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We do not Understand the Ways of the World

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Abstract

The paper undertakes indigenous caste monography of the Gaduliya Lohars (Blacksmiths with carts) of Rajasthan, in light of their historical origin and the present state, they are living in. They are named according to the nomadic lifestyle they have acquired historically, leaving the courts with their patron king.

Post-Independent democratic India accorded the community with their association with the legendary past of the nation, during All India Gadi Lohar Sammelan held in 1955, thus glorifying their semi-nomadic existence that followed their self-imposed exile from Chittorgarh. It was an attempt, diligent yet fruitless, to settle this community as 'Ironworkers' of the new Industrial nation; a honeytrap of mobilizing such nomadic communities to use as potential vote banks.

Presently, they are considered as 'illegal migrant settlers' in the western and northern states of India; as they can be found residing on the pavements alongside highways. Since Independence, they have been switching between multifarious caste attributions such as Scheduled tribe, OBC (Other Backward Caste), SBC (Special Backward Caste).

The paper explores how to confer to space, which is illegal to dwell, is a fundamental development of Settlement that hinders 'Migration', negatively affecting the existence of a community.

Keywords

Caste monography, Gaduliya Lohar, Kshtriyization, Political Engineering of Caste, Untouchability.

“We do not understand the ways of the world”: Gaduliya Lohars of South Rajasthan at the fringes of untouchability

We are Gaduliyas; true to our pledge, true to the land where we were born. The government did not have one of us otherwise; our children would not be suffering.

Shankarlal Lohar, Chittorgarh

The dominant narrative regarding the Gaduliya Lohar¹ community, which was officially promoted in Independent India, is that whilst leaving the Chittorgarh fort because of the Turkish/Mughal invasion the Gaduliyas had undertaken five oaths: that they would not return to the fort until the Mughals are defeated, never construct a permanent abode, not sleep on a cot, and never light a lamp.

Renunciation of Gaduliya Lohars to their oaths after independence highlights the manner in which the Congress regime after Independence started recreating identities of subaltern communities.

The GL's historical trajectory, took them from artisan caste attributes to categorization as a notified nomadic tribe (Criminalized tribe) during the Colonial rule, to end up being categorized as Scheduled Tribe post coloniality in 1955. They were later categorized as OBC (in 1994); SEBC (for 2 months in 2016) and OBC (since 2016).²

¹ The etymon Gaduliya derived from Hindi word Gaadi, means 'Cart' and Lohar, referring to their occupational identity means 'Blacksmith'. Their settlements are across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and most parts of Northern India. In Dehradun and other parts of lower Shivaliks, they are still nomadic and travel during winters to upper ranges to make and repair butcher's equipments. Gaduliya Lohars had concentrated nomadic patterns only in Marwar and Mewar with nil trace in censuses around the nation and Eastern Rajputana up until 1941. This might have been a problem because of the 'Khanp' (Caste) names that they used, identical to Rajputs.

² The Mandal Commission or Socially Backward Class Commission (SEBC) introduced in 1979 with failed implementation in 1990 catering to wide student protests and a stay from the Supreme Court was implemented in 1992. The Gaduliyas were put under OBC category on 20 October 1994. Catering to the Rajasthan SBC Bill passed in September, 2016 by the state assembly they were put under SBC (Special Backward Class) based on social, educational and economic backwardness of a community along with Banjaras, Bagariyas, Gadri and Gurjars. The act was executed on 16 October 2016. It could not be passed for the 9th act of the constitution and all the communities later on 9 December 2016

The post-independence developments encountered by the community sheds light on the process of political engineering of caste³ highlighted by Nicolas Jaoul in the case of Bhangis/Valmiki in North India. The government used the prevalent myths to create inflated vote banks. Unlike the Valmiki studied by Jaoul however, the attempt was merely one from above without any participation from the members of the community as leaders in any political venture provisioned to its social development.

The Gaduliyas were never recognized as untouchables officially by being on the SC schedule, neither by Colonial nor Post-Colonial rule. Their social identity, in between caste and tribe has never been settled by the state, whilst dearth of political awareness amongst the community has made them an easy prey to the lip services of the Congress government.

In its modern version, Caste is a product of the collision of the Colonial Western rule over the Indian state, though not constructed wholly by it, but used as a form of power to systematize and rule the Indian subject (Dirks, 2001). Colonial

were put back in OBC category. High Court put a stay on the commission as the implementation of the bill had resulted in 54% of overall reservations in the state (education and government jobs for Backward Castes (ST/SC/OBC) exceeding the limit set by Supreme Court, which is 50%.

3 Nicolas Jaoul's theory of political engineering of caste criticizes the concept of Sanskritization by M.N. Srinivas as it suggests only to the cultural aspect of it. Srinivas approves of the positive implications of Sanskritization in unification of the state thus missing the political and conventional aspects of it. Jaoul introduces the political affluence to which a community is subjected towards along this process from within the community and the party in authoritative power, pointing to the way 'Sanskritization amongst Dalits have been both politically and culturally engineered'. (Jaoul, 2011) The paper uses this theory as its base, which will be lining all the other aspects of caste, labour, sedentarization, and aspect of impurity/untouchability linked to the state of Gaduliyas as subjects, through various lens such as Colonial ethnography and census reports and post-colonial scenario through academic history, and popular memory.

ethnography was used as a tool by the colonizers to understand (broadly to control through classifications) the people whom they were dominating. Anthropological views centered on caste were regularly presented about the land they were colonizing or had colonized.

The Gaduliya Lohars were mentioned in the census only in 1921. The colonial rule held the community's existence as a nomadic tribe, which they justified from the prevalent myths and nomadic way of life of the community.

Even though it officially adopted a secular agenda in its Constitution, Independent India during the Congress regime, in many ways acted as the initiator of the early onset of Hindu Nationalist politics. Jaoul has shown how "local politics of Sanskritization, caste and labour" impacted Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh after Independence. This was in the aftermath of the colonial administration in 1935, who classified several communities considered as untouchables as Scheduled Castes in order to enact the consensus found between Ambedkar and Gandhi known as the Poona Pact, regarding upliftment of these communities through protective measures. S. Baily has shown how in the 18th century, several non-sedentary populations started being encouraged to settle at the margins of villages and became incorporated as untouchable labourers in the agrarian economy structure when this agrarian economy started becoming oriented towards extracting profits for the colonial revenue. Gaduliyas were nomadic, serving the agrarian mode of economy as blacksmiths, staying at the margins of the villages. Their settlement was as such because of the labour they were indulged in, i.e. cattle rearing and blacksmithy.

Their sedentarization happened only after independence and they are not considered officially as Dalits, which is a political term chosen by Dalit activists who sought to unify the SCs politically under this terminology. Nevertheless, their subaltern position in terms of caste as well as certain practices of discrimination towards them makes this case study relevant to our focus on subaltern caste trajectories and untouchability. Moreover, this relatively recent history can highlight comparatively the making of untouchability at different points of time in Indian social history.

In this paper, I would like to assess what positive knowledge is available regarding the dynamics of caste formation of GL in colonial sources as well as in the popular memory of the community, which mainly takes the shape of mythology. A way of enquiring into this popular memory can be by going back to the history of their name, i.e. where it comes from historically and how it has been carried on up until the contemporary times.

The first part of the paper deals with how myths prevalent in the community can provide clues on their social history and how they acknowledge/remember it; how do these myths cater to the process of Sanskritization within the community, which was later used for purely political endeavours by the Congress. The second part of the paper deals with 1955 sammelan (Convention) held under the jurisdiction of the Congress government, marking the entry of the community into the independent Indian state. During this event Gaduliyas were encouraged to redefine their identity in a fashion the new nation state deemed fit to its enterprise, thus illustrating the politics of sanskritization highlighted by Jaoul. The third

part caters to how Sanskritization in Southern Rajasthan was at play, showcasing the present state of gaduliyas. Where is the joint process of abandonment of the nomadic ways of life and sanskritization, leading the community socially and politically?

Pratap and Chittorgarh: Engineered Myth of Descent

Several myths are prevalent of the Gaduliyas' origin finding similarities with 'most of the criminal tribes of Northern India' (Crooke 107), who have assigned to themselves parts in the tales of Royal chivalry, claiming to have originated from the royal Rajput blood. The Gaduliya Lohars, too were categorized as a criminal tribe in the colonial times. From 1870 onwards, ethnography as a method became an important tool for the colonial administration for recording data about people living in different parts of India.

Despite the spike of interest in ethnographic research, there were no prominent studies done on the community and the material found on them is scarce. For instance, Colonel James Todd's work in three volumes, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1920) records no imprints of the community, though containing vast descriptions of the Rajputana Estate.

The earliest accounts of their dissent are found in Veer Vinod composed in 1886. As stated in *Veer Vinod* by Shyamaldas (1886), the Gaduliya Lohars do not stay at one place, but move from place to place in their Gaadis, like other nomadic communities. Their livelihood is supported by the blacksmith work that they do by moulding iron to make iron products. They claim that earlier they used to reside on the Chittorgarh Fort, but, when during to the Mughal invasion, the Chittorgarh

Fort was seized, they ran away, taking the oath that until Maharana of Mewar does not get his lost throne back they would neither return to the fort nor make houses for living (Shyamaldas 202).

Maharana Pratap's connection with the Gaduliya Lohars is nowhere evident in this work, though it is proposed that they had ties with Chittorgarh and the Maharana of Mewar. Various scholars have also tried to locate the time of their 'emergence' (i.e., the trajectory of nomadism) that was the sole outcome of their obsolete exile as Gaduliya Lohars. Varshneya considers that the origin of this community might have happened during one of the following three occasions: firstly, during the 1303 invasion on Chittorgarh by Alauddin Khilji, in which Rana Ratan Singh was dethroned; secondly, in 1567 during Raja Udai Singh's reign in Chittorgarh⁴. As pointed out by sociologist Satyapal Ruhela, the battle for the fort between Jaimal and Patta of Chittorgarh (under the patronage of Udai Singh who had fled the fort at the time of the siege) and Akbar left unprecedented numbers dead. Thirdly, in 1576 during the battle of Haldighati, wherein Akbar won possession over Chittorgarh. Moreover, Babur defeated Rana Sanga at Khanwa in March 1527 and while regaining consciousness in

4 Maharana Udai Singh II, with the news of approaching Mughal armies, had taken refuge in his new capital, Udaipur (named after himself), leaving the fort with Jaimal and Phatta to take care of. Whilst the armies had fallen back during the siege by Akbar, they with their followers escaped through the Lakota Bari (the iron gate) one night prior to, or on, 24th February, 1568. (Ruhela, 1968) Others have offered far bloodier versions of the battle wherein it has been mentioned that Akbar was able to kill Jaimal with a musket shot and women in Aissar Das, Sahib Khan and Patta Sissodia households committed self-immolation (Jauhar) after his death. The escapers include 1,000 musketeers with all the other defenders dead. It is also evident that the Mughal troops had slaughtered 20-25000 men of ordinary lineage of the town who had helped the Rajput officials during the siege.

the village Baswa, he pledged not to return to Chittorgarh as a defeated person. (Ojha, 1937) Hence, the instances of invasion from foreign rulers on Mewar dated from 1303 to 1572. There is no instance recorded in the memory of the people or the texts written on Gaduliya Lohars (excluding the census of 1891, Marwar and a testimony in Satyapal Ruhela's book) which attributes the reason of their exile to Khilji's invasion. Rana Udai Singh had left the fort much earlier than the battle took place, so it is undoable to decide whether they had left the fort with him or were with Jaimal and Patta. Moreover, all the documents fetched from the periodicals, dailies and official reports around 1954-55, accentuates Pratap as the person with whom they had fled the fort. Maharana Pratap had been born in Kataargarh (presently known as Kataar Palace) in Kumbhalgarh, so the testimonies stating that they left the fort with Pratap are not compatible with the actual historical instance. Gaduliya Lohars were of a nomadic origin, even before they had started working for Maharana Pratap and might not be Rajputs, as they claim.

The Census of 1891, Marwar states clearly that when Chittorgarh was under the siege of the Turks, Gaduliyas left the fort and adopted the nomadic set of circumstances. Khilji was the only Turkish ruler who had invaded and had sabotaged the Capital. Hence, the claims of them being associated to the Mughal war takes a path breaking turn, signifying their nomadism to Khilji's Sultanate.

Nevertheless, Gaduliya Lohars have two streams of myths prevalent in accordance with their origin and the exile taken from the Chittorgarh Fort. The first recording, regarding the origin of the community is as follows: A fairy came to Tinhi

Maharaja. He was a saint. The fairy bestowed him with a son in his lap and told him that the boy has been borne of Lava Fairy's drop of sweat. Tinhi took the boy and named him Lava. Lava became the first blacksmith of the Lohar community (Manohar). Secondly, the Gaduliya Lohars firmly believe that their ancestors were high caste Rajputs. They escaped from the Chittorgarh Fort, most probably in 1567-68, when Akbar defeated Rana Udai Singh II, father of Maharana Pratap (again not identical to the veritable historical occurrence).

The displacement and multiple layers of alienation and loss of 'home' that the Gaduliya Lohars experience through a critical assessment of the social memory add to this and led me to analyzing the oral narratives and songs sung by the community that deal with the emergence of the community. During the fieldwork for my MPhil, I met Manohar Lohar and her niece Meera of Rampura Kacchi Basti, Udaipur who also traced the historical trajectory of the tribe (16 July 2015). Meera works for an NGO, Jatan Sansthan for well-being of women of the basti. They exclaim, "Gaduliyas were Rajputs earlier. There was a beautiful girl named 'Aili Laacha' in our community and the Muslims wanted to marry her by force. The elders of the family gave her poison to save the family from further defame. Her mother (Maa Sati) didn't know of this fact and as soon as she got aware of this deed, she cursed our entire community that we will always wander on land with our carts (Gaadi) and sleep by putting the cots upside down wherever we stay and our right hand will burn till eternity. (While we heat iron and take it out from the furnace our 'Dawa Bhaj' burns) We have been doing the blacksmith work (Lohari) since then. Dharma Lohar was the first man to

become a blacksmith. We were the major men for forging weapons for Maharana Pratap and we left Chittorgarh for him, but we were cursed earlier⁵.”

Webb in 1941 Census has nowhere mentioned that the community has descended from Maharana Pratap, though some of his Gaduliya Lohar respondents had reported otherwise, of them having associations with Pratap. In addition to his findings, Satyapal Ruhela also suggests that during his field work in Rajasthan from 1962 to 1964, people from the field informed him that, “... this tale of their association with Maharana Pratap was told to them by the organizers of the All India Gaadi Lohar Convention, Chittorgarh in 1955. Prior to it, they had never heard about Rana Pratap from their elders, although they knew that they had come from Chittorgarh a few centuries ago.” (Ruhela) The promising of lands and other facilities, with the publishing of leaflets and pamphlets displaying the valour of the community, was a concealed political use of emotion. The history of formation of such discourses (community's origin) was an act of vehemently trifling with sentiments in a communal sense. The problem of descent arises here, as the patron of the community's memory is confused with a hero who belonged to the same blood whom they were serving. Such tales were used as propaganda after Independence by linking the community to a more appropriate leader (Rana Pratap) than Rana Ratan Singh or

5 While Webb in the tale describes Aili Laacha committing suicide by burning herself, Ruhela explains that it was by swallowing 'Aml ka Gola', i.e., a big opium ball. However, the respondents in the field denied any such happenings. The story of Aie Lacha in Webb's words: Ugam Singh of Soda near Umar Kot in Marwar, sought in marriage a damsel of the name of Aie Lacha, who lived at Para Nagar in Gujerat. The woman was willing but her father Rilmal Singh, refused his consent to the match. Aie Lacha resolved to commit suicide and burnt herself. (Webb, 132)

Udai Singh. Parallel attempts of recasting Valmiki as a bhangi was another such endeavor of the government after Independence of the nation.

Whilst sociologists such as P.K. Misra and Satyapal Ruhela, have insisted upon the fact that they belong to upper caste Rajputs, based on the narratives of the emergence of their nomadic identity. In my view, it is plausible that they were agrarian based nomads and forged weapons for the king whilst he was in exile or privileged artisans and forgers of the court and when after all, the fort was lost to the Mughals, instead of returning, they had taken to nomadism, as a more promising way of life.

Gaduliyas being Rajputs earlier cannot be true for the Charan Bhaats would have surely recorded (as they had recorded Bhils' allegiance to Pratap) their grand act of metamorphosis to Lohars overnight or from Lohars to Rajput warriors overnight. The dearth of literature existing in the Pre-Colonial era signifies such an identity's null existence of their mighty tales of triumph that probably are not true but acts of upper caste reformers (sociologists such as Ruhela and Misra) who try to push them towards a Sanskritized identity. Manikya Lal Verma; convener of the 1955 *Sammelan* acknowledged them as warriors, which was a political act of mobilizing the community's caste for the benefits of the party

Based on the report, the historians appointed by the City Palace of Udaipur whom I met whilst they declined the possibility of them being Rajputs in any circumstance but accepted that GLs were working for the royal palace. Though, during the 1955 sammelan, the Maharana of Udaipur had donated 50,000 INR for uplifting of the Gaduliyas and he

himself broke his vow on Chittorgarh Fort of not eating on a plate. . This was a political act of deception for the community as the Maharana who was trying to gain a positive allegiance with the congress government was used as a bait for the Gaduliyas (posing legally then as Congress government's vote banks) confirming to their Rajput identity. Moreover, Congress gained too a positive fealty from the Gaduliyas.

2. Nationalist Congress in 1955: “Emancipating” Gaduliyas

Though various myths about the emergence of the community were prevalent, only one version catering to their alliance to Pratap became dominant after the 1955 *Sammelan*. The Lohars were identified with being an elite artisan class of the court, living inside the Fort and this further created a communal and existential rift between the Lohar communities (sedentarized Hindu and Muslim Lohars) whom the Gaduliyas still consider as lower to them. This genealogy of the community represented only a minority of the community, thus erasing the importance of the social conditions of the rest of Artisan Blacksmiths.

When pamphlets and news articles about the historic accord and the community's return to a sedentarized existence were published for Wednesday, 6 April 1955, the community was envisaged as associated with the legendary past of the nation. I went to the Congress Office to find the documents on the 1955 *Sammelan*.

These documents reveal that the Congress' political act of so-called “emancipating” the Gaduliyas from their oaths. On the first foundation day, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal

Nehru summoned people of the community to Chittorgarh Fort asking them to break their vows as the country had become independent. The meeting was organized with Manikya Lal Verma and the Chief Ministers of Rajasthan including Mumbai, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Bhopal and Defence Minister, Dr. Kailashnath Katju who honoured the people of the community for their historical significance. Manikya Lal Verma; convenor of the *Sammelan*, was the initiator behind the proposal for upheaval of the Gaduliya Lohars and had proffered it to Jawaharlal Nehru. He belonged to the scheduled caste (as 'Verma' was either Sunar or Kurmi caste). He was a former freedom fighter who founded the local unit of the Harijan Sewak Sangh, a Gandhian Organization devoted to upliftment of the untouchables. He established Bhil and Kalbeliya (Banjara) organizations along with settling tribal colonies across Rajasthan. He was contemporarily a Congress Government's Member of Parliament. In 1954, Nehru invited the members of the community to Delhi on the Republic Day exclaiming that India had become 'Absolute Universal Republic' further stating 'Now we shall meet in Chittorgarh'. On 1 February 1955, G.K. Panwar sent Verma a letter intimating that the people of the Gaduliya Lohar community from Maharashtra and Baraar-Hyderabad were also planning to visit the *Sammelan*. The people of the community were intimated about the *Sammelan* through newspaper articles, pamphlets and Congress Party *Kaaryakartaas* (ordinary activists), wherein the community was sought after and mollycoddled to attend the *Sammelan* for 'it would be path breaking for their millennia old oaths', as stated by Verma in one of his summons in Navjeevan.

The dialogues that inaugurated the new phase of their existence after independence between the government and the community seems more and more a political process that putatively then is used to legitimize:

- A. their claims to the historical emergence pertaining to their oaths from Chittorgarh as a nomadic tribe,
- B. their new identity as nation-builders and ironworkers in the newly formed nation state.

Under the Presidency of the President of the District Congress Committee, a welcome committee comprising of fifty members was formed on 11 February 1955. The Railway department had given concession to the Gaduliya Lohars so that they could travel to Chittorgarh and back in one-way fare. Moreover, additional rail bogies were installed in special trains from Ratlam, Ajmer and Udaipur to Chittorgarh. (Report 1955, Congress Office, Jaipur) Jawaharlal Nehru directed the Gaduliya Lohars through the gates of the Fort in the morning and until the afternoon; 'the pandaal seemed like a field of roses with every man ornated with a pink *Pagdi* by the welcome committee'. Flamboyant flowery grace notes were ascribed to the *sammelan* in the daily and weekly locals. The homecoming⁶ of the Gaduliyas estimated three lakh people of the Gaduliya Lohar community across the Indian subcontinent in the year 1955. According to the report, Nehru proclaimed to give scholarships to 25 students each from the Central Provinces and Rajasthan State. Opening of a technical school in Chittorgarh for Gaduliya Lohar students was also proposed.

6 'Freedom is a homecoming', the speech given by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Chittorgarh Fort on 6 April 1955. Attached in Appendix

Each family was conveniently assured to be granted an area of 250 square yards to settle. A meeting of all the members of the committee was conducted in the last week of May 1955, subsequent to the *Sammelan* listing 3000 families for settlements around the nation and five workshops to be established in Chittorgarh, Nagore, Sojat, Hanumangarh and Tonk districts of Rajasthan (Report 1955, Congress Office, Jaipur)

The Congress had changed its stance since the earlier days of Independence in the 1950s whilst it was showing more effort towards the industrial (Industrial Policy, 1948) workers and upheaval of Dalits than to the tribals. Though several tribal Advisory Councils were constituted to address the matters of welfare and advancement of the Scheduled tribes, the unfolding of their implementation seemed more of a lip service of the Congress government. With the articles being published on industrial development in periodicals alongside the call for upheaval of the Gaduliya Lohars from October 1954 to October 1955, it was evident that minimum level of work would be done on the ground level. Nevertheless, that would carry on up until the contemporary times is a major disregard of those policies.

All the above ventures were a clear political attempt of the government to attract vote banks⁷ for the upcoming general elections of the Lok Sabha in 1956 and the major communities they wanted to get stronghold over were the suppressed classes of the society.

⁷ The Gaduliya Lohars were not able to cast their votes earlier (*Hindustan*) and the *Sammelan* was a multifaceted development effort to make them the citizens of India allowing them legally to cast votes.

The first five-year plan was the dawn of congress-tribal relationship and by the end of the Second five-year plan, less was accomplished. The report of second five-year plan of Rajasthan State in 1958-59 shows that only 0.2 percent of what was being promised to the community was implemented.⁸

Reading through Mythology: Traces of Untouchability?

There exist accounts of untouchability in the local Gazetteers (Mridum Sumari, Marwar) and census (1941 census by A.W.T. Webb) wherein the Gaduliyas are claimed as untouchables in the eyes of the people but they were not termed as SCs officially in any of the official census reports. The 1891 census of Marwar indicates that they were indulged in killing and selling cattle and were close to the other nomadic community Saatiyas⁹ (whom the Gaduliyas do not acknowledge as kin) and were considered untouchables.

According to the myth, the last vow taken by the Gaduliya Lohars before they left Chittorgarh was not to keep a rope to

⁸The training-cum-production centres and subsidies for the development of cottage and village industries in the tribal areas were a venture that backfired and made such communities fossilized in the self-same spaces they were being provided with minimal development. Nevertheless, Red-Tapism and lack of coordination amongst departments resulted in many lapsed grants, as the plans could not be well assessed. Much money was wasted in centering the benefits of schemes on 'Vocal' aspirants having contacts with the Congress Government; as I was told by my respondents during fieldwork, thus leaving a huge percentage trailing.

⁹ Saatiyas have claimed their origin from Chittorgarh whilst it fell and that they belong to the Rajput clan. Merchandising women and oxen has attributed them this name (Saata- trade). They have claimed Gaduliyas as their kin. They use Rajput titles such as *Chouhan*, *Parmar*, *Sissodia*, etc. attributing the name of the Rajput father to the illegitimate children that they bear from them. (Census 1891)

extract water from wells¹⁰. The Congress inscribed these vows on the Chittorgarh fort during the *Akhil Bhartiya Gadia Lohar Sammelan* in 1955. The old written sources such as *Veer Vinod*, Colonial Census, et cetera nowhere show that they had not vowed anything as such. Instead, there are accounts stating that they were untouchables and were not allowed to use water from the wells. (Navjeevan, January 1955)

A.W.T Webb, a colonial official working for various revenue and census projects for the government in Bombay Political Department, too claims in his accounts of the 1941 census operations in Rajputana (Ajmer-Merwara) that the Gaduliya Lohars were considered untouchables by the other communities and hence were not allowed to keep ropes. They had to ask for water from the villages they travelled.

Webb, aware of this history behind the Gaduliya Lohars renunciation of the use of ropes to draw water from wells, classifies their caste based on the community's nomadic existence as one not of Rajput blood but as their untouchable servers.

Gupta in one of his articles in Navjeevan, 1954 exclaims that they were considered untouchables in Rajasthan. They were allowed neither to extract water from the wells nor to enter temples and other places of religious accord. The reason

10 A non- Gaduliya Lohar informant in the City Palace, Udaipur, who is a miniature art painter and a buyer – seller of old Gaadis of Gaduliya Lohars and knows much about the community, explained the reason behind this practice. He said that, "the rope would be an extra item on a small gaadi and whilst travelling in the arid regions of Rajasthan, it is necessary that the head be kept cool. The Gaduliya Lohars extract water with the help of their turbans and then wrap the soaked turban on their head."

behind this practice was that some of them were indulged in killing cattle.

Ambedkar argues in his theory of Broken Men that they were settled outside the villages and hence, when became untouchables were occupying those same spaces; He talks of untouchability as a process of integration from below in the village physical space as well as the social space of caste system leaving the question of non-settled communities in his analysis. However, could we take inspiration from his Broken Men theory to consider that similar stigmatisation affected the GL once they settled?

The untouchables's restrictions on circulation in certain spaces of the villages does not apply to Gaduliyas who were keeping carts and were free to roam wherever they wished to. However, once bereaved from the mode of existence that was nomadic, the settlements they were given were on the margins of semi-urban landscapes adjoining cities with villages. Workshops at such places had no use during those times with least basic facilities provided. The lack of economic aid and mode of living of the Gaduliya catering to their labour of blacksmithy and cattle rearing; the spaces wherein they were settled turned to unhygienic, impure¹¹ spaces.

Although the case of GL is not of a SC caste, which is the official label that recognizes untouchability, nevertheless, they impart certain features of untouchability, since they suffer from discriminations based on landlessness, marginality, poverty and little access to school education. Avoidance of

11 This issue of how those of 'impure' origin were to be treated, both by the nation at large and by the reformist personally, remained the most problematic area of all in these debates about the meaning of caste for the Hindu nation. (Bayly 161)

physical contact and commensality with the GL developed after they had settled. The places wherein they were settled function as grounds for avoidance of physical contact by other people.

3. From Tribe to Caste: Sanskritization at Work

On the one hand, everyone in the community seems to think of themselves as Rajputs (an upper caste) though they are put under the OBC category, while on the other hand their way of living and culture is that commonly understood by anthropologists as that of a tribe. The customs of *Nata*, Dowry (given by the Groom's family), the internal panchayat system, worshipping of local deities, can indeed be considered as tribal attributes.

Ruhela, claims that in the past, as no self-respecting upper caste Rajput wished to give his daughters in marriage to people of low background, the Gaduliya Lohars married women from lower castes such as Maali (gardeners), Khaati (carpenters)¹², etc. which further lowered the status of the community. Some of the informants have revealed that their ancestors adopted the Naata System (remarriage of a widowed or a divorced woman) after their escape from Chittorgarh.

The meaning of Nata has changed in the contemporary times. In this regard, Balu Ji of Chittorgarh and his mother claim that they never marry outside our caste. "When a woman is barren or rather dies early, the man takes a new bride. This is Nata Vivaah. But, the man is bound to take a woman from the

12 Ruhela terms such intercaste marriage custom as 'Naata Vivaah', which was prevalent amongst nomadic tribes and untouchables.

Gaduliya Lohar samaj itself and no other community." To my question, if they marry within the Lohar community? "We consider Lohars as lower to us and do not entertain any kind of societal relationship with them. Other than that, we do not marry in any caste lower or higher to us. Nevertheless, if someone decides to marry someone outside our caste, we do not keep that person in our family anymore and no family ties with the person are established.

The historical imagination that took shape recently after Independence, of the links with Maharana Pratap, and their subsequent claim to Rajput identity, prevented them from marrying into other castes of the society and women were enclosed within the community. Another reason behind not marrying into other castes is that the people of the community are not self-dependent economically depending on other members of the community. The dearth of societal relations with other communities and lack of education makes them vulnerable if they attempt to take such a step.

The moment they sedentarized and started having access to a certain amount of land, they started imagining themselves as not nomads but, as something above this category. Therefore, the first step that they took was to stop their women from marrying into communities, which they considered lower to them. This is clearly a trend of Sanskritization facilitated by the 'Rajput-ethic' or 'Kshatriyanization'. However, Rajasthan was state dominated by Rajputs who were relevant economically, politically and sociologically. Therefore, many lowly castes as indicated in the census report of 1921 try to pass themselves as high castes trying to adopt the life styles and culture of the

upper castes¹³. Henceforth, Rajasthan did not face the similar hierarchy that existed in other parts of Northern and Southern parts of India, where Brahmins were at the top of the social hierarchy. Symbolically, Brahmins were at the top of the hierarchical chart and Rajputs who were in unassailable position of temporal power and owners of the soil were paying some deference to them. Political Power too was in their hands and since land was the major source of livelihood controlled by Jagirdaars or the kings, the real shots were being called by the Rajputs, as stated by P.C. Mathur and Iqbal Narain in their article 'the thousand years raj'.

Sanskritization in this context applies to anybody who belongs to the lower caste not trying to behold the status of a Brahmin but aping a Rajput; the entire super and sub structure being controlled by them. Hence, it would be more proper to talk of Kshatriyazation. (Mathur and Narain, 1990)

After independence, the Gaduliyas felt some difficulties in adapting to the sedentary ways of life. Some of them sold their land and started moving again, but now they have sedentarized and do not have their gaadis. Hathipole is an area in Udaipur where the Bohras do machinery work, so they have settled there mending their implements and it is a tourist area too, so they sell miniature art pieces to the tourists. They have settled¹⁴ alongside spaces where they can work or where

13 The Census of India 1921 marks a table assigning castes to which they usually recognized as belonging and the new nomenclature requested; Darogas for Rawana Rajput; Nai for Kuleen-Brahman or Nai Brahman; Khanzada for Muslim Rajput Jadon; Sevag, Rankawat and Bhojak for Brahman; Khati or Suthar for Jangida Brahman; Mali for Sainik Kshatriya; Kurmi or Kunbi for Kurmi Kshatriya and Darzi Chhipa for Rohela Tank Kshatriya.

¹⁴ They do not settle even if they get their own land; rent their property temporarily, whilst they keep living on the pavements (Jhotwara Underbridge, Jaipur). The

the government has settled them (mostly on the margins of cities; Semi-Urban areas). Various testimonies from Udaipur and Chittorgarh reveal that though they have sedentarized now, they still wander in villages to repair and make iron implements for the farmers, keeping in touch with mobile phones.

However, Gaduliya Lohars do not travel in their carts as they used to earlier. The carts as part of the social memory, become markers of the displacement that they have experienced in post-independent democratic India as a backward community. Sedentarization has brought in a sense of alienation from the sense of attachment (to the gaadi), for an informant from Ramangarh Kacchi Basti, Udaipur was reluctant to sell it (the only cart that they had). The carts which was considered property to be availed by sons is cultural remnant of a magnetic loop that is attached to the historic oath that they had taken in the Mughal period, which is analogous to the resistance shown by the community towards detaching themselves from the cultural and material necessity of their cart. It merely affects the respondents to sell their carts now, but they cherish the journeys that they did with their family. Nevertheless, middle and old age men are more prone to talk about the past. 'Our new generation is not aware of the perks of travelling', they would say.

Conclusion

While talking to a Gaduliya in Chittorgarh, about their origin, he said that they left the fort while the Mughals attacked and

people are uneducated and mostly the land that is given to them is not suitable for blacksmithy. Labour reverts them back to their old ways of living. Though they are uneducated, it is not feasible to leave the vocation that makes them earn.

then Jawaharlal Nehru came to rescue them. I interrupted saying that the British Colony had come in before Nehru; he denied this fact and started accusing Indira Gandhi for marrying a Muslim man, thus dividing the nation and the then political parties in rule. He was aware of the political scenario after independence but not before that. The same instance happened at Ramnagar Kacchi Basti, wherein the elderly unaware of the colonial rule said, "...when our people climbed down, they vowed not to return until the Maharana returns back to the Fort. Then came the Nehru Sarkaar". When I interrupted saying that '*Angrez log*' were the ones who came before Nehru government, he declined. He was not aware of the colonial rule at all. The age of the vow and the age of freedom from its bondages are the two instances that the community is well aware. The rest is non-existent in their legendary accounts of nomadism and tales of their genesis as Gaduliya Lohars. The way GL's identity has been formulated by authoritative blocks show the dearth of political sensitization and awareness that was replaced by a historical awareness. The anecdote also shows the lack of people's historical awareness. The process of Sanskritization came a full circle when they entered the local politics of Rajasthan Congress in 1955, adorned with the image of warriors of historical tales.

Whilst I was trying to fetch documents from the Congress Office Jaipur, a grade C official was in charge of searching and giving me the files related to Gaduliyas. He stated that, "Many Lohars and other communities had settled themselves in Pakistan and though they were not included in the constitution there were strong chances of them being converted to Islam. We had recently faced partition and it was

a staunch need for the Government of India to acknowledge them as Indian Citizens. There was no hold over the Muslim population of the country due to the mass exodus that was being faced during Partition. That hold came in during Indira Gandhi's era. So, it was a venture of Congress to merge such depressed communities under the unified flag of Hindutva". This indicates that post-independence politics is interpreted as the initiator of the early onset of Hindu Nationalist politics, which took the form of a sedentarization process responsible for a form of special segregation remindful of untouchability.

There were false promises made during the 1955 sammelan. Though proposed land for one family was 250 square yards, they were given 50 square yards, as mentioned in UIT reports of Chittorgarh. Moreover, UIT reports of Udaipur show that they were given land for the first time in 1980s and that the area/plot was 50 square yards. Up until now, only 49 families have been given ownerships in the year 1986, 2003 and later in 2011 (Reports attached in appendix).

Presently, GL representatives like Kaluram Fauji, who had acquired this name because of serving in Indian army in the past, talked about the land that was being to them by the Government in 1955 and Gadia lohar School in Pratap Nagar, Chittorgarh which is still not under the jurisprudence of the community and the government has confiscated it to make public parks while they are living on the foot path in front of their land.

The article has depicted how so-called political "emancipation" of Gaduliyas was in fact the course of political engineering of a space that confined them to marginality in a caste society, under the pretexts of false commitments of upliftment.

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