



## Maharashtra.

mented the continuing discrimination on caste lines in Maharashtra. On June 16, in Hingoli district, Sahebrao Jondhale, a 40-year-old jeep driver was burnt alive in his vehicle for refusing to ferry some influential members of a higher caste. In Vadgaon in Latur district, the six Scheduled Caste families who live there deal with discrimination on a daily basis. They cannot use the water from the village well or enter the temple. The women who dare to draw water from the well are abused.

In Ghansargaon village again in Latur district, a teenaged Scheduled Caste student Amit Sahebrao is taunted for wearing good clothes and using a mobile phone. Members of the upper castes in the village beat up his grandparents Tukaram and Sushilabai Kambli in March. Tukaram used to run a ration shop in the village which has been taken away from him and there is a social boycott of the Scheduled Caste families. The report points out that often there is a delay in registering a case under the Atrocities Act and the investigation is poor.

Recognising the pitfalls in the implementation of the Atrocities Act, the Maharashtra government has appointed a committee headed by Justice (retd) V.G. Palshikar which has to submit its recommendations on making the Act more effective by March 31, 2009. The State cannot ignore the continuing discrimination against the Scheduled Castes and the prejudices that exist even today. While there are laws in place to ensure discrimination is punished, cases have to be properly investigated so that they result in convictions. It took a heinous crime in Khairlanji to bring back the focus on crimes against the Scheduled Castes and make the state and society sit up. Caste tensions exist in many parts of the State and there is increasing polarisation between communities after the Khairlanji incident. That is all the more reason for the State and the political leadership to show some maturity and commitment to social justice.