



Cow-politics in India: A study on recent developments

Sufal Bepari

MA, Department of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Abstract

'Cow' is a politically important animal in India. In other words, the cow is a 'political animal' of India. There has been a long history of socio-political tensions in India over the question of 'cow protection.' The two main parties of this conflict are the people of the Hindu and Muslim communities. For Hindus, it is a religious duty to 'protect cows,' while for Muslims, it is a religious freedom to 'sacrifice cow and eat beef.' Especially, after the independence this religious conflict has become one of the political conflicts in India. Various issues like cow vigilantism, mob-lynching, beef politics can be brought together in the field of 'cow-politics.' The new character of 'cow-politics' is much more diverse and different than the pre-independence cow protection movement. These recent developments in 'cow-politics' have been discussed here. Especially after the establishment of the BJP-led NDA Government of India in 2014, there has been a rise in the number of cow protection groups and incidents of cow vigilantism. Different concepts like 'Food Fascism,' 'Cow Terrorism' have emerged. The first part of the discussion gives a brief overview of the history of the cow protection movement in India and its development in the post-independence period. The next section discusses the recent significant rise of cow protection groups and their violent activities. The recent initiatives taken at various administrative levels to protect cows have also been highlighted. In the last part of the discussion, the role of social media in 'cow-politics' and its growing connections with students, youth and labour class people has been analyzed.

Keywords: Cow-politics, cow protection movement, cow vigilante violence, beef-politics

1. Introduction

Cattle, or cows (female) and bulls (male), are the most common type of large domesticated ungulates. Cattle are commonly raised as livestock for meat (beef or veal), for milk, and for hides, which are used to make leather. The discussion of 'Cow-politics' has become important in India, mainly for religious reasons. People of different religions like Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Christians and Muslims live in India. The majority of the people in India belong to the Hindu religion. The killing of cows has been broadly opposed by the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. The people of the Hindu community worship the cow as a 'God' or '*Gau-mata*' (Cow as a Mother). Cattle slaughter has also been opposed by various Indian religions because of the ethical principle of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and the belief in the unity of all life. On the other hand, the Muslims (India's largest minority community) and some other non-vedic, Abrahamic and non-Indian religions, have a tradition of eating beef and in some cases, it is also largely associated with their livelihood. According to Hindus, it is their religious duty to protect cows and for Muslims, eating beef is a matter of their religious freedom. Thus, a kind of religious conflict has emerged in India over the question of 'cow protection,' which over time has become a strong political issue. So, the matters like 'cow-protection movement,' 'beef-eating,' 'cow vigilante violence,' and other related socio-political issues can be analyzed together in the light of 'Cow-politics.'

Cattle slaughter was practiced in the Mughal Empire under its Sunni rulers with a few exceptions. The religiously liberal emperor Akbar criminalized cow slaughtering. Later, Aurangzeb lifted this prohibition with his *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*. The Mughal emperor Humayun stopped eating beef after the killing of cows in a Hindu territory by his soldiers led to clashes. Later Mughal emperor Jahangir, imposed a ban on

cattle slaughter for a few years, not out of respect for Hindus, but because cattle had become scarce. According to Ian Copland and other scholars, the Maratha Empire, which led a Hindu rebellion against the Muslim Mughal Empire and created a Hindu state in the 17th and 18th centuries, sharply enforced the Hindu sentiments for cow protection. Cow slaughter was banned by Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire in Punjab. Many butcher houses were banned, and restrictions were put on the slaughter of cow and sale of beef in the Sikh Empire. During the Sikh reign, cow slaughter was a capital offence, for which perpetrators were even executed.

The cow protection movement is mainly a religious and political movement aiming to protect cows. The backdrop of the cow protection movement can be seen in India during the British colonial rule. The East India Company has imposed the ban on cow slaughter in many domains. Henry Lawrence, after British annexed Punjab, banned cattle slaughter in 1847, in order to gain the popular Sikh support. The reverence for the cow played a role in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the British East India Company. According to Mark Doyle, the first cow protection society on the Indian subcontinent was started by *Kukas* of Sikhism, a reformist group seeking to purify Sikhism. According to Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, Sikhs were agitating for the well-being of cows in the 1860s, and their ideas spread to Hindu reform movements. In 1870, the *Namdhari* Sikhs started the 'Kuka Revolution,' against the British, and seeking to protect the cows from slaughter. In the 1870s, cow protection movements spread rapidly in Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, *Oudh* State (now *Awadh*) and *Rohilkhand*. '*Arya Samaj*' and its founder Dayananda Saraswati were one of the early supporters of the cow protection movement. Dayananda Saraswati published the *Gokarunanidhi* (Ocean

of mercy to the cow) in 1881. It strongly opposed cow slaughter. '*Arya Samaj*' had a tremendous role in skillfully converting this sentiment into a national movement. The first *Gaurakshini sabha* (cow protection society) was established in Punjab in 1882. The organization rescued wandering cows and reclaimed them to groom them in places called *gaushalas* (cow refuges). The movement spread rapidly all over North India and to Bengal, Bombay, Madras and other central provinces. Between 1880 and 1893, hundreds of *gaushalas* were opened. Cow protection sentiment reached its peak in 1893. Large public meetings were held in *Nagpur*, *Haridwar* and *Banaras* to denounce beef-eaters. Melodramas were conducted to display the plight of cows, and pamphlets were distributed, to create awareness among those who sacrificed and ate them. According to Sekhara Bandyopadhyaya, during Dayananda's time, cow protection movement was initially not overtly anti-Muslim, but gradually became a source of communal tension.

The 1880s and 1890s witnessed many instances of major cow-related violence. The cow-killing riots of 1893 were the most intense civil disturbance in the Indian subcontinent after the 1857 revolt. Riots triggered by cow-killings erupted in *Lahore*, *Ambala*, *Delhi*, *United Provinces*, *Bihar* and other places in the late 19th century. Cattle protection-related violence continued in the 20th century. The 1909 Calcutta riot, the 1911 Muzaffarpur riot, Faizabad riots of 1912, were some of the notable examples in this regard. Many serious anti-cow slaughter and cow protection-related riots broke out between 1917 and 1928 across India particularly on the Muslim festival of sacrifice.

Cow slaughter was opposed by some prominent leaders of India's independence movement such as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malviya, Rajendra Prasad and Purushottam Das Tandon. Mahatma Gandhi supported cow protection and opposed cow slaughter. According to Gandhi, the cow is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Gandhi considered cow protection is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution and protection of the cows means protection of the whole creation of God. Both the mother cow and the mother, who gave us birth, are equally revered by him. He did not support either killing a human being to protect a cow or killing a cow for saving a human life. Gandhi supported the leather industry but stated that slaughter is unnecessary because the skin can be sourced from cattle after its natural death.

2. A Brief Outline of 'Cow-politics' in India after Independence

On August 15, 1947, India gained independence from British colonial rule. By this, the issue of cow-protection came to the fore in the field of Indian politics. However, cow-related violence continued in the post-independence period as well. Between 1948 and 1951, cow slaughter led to a spate of riots that broke out in *Azamgarh*, *Akola*, *Pilbhit*, *Katni*, *Nagpur*, *Aligarh*, *Dhubri*, *Delhi* and *Calcutta*. The members of the Constituent Assembly, a body consisting of indirectly elected representatives set up to draft a constitution for India, debated the question of making a provision for the protection and preservation of the cow in the Constitution of India. Pandit Thakur Dass Bhargava, Seth Govind Das, Shibban Lal Saxena, Ram Sahai, Raghu Vira and Raghunath Vinayak Dhulekar strongly pleaded for the inclusion of a provision in the Constitution for prohibiting the slaughter of cows. An

amendment for including a provision in the Directive Principles of State Policy as Article 38A was introduced by Pandit Thakur Dass Bhargava. Presently, the prohibition of cow slaughter is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy contained in Article 48 of the Constitution of India. It reads, "The State shall endeavour to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."

In post-independence India, there have been several attempts to ban cow slaughter across the country, but all of them have failed. In a letter dated 20 December 1950, The Central Government directed the State Governments not to introduce a total prohibition on cattle slaughter. Because if a total ban on slaughter is imposed, it will work against the interest of the export trade and tanning industry in the country. In 1955, a senior Congress member of parliament Seth Govind Das drafted a bill for India's parliament for a nationwide ban on cow slaughter. However, this bill failed to pass by a vote of 95 to 12. In 1966, cow protection groups held large demonstrations in Delhi. The protests were mainly led by the leaders and supporters of the *Ram Rajya Parishad*, *Vishva Hindu Parishad* and *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*. They demanded greater protection of the cows.

The "Preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice" is Entry 15 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, meaning that State Legislatures have exclusive powers to legislate the prevention of slaughter and preservation of cattle. State legislatures such as those of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh enacted their laws in the 1950s. Subsequently, many State Governments and Union Territories (UTs) have enacted different cattle preservation laws at different times. At present, legislation against cattle slaughter is in place throughout most states of India except Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and West Bengal.

The role of the Indian judiciary is also very crucial in this matter. In 1958, Muslims of Bihar petitioned to the Supreme Court of India that the ban on cow slaughter violated their religious right. The Court unanimously rejected their claim. On 26 October 2005, the Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment upheld the constitutional validity of anti-cow slaughter laws enacted by different state governments in India. In May 2016, Bombay High Court gave the judgment that consumption or possession of beef is legal under Article 21 of Constitution of India, but upheld the ban on cow slaughter in the state of Maharashtra.

The cow has also been used as a 'political symbol' in Indian politics. The Congress party split in 1969, and the Congress (R) was formed as a rival organization under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. This party got a new election symbol of 'a cow with suckling calf,' by the Election Commission. Since the 1990s, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been extensively using the issue of 'cow-protection' to strengthen its 'Hindutva' agenda further. 'Cow protection' was one of the main subjects in the BJP's election manifesto of 1998, 2004, 2009 and 2014. In this way, the 'Cow' became a 'political animal' of India. However, if we discuss the issue in the context of recent Indian politics, then the topics like 'Cow vigilante violence,' 'Mob-Lynching,' 'Beef-politics' and more different affairs come up, which are discussed

below.

3. Review of Literature

Adcock (2018)^[3], stated that recent efforts to prevent cow-slaughter in India poses a significant violation of religious freedom. Through analyzing the U.S. religious freedom reports, she argued that the politics of cow protection in India has become more complicated as the issue of 'cow protection' has been portrayed as a stark conflict between Hindus and Muslims. For this reason, the goal of reducing anti-minority discrimination and violence in India has been neglected.

Agoramoorthy *et al.* (2012)^[4], gave an excellent account on the religious, historical, economic, cultural and sociological significance of the sacred cow in Hinduism. The authors also suggest options to use the sacred cow for the enhancement of eco-friendly living in India in the near future.

Chigateri (2008)^[12], extensively discussed about the beef consumptions in India. This issue is essentially involved with the dominant-caste Hindu ethic against cow slaughter. A broader 'food hierarchy' can be seen in a 'Hindu India' that sustains an order of superiority of food conception—which goes down from vegetarianism, meat-eating (no beef) to beef-eating. This 'food hierarchy' relies on a matrix of the superiority of the ethic of non-violence, a conception of a graded hierarchy of living things, and a belief in the sacredness of the cow, to produce a conception of *necessary* food.

Gundimeda *et al.* (2018)^[20] showed that the context of cow protection has become a heavily politicized issue in contemporary India. The role of the Indian judiciaries is very crucial in this regard. Based on recent judicial verdicts related to the cow protection, it would not be wrong to say that these judgments legitimizes Hindu majoritarian sentiments in the law while depriving millions of Indians, not just Muslims, of fundamental rights to food and livelihood.

Miglani (2017)^[27], explained the cow slaughtering issue of India through a socio-legal perspective. In India, there is no single or uniform law regarding cow slaughter. Thus, the issue has been subjected to considerable judicial scrutiny over the years. In the judicial interpretations, dominant Hindu ethic has systematically normalized, legitimized and prioritized at different times. Consequently, tussle between majority influence and minority rights and also the fairness of the judicial system came to fore.

Singh (2018)^[33], found that the two important Acts (Prevention of Cow Slaughter Acts and The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960) over the time are becoming tools for the destruction of cows in the hands of beef mafias, law enforcement agencies, politicians and communal leaders. These Acts are also used as the tools to halt the scientific inventions in India and knowledge-based progress of the society.

4. The Spectacular Rise of the Cow Protection Groups in Recent Times

The number of cow protection groups and organizations in India has increased tremendously in recent times. As of 2016, cow protection groups were estimated to have sprung up in 'hundreds, perhaps thousands' of towns and villages in northern India. There were an estimated 200 such groups in Delhi-National Capital Region alone. Especially, there has been a rise in the number of cow protection groups and incidents of cow vigilantism since the election of the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Indian central government in 2014. The surge is attributed to the recent rise in Hindu nationalism in India. The emergence of cow protection groups is even more significant in the Indian states where the BJP has not been politically strong before but has gained strength recently. Many vigilante groups say they feel 'empowered' by the victory of the Hindu nationalist BJP in the 2014 election.

At present, the nature and the functions of different cow protection groups and associations are divergent. These cow protection groups are usually of two types, 'organized' and 'unorganized.' In this case, the number of unorganized cow protection groups is higher in India. Unorganized cow protection groups often act as 'gangs.' These are also known as 'self-proclaimed' cow protection groups. Many 'organized cow protection groups' also work internally in an unorganized form and then shirk their responsibility. Their relationship with the police is also disputed. Some vigilantes claim to work with the police, while others claim that the police are corrupt and incompetent and that they are forced to take matters into their own hands. These groups have led to many cow vigilante violence, mob lynchings, and communal clashes in different parts of India. Cow vigilante violence's involve mob attacks in the name of 'cow protection' targeting mostly illegal cow smugglers, but in some cases even licensed cow traders. People from the Muslim, Tribal and Dalit communities in India are the main victims of cow-related violence. Significantly, in most of the cases, the cow protection groups received support from the local administration and political parties. Even, many groups believe their actions are approved by the government and the Hindus of the country.

One of the most notable cow protection groups in India is the *Bhartiya Gau Raksha Dal*. The *Bhartiya Gau Raksha Dal* (BGRD) is a Hindu nationalist and right-wing federation of cattle protection movements in India affiliated with the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* and a member of the *Sangh Parivar*. It provides guidance and support in the construction of protective shelters for cattle and is supporting cattle protection movements all over India. It was founded in 2012, and this organization is not affiliated with any political party. The organization has already set up more than 33 cattle protection groups in different Indian states. Activists of the BGRD have also been accused of being involved in cow-related violence.

Recently, many right-wing Hindu nationalist political parties and non-political organizations have emerged in India, which were directly or indirectly involved with the 'cow-politics' and have caused various controversies. Although these organizations are not directly involved with the cow protection movement, but the issue has become a part of their agenda. *Hindu Sena* and *Hindu Samhati* are two examples in this regard. *Hindu Samhati* is a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization. It has been established to protect Bengali Hindus. *Hindu Samhati* was founded in 2007 by Tapan Ghosh. It has branches in every district of West Bengal. It has opened new units in Assam and Jharkhand also. In 2015, the *Hindu Samhati* wrote a letter to the then CM of West Bengal, Smt. Mamata Banerjee, demanding a ban on slaughter of cows and beer in the state during Durga Puja. However, the state government rejected their demand. Another right-wing organization is the *Hindu Sena*, founded on 10th August 2011 by Vishnu Gupta. *Hindu Sena* chief Vishnu Gupta was arrested on 25th December 2015, two days after he called the

police and claimed that the restaurant of the hotel 'Kerala House' was serving beef. All of these mentioned incidents may seem scattered or minor, but they are not. From these incidents, the current trends and the future directions of the 'cow-politics' can be understood.

5. The Recent Growth of Cow-vigilante Violence in India

There has been a massive increase in cow vigilante violence in India recently. According to a Reuters report, a total of 63 cow vigilante attacks had occurred in India between 2010 and mid-2017, mostly since the Modi government came to power in 2014. In these attacks between 2010 and June 2017, '28 Indians - 24 of them Muslims - were killed and 124 injured,' states the Reuter's report. Scholar Radha Sarkar has argued that "cow vigilantism itself is not new in India, and violence over the protection of cows has occurred in the past. However, the frequency, impunity, and flagrance of the current instances of cow-related violence are unprecedented." Human Rights Watch (HRW) has reported that there has been a surge in cow vigilante violence since 2015. The surge is attributed to the recent rise in Hindu nationalism in India. Between May 2015 and December 2018, at least 44 people - 36 of them Muslims - were killed across 12 Indian states. Over that same period, around 280 people were injured in over 100 different incidents across 20 states. It examines the link between cow protection and the Hindu nationalist political movement, and the failure of local authorities to enforce constitutional and international human rights obligations to protect vulnerable minorities. HRW also states that, in most of the cases, families of victims, with the support of lawyers and activists were able to make some progress towards justice, but many families fear retribution and did not pursue their complaints. In 2018, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court made observations that such incidents of vigilantism were mob violence and a crime. Also, it placed the responsibility to prevent such crimes on the states.

The 'Rumours' play a significant role in the case of cow-vigilantism. Most of the recent cow-related violence occurred in India have been based on rumours. In an analysis by Hindustan Times, they found that more than half (52%) of the cow vigilante attacks between 2010 and 2017 were based on rumours. Dadri mob-lynching of 2015 was a shining example in this regard. In this incident, a mob of villagers attacked the home of 52-year-old Muslim man Mohammed Akhlaq, killing him, for suspicion of slaughtering a cow. This incident caused a stir in the whole country.

The victims of cow-related violence are mainly people from the Muslim community. However, not only the Muslims but also the people of the Dalit and Tribal communities are increasingly being subjected to this kind of violence. Violence against Dalits over the cow-protection is not a new matter. Historically, the Hindu society has kept the Dalits outside the four-fold Hindu *Varna* system and considered them as 'untouchables.' Even in present-day India, the position of the Dalits has improved somewhat but has not changed radically. Many people in the Dalit community depend on the leather industry for their livelihood, and even among them, there is a practice of eating beef. This is why they were also subjected to violence at different times. In the context of the discussion, an incident in the month of July 2016 is noteworthy. After an attack on four Dalits in Gujarat in July 2016, thousands of members of the Dalit community took to the streets to protest what they saw was 'government inaction.' The protests spread across the state. At least five

Dalit youth attempted suicide, one of whom died.

Apart from Muslims and Dalits, women have also been equally affected by the 'cow-vigilantism.' Mainly Dalit and Muslim women have been the victims of such violence. In September 2016, two Muslim women living in *Mewat* district of Haryana state in India had been raped, and two members of their family have been killed for allegedly eating beef. Not only this, but there are many cases where women have been sexually harassed, raped, attacked, physically and mentally tortured in the name of cow-protection. From all the discussion, it becomes clear that cow-vigilantism is not only harming people of a particular community. Rather, it is on the way to destroying the ideal of secularism and tolerance of India as a whole.

6. The Question of State Support and Related Administrative Affairs

The question of state support over the issue of cow protection has become very much relevant in recent times. Various initiatives have been taken by the Central Government and different State Governments in this regard. The slaughter of cattle for exporting beef was banned in May 2017 by the BJP led NDA government of India. Selling of cattle legalized only for agricultural purposes, including for use in plowing fields and dairy production. The restriction threatened Indian beef export industry worth \$4 billion annually. The multibillion-dollar beef and leather industries are mostly run by the members of the Muslim minority. So, the decision was strongly opposed all over the country. Later, the Supreme Court of India suspended the ban.

In March 2017, Yogi Adityanath, the CM of Uttar Pradesh, took the initiative to close many cow slaughterhouses in the state. As usual, the decision went against the interests of the Muslims. Different initiatives were also found in the other states of India. In March 2015, the Maharashtra Government passed stricter legislation that expanded its ban on the slaughter of bulls and bullocks. Hon'ble CM of Rajasthan declared in Budget announcement of 2013-14 to opening a separate "Directorate of Gauseva". It came in functioning on 22 July of 2013. Separate 'Gopalan Department' has been created on 13th March of 2014. The name of the "Gauseva Directorate, Rajasthan" has been changed to "Directorate Gopalan Rajasthan" from dated 19 December 2014. In this way, Rajasthan got its first 'cow minister.' In 2010, 'Haryana Gau Seva' was set up by the Haryana Government. "Haryana Gau Seva Aayog" (HGSA) is a state government organization that works under Haryana Government for registering and regulating grants for *gaushalas*, conservation and protection of cows. HGSA also proposed and led beef policing in Haryana. HGSA is the first organization in India who is setting up university to research on cow dung and cow urine. The organization also regulates and preserves the functionality of bill associated with cow protection law, i.e. *Gauvansh Sanrakshan and Gausamvardhan Bill* under Haryana Government. In 2019, HGSA registered 505 *gaushalas* in the state. In 2016, the Haryana Government also set up a 24-hour helpline number to complain against cow slaughter and cow smuggling. The growing importance of cow protection at the administrative level can be understood from these initiatives.

Recently, six 'Gau Raksha Chowkis' (Cow Protection Police Outposts) have been set up by the State Government in a district called *Alwar* in Rajasthan, to curb cattle smugglers and cow vigilantes. The residents alleged that many of them

are now unofficial ‘extortion points,’ where bovine transporters need to bribe the on-duty policeman in order to pass through the barricades. Many activists of cow protection groups also enjoy a share of this ‘protection money’. So it is not wrong to say that the cow protection has turned into an ‘organized extortion racket’ in *Alwar*. Thus, an ‘evil triangle nexus’ has developed between the local administration, cow-vigilantes and cattle smugglers. Cow vigilante groups consider their activities to be legally valid for such government initiatives and patronage. The Supreme Court of India in September 2017 ruled that each state should appoint a police officer in each district to take strict action against cow vigilantism. ‘*Gau Raksha Dal*,’ one of the cow protection groups, believes it is acting on government mandate. Scholar Radha Sarkar has stated that the bans on beef “tacitly legitimize vigilante activity.” All of the above trends have paved the way of ‘cow-terrorism.’

7. The Multifaceted Role of Social Media in ‘Cow-politics’

The role of social media has also become significant in the discussion of ‘cow-politics.’ In this case, social media plays a multifaceted role. Cow protection groups place more emphasis on various modern digital tools than on traditional methods such as slogan-shouting or pamphlet distributing. They share varieties type of texts, pictures and videos related to cow protection across social media. Social media is used in different ways to meet different goals. According to some vigilante groups, with the help of social media, they can easily get the news related to cattle smuggling or slaughter, which has further made their job easier. It has also helped to increase the membership of the organization. Many cow protection groups post pictures and videos of their ‘cow protection campaigns’ on various social networking sites such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook. In order to motivate a person emotionally, various videos of animals being tortured are shown to that person. Thus a ‘psychological hegemony’ is gradually established over a person. Many organizations also run their official websites, Facebook fan pages, WhatsApp groups and YouTube channels. Nowadays, different incidents of cow-related violence spread quickly on social media, even from the print or broadcast media. Because of this activism of social media, it has become more popular among the cow vigilante groups. One of the negative aspects of cow vigilantism is mob-lynching. Social media has been used to organize such mob-lynching. This type of violence is often based on rumours that are mainly spread through social media. Social media has been used in many innovative ways to spread awareness about the protection and welfare of cows. This can be discussed with an example. In October 2017, an NGO in Kolkata, ‘*Go Seva Parivar*,’ has started a two-month-long competition, inviting people to click selfies with cows and upload it on their website to qualify for an award. A huge number of people took part in this ‘*Cowfie*’ contest. Social media also acts as a ‘voice of protest.’ After the Dadri mob lynching of 2015, the incident was strongly condemned in the social media along with the protests on the streets. After an attack on four Dalits in Gujarat in July 2016, thousands of members of the Dalit community took to the streets to protest. A campaign, ‘*Not In My Name*’ was conducted by film-maker Saba Dewan through a Facebook post against the violence.

8. Growing Connections between Students, Youth, Labourers and ‘Cow-politics’

The growing involvement of students, youth and labour class people with the ‘cow politics’ is a very significant matter. Various organizations have been formed to involve students and youth in the cow protection movement. The *Yuva Jagaran Chetna Kendra* is one such organization. It is an organization based in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh that works for cow protection. According to a youth member of this organization, cow vigilantism had given him a ‘purpose in life’. Hindu youth militia like, *Hindu Yuva Vahini* (HYV), has expanded its scope further. Volunteers of *Hindu Yuva Vahini* have launched massive campaign against slaughterhouses and cattle lifting at different times. Cow protection is one of the top agenda of HYV. In 2017, the organization had decided to strengthen its presence in Bihar by enrolling thousands of youths.

Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of BJP, has also been embroiled in controversy over the question of cow protection. In May 2017, BJYM and workers of the youth congress clashed in *Baldevbagh* locality in Kerala, when the BJYM activists tried to storm the Youth Congress office with a portrait of a cow in protest against the slaughtering of a calf. All of this indicates that the tendency of growing association between the youth society and ‘cow-politics’ is going in a negative direction.

The student organization like, *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP) are also being involved in the issue of ‘cow-politics.’ ABVP is a right-wing all India student organization affiliated to the Hindu nationalist *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS). It claims to be India’s largest student organization with more than three million members. Despite being a student organization, it was involved in ‘cow-politics.’ In May 2017, fifty students of IIT Madras participated in a ‘beef fest’ inside the campus. Some students were assaulted allegedly by a group of ABVP members for attending the event. The AVBP members had also allegedly issued death threats to all the ‘beef eaters’ on the campus. It is clear from the above discussion that an evil conspiracy between student politics and ‘cow-politics’ has emerged.

Not only the students and youth but also the poor labourers are one of the most active parts of the ‘cow-politics.’ Cow protection groups have a strong information network. This network of informers often consists of cobblers, rickshaw drivers, vegetable vendors. According to a Cow vigilante group, helmet sellers on the highway, ice-cream vendors and even local tea seller served as their informer. Some of them do this kind of work as a part-time job. Thus, a new kind of ‘Hindutva-Subaltern Coalition’ has emerged.

9. Conclusion

Cow vigilante violence is not a new phenomenon. It is associated with the historical roots of India. But the recent rise in such incidents is a matter of great concern. In the past, the cow protection movement was only involved with the question of ‘cow protection.’ However, especially after independence, the motives and character of such movements began to change. Over time it has become more multidimensional. In order to become more involved in politics, the cow protection movement as a whole turns into ‘cow-politics,’ and this is slowly moving towards ‘cow-

Terrorism.’ The cases of mob-lynching for allegedly eating beef or slaughtering cows has increased dramatically. Lack of specific legislation to prevent mob-lynching has further inspired such incidents. At the administrative level, no special measures have been taken to prevent cow-related violence as it has been done to protect cows. The role of the Indian judiciary, in this case, has also been questioned. The judiciary has failed to protect Hindu majoritarian sentiment and minority interests equally. The activities of various cow protection groups have also been uncontrolled. Also, there are no administrative mechanisms to control the rumours that are being spread using social media. Initiatives should be taken to stop the evil conspiracy between students, youth and ‘cow-politics.’ So, if proper action is not taken, ‘cow-politics’ will gradually erode the secular character of India.

10. References

- About Us. Goseva Parivar. Gosevaparivar. Org, 2019. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://gosevaparivar.org/about-us/>.
- Abraham D, Rao O. 86% killed in cow-related violence since 2010 are Muslim, 97% attacks after Modi govt came to power. Hindustan Times, 2017. Retrieved 5 March 2020, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/86-killed-in-cow-related-violence-since-2010-are-muslims-97-attacks-after-modi-govt-came-to-power/story-w9CYOKsvgk9joGSSaXgpLO.html>.
- Adcock C. Cow protection and minority rights in india: reassessing religious freedom. Asian affairs. 2018; 49(2):340-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1470750>.
- Agoramoorthy G, Hsu MJ. The significance of cows in Indian society between sacredness and economy. Anthropological Notebooks. 2012; 18(3):5-12. http://www.drustvo-antropologov.si/AN/PDF/2012_3/Anthropological_Notebooks_XVIII_3_Agoramoorthy.pdf.
- Angad A, Dwivedi Johri A. The cow keepers: Some cattle vigilante groups operating in Delhi and neighbouring states. The Indian Express, 2016. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/the-cow-keepers-the-cattle-vigilante-groups-operating-in-delhi-and-neighbouring-states/>.
- Asrar S. India suspends ban on trade of cattle for slaughter. Aljazeera.com, 2017. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/india-suspends-ban-trade-cattle-slaughter-170711075047079.html>.
- Bepari S. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RECENT COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA. International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education. 2020; 6(2):1181-1187.
- Bhartiya Gau Raksha Dal. En.wikipedia.org, 2015-2020. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhartiya_Gau_Raksha_Dal.
- Bhattacharya S. Bengal Hindutva leader who took on RSS quits organisation he founded. Hindustan Times, 2018. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/kolkata/bengal-hindutva-leader-who-took-on-rss-quits-organisation-he-founded/story-g0Fk5DcgdQ33hflNcDWfSN.html>.
- Biswas S. Why the humble cow is India's most polarising animal. BBC News, 2015. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34513185>.
- Cattle slaughter in India. En.wikipedia.org, 2020. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_slaughter_in_India.
- Chigateri S. ‘Glory to the Cow’: Cultural Difference and Social Justice in the Food Hierarchy in India. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies. 2008; 31(1):10-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400701874692>.
- Cow politics. Clash between workers of BJYM and Youth Congress. India Today, 2017. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://www.india-today.in/pti-feed/story/cow-politics-clash-between-workers-of-bjym-and-youth-congress-935994-2017-05-31>.
- Cow Protection. Mind of Mahatma Gandhi. Mkgandhi.org, 2020. Retrieved 5 March 2020, from <https://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap81.htm>.
- Cow protection movement. En.wikipedia.org, 2020. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cow_protection_movement.
- Cow vigilante violence in India. En.wikipedia.org, 2014-2020. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cow_vigilante_violence_in_India.
- Dadri mob lynching 2015. En.wikipedia.org, 2015-2020. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Dadri_mob_lynching.
- Directorate of Gopalan, Government of Rajasthan. Gopalan.rajasthan.gov.in, 2019. Retrieved 5 March 2020, from <https://gopalan.rajasthan.gov.in/>.
- Ghoshal A. Ban cow slaughter, beer during Puja: Hindu Samhati to Mamata. The Indian Express, 2015. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/ban-cow-slaughter-beer-during-puja-hindu-samhati-to-mamata/>.
- Gundimeda S, Ashwin VS, 2018. Cow Protection in India: From Secularising to Legitimizing Debates. South Asia Research, 38(2), 156–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728018768961>.
- Haryana Gau Seva Aayog. En.wikipedia.org, 2019. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haryana_Gau_Seva_Aayog.
- Hindu Sena. En.wikipedia.org, 2016-2020. Retrieved 26 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_Sena.
- Hindu Yuva Vahini. En.wikipedia.org, 2013-2020.. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_Yuva_Vahini.
- Hindu Yuva Vahini outfit to enroll thousands of youths. Telangana Today, 2020. Retrieved 28 February 2020, from <https://telanganatoday.com/hindu-yuva-vahini-outfit-enroll-thousands-youths>.
- IIT Madras student thrashed by ABVP for attending ‘beef fest’. The Indian Express, 2017. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/iit-madras-student-beaten-up-for-attending-beef-fest-4681151/>.
- Loiwal M. Time for a #Cowfie: Kolkata gears up for

- selfie-with-a-cow competition. India Today, 2017. Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/what%27s-hot/story/cowfie-selfie-with-cow-competition-kolkata-go-seva-parivar-gauraksha-lifest-1079329-2017-10-30>.
27. Miglani A. A socio-legal perspective of cow slaughter in india. International journal of law and legal jurisprudence studies, 2017; 1(6). Retrieved 24 february 2020, from <https://ijlljs.in/a-socio-legal-perspective-of-cow-slaughter-in-india/>.
 28. Noronha E BJP. Cow as a Political Symbol. Economic and Political Weekly. 1994; 29(24):1447-1448. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4401327?seq=1>.
 29. Parth MN. Controversial student activists turn India's universities into ideological battlegrounds. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved, 2016. from <https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-india-student-activists-2016-03-01-story.html>.
 30. Purohit D. 'Gau raksha chowkis' are extortion points in Alwar. Jaipur News - The Times of India. Retrieved, 2017. from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/gau-raksha-chowkis-are-extortion-points-in-alwar/articleshow/62003594.cms>.
 31. Safi M. On patrol with the Hindu vigilantes who would kill to protect India's cows. the Guardian. Retrieved, 2016. from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/27/on-patrol-hindu-vigilantes-smuggling-protect-in-dia-cows-kill>.
 32. Sengupta D. Supporters of Dadri 'beef' murder use social media to wield their weapons. CatchNews.com. Retrieved, 2017. from <http://www.catchnews.com/national-news/supporters-of-dadri-beef-murder-use-social-media-to-wield-their-weapons-1443717569.html>.
 33. Singh B. How Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act Becoming Safe Abode for Killers of Holy Cow in India, 2018. Noto-are. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326983108_How_Prevention_of_Cow_Slaughter_Act_Becoming_Safe_Abode_for_Killers_of_Holy_Cow_in_India.
 34. Violent Cow Protection in India | Vigilante Groups Attack Minorities. Human Rights Watch. (2019). Retrieved 5 March 2020, from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/18/violent-cow-protection-india/vigilante-groups-attack-minorities>.
 35. 'Women raped in fatal attack over beef'. BBC News, 2016. Retrieved, 2020. from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-37336050>.