

ARYA JOURNALS AND COW PROTECTION

[LATE NINETEENTH -MID TWENTIETH CENTURY PUNJAB]

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ABSTRACT

The cow is the purest type of sub-human life. She pleads before us on behalf of the whole of the sub-human species for justice to it at the hands of man, the first among all that lives. The cow is a sacred animal in the Hindu religion. Veneration of cow increased during medieval period. The issue of cow killing was raised by swami Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj. References are there of demerits of cow killing in Arya journals. With strong efforts of Arya Samaj, the issue of cow protection became one of the most important issues of ancient nationalism. It created a rift between Hindus and Muslims. At last the movement was successful with the inclusion of the matter in Indian constitution under article 43 (part 4). Thus the network built by Arya samaj and 'orthodox' ascetics were increasingly used for the 'defense of the cow' against barbarians aggression.

KEYWORDS: Economic Uses of a Cow, Mother v/s Mother cow, Cow Protection Movement by Arya Samaj

INTRODUCTION

The cow (*Gomatha*) is a poem of pity. One reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dump creation of God. The ancient seer, whoever he was, began with the cow. The appeal of the lower order of creation is all the more forcible because it is speechless. The cow is the purest type of sub-human life. She pleads before us on behalf of the whole of the sub-human species for justice to it at the hands of man, the first among all that lives. She seems to speak to us through her eyes: 'you are not appointed over us to kill us and eat our flesh or otherwise ill-treat us, but to be our friend and guardian'.¹

Economic Uses of a Cow

The cow is referred to by various names in the Vedas such as 'Aditi', 'Kamdhenu,' and 'Aghanya' [that which cannot be killed]. Other than its milk and by products, a cow has numerous 'economic uses'. Cow dung is known to act as antiseptic and reportedly acts as an air purifier when burnt. It also acts as a coolant when mixed with mud and applied to walls of dwellings.²

Mother v/s Mother Cow

Mother cow is in many ways better than the mother who gave us birth. Our mother gives us milk for a couple of years and then expects us to serve her when we grow up. Mother cow expects from us nothing but grass and grain. Our mother often falls ill and expects service from us. Mother cow rarely fall ill. Here is an unbroken record of service which does not end with her death. Our mother, when she dies, means expenses of burial or cremation. Mother cow is as useful dead as when she is alive. We can make use of every part of her body-her flesh, her bones, her intestines, her horns and her

skin. This not to disparage the mother who gives us birth, but in order to show the substantial reasons for worshipping the cow.³

Cow Slaughtering During Medieval Period

The cow is a sacred animal in the Hindu religion. Veneration of the cow increased during medieval times, when the rate of cow slaughter increased phenomenally. It is also believed that Muslim sacrifice of cows during '*Bakr-id*' also led to an increase in cow veneration among Hindus.⁴ The issue of cow slaughter is not a new one. It was first raised by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj,⁵ Cow killing was started in India with the advent of the '*Yavanas*'. The Britishers were the beef eaters themselves so they always favored "*Yavanas*'. They were less in number as compared with '*Yavanas*'. The most of the flesh for them was imported. The animals were not evidently slaughtered for the purpose of their beef.⁶

Demerits of Cow Killing

There are references of demerits of cow killing in Arya journals like '*Bharat Sudasha Pravartak*'. Due to cow killing several famines occurred in India followed by several diseases. Due to lack of milk products like milk, ghee, human stamina decreased without which no educational earnings could be there. It led to non achievement of dharma. Prices of milk, ghee, grain, buffaloes rose high. Due to unavailability of buffaloes land could not be fertilized. There was scarcity of grain products.⁷

Cow Protection Movement by Arya Samaj

The cow protection movement was the movement that demanded end of cow slaughter in British India. This movement gained momentum with the support from Arya samaj and its founding father Swami Dayanand Saraswati.⁸ Arya samaj propounded the idea that Hindus should cleanse their religion and return to the purer form of Hinduism which existed during Vedic times. While this movement rejected idol worship, polytheism, child marriage, widow celibacy, the caste system by birth and the spiritual superiority of Brahman priests, it accepted the practice of cow worship. Dayanand's movement had important doctrinal similarities with Sikhism which may partly account for its success in the Punjab as compared to other regions.⁹ it is peculiar feature of the Arya Samaj that while it attacks the ritual superiority of the Brahman priests, it has an orthodox, Brahmanical theology and accepts some crucial features of Brahmanical rituals.¹⁰ In a treatise called '*GOCARUNA NIDHI*' [Ocean of mercy to the cow] published by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1881, the author strongly opposed Cow slaughter as an anti Hindu act. In 1882, together with orthodox Hindu leaders, who were his opponents on other occasions, Dayanand founded a committee for the protection of cows. In the following decade, the Arya Samaj played an important role in the establishment of societies for the protection of cows in different parts of British India. Protection of '*Gau Mata*' [mother cow] became one of the most important issues of an ancient nationalism between 1880 and 1920. The cow protection movement demanded a ban on cow slaughter from the colonial government failing that it attempted to prohibit physically the slaughter and sacrifice of cows.¹¹

A Rift between Hindus and Muslims on the Issue of Cow Slaughtering

The movement not only created a rift between Hindus and Muslims but also between Hindus and the British.¹² the British and the Muslims came to be seen as allied beef eating barbarians determined to insult the deepest religious sentiments of the Hindus. While goats could also be slaughtered at that '*Bakr-id*' festival, it became imperative for Muslims not to bow down to Hindu encroachments on their ancient right to sacrifice cows at that festival. Time and place were thus set for violent encounter. When the riots started, the British response proved totally inadequate.¹³ In the 1870's, cow

protection movements spread rapidly in the Punjab. Arya Samaj had a tremendous role in skillfully converting this sentiment into national movement.¹⁴

Establishment of Gaurakshini Sabha and its Activities

The first 'Gaurakshini Sabha was established in the Punjab in 1882. The movement spread rapidly all over north India. The organization rescued wandering cows and reclaimed them to groom there in places called '*gaushalas*'. Signatures up to 3, 50, 000 in some places were collected to demand a ban on cow sacrifice.¹⁵ During Dayanand's time, cow protection was not much regarded as an anti-Muslim phenomenon and he attempted to build a rational and respectable movement around this sentiment. It gradually became an issue of communal rivalry as it became a legal issue and calls for a legal ban on cow slaughter were raised.¹⁶

Efforts of Swami Dayanand for Cow Protection

Swami Dayanand and his followers travelled all across India giving lectures and founding societies. The advent of trains, buses and the printing press aided in much wider dissemination of their messages. Large public meetings were held in different parts of Punjab 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.¹⁷ The network built by Arya samaj and 'orthodox' ascetics were now increasingly used for the 'defense of the cows' against barbarian aggression. However, not only sadhus went around to spread the message, but Hindus also went increasingly to pilgrimage centers where they were informed of the movement. Donations to support the movement were solicited from every household. 'Snow ball' letters [Patias] were circulated to mobilize support when cow sacrifice or the transport of Law to government pounds had to be stopped.

British Response to Cow Protection

The rioting was precipitated by contradictory interpretations of a British local magistrate's order. He had apparently asked all the Muslims interested in cow slaughter to register, which undertaking was in fact performed to identify problem prone areas. However, Muslims had interpreted this as a promise of protection for those who wanted to perform sacrifices. In 1881, high court in Allahabad ruled that cows are not 'sacred' animals as defined in section 295 of Indian Penal Code and Muslims could not be held accountable for slaughtering them.¹⁸

Views of Mahatma Gandhi on the Matter

Mahatma Gandhi said, the central fact of Hinduism is cow protection. It is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond this species. The cow means the entire sub- human world. Man through the cow is enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives. Why the cow was selected for apotheosis is obvious. Cow protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world; And Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow..... Hindus will be judged not by their *Tilaks*, not by the correct chanting of *MANTRAS*, not by their pilgrimages, not by their most punctilious observances of caste rules, but their ability to protect the cow. I would not kill a human being for protection a cow, as I will not kill a cow for saving a human life, be it ever so precious. My religion teaches me that I should by personal conduct instill into the minds of those who might hold different views, the conviction that cow-killing is a sin and that, therefore it ought to be abandoned. My ambition is no less than to see the principle of cow protection established throughout the world. But that requires that I should set my own house thoroughly in order first.¹⁹

One day, while swami Dayanand ji was sitting in a chair in a garden at Ajmer, the agent to the Governor – general for the Rajputana states passed by. Seeing Swami ji, he entered into the garden, took off his hat, shook hands with Swami ji and sat in a chair. In course of conversation Swami asked him if he supported Dharma (righteousness) or not. Colonel Brooke said, “it is good to support righteousness but we do what is useful. Swami ji said, ‘No, you do not do what is useful, but do what is harmful’ Colonel I Brooke asked, “How? Swami ji replied, “see what great benefits people derive from a cow and how many people receive nourishment from her? Now tell me if cow killing is beneficial or harmful? Colonel Brooke said, “No doubt it is harmful. Swami ji asked, “Then why do you kill cow? The colonel said that he agreed with Swami ji, but would like to talk over the subject at his bungalow. Next day Colonel Brooke sent his carriage to swami ji, he went and talked with Colonel I Brooke for about forty minutes. Colonel Brook admitted that cow killing was harmful, but he was powerless. The matter and requested swami ji to see the Governor- General of India and gave swami ji letter of introduction addressed to the Governor- General.

Ragunath Prasad Pathak, “*Teaching of Swami Dayanand*; Hoshiarpur, Vishveshvaran and Vedic research Institute, 1973, p.72.

Legislative Measures for Cow Protection

Mahatma Gandhi's strong views on the matter led to its inclusion in constitution under article 43 [part-4, Directive principles of state policy] which states that the state shall preserve and improve the breeds and prohibit the slaughter of cows, calves and other draught cattle.²⁰ According to the act without prior permission of local government, cow slaughtering or eating of beef was strictly prohibited. Any person who will destroy any place or any object of worship to hurt the sentiments of the people of any community, will be fined or punished for two years or will be entitled for both.²¹

Cow Slaughtering and Hadis

There is no evidence available of cow slaughtering of cows in '*Quran*' or '*Hadis*'. It is written in 2nd '*Hadis*' that these four persons cannot get 'moksha'; [1] Killer of ox [2] Tree cutter [3] Man seller [4] A drunkard person. That was the reason that mughal emperor Akbar prohibited cow killing in his law '*Ain-A-Akbari*'. This shows that cow slaughtering was followed out just for the sake of communal jealousy.²²

Support to Cow Protection Movement from the Rajas and Social Groups

It seems that every Hindu from high to Low had to become part of the national family. The cow societies were supported by rajas that had been transformed by the British from lords of the land to landlords. The protection offered by the British to these ruling elite enabled them to invest considerable amount of money in religious courses such as the building of temples and the beautification of centers of pilgrimage.²³ The direct organization of the movement was left to the service classes in the cities and petty landholder and school masters in the rural areas. Through measures like caste excommunication and fines, Hindus who had sold cows to butchers were forced to buy the cattle back. Merchant groups that were engaged in the cattle transport, Such as the '*Nats*' and '*Banjaras*' were forced to fall in line with what increasingly became a 'Hindu notion' fighting for the one and the same cause.²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Cow slaughter can never be stopped by law. Knowledge, education, and the spirit of kindness towards her alone can put an end to it. Cow protection is not mere protection of the cow. It means protection of that lives and is helpless and

weak in the world. Legislative prohibition is the smallest part of any programme of cow protection....people seem to think that, when a law is passed against any evil, it will die without any further effort. There never was a grosser self deception. Legislation is intended and is effective against an ignorant or a small, evil-minded minority; but no legislation which is opposed by an intelligent and organized public opinion, or under cover of religion by a fanatical minority, can ever succeed. Preservation of cattle is a vital part of *GOSEVA*. It is a vital question for India. There is urgent need for deep study and the spirit of sacrifice. To amass money and dole out charity does not can note real business capacity. To know how to preserve cattle, to impart this knowledge to the million, to live up to ideal oneself and to spend money on this endeavor is real business.

Future Scope

In so far as the pure economic necessity of cow protection is concerned. It can be easily secured if the question was considered on that ground alone. In that event all the dry cattle, the cows who give less milk than their keep, and the aged and unfit cattle would be slaughtered without a second thought. This soulless economy has no place in India, although the inhabitants of this land of paradoxes may be, indeed age, guilty of many soulless acts.

Ragunath Prasad Pathak, *Teaching of Swami Dayanand*; Hoshiarpur, Vishveshvaran and Vedic research Institute, 1973, p.72.

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