewood and cow dung cakes and arranging the pyre for last rites was the job of Mahars. If any person had to be buried, Mahars dug the pit⁶⁹.

9) Delivering the messages

Just as the Mahars carried the government documents and mail, they also delivered the messages of the patil of the village and other people from one place to another. If a male or female child was born at a the house of the Patil or a person, this message was delivered by the Mahar to their relatives. He received a shawl and a head gear in return⁷⁰.

10) Bonded labor

Mahar was all purpose peon and real bonded laborer. He had to perform bonded labor of the people and the government. Hence the Mahars said that they were servants for every work of the people. The domestic Mahars carried the seeds and seedlings of the person on their head to the farms. The Kulwadi considered it as his prestige. They received some money and oti for this work. More over Mahar had to do all the work of the people.

If Mahar was sick or not available, his wife and people had to do the peoples work. If they refused to do such bonded labor, the land gifted to them was confiscated and was auctioned. Occasionally they were physically handled. In November 1944, the high cast Hindus attacked a Dalit locality at the village KasbaGayakache Pimpalgaon in Jintur tehsil in Parbhani District and physically manhandled the men and women. A person named Shivaji Navsagare of about 55 years of age was so severely beaten that he became unconscious. Considering him dead, he was burnt alive on the banks of the river Dudhna. His ashes were thrown away in the Dudhnariver. Some days before, the Dalits in this village had refused to perform misc work in return for two cakes. Hence the high caste Hindus attacked the Dalit locality.⁷¹

At Hingoni in Vaijapur Tehsil in Aurangabad District, the dalits refused to contribute for the Mari Aai festival. So the high caste Hindus severely beat the Dalits and drove away the male dalits out of the village. They were not allowed to meet their family for days together. They dropped poisonous plant in the public well. The high caste Hindus also severely beat the Dalits at Kichargaon in Vaijapur Tehsil⁷². The Dalits at Aadgaon in Kannad Tehsil tried to hold a public meeting in 1946. So the high caste Hindus beat them and drove them outside the village. The hands and legs of one dalit named Behere was tied up for two days. In Jintur tehsil, the Muslim goons beat up the 13 Dalits reciting Bhajans at the Math. The women were also beaten up. Some Dalits were harnessed to bullock carts⁷³. Many such incidents were happening in Marathwada. B S Vyankatrao and J H Subayya petitioned the Nizam to save the lives of the Dalits.

CONCLUSION

Mahar was an important Balutedar, Village Vatandar and Government Peon of the village. He held a Maharkivatan. Similarly he received some land for performing the government work. But since this land was very infertile, the Mahar vatan did not have any prestige as the other Vatan. Mahars had to perform all the job of the village due to this vatan. But since the financial returns for this work were very meager, they were financially dependent on the high caste Hindus. In short, the Mahars were financial slaves and bonded labors of the people and government due to the Mahar vatan. They did not satisfy their basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar initiated struggle against the Mahar vatans since 1927. As a result the Mahar vatans were totally abolished in Maharashtra in 1958.

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