

APPENDIX—III

“ORTHODOXY RUN MAD

Alleged Barbarous Treatment of “Untouchable” Crime of Being Mahars

Mr. Keshavaji Ranchhodji Vaghela from Ahmedabad has informed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, President, *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha* as follows :

One Bapoorao Laxman and his brother Kaurao have been residents of Ahmedabad during the last six years. They used to mix with some people from the Deccan belonging to Maratha Caste. Kaurao's two sons *viz.* Damoo and Laxman used to take part in the *Bhajan* parties of the Marathas. The latter, however, recently came to know that the brothers Damoo and Laxman were Mahars by caste and in order to ascertain this, two Mahars employed on the parcel train between Surat and Ahmedabad were specially called to identify Damoo and Laxman. After it was ascertained, they were called at a *Bhajan* party at Kalupur, Bhanderi Pole, at midnight on the 11th instant. Asked as to what caste they belonged to, Damoo and Laxman replied that they were *Somvanshis*. This reply enraged the Marathas who freely abused them for having defiled their persons and places. The Mahar brothers were also assaulted by the Maratha. One of the brothers had a gold ring on his person. It was forcibly taken away from him and sold for Rs. 11. Out of this amount Rs. 6 was paid to the Mahars who had been called from Surat to identify the brothers. Damoo and Laxman entreated the Marathas to allow them to return to their homes, but the latter refused to do so unless a fine Rs. 500 was paid. On the Mahar brothers pleading their inability to pay such a heavy sum, one of the Marathas suggested that the Mahar brothers should be fined only Rs. 125. But then one of the Marathas opposed the proposal for fine saying that they should not be satisfied with fine, but should punish the Mahars severely for their crime of concealing their caste. Having decided upon the course, the Mahar brothers were detained and at about 9 O'clock in the morning they were subjected to barbarous indignities. Their mustaches in the left side and eyebrows on the

right side were shaved, their bodies besmeared with soot mixed in oil and also with dirt, garlands made of old shoes were put around their necks, and one of them was asked to hold a broom in his hand and the other to hold a placard on which it was written that the punishment was metted out to the culprits for venturing to touch high caste people. The Mahar Brothers were taken in procession consisting of about 75 people, a drum being beaten in the front.

A complaint has been lodged with the Police by the said two Mahar brothers. The accused in their statement have admitted that Damoo and Laxman were treated in the alleged manner, but pleaded that the complainants had willingly agreed to undergo the punishment. Obviously Damoo and Laxman were helpless when they were abused, assaulted and threatened with severe punishment and actually subjected to barbarous indignities. This case has created a great sensation among the people belonging to the so-called Untouchable castes and efforts are being made to give proper legal aid to the complainants.”¹

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¹: The Bombay Chronicle, dated 25th February 1928.