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रामजी प्रसाद सिंह ग्रामीण विकास सामाजिक
एवं आर्थिक शोध संस्थान के तत्वाधान में प्रकाशित

Bravery of Mahar in Medieval Era

Dr. Deepa D. Sawale*

Mahar is ancient caste in Maharashtra. Mahar who considered to be a untouchables was native warriors. Their kingdoms were in ancient Maharashtra. But in time, the Aryan and the other group attacked the untouchables. Between them many battles were fought. After that they abolished Maharashtra's states and made them slave.¹

There are many sub-castes in Mahar caste. Some caste on the basis of their business, region and some on surname. Among Mahar caste there is no racial discrimination.

In Mahar caste and sub-caste is the brave caste so brahmin fears to them. Therefore they applied divide and rule policy discriminated them in caste and sub-caste Mahar were brave as well as intelligent.² But they were harassed psychologically and intellectually.

In the medieval era and before Shivaji, Mahar have to perform various works of the village and government. Balutedar, Taral, Jagla, Yeskar & Slave, all these types work were done by Mahar. Katwal of various villages were Mahar. Taral were assistant to Kotwal for larger village. In the government work, Mahar were major participant in the work of village.

Villages were take two types of service from Mahar. First is government office, these work ordered by government officer at village. The vatan was given for this work is known as chakarivatan. Second work is given by the villagers and for this work villagers gave them land. Revenue of this land was paid by villagers. As a service to the rural community, he got the compensation form the villagers in the form of Baluta. In short Mahar's had got two types of salaries like land and salary lumsomely.³ If a dispute arises in the village about boundary, then Mahar is considered an important witness. Therefore whenever dispute arises among two villages about boundary, the Maharbalutedar was called for witness. Before the announcement of their decision, they consider the opinion of Mahar Balutedar⁴.

Mahar was the compensatory servant of villagers. Their compensation was known as 'Hadiki' 'Hadola' or 'Padekari'. Page 4. He had to know everything about the village. Padevar is the village Mahar and mahabhar are the guarded servants of the house of Patil. It was mighty. In one letter it is said that to save the fighters a giant named Gondnak put his life in danger and he was killed. For this his son Arjanak applied the application for Taral. The Taral and the Maharki probably belonged to the same person. His job was to convey the Government Message to public. He had to perform proclaim the government message in the village."

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The Peshwati document mentions that Mahar's as Untouchables. Though in contemporary document even there is a reference of Mahar, Mang and cobbler were untouchables. But it is referred in many different words and context. 'Mahar sometimes called 'Dhed, Bhumiya or guide. Another mention of this document is found in Yaskar, Taral, Jagale, Bhumi Putra, Padewar, Rabtamahar, Rajantri or mang Garudi, chaambhar or mochi, Jigale, etc.⁸ But Mahar is one of the most famous castes in Maharashtra. These are the largest in the untouchable's caste in Maharashtra, Therefore.

But Mahar is one of the most famous castes in Maharashtra. These are the largest in the untouchable's caste in Maharashtra, Therefore

1. Mahar community is spreading in every village.
2. In Every village Mahar live outside of village in Maharashtra.
3. They are working on the same side of the village to supervise the village.
4. There are 52 types of rights granted to the Mahar from Hindu villagers.⁹

That is to note that Mahar was powerful and capable. Mahar had to do very important tasks in the field of government revenue. Accordingly, take care of each person's farmland, boundary or keep an eye on it because at that time the extent of increase in the land area of farm land is very much like plowing. Therefore he should be take care the crop till they grow. He was Jantajanardans reporter, guide and Police machine, in addition Mahars do many works.¹⁰ They were equally responsible for doing it year after year.

Those who got inherited rights of village work (gavaki), those who got land from government and those who got honorary status at village are known as 'Deshak'. These are permanent resident of the village.¹¹ Deshak were Deshmukh or Desai, Deshpande or Deshklkni, Patil, Kulkarni Chougula, Shete, Mahajan, Mahar etc.¹² Along with Patil – kulkarni,

Mahar also included as Deshak. On these references we realize the importance of Mahar.

Patiki of village has been honoured to Mahar. For Example Nagnale of Mahar caste has been awarded patilki of village Nagewade of wai Pargana (region)¹³. In ancient literature like 'Vishnu Puran' we found a reference of Marahtha and Mahar – Rashtra Combining these two words produced Maharashtra. According etymology Maharashtra means great state or nation. But some intelligentsia puts their opinion as Gujja-Rashtra means state of Gijjar. But this is not about Maharashtra means states of Mahar. To prove this statement they give example of phrase. Every village had Mhawada¹⁴ (residence of Mahar, away from village). Mahatma Phule stated as Maha-Ari means Mahar. After Death of King Parashurama remaining Kshatriya were fought twenty one times with Parashuram for the emancipation of their brothers those who made slave by Brahmins. At the end, they were known as Maha- ari. Later on they become Mahar's.¹⁵ According to Dr. S.V. Ketkar, 'Maharashtra means those native people, or Mahar's caste. Shudra's, Antyaj and untouchables are synonyms for the Mahar in Maharashtra as per experts. In they are known as Bhumi Putra.¹⁶

According to Historian V.K.Rajwade, "Nagwanshi people firstly colonized Maharashtra and Nagwanshiyakshatriya people and Suryawashi Naga people become congruent and made Maharashtra state.¹⁷ In Ancient era Naga people rules different states of Maharashtra. Das mentioned state.¹⁷ In ancient era Naga people rules different states of Maharashtra. Das mentioned in Rugveda were Nagawanshiya. Before arya. Naga culture exists. It means Before Aarya Naga culture existed in India. Today's Mahar are the Nag-race people. According Mahar's tradition nag was the first king. Naga

people and their king use Nag as suffix to their names. And in medieval era Mahar use Nak as the suffix for example Nagnak, Shidnak, Tuknak etc. Nak is the slang of Nag. Mahars were the native resident of Maharashtra and the rulers also. Thinking about who were shudras, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar states that they were originally kashatriya class and were important and powerful kings among ancient Aryans.¹⁸

There are instances of Mahar caste being Patil. Patil of Nagewadi in wai Region was Mahjurseti bin Nagnakmahar. But as time went one of the Gurav who called for worship the god had captured. Nagnak complained about it to higher authority and retained it.¹⁹

In muslim period and in the shivaji times, the mahar's have shown their strength. During the reign of Muslim rule. Mahar's was first to get the chance to take battle against the king. Muslim used their strength for expansion of empire. Mahars are mighty and honest and faithful because of that Muslims appointed them as a guard of janakhana.²⁰ Mahar suffered a great deal on the Indian system of system and caste system. So many Mahars accepted muslim religion. Mahars did a great job in establishing muslim rule in Maharashtra. Chhatrapati Shivaji maharaj began the task of establishing Swarajya and all caste tribes participated. Maharaj emphasized on quality and skills of the people in recruitment. Did not see caste and religion but only quality has been fixed for the army recruitment, and given opportunity to Mahars also is on his credit maharaja's army. After watching the bravery of Mahars recruited them in his army. Later Mahar served Maratha reign till the end of Maratha Empire.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja instructed the Mahars to maintain the way of the wilderness, the secret, open way to hill fort and to provide wood and fodder to the hill stations, these are the important tasks for them. All the above works were the important for army. These important tasks, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had given in the hands of loyal and honest caste of Mahar. Apart from this Maharaj also kept the precedent possession of Maharon the ground to make these difficult works. Maharaj given the main job to the mahar family and had thousands of young Mahar soldiers found opportunity to fight against enemy in battlefield.²² After the Marajbazi was fought in Purandar's battle, it was not the main Darwaza. On the huge door saffron flag was fluttering in proud. And Below clan that flag Mahars were feeling proud. Naik people were not ready to leave the door because that army was of mahar army and silently they were respecting Murarbaji and saying 'Johar Dhani Johar.'²³ Go back to your home don't take tension of fort. Up to our death no one can try to hoist their flag on this fort. Don't see back! Fort is in our heart and takes our salutation.²⁴ We can imagine bravery to sustain the fort. Mahar and Mang were include in artillery and protect force of fort by chhatrapati. Shivaji Maharaj those soldiers were ready to fight at every time.²⁵

When Raigad become capital of Hindvi Swaraj, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj declared prize to the person who can enter the fort when all doors of fort were closed. At that time Rainak of Pachad Mahor entered the fort and stood in front of Maharaj with victorious face. Maharaj enquired about him gave the prize and closed the door from he entered the fort.²⁶ While recruitment of castles Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj took consideration of person quality like intelligence, bravery and work so that maharaj offered castle post to various Mahar' castles of Purandar castle was Chive Naik who was Mahar. He belongs to Avasari (kh) Ta. Purandar Dist.²⁷ Mahars achieved important castle post. It means that this caste was brave and honest. Protection of outside of castle (fort) was entrusted on Mahar and Ramoshi.²⁸ Instead of this artillery officer and shibandi, brave Mahars were selected by Shivaji Maharaj cannons in Maratha army were shifted in Bullak cart and transported on battle field by this Mahar. Also firing of cannons and maintenance of it was the task performed by Mahar and Mang servant.²⁹

Shivaji Maharaj gave special attention to the infantry because the area of swaraj was from mountainous, hilly area. In this place gurreilla warfare technique was used to fight with enemy. Maharaj's

Infantry comprises at about one lakh soldiers. Such a job in infantry was Mahar's inherited right.³⁰ Apart from the infantry soldiers, Mahar were recruited on the Naik rank. Bahinaikmahar was the Naik of the Shivaji Maharaj's Purandar fort.³¹

Mahar were recruited on Mete-Naik post. These were the important post. On the slope of the fort, for the protection of every hill fort, where there was a lot of flatness, colonies were established and for these colonies the word 'Mete' or 'Mett' is used. Originally 'Mett' or 'Mete' word is from Kannad language word. These colonies are also called protection desk. Koli, Thakr, Magag, Berad and Ramoshi were also appointed as Mete-Naik along with Mahar. Mete is the under guard's guard space, and it was used to keep on eye on the fort for twenty four hours. Many Mahar-Naik had played an important role in this. For instance Khandnak³² and Mahadnak, Mahar from Walhe, Nagnak Mahar, Shidnak Maharetc many Mahar-naik performed important role in swaraj.

We found rare reference of MaharPatil in history. Mahujarseti bin Nagnak of Mahar caste has been recorded in the village Nagewade of Wai Pargana (region). But as time went one of the Garav who was called for sorship the good had captured. Nagnak complained about it to higher authority and retained it. For this purpose he Garav demanded justice to Rajaram, it was a time of great fear. Swaraj was in severe problem. Mughal's were capturing one by one fort. So King Rajaram asked to do dhardivya to Nagnak Mahar and retain Vairatgarth and join it to Swarajya. After that 'we will do justice about you'. Nagnak accepted that Nagnak accepted the challenge and captured that fort and also retained his territory.³⁴ On this instance we could see the bravery of him. Mahar helped in Peshwai also but feeling of untouchable was more in this period. Caste system was brightly emerged in Peshwai. Chaturvarnya system protectors impeded many restrictions on shudras.

Harassed by oppressive system of Peshwai, the Mahar supported the British. In 1751 battle between British and Peshwa, Mahar fought a great fight from British army. In 1802-03 during the second war between Maratha-Peshwa and British, Mahar gave victory to the British. In 1857 battle of Kharki, Mahar soldier fought bravely and Peshwa army in fear fled away. In this battle 20 Mahar dead and 3 were injured. In the memory of these soldiers British constructed victory columnar and carved the name of Mahar. After that in Indian freedom movement Mahar fought against British.

In conclusion before Aryan's Mahar had their states in India Mahar were native resident of India and Bhumiputra. Mahar had to become slave and to do various types of work because of political oppression. Mahar were the key element in judicial system. Many Mahar's accepted Muslim religion due to oppression system of upper caste Hindus.

Mahar is Naga racial people. Therefore they use Nak as a suffix. Nak is a slang of ancient Naga word. To make stable government of British. Mahar bravely fought and also played important role in Indian freedom movement. From ancient to present they supported every government or ruler. Rulers neglected Mahar community for their own selfishness and kept them neglected.

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