



A Reading of Traumatic Identity in Laxman Gaikwad's *The Branded*



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Abstract :

Laxman Gaikwad is an established Marathi writer, a committed social activist and the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award, the highest literary award of the country. He was born on 23rd July 1956, as a poor Uchalya, a thieving community at Dhanegaon village in Latur district of Maharashtra province. He was born in a destitute family which had nothing in possession: no land to plough, no permanent house to live and not even a caste of their own for social recognition. Despite the fact, he becomes the first child from his community to go to school and get a formal education. His community was condemned as criminal under the provisions of the *Criminal Tribes Act in 1871* by the British government in India. Gaikwad's social stigma of being branded as criminal and petty thief becomes a severe barrier in getting employment, temporary or permanent. His autobiography *The Branded* (1998) translated version of *Uchalya*(1987) is considered an outstanding literary work in Marathi Dalit literature. It is the story of the self and the community it belongs to. The book represents the voice of the people who were excluded and oppressed by the mainstream Indian society and

were forced to remain silence for ages. Thus, the paper attempts to examine the nature of traumatic identity of the *Uchalya* community of being perpetually labelled as criminal and the challenges faced by the community as a whole in its everyday life.

Keywords : Traumatic Identity, Experience, *Uchalya* Community, Labelled, Criminal etc.