

Impact of ‘Cow Politics’ on Muslim Community: A Case Study of Ghosi Community of North India

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The Ghosi community, traditionally associated with milking and herding, today faces unexpected challenges and is struggling to maintain its traditional occupation and livelihood. Earlier, mounting inflation and the increased cost of fodder and cattle maintenance were the issues troubling the community, but the recent socio-political context of ‘Gau Raksha’ (Cow Vigilantism) and Beef Ban are deepening the problems faced by them now. The identity of being a Muslim continues to make them prone to exploitation and violence which is directly hurting their livelihood. Drawing from empirical evidence this paper argues that a rights-based approach need to be incorporated to deal with the problem of insecurity among milking families of Ghosi community. This paper attempts to examine the socio-economic impact of such events on the community, especially on those who are engaged in milking and herding.

Keywords: Ghosi, Cattle, Gau Raksha, Beef Ban, livelihood.

Introduction

‘Caste’ is an intrinsic feature of the Indian subcontinent. The Caste system not only divides the society but also hierarchically associates each caste with a specific form of labour. The labour associated with each caste determines its hierarchy and the hierarchy is characterised by the notion of ‘nature of labour’. The Varnashrama Dharma has divided the Indian society into five major categories which were hierarchical and unchangeable for a person born in a particular Varna. These were Brahmins (associated with religious practices and ceremonies), Kshatriya (associated with the protection of the state from outsiders), Vaishya (engaged with the business), Shudra (the tillers and workers) and *Ati Shudra* (generally associated with ‘unclean’ works). There were so many castes from the Varna of Shudra who got the treatment of untouchables and were not allowed for accessing resources along with all castes of *Ati Shudra* (Ambedkar, 1936: 16). The nature of the labour not only stratified the socio-economic conditions of these groups but has made them historically vulnerable.

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Among the Muslims there are almost 750 different tribes, castes and communities across the world, out of which 246 are in India (Singh, Khan, ed. 2001: I). Islam and its teachings don't promote inequality and in principle treats everyone as equals irrespective of one's occupation, religion, tribe, clan, language or any other identity. But the advent of Islam in India couldn't change the institution of caste although the notion of caste was challenged by many Islamic spiritual leaders like Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya.

But the converts to Islam replicated the institution of caste into the Islamic frame and also legitimised it (Zainuddin, 2003). Currently, Indian Muslims are divided into three broad categories Ashraf (upper caste), Ajlafs (OBC/occupational castes), and Arzals (Dalits/Untouchables) and further they get distributed into hundreds of caste groups (Falahi, 2009: 04). Like that of the Varnas of Hinduism, there is also a similar system existing within the Indian Muslims and the OBC Muslims are converts of middle and lower caste Hindus and their identification is done from their traditional occupation (Sachar committee report, 2006:193). The Ghosi community comes under the category of Ajlafs due to the nature of their traditional occupation and has the history of being oppressed.

Pasmanda Mobilisation vis a vis the Representation Continuum

The democratization of the Muslim society has not occurred till now since the upper caste leadership has consciously focused on the politics of identity and centered on a few cultural emotive issues (Alam, 2003). Such politics not only portrayed Indian Muslims as a 'uniform monolithic community' but also hid caste-ridden and fragmented realities of the community. However, many movements erupted for the rights of 'oppressed within the oppressed' like All India Momin Conference, Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, All India Backward Muslim Morcha but with the passage of time either they were contained by upper caste led Ulemas (religious scholars) or co-opted by so-called secular parties. The main reason behind the failure of these movements was the inability to provide a critique of Islamic interpretative traditions of the casteist construct like that of Bahujan or Mulnivasi movement which have a strong material basis and inclination towards the production process (Ansari, 2009).

Ambedkar provides four-fold criteria for any preferential treatment i.e. demographic composition, social and economic backwardness with low educational participation. Such treatments provide persons and groups who have been historically denied the social presence and denied public life (Rodrigues, 2005). The Ranganath Mishra committee (2010) on religious and linguistic minorities had suggested to the government to provide 10% reservations for Muslims and 5% reservations to other religious and linguistic minorities. Apart from this, the committee suggested the inclusion of Dalit Converts into Scheduled Castes (SC) and 8.4% reservation to minorities within the 27% quota for OBCs. Though this demand was opposed by the opposition parties but also from the Muslim Intelligentsia. Scholars like Zoya Hasan found the demand of reservation on religious basis problematic since it is against the secular spirit of the Indian constitution but also on the notion that historically Muslims have not faced caste discrimination (Hasan, 2005). The second part of Hasan's argument seems utopian since the Arzals still face issues like untouchability and discrimination in many spheres of life.

There are two major arguments in favour of caste-based reservation for Muslims - first, OBC reservation didn't benefit Muslim OBCs compared to other OBCs, therefore a separate reservation should be given to Pasmanda (Backward) Muslims; second, Dalit Muslims should be included in the SC list since they not only face discrimination but also have become more marginalized than other SCs/STs (Ali, 2012). There is also a formula based on the matrix of gender, region and subgrouping of unprivileged castes within the reserved category along with providing deprivation points to the most backward in higher educations and government jobs (Deshpande, 2007).

Reviewing Status of Muslim Backward Castes

Muslim OBCs constitutes 6% of the Indian population and 11.7% of Uttar Pradesh's population (NSS 62nd, 2005-2006, as cited in Sachar report: 213). Although the proportion of OBC Muslims within the Muslim population is contested by scholars like Ali Anwar who claim it to be more than 80% which will make their number 11-12% of the total Indian population (Anwar, 2005). Despite being in good numbers, the participation of OBC Muslims in higher education, organized sector and in bureaucracy is negligible. The per capita expenditure of OBC Muslim is much lower than the national average, the participation of Muslim OBCs at the graduate level is 2.31% and at postgraduate level is 0.96% (Sachar report, 2006: 213- 216) and according to 2011 census data, 42.7% Muslims are illiterate. The representation of OBC Muslims in central government jobs is very low. Their representation in railways, central PSUs, and State Public Service Commissions is lower than 1% while in Central armed forces they have a representation of 3.6%. The Sachar committee also found out that they are the most vulnerable in entrepreneur based and small-scale businesses (pp:216).

Ghosi Community

According to Ambedkar (1936), caste is not a division of labour, but it is the division of labourers, the division of labourers separates one from another but also gives a hierarchical notion attached to each kind of labour. Traditionally the Ghosi community is associated with milking and are considered as herdsmen, they keep buffaloes, cows, camel and other cattle for the purpose of milking, cattle trade and the business associated with it (Singh, Khan ed.2001: 470-73). They are followers of Islam and are predominantly Sunni and located mainly in Northern and North-West regions of India. There is a debate over the origination of this community. In Uttar Pradesh, they are considered as converts of Ahir caste. On the other hand, in Rajasthan, they claim to be of Gujjar origin (Crooke, 1896: 419). Although political leaders of Ghosi community like Asghar Ali have a different opinion regarding the origination and historicity of the community. And the rejection of claim of previous anthropological studies is based upon their orientation being 'colonial and biased.' The Ghosi community has its linkages to the invasions by Muslim invaders like Muhammad Ghori and the troops (lashkar) brought in by them. The conversion to Islam was carried out by the various caste groups and those who remained associated with milking were called Ghosi. This claim is evidenced also by the different Shizre/Gotra found in the community and their names like Nat (used for converts from dancing and performing caste), Babhani (used for Brahmin converts), Solanki, Deshruth, Mehlud (all three used to represent Rajput conversions) etc. (Ani, 1999: 03). The subdivisions in the community are based on a strong system of Shizre/Gotra. According to this system marriages within the subdivisions endogamy is avoided. Along with this, there are subdivisions of Lashkariya Ghosi, Badkawa (those who have

lost/forgotten their Gotra or mixed their Gotra by marrying outside the caste) and Chotkawa Ghosi (those who have maintained their Gotras and followed the traditional customs). These classifications can be easily traced in the indigenous knowledge sources like traditional songs and tales (Phatma, 2002: v).

The culture and customs of Ghosi community used to be a mixture of Hinduism and Islam but nowadays they are continuously rectified by Islamic principles (Ahmad, 2015: 7-8). Although there are so many practices which are quite similar to the customs of other local communities that can be seen during the ceremonies of birth, marriage, and death and the songs sung during various rituals. In most parts of India, this community is settled alongside the rivers, ponds, railway stations etc. (Anis, 1999:03). With the increased urbanization they are losing the natural resources of water and green fodder, and they are forced to set up their habitations or stables outside the urban spaces. Also, with reference to their livelihood practice the community members are considered as 'Producer of pollution and diseases'.

Customary Institutions

The community has an effective and influential panchayat system which is elected by the community members and generally it is not hereditary (Crooke, 1896: 419). The panchayat is comprised of three to five people and the head of the panchayat is called Chaudhary and his/her deputy is called Nayab Chaudhary. The function of panchayat is to solve the problems of divorce, problems in marriages, land disputes and other domestic issues among the community people. They have their own form of penal code whose intensity can reach up to the social exclusion of a person or a family, which is called 'Hookah Pani Band'¹ and sometimes the guilty is also charged in the form of cash and forced labour for a certain period (Ahmad, 2015: 08). Along with this, the panchayat organizes events and also helps those families which are financially not well. They become an agent of fundraising for marriages, clinical operations and medical care and other needs of the underprivileged members of the community.

Intra Community Gender Dynamics

The magnitude of gender disparity is not too much since women in the community are allowed to help and participate in the traditional occupation of milking and herding along with male members of their families. Although the hierarchy between the nature of distribution of tasks easily depicts the gender roles in those Ghosi families who are still following their traditional occupation. Women are allowed to milk but they are supposed to deal with the dungs of cattle. They make dung cake, coal balls (from mixing ashes of burned coal and dung), apart from this sometimes they are also involved in purchasing and selling of cattle. But with the livelihood transitions of the Ghosi community in recent times women are getting more associated with the household works since in most of the cases men are becoming the breadwinners after leaving milking and herding (Ahmad, 2015: 17).

¹ None of the members of the community will participate in the functions organized by the family and whoever participate will also face the same punishment.

In marriage ceremonies, women have a key role from both sides, whether it is the side of groom or bride. They memorize traditional songs in local dialects like Kajri in North Indian states for singing in auspicious ceremonies (Phatma, 2002: iii). Though patriarchy still prevails in the community which can be seen by their role in decision-making in family level and community-related issues. The literacy rate and enrolment of the girl child have increased, and women are getting more financial freedom with the diversification in the occupation of the community. With the inclusion of Ghosi community in the Other Backward Classes list, girls are getting more opportunity to access higher education.²

White Revolution and the Ghosi community

The data collected by the Department of Animal Husbandry, dairy and fisheries clearly shows a 4.51 percent increase in the number of cows and buffaloes (2012). Along with this the National Dairy Development Board data suggests that there is more than 5 percent growth in the overall milk production in the last five years (2015-16). Despite these figures various primary level studies show that the job of milk production is not always profitable and after five decades of the White Revolution this job largely remains a subsistence activity (Ghosh et.al., 2017). The White Revolution and its impacts have little effect on the milk production process of Ghosi community. Though new breeds of cows and buffalo are being purchased but improvements at the level of production and marketing remain stagnant as before. Ghosi community and the households engaged in milking predominantly sell their milk to private customers or to milk traders. In fact, no attempts were made for the cooperative dairying by the community or by its leaders at any period of time. This approach didn't give any chance for the people of the community to go for large-scale production and maximise their profit from milking. Apart from this, lack of education and awareness played a vital role in maintaining the backwardness and in the absence of technology and innovations in production and marketing.

Political Frontier

Formed in 1980, All India Muslim Ghosi Association (AIMGA) is considered as the oldest community network that represents the social and political aspirations of the community. Ghosi community is one of the 84 Muslim castes that come under the OBC category by Mandal Commission's recommendation (NCBC, 1996). Although this is one of the caste groups which struggles to establish their different identity other than the Gaddis. In the first list of Mandal commission the community didn't get a place and with continuous efforts put up by its leaders enabled the community to be in the list³. AIMGA was the flagbearer in the struggle for the inclusion of Ghosi community in the centre as well as in state list of OBC (Rashid, 1998).

AIMGA has its branches and office bearers in hundreds of districts in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh. Usually, the organization extends its support to various political parties and the community usually follows the rulings of the association. The community supports different political parties in different areas; like in Uttar Pradesh, the support goes to

2 Professor Rashid provided this observation while serving in RML Awadh University of Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh.

3 A copy of memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister office of Uttar Pradesh Dated 14th June 1994 was shown to researcher .

multiple parties and mainly for Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress Party whereas in Rajasthan they are considered to be the supporters of Congress Party (Ahmad, 2015: 23). After 2009 general elections, the leaders of the community aligning with the leaders from other backward community formed All India Pichda Jan Samaj Party. The main motto behind the formation of the political organization was to create consciousness among the backward communities to raise their demands and get mainstreamed, although the party is yet to contest election.⁴

Resurgence of cow politics and its impact on Ghosi Community

In the late of 19th century and early of 20th-century cow emerges as a potent and sacred symbol of Hindutva politics and Hindu nationalism. Cow and its sacredness get legitimised by the constructed beliefs of being possessed as Kamdhenu (Goddess who fulfils every wish) and Lakshmi (symbol of wealth and fortune) (Gupta, 2001). The propagation of various thoughts associated with the ‘sanctity’ of the cows were promoted through soft poems, newspapers, posters, bhajans etc. It was spread out in most of the parts in North India that the importance of her milk is as valuable to the milk of a mother fed to her sons, therefore killing a cow is equivalent to matricide. During the freedom struggle movement, the cow was being politically represented as the mother of all Hindus and of a Hindu identity and Nationality requiring protection from non-Hindus (Gupta, 2001). Although the doctrine of cow sanctity and its stages of development is not clearly apparent. Ambedkar (1948/2014) claims that it was Brahmins’ strategy to vanquish Buddhism, however scholars like W Norman Brown (1964) argues that the sanctity emerges as a response to Muslim invasions and their rule in Indian subcontinent.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the sanctity of the cow emerges as a political tool for the right-wing organisations for creating a polarised environment. The question of cow protection vis a vis pink revolution emerged as a manifested argument by the BJP during the election of 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign.⁵ This argument filled the spirit of far-right Hindu organizations in India and produced a communal tension along with various forms of violence. And after the formation of Narendra Modi led NDA government at the union government and the decision of closing ‘Illegal’ slaughterhouses by various BJP led state governments generated a sense of fear across the Muslim community especially in those sections whose traditional livelihoods were associated with cattle. Cow related violence is not new to Indian soil but the lynching of Akhlaq in Dadri and the reactions to his murder and a series of such incidents has created an unexpected environment in North Indian society. Many cattle traders were being lynched, beaten, threatened and bribed for transporting cattle and many persons were targeted on the speculation of being consuming beef across India.

According to India Spend Database (28 June 2017), 86% of those who died in Cow-Related Violence Since 2010 were Muslim and 97% of these deaths are after 2014. The data also highlighted that half of the death reports were from BJP ruled states. The incidents are not only

4 Asghar Ali, who was one of the founding member of the party provided this information to the researcher.

5 Speech given by Mr. Narendra Modi then the Prime Ministerial candidate for the Bhartiya Janata Party at Nawada, Bihar on 03 April 2014 during his campaign for parliamentary election retrieved from The Hindu newspaper Titled as “Modi Fears Pink Revolution” as accessed on 09 February 2018 from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/modi-fears-a-pink-revolution/article5864109.ece>

affecting the communities engaged in cattle related occupations but also affecting the market based on cattle sale and purchase. The increased dependency on buffalo for milk, meat and leather have boosted the average cost of buffalo. Parallel to it the cost of cows has decreased sharply, and the farmers are facing hardship to make their cattle economically viable.⁶

Current Status of the Community

The community is rapidly leaving its traditional occupation due to multiple causes which includes increased input cost and the number and rate of diseases in the cattle. The community members are adopting other livelihood practices against their traditional practice of milking. This results in increased rate of migration of the community's new generation towards the city and metropolitans in search of livelihood. Apart from this migration to the Gulf countries as a construction and domestic worker is emerging as a normal phenomenon specially in the rural settings of Ghosi community. The institution of panchayat is fading, and the people are opting court rather than complaining to the panchayat. The increased Islamisation of community has not questioned the caste system, though it has faded the notion of Gotra in the marriages. The discrimination faced by the community based on caste has lowered, but the religious discrimination has increased (Ahmad, 2015:80-81).

The economic backwardness of the community is still a big question. The reason behind the backwardness is multifaceted, which includes nature of the occupation, the low amount of profit generation, and requirement of heavy engagement from different members of the family to perform the tasks of rearing, waste management and selling of milk. The positive effect of getting reservations under the OBC category is felt by the community, as the enrolment in higher studies and participation in jobs have increased over time. Contrary to this, people of this community are leaving their traditional occupation due to the increased rate of input cost (cost of fodder and maintenance) and due to rising problems in cattle's health (Ahmad, 2015: 78). Although in rural localities the community still largely follows its traditional occupation.

Research Questions

- How the processes of rising inflation and industrialization have affected the community's milking and herding families?
- Evaluating the risk factors in livelihood and hurdles in sustainability of milking and herding.
- To analyse the implications of socio-political events of Gau Raksha and Beef Ban on the community's traditional livelihood?

6 Ramdas, S. R. (2017, April 06). The Beef Ban Effect: Stray Cattle, Broken Markets and Boom Time for Buffaloes . The Wire. Retrieved December 16, 2017, from <https://thewire.in/121728/beef-ban-cattle-market/>

Methodology

This paper was primarily concerned with the livelihood issues of Ghosi community and how the events like Gau Raksha and Beef ban have affected their livelihood in a direct or indirect way. Apart from covering the scholarly works on the community, various political and sociological texts from the people of the community were taken to get 'a perspective from within'. The data was taken from three different settings/location namely rural, urban, and semi-rural for analysing impacts of these events on the community people living in different areas in the same district. The study was conducted in Gonda District of Uttar Pradesh and three localities namely Patel Nagar Ghosiyana (Urban), Keshavpur Paharwa Ghosiyana, near Kachahri station (Semi-rural) and Kabargah Ghosiyana (Rural) were chosen.

The research was concerned with the implications of cow driven politics on the milking households of Ghosi community. Presence of cattle and practice of milking at home was criterion for the selection of each sample, therefore Purposive Sampling was used for selecting respondents out of the target population. Fifty-Five Ghosi households were interviewed and the detailed inputs provided by the respondents helped to broaden the understanding of the problems faced by them. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule was the mode of data collection which was followed by an in-depth discussion with some of the respondent's family. The questions were mostly quantitative in nature although expressions, experiences, and comments were also taken into consideration. A mixed approach was applied for the analysis of findings. The statistical tool used for the data analysis includes frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation and bivariate analysis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Key findings and Discussion

The data from Ghosi households were collected during the period of November 2017. The interview was taken in such an environment, which provided the respondent to freely express about various issues.

1. Economic dynamics of milking families of the Ghosi community.

The respondents were mainly the head of the families (generally male) and the age of the respondents varied from 23 to 65 years. Despite high disparity in the age of respondents, 56.4% of the total respondents were illiterate. More than 93 percent of the respondents accepted the fact that the livelihood they are involved in was also a job of their forefathers and most of them also argued that the traditional livelihood has played a negative role in their accessibility to education and other basic resources. The high level of illiteracy is not only pulling them to remain trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and economic uncertainty but also making them prone to exploitation by authorities. The lack of education and its effects can be seen by their zero involvement in cooperative dairying and taking benefits from the government-sponsored schemes for dairy cattle. The lack of education and awareness is making the people easily deceivable and get exploited

through cut practices of veterinary doctors. One of the respondents⁷ painfully expressed his grievances when he said:

Sarkar ke niyam ke hisab se 5 rupaye ke parche se doctors ko janwar ki jaanch ker leni chahiye.....Janwar ko haspataal le jane ke bav jood sarkari doctor bina 100 ki note dikhaye janwar ko haath nhi lagate.... Sarkar janwaron ki dawaiyaan muft me dene ka wada krti hai par doctor bahut chalaki se dawa bech dete hai aur hum logon ke janwaron ko dekhne ke baad bahar se dawa likh dete hain.....Kuch dawa aur injection istemal hoti hai baaki bachdawa ko dobara bech dete hain.

(Translation: According to the government's rule, the doctor should treat the cattle on the 5-rupee card. Despite taking cattle to the hospital the doctor didn't touch the cattle without seeing 100 rupees. The government promised to give cattle medicines free of cost, but the doctors sell out the stock cleverly and they prescribe medicines for us to purchase from pharmacy stores. Some of the prescribed tablets and injection get used and rest of them got resold by the doctors.)

There is a ray of hope that the children of around 65 percent of the respondents who had/have got formal education, and this could bring diversification and innovation in the occupation which will ultimately result to economic sustainability.

Enhanced urbanisation and acquisition of green lands had increased the dependency of fodder and water on their pockets. And after the introduction of combine machine in the harvesting process the cost of dry chaff has increased drastically. The increased prices of fodder had minimised the overall savings especially in last few years connected to the fact that the overall savings of 80 percent of the families was less than three thousand. Apart from it, the events of Beef Ban have increased the pressure on the available chaff. Rising inflation and increased rates of the fodder including those of bran and other nutritional food for the cattle have affected the overall savings of milking families. This situation was sarcastically summarised by a respondent:

Admi ka Aata aur janwar ka Chokar barabar ke dam par bik rahe hain.

(Translation: Flour for human and Bran for cattle is sold on the same price).

The heavy inflation rate has not only decreased the savings but also made the milking families prone to indebtedness. In fact, the rate of chaff has doubled over a couple of years and on the other hand, income has not increased at the same pace. This is creating a lot of financial issues for these families.

2. Mapping livelihood risks

The livelihood risks and its impact on the livelihood of Ghosi milking families are derived by the sustainable livelihood framework given by Department of International Development (2008). In the studied case it was found that the socio-political dynamics and the inability to sustain from the

⁷ Name of the respondents are not mentioned to maintain confidentiality.

shocks are playing a crucial role in negatively impacting the livelihood prospects. In fact, the inflation added by the events of Gau Raksha and Beef ban has severely impacted the livelihoods and is creating a situation from where it will be harder for the low-income households to carry on the milking. Around 60% of the respondents accepted that they want to continue milking for a longer run. Responses like 'I have no other income and I am doing under compulsion', 'If I stop milking then where will my family go', and 'I don't know anything else (other skill) so I have to continue milking' were received when the interrogation got deeper with those who responded for the continuation of milking. However, there is a strong feeling in the community to leave this occupation since more than three fourth of the respondents don't want their next generation to continue milking. Meanwhile a discussion with a respondent explains the critical condition of the livelihood by saying:

Ye ek kaccha rozgar ho chukajisme bimariyan bahot hi mushkilen paida kartihain..... Gala Ghot, muhpaka, sarrajaisi bimariyan me janwar ke bachne chance kam ho jaatahai. Aur ye bimariyan failne wali hai.... Upar se ab بیمار اور باکن بھائن بھیشی سے بکنھیرھی. Aamdani kam ho chukihai patanhi aage kya hoga.

(Translation: This occupation has become precarious and the diseases creates a lot of problems. There is a little scope of life of cattle in diseases like Trypanosomiasis, *Haemorrhagic septica...* and these diseases are transmissible... Apart from it, nowadays it is hard to sell an unproductive and diseased buffalo... our income has lowered...we don't know what will happen)

The uncertainty of the occupation is one the major factors that has kept the people of the community to come out of the risk zone. There is a clear absence of large-scale rearing and there have been no efforts made by the community to do any kind of cooperative farming.

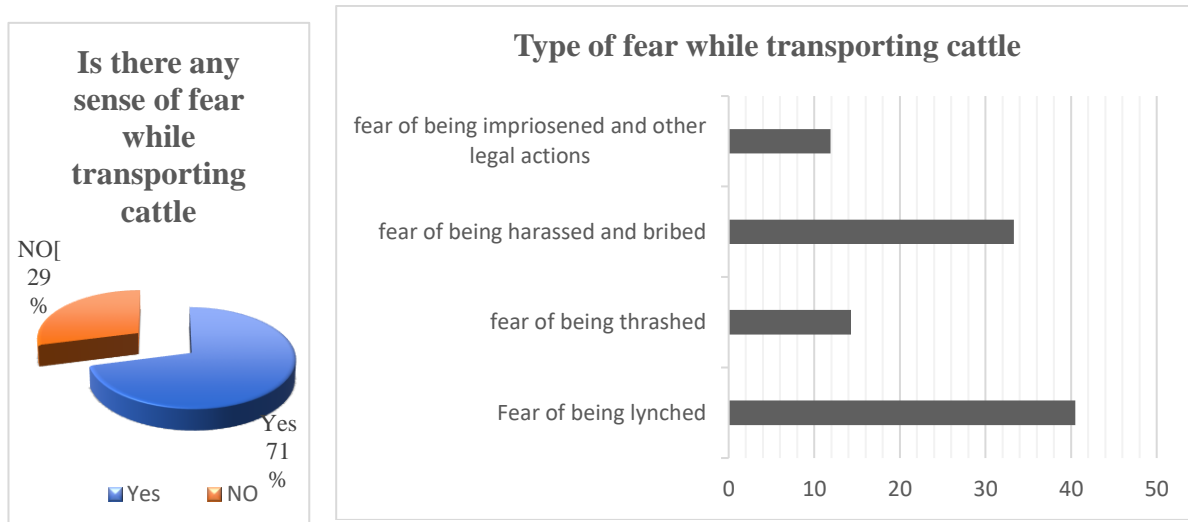
The vulnerability due to the increased cost of buffalo has weakened the capacity of people in the community to rear more cattle and forced the people to take debts in case of disease and deaths of cattle. Around 84 percent of the respondents have accepted they take debts on a regular basis and their occurrence has increased in recent times. More than half of them take it from the sahuakar (moneylenders). The average rate at which the money is provided to them is around one-third of the total money given by moneylender. The heavy paperwork is one the chief reason which is creating hindrance to take help from banks and cooperatives.

3. Politics of Gau Raksha and its Multiple Impacts

The events of Gau Raksha and Beef ban may be political in their very essence but the vulnerability it has created in the cattle-rearing communities is socio-economic in nature, in addition to instilling psychological fear. The psychological fear has not developed in a single day but by the continuous killing and beating of Muslim cow herders, whether it was the case of Pehlu Khan or several others who died in the cow-related violence, the identity of being a Muslim was a common ground in the extent of violence they faced.

The events of Gau Raksha have filled a great sense of fear among the people of milking families. Almost 71 percent of the respondents have accepted that they feel or have felt a sense of fear while

transporting their cattle and 44 percent out of them have the fear of being lynched. Firstly, it was the rising cost of fodder and other basic amenities which were making the households economically vulnerable, but these events have pushed the community into socio-psychological vulnerable conditions.



In the changed scenario, the dependency over the buffalo for both milk and meat has increased the cost of it, whereas the cost of the cow has decreased dramatically over a short period of time. However, in a very direct sense, the rearing capacity of the community has lowered over a period and the decrease is in both the cows and buffalos. However, the ratio of buffaloes is still bigger than that of cows in overall livestock held by the community.

	Number of Cows before 2014-15	Number of cows currently	Number of Buffalos before 2014-15	Number of Buffalos currently
Livestock in Numbers (As held by 55 Respondents)	241	124	301	204
Average	4.3818	2.2727	5.4727	3.7091

Table 1: Change in the average livestock held by the community (based on approximate numbers provided by the respondents)

Going through the above data it can easily be analysed that the livestock capacity of the community has had a sharp fall in few years. The decrease of the cattle is not resulting in the switching of the job by the people since more than 72 percent of the respondents were having no other source of

income apart from milking and trading cattle. And this situation is not going to help the people engaged in milking for a longer run.

Impact of events like Gau Raksha and Beef Ban on your overall savings (as perceived by the respondents)	Amount of saving per month (money earned from milking-input cost)						Total
	0-500	500-1500	1500-3000	3000-5000	5000-8000	8000-12000	
Little bit profit	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
No effect	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Little bit loss	1	9	7	3	0	1	21
Heavy loss	2	13	9	4	2	0	30
Total	3	23	18	8	2	1	55

Table.2: Events like Gau Raksha and Beef Ban's effect on overall savings (Crosstabulation)

Just like in the situation of droughts where people with poor financial conditions are the most affected the impacts of Gau Raksha and Beef Ban are similar. The economic impact (measured through the change in overall savings) is heavy on those families who are in less advantageous conditions and from the given data, it is quite evident that the degree of loss is more for the families which are having the low amount of savings. This situation is making such families prone to economically unsustainable conditions and compelling them to leave their traditional livelihoods. In the rural areas the problem has two-fold realities, the families which are engaged or not engaged in milking are not able to sow their fields due to the increased number of stray cows and oxen.⁸ Meanwhile, the discussion with one old age participant pointed to this:

Agar aap is gaunke teen kilometre idhar jaen ya udhar jaen aapko ekbhi khet boyahuwa nhi milega. Log chuttagaeki wajah se buwai nhi karrhe. Hum logon ke pass itna paisa kahan ki baken gai ko itna mahanga bhusachokar khilaen. Upar se ab baken gai biknabhi band ho gai hai.

(Translation: If you go three kilometres in the left or in the right direction of this village you can't find a single plot of agricultural land that is sown. People have stopped harvesting due to the increased number of stray cows. We people don't have so much money to feed costly fodder to unproductive cows. Apart from this, nowadays the unproductive cows have become unsaleable).

The key findings of this paper clearly show a direct impact of cow driven politics on the socio-economic conditions of Ghosi community and how psychologically these events are filling up fear

8. Kant, K. (2017, August 17). 'Gau Raksha Has Turned Cattle Into Enemies of Farmers'. The Wire. Accessed on December 23, 2017, from <https://thewire.in/168732/gau-raksha-turned-cattle-enemies-farmers/>

in the minds of cattle herders. The livelihood challenges that are emerging in the given context is not based on theories of macroeconomics, but the challenges are purely political in nature. The impact due to the politics of Gau Raksha on the traditional livelihood of Ghosi community is posing a financial threat in terms of livelihood to the people of the community who are still engaged in milking and herding. With the changing political scenario, there is an urgent need to address this serious issue in an effective manner.

Conclusion

The caste system in India has historically deprived people of access to resources along with socially demeaning their occupation from the vantage point of 'clean' and 'purity'. Although, some of the community were not deprived as severely as the category of Ati-Shudra the discrimination upon them was not less. In Indian political history, the movement of Gau Raksha is not new, the adverse impact is strongly felt not only by the Ghosi community but also by those whose traditional livelihood is associated with cattle. The severeness of Gau Raksha and Beef Ban is high upon Ghosi community for a dual reason, Firstly, the socio-economic situation and secondly, the identity of being a Muslim. The economic one is that the community was kept historically backward, and the socio-economic standards haven't improved over the years like castes of 'Hindu' religion (like that of Ahirs) and the nature of occupation have always differentiated them with other Muslim groups specially the Ashrafs. With the increased communalism and communal politics, the hatred has manufactured towards Muslims as a 'Cow eater'.

The increased number of events like violence related Gau Raksha and communal propaganda have created a sense of animosity towards the Ghosi community. Such politics is endangering the traditional livelihood of this community and creating a vulnerable situation for those households of the community for whom milking is the only source of income. Prior to these events, it was the increased rate of fodder, nutritional foods for cattle, medicines, high yielding cattle (specially buffaloes) was forming an economic pressure on the traditional livelihood of the community. In the low-income families, most of the members must be engaged in the rearing and maintenance of the cattle, apart from it, in most of the cases such families have to spend more than half of the money on the maintenance of cattle and their diseases. In case of crisis, such families have to survive on the Moneylenders/*Sahukar* (mainly from Upper caste Hindu group) for their survival. The rate at which money is provided is much higher than the market rate. Such families get engulfed in the poverty trap by the exploitation from many fronts. Banks do not provide loans, multi-staged corruption in the administration has restricted the community to take loans for the commercial farming of cattle and cooperative dairying. In fact, people from upper caste and upper class are getting benefits from all the policies driven by the dairy development and cattle related schemes. The current era of Gau Raksha has restricted the community to sell their unproductive cows and the increased number of stray cattle have severely affected the agriculture of Ghosi community of rural areas. While in the urban areas the provision and management of cattle pound (Kanji House) has collapsed earlier. The events of Beef Ban and Gau Raksha have a severe impact on the community which should be addressed by the concerned authorities and a rights-based approach should be incorporated while addressing the issues of livelihood of the community.

Possible way forward

After in-depth discussions with the people and community leaders, there were two major aspects that emerge for the current livelihood crisis of the community. One was the administrative fault and its direct and indirect involvement in discriminating people from the community. The experiences from the field show that there was complete involvement of police in taking bribes in the name of protection from Gau Rakshaks which should be dealt by the administration in order to save the community people from being involved in institutionalised corruption. And the second was on the policy level, suggestions that should be implemented in an effective manner. The policy level suggestions include:

- Article 48 of the Indian Constitution should be considered before making any policy or legislation related to cattle.
- There should be a separate policy framework for providing compensation to those farmers who are willingly or unwillingly handing over their cows to Gaushalas. The rate of each cattle should be fixed as per the breed of cow.
- For dealing with the issues of stray cattle (especially cows and bulls) in urban spaces, the institutions like Kanji House should be given proper importance from the concerned authorities.
- Since the traditional occupation communities like Ghosis is related to the rearing and milking of the cattle, and the people of the community knew the minute details of rearing, the community should be given proportionate representation in the government sponsored Gaushalas and Kanji Houses.
- Similar to the Kisan Credit Card, the Central Government should formulate a scheme to provide a financial security to cattle farming communities across the country. Such a step will also provide an identification for cattle raising persons and guard them against the corrupt activities or any kind of discrimination and violence. The government should adopt a uniform policy for controlling prices of bran, chaff and other basic amenities for cattle rearing.

All the recommendations should be incorporated to deal with the issues that are creating hurdles and risks in the livelihoods of community. Along with this there is a need from the society to overcome the politics of hatred and the process of conscientization should be promoted.

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