*Theme Issue: The Species Turn in Indian Identity Politics*

E Nature and Space

EPE: Nature and Space
2023, Vol. 6(2) 756–775

DOI: 10.1177/25148486211062005
journals.sagepub.com/home/ene
Sage

# 'A pilgrimage of camels': Dairy capitalism, nomadic pastoralism, and subnational Hindutva statism in Rajasthan

**Yamini Narayanan**
Deakin University, Burwood, Australia

**Abstract**

Hindu nationalists and NGOs proffer camel dairying as an employment strategy for Rajasthan's nomadic pastoralists, akin to the commodification of bovine milk for poverty alleviation in India. Commercial dairying however is inconsistent with pastoralist ethics though it is consistent with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's broader agenda to consolidate Hindutva at the national and subnational levels in India, and with developmentalism that regards animals as capital. In an original contribution bringing together pastoralist studies and critical animal geographies, this paper introduces *species* to the 'conjugated oppressions' in agrarian economies, currently composing caste, tribes, and class, through the suturing of (dairy) capitalism and right-wing ultranationalism. Focussing the camels and the Raika herders in the subregions of Jaisalmer, and Sirohi, home to India's only camel sanctuary, the paper delineates how the camel is entrapped in the coalescing and conflicts of dairy-based development and Hindutva nationalism. Interconnected oppressions upon the camels *and* herders are conceptualised and enacted through the control and appropriation of rangelands, understood as *yatra* or pilgrimage by the pastoralists. However, the camel is also enmeshed in the older violent histories of domestication, raising difficult questions about how nomadic *and* camel sovereignties may be imagined, together. Arguing that dairy capitalism will discipline the nomads and camels while strengthening Hindutva in Rajasthan, the paper draws on pastoralist worldviews as a starting point to re-imagine human–animal relations, based on an ethic of de-commodification.

**Keywords**

pastoralism, Raika tribe, camel dairying, subnational Rajasthan statism, Hindu nationalism

**Corresponding author:**
Yamini Narayanan, Deakin University, Burwood Highway, Burwood, Victoria 3125, Australia.
Email: y.narayanan@deakin.edu.au

## Introduction

In 2014, as the violence of cow vigilantism by Hindutva groups against Muslim and Dalit minorities in the name of cow protection escalated in many parts of India, another important but far less politicised development took place in the state of Rajasthan. The state government headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) declared the camel as the 'state animal'. In 2015, on the back of sustained lobbying on the part of the National Research Centre on Camel (NRCC) in Bikaner, affiliated to the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), and NGOs dedicated to pastoralists' welfare, the Rajasthan state government legislated that camel milk could be sold in India. While previously not a saleable commodity, in 2016, the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI), with the support of the BJP-led government at the centre, codified standards for camel milk to be sold commercially.

Concurrently, the Rajasthan state government issued legislation that mandated the 'protection' of the camel, akin to the controversial protections for the cow, a 'dairy' animal who also symbolises the aspirational Hindu state. Identical to the celebration of cow's milk while criminalising her slaughter, the *Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act 2014* emphasised camel milk as a core part of the state's food security policy, and prohibited camel slaughter, and unauthorised transport of camels outside the state borders of Rajasthan (Dhar, 2014). A nomadic pattern of ranging outside of Rajasthan's state borders that the camels and herders like the Raika, have followed for hundreds of years was disrupted almost overnight. Unpermitted movement of the animals outside the state would incur penalties from 1–5 years imprisonment, and a fine of Rs. 20,000 (approx. $USD 270).

Initially a hopeful sign for the nomadic pastoralists that the state was finally recognizing the cultural significance of the camel, the special status enforced on the camel became another blow to their traditional lifestyles. With severely reduced grazing commons, nomadic pastoralists have long been losing the 'right to roam' and feeling the pressure to settle, or form smaller groups which diminishes their sense of security and identity (Chandran, 2020). Herders have started to abandon their camels or cease breeding them, raising concerns that the camel population has reduced by 37% as they are no longer as prolifically used as desert transportation (Moudgil 2020). New generations of pastoralists and camel herders seek alternative livelihoods, and the older generations are 'old, tired and resigned, hanging on to their camels only out of a sense of responsibility and nostalgia' (Kohler-Röllefson, 2016). Against this context of political and developmental concerns for the vulnerability of the pastoralists, it is the *camel* who intriguingly is framed as needing saving (see Moudgil 2020), a phrasing that allows the conceptualisation of the camel's (racialised) violator (slaughterer). This 'rescue' however, will take the form of camel dairying, a production activity that is sustained by slaughtering non-lactating animals (Bazzoli et al., 2014).

The remaking of the Raika as dairy farmers introduces critical ethical tensions. The FAO (2021) describes pastoralism as 'a livelihood system based on extensive livestock production…characterised by animal mobility and common use of natural resources.' However the Raika camel herders of Rajasthan stand out in one important aspect. After researching camel cultures, Köhler-Röllefson (2015) wrote, 'I quickly realised that the Raika were unique: they were the only camel people worldwide who had a strict taboo on the slaughtering of camels for meat.' Commercial camel dairying then, which relies on the slaughter of unproductive animals, would be in tension with Raika values and identity, joining a legion of developmental activities threatening nomadic cultures. The consequences for the camel themselves would be unprecedented. While camel milk consumption outside of the herding communities was virtually unknown in India until these recent events, commercial dairying will require an escalated intensification and commodification of camels, and severing of their intra-specific relationalities.

In an original contribution bringing pastoralist studies and critical animal geographies together, the paper introduces *species* to the 'conjugated oppressions' that characterise agrarian economies in India

(Lerche and Shah, 2018) currently composing caste, tribes and class, through the suturing of (dairy) capitalism and right-wing nationalism. It asserts that the reclassification of the camel as a 'dairy' animal advances subnational statism in Rajasthan, and is part of a larger strategy to consolidate Hindutva ideology across India, by disciplining camels *and* the nomads. The securitization and enclosure of the camels is connected with the cow vigilantism that has escalated in Rajasthan and elsewhere in India since 2014. The instrumentalisation of the camel as a vehicle of ultranationalism, as the cow, is aided by the dairy industry. Commercial dairying will further require the spatial consolidation of pastoralist labour, encapsulating them further under the ambit of the modern sedentarist state that is generally uncomfortable with nomadism (Gellner, 2014).

However, the introduction of *species* as a part of 'conjugated oppressions' requires a consideration of species oppression not only under Hindutva but domestication itself, a process of 'capture, enslavement, use, and slaying' that is profuse with suffering (Nibert, 2013: 11). As a 'dairy' animal, the camel also is exposed to multiple traumas including forced and repeated pregnancies; mother-calf separation; male calf butchery (Gillespie, 2018); and as the paper discusses, in India, underground transportation to slaughterhouses. Further, the entire continuum of dairy production in India involves the exploitation of marginalized human communities like Muslims and 'low' caste Dalits, to sustain the slaughter-end of dairying (Narayanan, 2019b). In the main however, the enmeshment of pastoralist nomads and their animals in the violence of global dairy capitalism, or right-wing nationalism in India, has hardly been critiqued in critical animal studies or geographies.

Development approaches that rely on market capitalism cohere almost precisely with Hindu nationalist visions (Chacko, 2019). This intersection is epitomised through dairy capitalism where the cow and now the camel, are rendered (re)productive and political capital. Notably, key distinctions emerge in the instrumentalisaton of the cow and the camel, as part of the BJP's strategic response to regional differences. The paper thus delineates how the camel is deployed in the convergence and conflicts of dairy-based development and Hindutva nationalism. While the (dairy) cow is a sacred 'Mother Cow', who represents a Hindu Mother India (Narayanan, 2019a), the camel is invoked to mobilise a pluralistic, inclusive, secular, pan-Rajasthan identity, encompassing even groups outside of Hindu caste, such as tribals, nomads and Muslims. The cow is weaponized to be a divisive symbol. While cow slaughter, core to sustaining dairying, is legislatively prohibited in most Indian states, it is performed underground by Muslims and 'low caste' Dalits who become their racialized slaughterers, ostensibly inimical to the ethics of the cow-protecting Hindu nation (Narayanan, 2019b). The camel, however, is used as a tool of assimilation, also a strategy of erasure (Tanyas, 2016).

Through ethnographic and archival analyses, the paper focusses on the camels and the Raika in the subregions of Jaisalmer, a desert outpost straddling the Indo-Pakistan border, and Sirohi, five-and-a half hours away by road from Jaisalmer, which houses India's only camel rescue sanctuary. The focus on subregions is vital to more richly encapsulate geographies of dromedary rangelands, and the industries that are pivoted around camel dairying. Specifically, subregions also demonstrate how the camel rangelands, understood as *yatra* or pilgrimage by the herders, become landscapes wherein camel dairy capitalism, and right-wing nationalism dovetail. Nomads are generally a challenge to the ideological concept of the modern, *stationary*, postcolonial nation-state (Gellner, 2014) which seeks to enclose and manage the geophysical national entity. The prohibitions against the ranging of camels outside Rajasthan indicates the securitization of Hindutva-defined borderlands, where the state border clashes with their expansive rangelands. Notably, these migrations are not necessarily part of the *camels'* natural or ancestral practices; they are part of pastoral practices that require pasture for the large numbers of animals who have been bred. However dairying, also increasingly a core Hindutva strategy, itself is based on the intensification, and tightening of animal ranges for profit.

Ultimately, the paper offers a starting point in bringing pastoralism into the broader debates in critical animal geographies on animal capitalism, animal commodification and animal agriculture. While the worldviews of Indigenous people are less anthropocentric compared to society in the main (Deckha, 2020), these too play out against the wider context of capitalism and patriarchy. Rajasthan's pastoralists recognise this violence, and in fact, regard the sale of the camel's milk as a sin (Moudgil 2020) though many now feel forced to engage in commercial dairying (Köhler-Röllefson, 2018). Additionally, dairying in India sustains right-wing nationalism itself, and pastoralists and their animals also become vulnerable to their combined extractions. Through conversations with the Raika in the subregions of Jaisalmer and Sirohi, the paper posits that pastoralist worldviews can help to imagine human–animal relations of care and kinship, based on an ethic of de-commodification, which centrally and more widely, would involve a decoupling of human identity from the animal. Pastoralists' identity, as other human groups, are mutable in relation to the changes of the political economy as their willingness to consider camel dairying itself demonstrates. To advance nomadic sovereignties, the state's developmental visions must rather be underpinned by a respect for their land and commons.

## Site and methods

Jaisalmer, one of Rajasthan's most significant medieval cities, is located at the heart of the Thar Desert, also known as the Great Indian Desert, which spans 200,000 sq. km, straddling Pakistan and India. Approximately 350 km from the Indo-Pakistan border, Jaisalmer is now one of the permanent stations of the Indian Army, which moved into the largely peaceful township after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Sirohi lies approximately 350 km south of Jaisalmer. Sirohi is home to India's only regional animal sanctuary, and the country's only camel rescue centre, run by People for Animals (PFA) Sirohi. The subregions of Jaisalmer and Sirohi have been well-worn rangelands for centuries, as part of the seasonal migration in search of browsing territory for the long-necked camels, who may feed off treetops and bush as high as 3.5 metres (Bornstein and Younan, 2013). As part of the research, I visited the subregions of Netsu, Asoo Ka Tala, Fatehgarh, and Serawu in Jaisalmer, and Pindwara, near the Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary in Sirohi where I attended a camel mange treatment camp organised by the PFA.

This research involved two stages of analysis. The first stage of archival research involved reviewing literature on: the politics around pastoralism and nomadism with a focus on the camel herders of Rajasthan; the nexus between market capitalism and Hindutva; media, NGO and government narratives on camel dairying in India; and the ethological, emotional, and ecological lives of camels. The second stage of empirical work involved semi-structured interviews with camel herders and regional animal activists who work together, and participant observation of camels. The paper follows Lestel et al.'s call (2006: 155) to integrate ethnology and ethology to study hybrid human–animal communities, and understand the shared nature of their lives 'to account for the complexity of interspecific sociabilities.'

As indeed fetishized by tourism brochures, travel memoirs, and even scholarly work, the colourful, multispecies Raika caravanserai present an extraordinarily vivid and arresting sight. I thus attempted to be maximally mindful of Kabachnik's caution (2007: 124) that 'When academics appropriate and romanticize the experience of the nomad, they are ignoring the lived experiences and practices of those who actually live that way of life.' To purposively centre the Raikas who were directly engaged with care, management, and responsibility for the camel herd, I focussed on individuals – humans and camels – at various moments of interaction between them. I sought herders' perspectives on their relationalities with the camel constituting physical labours of care, but also modes of discipline and control, and the emotions they used to describe their relations with different individual camels. We discussed the significance of the camels in their cultural, ecological, and political worlds; the nature and

importance of the camel *yatra*; their thoughts on camel dairying; and the intertwined camel-Raika futures. To attend to the camels, the paper pursued the feminist tradition of focussing on specific animals who might draw attention by their behaviour, demeanour, cries, body condition, social relations with other camels and humans, and their particular geographic contexts (Gillespie and Narayanan, 2022). Together, the paper tried to garner the sense of place of the shifting landscapes of the camel *yatra*, against the dairy capitalism that underlies development and Hindutva visions of the state.

## *Camels pastoralism, dairy capitalism and Hindutva nationalism in Rajasthan*

The charismatic figures of the camel and the Raika seem almost inseparable from the imaginary of Rajasthan, even though the bounded administrative concept of the postcolonial state is largely an illegible one for its highly diverse inhabitants (Lodha, 2016, Narain and Mathur 1990). That the pastoralists are not a part of caste, mattered little in Rajasthan. Indeed, despite caste being one of the greatest markers of social identity in Rajasthan, it has, historically and contemporaneously, failed to command the political significance that it does elsewhere in India. There are hundreds of caste and sub-caste groups throughout the state providing a pluralistic social form to identity, and caste groups are predominantly local in character and influence.

Nomadic groups such as the Raika refers to 'people whose life-styles and social organizations entitle them to be categorized as tribals' (Narain and Mathur 1990: 2). In colonial India, they were classified 'as *jangali* (of the 'jungle' or wilderness)', later re-classified as 'tribes' by the British, which was deployed by the independent Indian state for political action and social reforms (Gellner, 2014: 13). Their classification remains an ongoing challenge; pastoralist tribes are now classified as Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes, and not counted as nomads in the 2011 Census. Rajasthan's Raika however, might be more accurately considered as what Gilbert (2014) calls *pastoral nomads*, whose culture is characterised by its mobile nature, and their animals, who constitute part of their sociocultural identities. In the case of the Raika, the camel is their heraldic animal, associated with their origin stories and mythologies (Moudgil 2020).

The camel belongs to the *Camilidae* family, and is one of the largest mammals. The *Camelus* genus comprises two species – the *Camelus dromedaries* or the Arabian single humped camel, and *C. bactrianus* or the Asiatic double humped camel. The single-humped camel has been a key part of the pastoralists' herds in Rajasthan due to their exploitable potentials in bearing load, surviving in scarce desert climates, dairying, and use of manure as cooking fuel (Pathak and Roy 2008). The camel enabled the nomadic pastoralists to continuously move to greener pastures and forestlands. The desert ecology of Rajasthan does not support animal farming, requiring pastoralists to 'continue on a migratory loop in those more rain rich regions where they can find pasturage and water' (Salzman, 1986: 51). Though continuous migration often appears to be the pastoralists' preference, it is in fact not the case. Almost 40 years ago, studies note that pastoralists are forced to roam wider due to shrinking pasturelands. Salzman (1986: 51) writes, 'if there are very good rains in Rajasthan, and the landscape turns green with grass for grazing and bushes for browsing, and the rivers and pools and tanks overflow with fresh water, the pastoralists and their herds and flocks will stay the year 'round in their home village.' However, even the south-eastern forested parts of the state, which receive comparatively more regular monsoonal rainfall, do not compose natural catchments (Narain and Mathur 1990), necessitating 'livestock' migration. More generally, the severe environmental implications of pastoralism, particularly overgrazing and overstocking, have long been subjects of debate (Weber and Horst, 2011). *Animal interests*, predictably, are almost entirely missed in discussions advocating pastoralism (see Brara, 1992; Ghai 2021). Akin to the impact of environmental racism wherein the racialised poor and communities of colour bear the brunt of cases *for* the environment, the animals too, pay a heavy price for the justification of what may be understood as environmental speciesism.

Pastoral migrations have been under threat for decades since independence due to the land reforms introduced in the state in the 1950s, eroding access to common property resources that are 'used by an entire community without any exclusive individual ownership or access rights' (Jodha, 1985: 247). Traditional management of common grazing and pastureland was disrupted in the name of development, even as development itself remained diffused in the state. The land-owning castes relied on agriculture but the mineral, forestry, and agricultural potentials of the state were not fully developed as Rajasthan remained isolated from the changes sweeping through the rest of independent India (Narain and Mathur 1990). Diffused development maximally impacted remote nomadic groups, who remained outside the periphery of state recognition or support. Such exploitation has been less understood, partly due to the peripatetic nature of nomadic life itself.

The exploitation of the camels themselves, in the historical context of domestication and then as development capital, rarely features in pastoralist studies. Domestication involves the capture of formerly wild species, taming them through physical, emotional, and a form of 'structural violence', i.e., the removal of their autonomy so they are dependent on humans for even basic needs (Nibert, 2013: 11). Pastoralism, as other animal farming, relies on romanticised narratives of care and kinship to justify itself though as Wadiwel (2018: 540) writes, it is 'difficult to disentangle the ethics of these encounters,' without 'glossing over' the central relations of human domination in animal farming. To generate meaningful change *for* the animals, politicizing the 'frictions, foreclosures, and exclusions' that determine the lived realities of these animals is critical (Giraud, 2019: 2–3). In the case of the camels, these frictions and tensions include the oppression of Hindutva's dairy politics, against the longer context of the oppression of domestication itself.

Akin to the significance of the cow to the Hindu's identity, much has been made of the Raika's sense of self as intimately interconnected with the camel. Calling the camel 'an essential part of Raika identity', Kohler-Röllefson (1995) recounts the story of the Lord Shiva manifesting the Raika out of his flesh, in order to care for the camels, who were seen as trouble until then. Camels – like the cows – may be regarded as what Garibaldi and Turner (2004: 1) call 'cultural keystone species', or 'species that become embedded in a people's cultural traditions and narratives, their ceremonies, dances, songs, and discourse.' While such human–animal 'entanglements' are usually viewed in celebratory frames in much posthumanist or even broad animal studies traditions (see Haraway 2008), Fiona Probyn-Rapsey argues that ideas of connected or synergistic human–animal relationality, usually 'obscure rather than assist with understanding of the human/animal entanglements' and are at risk of being 'so overused that they seem to have lost political purchase…rather than inviting us to think about *the specific dimensions of that connection*' (Probyn-Rapsey, 2014: 12, emphasis added).

In the main, the camels and the nomadic pastoralists have largely remained outside of the purview of nationalist politics in Rajasthan. This was to change when support for the Congress party, which had ruled Rajasthan more or less continuously since Independence, started to decline in the 1990s. The BJP began making steady inroads into the state by making competitive caste politics more important (Lodha, 2016). As Lodha (2016: 423) writes, 'What makes the position of the BJP formidable is the simultaneous vertical and horizontal expansion of its base' through the 'subregions in which it had negligible presence for a long time' (Lodha, 2016: 423).

Nonetheless, the diversity of Rajasthan's caste stratification did ensure that BJP's success in the state was not easily assured, and particularly, that its strategy must be based on at least some loose form of inclusivity and egalitarianism. The Hindutva machinery in Rajasthan has thus carefully 'taken on a local flavour' (Jenkins, 1998: 120) by invoking the symbol of the most distinctive image of Rajasthan, the camel. Jenkins asks (1998: 118): 'Can a national movement pivot around a symbol?' – and he concludes that it can, particularly when focussed around a charismatic community. The camels in themselves, and the vibrancy, colour and culture of the Raikas, make for

charismatic interspecies communities. The camel was not particularly known as a 'dairy' animal India, nor are the Raika renowned for dairy consumption. However, the capitalisation of pastoral life would involve their reinvention in a form of Rajasthani heritage dairying, through interlocking of dairy capitalism and Hindu nationalism. As Jenkins writes,

> While it is possible to invent traditions, such efforts [towards advancing parochial nationalisms] are more likely to meet with success when they build upon the raw material that is most accessible to the local political consciousness…Local beliefs, traditions, and patterns of social relations have… been used to fashion a compelling narrative of Rajasthani culture's role in the renewal of the Hindu nation throughout India. (Jenkins, 1998: 120).

The charismatic camel, distinctive and emblematic of Rajasthan's desert ecology, offers precisely such a cultural and commercial 'raw material'. Cognisant of Rajasthan's religious and caste pluralism, the BJP strategically deploys the camel as a dairying symbol. As such, bovine and dromedary dairying bear remarkably similar parallels with, and critical departures from, each other. In the first instance, as with bovine dairying, camel dairy research institutes, NGOs, and Hindu nationalist parties now advocate commercial camel dairying to save herders' livelihoods. Dairy development relies on state-subsidised growth, requiring the creation of demand for such products in the first place. Cultural theorist John Sanbonmatsu (2017: 7) writes, 'Capitalists in fact spend nearly as much money manufacturing demand as they do manufacturing goods.'

Post-Independence, bovine dairy became a vehicle for capitalist development, through the creation of demand for hitherto unknown dairy products in India, such as dehydrated milk powder, infant formula, and condensed milk (Kurien, 2005). In his memoir, dairy engineer Verghese Kurien recounts the extensive efforts to *create* a demand for bovine milk on a commercial scale in India in the 1950s (Kurien, 2005: 75). So too the ICAR (2017) is 'now focusing to establish Camel as a milch animal', an objectification currently not (widely) associated with the camel in India. Camel ghee, camel milk ice cream, and other dairy products are peddled as a healthful option for diabetics, etc. (Kohler-Röllefson et al., 2009). Ilse Kohler-Röllefson, the founder of Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS), an NGO in Sadri district dedicated to pastoralists welfare, describes their attempts to exploit the untapped capitalist potentials of the camel,

> *by creating markets for innovative products*…LPPS has embarked on activities that include organizational strengthening of camel breeders (so that they can lobby for supportive policies) and *the exploration of new marketing options with the purpose of increasing economic returns per camel.* (Kohler-Röllefson et al., 2009: 1063, emphasis added)

Animals are profitable *as* resource because animal industries are heavily state-subsidised globally. India is haemorrhaging money it can ill-afford on keeping dairying afloat, which in fact, has *not* alleviated poverty in India. It only *appears* to do so, sustained by constant subsidisation. In 2018–2019, just two Indian states, Gujarat and Maharashtra, invested US$72.78 million in dairy subsidies to aid dairy exports, against a heavily over-supplied domestic market (Farm Policy Exports, 2019). However, '(e)ven after the subsidy, dairies will be losing money on the exports,' said Devendra Shah, chairman of Parag Milk Foods, a dairy firm based in the western state of Maharashtra.

Dairying around culturally significant animals also unfolds in distinct ways under a Hindu state. Unlike the perception of cow milk as sacred (Narayanan, 2019a), the canonical *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Ch 16, Book Three), created around 45° C.E., states: 'The milk of animals with undivided hoofs, of a camel, a ewe, a deer, or a buffalo, is unfit for ancestral oblations' (Wilson, 1840: 333).

In contrast to the fetishisation of the cow as 'mother' of a Hindu state, the camel then is framed in more secular terms as a 'state animal', albeit of a BJP-ruled state.

Almost predictably, the 'special' status bestowed on the camel came with a set of protections that puts India's Muslim minorities under surveillance, implicitly the threat against whom the protections are instituted. Camel rangelands are traditionally extensive. Historically, the Maldhari camel herders from Afghanistan, for example, ranged southwards into Pakistan, and then India during the harsh winter season, an impossible prospect now as crossing international borders requires passports, identity papers (Thomas, 2020), and proof of permanent addresses, which nomadic pastoralists cannot provide. Within India, Salzman (1986: 51) writes of the Raika, 'Whether to the south, east, or north, all of these herders migrate out of Rajasthan, usually on circuits of considerably more than a thousand kilometers, to the moister climes of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab.'

The policing of borders is crucial, more broadly, to creating the civic religion of the nation-state (Ibrahim, 2011). Camels are already used as a securitization device to secure India's borders from Pakistan. The Indian Army uses more than 800 double-humped (Bactrian) and single-humped camels to patrol the 1400-km border with Pakistan, along the Rajasthan-Gujarat borders, and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the mountainous regions of Ladakh, to carry 'heavy loads of ammunition' (*The Times of India 2017*). In Jaisalmer, herders are often recruited to do informal surveillance and inform the Border Security Force of suspicious activities witnessed while shepherding their animals (Meena, 2020).

However, a disruption of rangelands of the camel, a newly minted, state-approved *dairy* animal, in the name of their protection also becomes a way of drawing internal borderlands, and secure the BJP-ruled Rajasthan state within India. Even as Rajasthan is bounded by BJP-ruled Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, subnational state governments also have to 'deploy their powers, resources and legitimacy' through specific policies to solidify their legitimacy within the state (Connell et al., 2021: 1). The subnational securitization through the camel in Rajasthan is connected with the specific nature of the state's agricultural capitalism, and now dairying. Describing the 'conceptual geography' of Rajasthan's Raika as 'inside-out', Paul Robbins (2004: 136) argues that even as the Raika are displaced and pushed 'outwards' to the state margins by land accumulation and the growing capitalisation of agriculture within the state, they contribute '"inwards" towards the centre of the regional economy' through 'livestock production' that relied on migrations. In a geographical reversal twenty years later, camel dairy capitalism requires an inversion of these mobilities, wherein the camels and the herders stay 'inside' the state.

Hindu nationalists demand slaughter bans for animals used for dairying – cows, buffaloes to some extent, and now the camel – *while actively promoting dairy development*, though the cold economic logics of dairying require unproductive animals be slaughtered. This predictably leads to frictions with the proponents of dairying, whether the secular state or development NGOs. The father of India's dairy revolution Verghese Kurien, recounts his arguments *for* cow slaughter, with Hindu nationalists who lobbied *against* it. Reflecting on his unlikely friendship with, and mutual respect for then RSS head of Gujarat M.S. Gowalkar, Kurien (2005: 185) wrote that regardless, 'Of course, neither did I concur with him on this nor did I support his argument for banning cow slaughter…' So too, proponent of camel dairying Köhler-Röllefson (2017) argues that the Hindutva interventions regulating camel movement – including to slaughterhouses – has 'in fact made the situation worse for the camel breeders.' As in the case of the cow, so too with the camel, dairy capitalism and Hindutva nationalism converge the breeding end of dairy production, and diverge at the slaughter end of the dairying continuum.

This deviation in the politics of dairy-focussed NGOs, and Hindu nationalists becomes highlighted during the slaughter transport (for cows), and rangelands (for camels). The dairy supply chain in India is racially segmented, which means that animals supposedly protected through

slaughter bans, will simply be transported and butchered underground by vulnerable, marginalised groups like Muslims and Dalits (Narayanan, 2019b). This transportation becomes the most politicised part of the dairy production chain. Culturally objectified *lactating* species in India become not only dairy capital, but also weaponized for Hindutva religious extremism, wherein they are not protected from *being* capitalized bodies, but rather *as* capitalized bodies, from a religious other, specifically Muslims.

Typically however, the animals themselves, whether cows, buffaloes, or camels, become obscured in most political, media or scholarly discussions of these complex issues, even as their mobilities, enforced or otherwise, become the focus of divisive politics. In my research then, I looked to the individual camels who I encountered in the subregions of Jaisalmer and Sirohi, and their herders, who together, animated, lived, and endured the violent intersections of dairy developmentalism and subnational Hindutva statism in Rajasthan.

## *'A pilgrimage of camels': capitalising and containing mobile camel–human cultures*

The squatting male camel threw his head back and emitted a sobbing howl, perhaps due to fear and agony. Large swathes of dark fur along his broad body, hump and long neck had disappeared, leaving exposed bloodied sores and boils from mange. A Raika man, turbaned and his loin cloth hitched up, dipped his entire arm wrapped in plastic, into a bucket of mustard oil and medicinal herbs, and rubbed the tincture onto the camel's raw neck, causing him to wail again. '*Theek hai beta, theek hai*, it's okay son, it's okay,' the man crooned to the weeping camel. The Raika saw us stopping at a careful distance so as to not agitate the camel further, and called out a greeting, continuing nonstop in his labour – the entire body of the camel needed attention, and he had some twenty more animals to attend.

At a distance from these sickly camels, all male, about one hundred and fifty other camels, and fifty Raika men of all ages had gathered for a mange treatment camp, some 100 kilometres outside Sirohi. The medical camp, like the camels and herders themselves, had popped up temporarily along a natural browsing route. Around us, vets and para-vets moved from camel to camel as the Raika expertly bound up a foreleg of each animal. Once on three legs, it was easier to make the camels sit, so they could receive the injection. We wound through the squatting, crying herd; a mother camel, legs constrained, screamed as she received the needle. Her twin female calves needed no binding; trembling and shaking, they huddled close to their mother, sobbing unlike anything I had heard from other animals, as they too were injected.

This was a traditional camel herd, that is, a dairy herd, overwhelmingly comprising she-camels and female calves, and only three bull-camels. An autonomous, wild herd of camels would typically be mixed, and smaller, so that hierarchies and social relationships *between* individual camels of the herd could be established (Padalino et al., 2014). Individuals in a larger herd tend to be more nervous in the absence of the reassurance of steady hierarchies, anxieties getting aggravated in an unusual and stressful situation like a medical camp. A study notes,

> Camels are social animals and, while old males can occasionally be solitary, camels usually live in herds made up of males, females and young, or females and young without a male, or males and females without young or only one male, with an average of 25 individuals per herd. (Padalino et al., 2014: 4)

I wound my way back to a charpoy (bed made of jute ropes) that had been set up near the ambulance where Raika elders and a few other men were seated. One of them introduced himself as a Gau-Rakshak (cow protector) affiliated to a Hindu nationalist party. Originally from Gujarat, he often crossed the border to move with the Raika and the camels between the states. He loved camels, indeed all animals, he said. The Raika were like family, he had crossed the border from

Himmatnagar in Gujarat, where the *yatra* was heading next. As we talked, the loudest cries of distress continued to come from the mangy bulls; each individual of the dairy herd quietened once they were pricked, and their legs released again.

'Is mange a common problem for the camels?' I asked one of the Raika elders. 'Do they get it from dog bites?'

'No, no, there is no mange in Rajasthan.' the cow protector interjected. 'This disease comes from the outside,' a Raika leader assented. 'These injections are all new for us, our forefathers looked after their camels with their own knowledge. But this is beyond us, it can sicken hundred camels in no time while we can only sit and watch,' he said.

The cow vigilante explained that the mangy camels were among those rescued from outside Rajasthan, and brought back into the state, in the process, bringing mange and transmitting it to the resident camels. The *rescue* of the bull camels outside Rajasthan, and their *return* to the state was a recent development. The Raika were a vegetarian caste whose ethics did not permit them to slaughter animals. They nonetheless sold male camels from their dairy herd to Muslims outside the state, particularly in the months preceding Eid, where animals, including camels, were ritually slaughtered (Moudgil 2020). According to Ramesh Bhatti of Sahjeevan Trust, a non-profit organisation that works on camel conservation in Gujarat, 'Sale of milk was also not required earlier because the trade of male camels sustained the rearers' (Moudgil 2020). While the consumption of cow meat is ostensibly hurtful to Hindu nationalists, camel meat has been long associated with Muslims, for whom their slaughter and consumption is permissible as *halal*, and – hitherto – not contested as offensive to Hindus.

The rising cow vigilantism was having unforeseen impacts on Raika lives. The Raika emphasized that there were no differences between their cultural lives and management of the camel herds, and that of the Muslim or Sindhi camel herders. Raika and Muslim herders would routinely trade, and share information with each other. The Muslim camel herders also did not slaughter or consume camels. 'In Rajasthan, nobody will slaughter a camel,' a Raika told me in the Sirohi camp, a sentiment that would be echoed several times. However, once *outside* of Rajasthan, *all* herders relied on the trade with non-herding Muslims along the *yatra* outside of Rajasthan who would buy and slaughter the unwanted males. While the entirety of the *yatra* was home, Rajasthan itself was sacred as ancestral land, the Raika said; undeniably inauspicious activities could not be conducted here. *Outside* of the state, however, was beyond their moral responsibility.

The BJP-ruled state ordinances on the regulation of camel ranging outside of Rajasthan *also* conceptualises the idea of Rajasthan in a manner that clashes with Raika visions of land and home that is shifting and migratory. The *Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act* 2014 that requires that all ranging now be officially permitted, disrupts the continuum of even this comparatively smaller scale of dairying, which too relies on the slaughter of males and spent females. If the pastoralists want to cross Rajasthan state borders, the herd numbers, and its sex ratio will be noted by the border guards. While the herd size may have increased at the time of return due to pregnancies and deliveries, reductions in size must be explained by veterinarian certificates. A dairy herd would be expected to lose about half of its members, born male; as such the legislation posed such insurmountable difficulties that many herders started to sell or abandon their camels. Camels thus started to be smuggled out of the state, often in the same trucks that carried cows to slaughter, and might be discovered by rescuers as far as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In May 2017, the Ministry of Environment at the Centre issued the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets*) *Rules 2017* (India), which prohibited the transport of bulls, cows, buffalo, calves – and camels – as slaughter resources to markets (*The Indian Express 2017*).

The trafficking of camels for slaughter outside of Rajasthan, was also thus coming under scrutiny. The rescuers often do not know what to do with the camels. Gaushalas or Hindu cow shelters

typically do not accept even Jersey cows or buffaloes (Narayanan, 2018), let alone other species raised for dairy. Mindful that no other natural environment would ultimately be as suitable for the camel as the deserts of Rajasthan or Gujarat, activists, when possible, would try to return the animals back to these states. Having crossed the border into Rajasthan, these animals came back, according to the cow vigilante, impure, diseased, contaminated. The camel sanctuary at Sirohi offered the Raika a space to look after these camels who could not be allowed to re-join a healthy herd.

The sale of male infants produces moral discomfort among the Raika, as elsewhere. In the United States, Gillespie (2018) notes the uneasiness of dairy farmers when asked about veal, which is sourced from male dairy calves. Hindus in India often deny the economic logics of dairying that require that males be butchered (Narayanan, 2018). Raika herders too likewise are uncomfortable with the 'male calf' issue that is interlocked with even the smallest scale of milk production. 'We will take care as long as he is with us, after he is sold, he is out of our hands,' a Raika worker told me in the camp. However, the halting of slaughter trucks and the return of the camels was forcing the Raika to confront of the realities of what happens to their unwanted animals who are conveniently disposed out of sight, *out of Rajasthan*. I was to later see a fearful, broken bull camel at the Sirohi sanctuary whose jaw and teeth had shattered from the bumpy transportation. Cow vigilantes in neighbouring Gujarat had found him in a truck containing concealed bovines. No longer able to naturally browse, the Raika carers at the sanctuary were feeding him thin gruel.

Commercial dairying was therefore forbidden as that would involve the constant disposal of an exponentially larger number of calves. Poverty, however, was driving them to desperation. Kohler-Röllefson (1995) discovered that in southern Rajasthan and in the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh, a group of Raikas had started to sell camel milk to tea stall owners. This discovery sowed the seeds for NGOs and the state to campaign for commercial camel dairying, rather than advocating for an empowerment paradigm wherein Raika livelihood was consistent with their ethics. Furthermore, against loss of pasturelands, monsoonal vagaries, and even ecosystem changes caused by intensive crop agriculture in Rajasthan (Robbins, 2004), intensive camel dairying is likely to be a precarious livelihood. Even some fifteen years ago, the intensification of bovine faming in Rajasthan for instance, relying on breeding high-lactating hybrid breeds (as native breeds lactate only in sufficient quantities for their infant's nourishment), and 'oriented exclusively towards dairy production…have failed repeatedly' (Kohler-Rollefson and Rathore 1998, in Robbins 2004: 140).

Regardless, the camel is being remade as a 'dairy' animal. It is the nature of capitalist economies to reclassify the animal into new capitalised modes, or even as waste, and therein superfluous to capitalism (Collard and Dempsey, 2017). In Australia for instance, formerly load-bearing camels, are now abandoned, and '"out of time," as its classification and treatment have transformed in concordance with temporal shifts in human circumstances, cultural values, and worldviews' (Crowley (2014: 192). So too NGOs and dromedary research organisations in India reclassify this creature 'out of time' with old uses. The flagship dromedary dairy development organisation ICAR; RCC (2017) plans to 'undertake breeding initiatives to identify and conserve the elite males and females having better pedigree or having better milk yield potential.' New demands have to be created to sustain production. While poor cold storage infrastructure, and irregular electricity supply prevents the large-scale manufacture of camel ice cream, the LPPS micro-dairy pasteurizes and deep-freezes the milk for sale, and produces camel milk cheese, even as it is foreign to Raika diets (Randall, 2019).

Commercial dairying begins to disrupt their *yatra*, a ranging activity that is necessary for even wild or feral camels. However, long-ranging animals are not feasible for dairying, whose key product can quickly go bad, especially in the desert heat of Rajasthan. Currently, camels were milked in the morning along their *yatra*, and Raika herders transport large aluminium canisters

of milk on motorcycles to the camel micro-dairies for processing, which are as yet, few and far between. As dairying increases in scale, the *yatra* will necessarily have to be shortened, if not enclosed altogether. Throughout the *yatra*, the herders also have places for ritual thanksgiving, long-standing relationships with villagers who provide goods and services to the Raika, and know of browsing ecologies for the camels with varieties of trees like the medicinal *neem*. These ecologies are now used to promote camel lactate as healthful. The ICAR claims,

> Research findings about camel milk present a convincing evidence about its human health medicinal value like in the management of diabetes, liver and kidney disorders, its functional food value in the cases of autism in children and boost up of immunity to resist many infectious diseases. (ICAR 2017).

The reality however is, that against the press of highways, roadways, mining, and other land development, camels are forced to consume thorny scrub, which we could see for miles in the deserts outside of Jaisalmer. A Raika elder showed me a massive pair of pliers he used to pull out deep-rooted thorns from the tongues of the camels. If left unnoticed, their mouth could get infected, the camels would stop eating due to the pain, and starve to death.

As camels and herders become more intensively managed, and are forced to become more sedentary, the commodification of the camel is likely to erode the comparatively greater relations of care of the Raika. At a desert camp not far from Nasoo ka Tala near Jaisalmer, I witnessed the Raika 'becoming camel', as it were. I waited with six Raika elders, who were making chai in a small pot. It was time to gather the flock to move onwards, when a female would be milked to make tea. An elder started a yodelling call, mimicking as another herder explained to me, the camels' own calls; the Raika in effect, *was speaking the camels' language*. I gazed on, amazed, as the camels started to gather around, remaining nonetheless at a distance. It was my presence that made them hesitant, the Raika told me, otherwise they would crowd right around him, pushing against each other. At one point, the elder pitched his voice higher and called; a few more camels appeared through the bush. He knew the errant ones were missing, without having to search and count through the herd, and had vocalised and spoken *specifically to those individuals*.

The Raika also have a sense of each camel's relationship with the others. Camels, like many mammals, are tribal mothers and it is common for calves to suckle from non-biological mothers; I witnessed this commonly in the herds, and the Raika paid no attention. These relations are viewed with contempt in commercial camel dairying; a study describes such allogrooming by non-filial camel infants as 'milk thefts' being conducted by 'opportunistic parasites' (Brandlova et al., 2013: 1).

Nonetheless, severe violence also characterises Raika relationships with the camels, particularly the bulls during taming and training, with beatings, intensive confinement, and the use of thick nosehooks. Many of the camels in all the herds I witnessed had even two or three nosehooks, which would be pulled to inflict pain and discipline the animals. These practices are transmuted to other industries that intensify around dairying, such as tourism. Unwanted camel bulls from dairying are forced to give joyrides to tourists in the sand dunes of Jaisalmer, or endure their roles in camel polo, races, and as wedding props. The peak tourism season in winter, coincides with their musth period, when the bulls are hormonally charged, ready for mating. Similar to the training to break bulls used for load-pulling during pastoral migrations, these bulls are forced through painful methods to become compliant. Padalino et al. (2014: 2) write, during 'the breeding season bulls can become very aggressive towards other males or humans and for this reason they are kept in a single box or tethered with ropes.'

I saw such a bull who was part of a Raika herd, confined in Nasoo ka Tala outside of Jaisalmer. He was controlled with three thick hooks jammed through his nose, harnessed to the ground on

either side of his face with ropes attaching the hooks to large iron rings buried in the ground. The camel could not move his head, as the immense pain from the movement would over-ride his frustration, agitation and fear from being so heavily confined while in musth. He had already been thus restrained for several weeks; he would be kept so for months until broken, and 'fit' for service. Soon, he would develop stereotypie behaviours to cope with trauma. Padalino e,t al. (2014: 1) study of captive camel-bulls, noted that they engaged in 'repetitive, unvarying and apparently functionless behaviour patterns', an indication of severe emotional and physical suffering. This was a result of the animal's 'lack of control over its environment, frustration, threat, fear, and lack of stimulation', as well as 'forced proximity to humans', and lack of social contact with their own; eventually such solitary confinement would drive them to 'abnormal' behaviour including repetitive head-swaying, self-'biting or self-mutilation', 'bar biting, head-shaking' (Padalino et al., 2014: 2, 3). Padalino et al. (2014: 3) write, 'This stereotypical behaviour was considered as a state – indeed the camel could bite his legs for a variable length of time, ranging from just a few seconds to several minutes.'

Ultimately, the simultaneous commercialisation of camels' milk, and the restrictions of their movement outside of Rajasthan, are not coincidental; the market capitalism of camel dairying, and BJP's state strategy for Hindutva, are in fact, perfectly consistent. Thus far, sedentary nation-states have found it difficult to capitalise 'the economic activities of nomadic peoples – foraging, hunting, shifting agriculture, pastoralism'; as Quicke and Green (2018: 649) succinctly write, 'they are constructed as intolerably economically unproductive.' As a result, they explain (*ibid*), 'States consequently often act to incentivise mainstream market engagement among mobile cultures through restricting welfare entitlements…and/or encouraging engagement with development initiatives that emphasise mainstream economic integration…'

The intensification of camel and herder lives, and the geophysical restrictions on the *yatra,* helps to create an 'edge' that defines and contains the modern state of Rajasthan. In his analysis of the US-Mexico border in the desert, Taylor (2007: 389) argues that the moral geographies 'implied and indeed created' in movement to the edge and to the centre, is key to developing the idea of a sanctified nation-state. In being forced to traverse through to the edge and 'centre' of their rangelands within Rajasthan only, the camels create the idea of Rajasthan state itself, albeit Hindutva ruled, while laying the foundations of an intensive camel dairy sector. And when some of these sold males are returned, sick and broken by their long journey out of, and then into Rajasthan, their condition becomes another way of mobilising Hindutva politics that highlights the racialized slaughterer of an animal used for dairy production, rather than the predictable nature of *all* dairying which requires their killing.

## *Species* and the 'conjugated oppressions' of agrarian/dairy capitalism and ultranationalism

Against the resurgence of conservatism, authoritarianism, and right-wing nationalisms globally, much attention has been focussed on the role of capitalism in emboldening violent ideologies (Potts, 2019; Chacko, 2019). Far from the economy being an objective and neutral mechanism that will level out socio-economic inequalities, the capitalist economy has 'not only been impeding just social reforms but also contributing to the resurgence of right-wing nationalism and bigotry around the world' (Potts, 2019: 1997); so much so that the capitalist market, particularly in a neoliberal economy, has become a chief mechanism *through which* right-wing ideology gains legitimacy and distribution. Das (2015: 715) simply defines neoliberalism as 'capitalism without leftist illusions (i.e. illusions that there can be such a thing as humane capitalism on a long-term basis).'

So too in India, since the liberalisation of its economy in 1991, the market has become the apparatus through which ideological oppression can be advanced. Scholar of authoritarianism and populism Chacko (2019: 379) writes that the Hindu nationalist BJP's 'turn to markets has not occurred at the expense of its majoritarian ideology, but in conjunction with it.' Further, she argues, BJP's agenda of economic liberalisation is characteristic of Hindutva nationalism itself; Chacko writes (379), 'while [the BJP] has routinely embraced dominant economic ideas, in doing so, it has sought to reframe these ideas within Hindu nationalist idioms and for the benefit of its support base.' Modi's notion of *vikas* or development is itself part of the state's neoliberal agenda (Das, 2015).

Development that relies on capitalism is by its very nature, sustained by 'domination and imperialism' (Marwah, 2019: 498). Developmentality, write Srinivasan and Kasturirangan (2016: 125) is a model 'centred around consumption fuelled economic growth and surplus accumulation, has depended on the intensive exploitation of people and nature, thereby adversely impacting societies and ecologies throughout the planet.' Capitalism relies on the systemic exploitation of sociopolitical differences and hierarchies between people, and notably, also the difference in geographic spatialisms, particularly maximising the urban/rural binary for profit (Potts, 2019). In India, caste differentiation and its opportunities for discriminating, favouring and exploiting, provides the primary labour and resource to sustain the market and the capitalist development economy (Mosse, 2020). In this landscape, development in India is founded upon sociopolitical inequalities. In Gujarat state for instance, where Modi was the Chief Minister prior to becoming the nation's prime minister, 'capitalist development [was] built on precarious labour and jobless growth' and 'violent Hindu nationalism' (Sud, 2020: 1). The BJP machinery won the electoral race at the centre, however, substantially by drawing on the promise of the developmental ideal of the Gujarat Model (Sud, 2020).

Contemporary capitalism relies not only on the oppression of *a* group but specifically, a combination thereof. To specifically illuminate agrarian forms of capitalism – of which dairying is part – Lerche and Shah (2018) add tribes and caste to French political theorist Phillip Bourgois conception of 'conjugated oppression', which originally focussed on race, ethnicity, and gender. Bourgois (1988: 330) writes, 'Conjugated oppression occurs when an economic structure…conflates with ideology [such as ethnic or gender hierarchy, to] create an experience of oppression that is more than merely the sum of its constituent parts: class and ideology.' A deeper understanding of how oppressions based on multiple identities interlock is vital to understanding the contemporary agrarian economy's exploitation of tribal labour, and the commons such as land and forests (Lerche and Shah, 2018). *Species*, however, has generally been absent from the concern for oppressed groups whose resources, bodies, and labour are exploited to sustain developmentality.

Generally, the extractions from animals *as* capital have not received much attention in critiques of neoliberal, capitalist, *anthropocentric* development. However drawing upon Marx and Engels' (1970: 42) idea of production as 'a definite form of activity of…individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part', critical theorist Sanbonmatsu (2017: 2–3) argues that both speciesism and capitalism can be defined as 'modes of production'. Capitalism and speciesism together fashion human society itself, which is characterised by 'dominating, controlling, and killing other sentient beings' (*ibid*), enabled by the property status of domesticated animals under law. In this context, animals are bred specifically *for profit and sale* (rather than any unavoidable necessity) (Sanbonmatsu, 2017). Underscoring that animals are profoundly vulnerable to human violence directly due to their property status wherein human interests, however minor, will triumph animal interests, however significant, Gary Francione (2020: 29) argues for just *one* right that composes 'a sensible and coherent theory of animal rights' itself – 'the right not to be treated as the property of humans.'

Capitalising nomadic pastoralism however means, that new products involving animal as property and increasingly commodities – and demand for these – had to be created (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 5).

Animals experience even more profound violence *as commodity units* in *all* scales of agriculture, including small scale. Pastoral systems of animal farming are no freer of the fundamental violence that is innate in objectifying animal bodies as commodities. Domination and subjugation of animals is as necessary in pastoralism as other methods of animal farming, even as the notion itself evokes care and kinship. In *War Against Animals*, Wadiwel (2015: 112) writes of pastoralism,

> What of course lies hidden in the metaphor (and reality) of the pastorate is the inherent violence that encloses and demarcates the relationship between shepherd and animal, a relationship of domination. The human shepherd of an animal flock seeks a relationship of instrumentalisation that maintains as its goal the harvesting of those animals for human benefit…And certainly it is true, that in order for a shepherd to use his or her sheep, then a care must be inculcated in order to maintain the lives of the flock for that use. However care here is twisted with violence…to maintain life up until the threshold of slaughter. [Care, in this case] is…a violence that claims to care.

The implications for the animals who are objectified in human cultural identities, *and* have production value, such as the cow or the camel, are particularly severe (Narayanan, 2018). *Species* then deserves consideration in its own right as a political subject, and in the interlocking relations of conjugated identities, is also fundamental to the emancipation of other identity groups. The intensification of the camel as a 'solution' to Raika precarity also elides how modern capitalist development has undermined their sovereignty, and excluded them from its benefits. India's National Livestock Policy refers exclusively to farmers and makes no mention of pastoralists as part of 'livestock production' (Government of India, 2013). However studies conducted by the LPPS claim that more than 70% of Indian dairying, and more than 50% of meat production is derived from pastoral systems of production (Kohler-Röllefson, 2018).

However the Raika have long faced threats from rampant land development. Rajasthan has some of India's largest sand mining operations, and close to 90% of the mines are illegal (Asnani, 2020). As per the Centre for Science and Environment's Sixth State of India's Environment report, *"Rich Lands, Poor People" – Is sustainable mining possible?*, 'Unregulated legal mining and rampant illegal mining in Rajasthan has systematically destroyed forests, devastated the Aravallis, and played havoc with the water resources' (CSE 2021). In addition to mining for minerals and stones – marble, sandstone, garnet and jasper – the sheer scale of illegal sand quarrying, across agricultural, forest and pasturelands, generating large amounts of illegal revenue (Anani, 2020) has caused some of the greatest ecological devastations in the state. This is compounded by the press of infrastructural modernisation that has swept through Rajasthan, through the construction of highways and roadways, and urbanization.

The lands, often remote and inaccessible, that these animals and their herders travel through, are crucial to the interlocking of capitalism and right-wing ideology. The very nature of capitalism is spatially colonising, 'subsuming more and more people, territory and resources into the market for the past several hundred years' (Potts, 2019: 1198). In contemporary India, subregions have acquired a 'political salience' through a significant widening of democratic processes across multiple geographies, including those of caste, tribe, and ethnicity (Kumar, 2016: xxxviii). In the subregions, capitalism, taking the form of 'agrarian neoliberalism', can be 'particularly ruthless' as it involves land takeover, extraction, and transformation of land, generating wide inequalities (Das, 2015: 715).

This dispossession of the nomadic tribes and their animals is crucial to entrench capitalism, and right-wing ideology, through the commodification of the camel as a novel 'dairy' animal, and the remaking of the Raika as dairy labourers. As Sonbanmatsu (2017: 14) writes, 'So long as people had been able to produce their own lives…they had no need to sell themselves or their labor power to others.' The capitalisation of the camels occurs through the disruptions to the camel

*yatra*. In their study of mobile cultures, Quicke and Green (2018: 646) argue that 'state practices that ignore or attempt to regulate the spatial/population mobilities of mobile cultures have questionable efficacy, and can further entrench the marginal status of mobile cultures.'

Nomadic bodies, as *junglee* or wild bodies, are also *displaceable* bodies. If the condition of *displaceability* is more urgent to address than even the act of displacement (Yiftachel, 2020), then the animal body, and subaltern human *mobile* bodies, perhaps epitomise disposability. The dispossessions of animals and humans from the natural world, in this case by enclosing their rangelands, involves not only *racial* or *ethnic* cleansing but also *species* cleansing (Sonbanmatsu, 2017: 14). These practices, whether delivered by the state or NGOs, become entrenched in the name of 'development', to the particular detriment of tribal people (Sahoo, 2013). In his analysis of both international and locally funded NGOs in Rajasthan, Sahoo argues (2013: 260) that their approach 'has not only "depoliticised development", but also unconsciously developed a culture of "organised dependency" at the grass-roots level.'

Indian capitalist development drawing on nomadic bodies and labour also brings them closer to Hindu caste. As Lerche and Shah (2018: 933) write, 'The closer their interaction with Hindu societies, the more their domination and exploitation might become more like that of the "Untouchables".' The perception of nomadic tribes as 'childlike' or 'savage', makes them 'a super-exploitable workforce…in collusion with corporate capital' and the state (Lerche and Shah, 2018: 941). In their critique of the anthropocentrism in dominant political ecology and development praxis, Srinivasan and Kasturirangan (2016: 128) argue that 'zoöpolitical logics', or the human/animal binary allow the extractions of capitalist development itself. They write, 'The human/animal distinction that underpins human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism plays a dual role in developmentality: it allows for the extractive use and exploitation of nonhuman "Others", as also the marginalization and displacement of subaltern human "Others".' (Srinivasan and Kasturirangan, 2016: 128)

## Conclusions

The current government's strategy of relying on market capitalism to advance developmentality, coheres with its broader agenda of cementing Hindutva in India. Dairy capitalism has been one of Hindutva's most potent strategies. While the cow is used unambiguously as an 'upper' caste Hindu symbol and exploited for the divisive potentials therein, the camel offers an inclusive and secular symbolism, crucial in pluralistic Rajasthan. In its 'protection' of the camel by prohibiting their slaughter, while advancing dromedary dairying as an employment alternative for the nomadic camel herders, the state nonetheless employs identical tactics to its exploitation of the cow as a vehicle for Hindutva.

Commercial dairy capitalism requires the restrictions of camel *and* Raika mobility, justified however, as required for the *camels' protection* against their slaughter, in racialized hands outside Rajasthan. Depending on time, space and the context, the securitization of cultural object-subjects – Muslim women (Gupta et al., 2020), Hindu women, cows, or indeed, the camel is deployed as part of securing the cultural entity of the Hindu nation itself. Indian dairy development fundamentally involves a civilising mission in its oppression of the nomads, as political and market narratives promoting dairy intertwine, and the economics of dairy production require the disciplining of mobile and sovereign nonhuman and subaltern human bodies.

The conjugated oppressions in camel dairy capitalism depends on the containment of the Raika, and the confinement and domination of the camel. Instead, the challenge, but also pathway for the state, is to genuinely begin the uneasy, complex but crucial discussion on multispecies sovereignties as also core to democratic politics. At the very least, animal sovereignties would necessitate a decoupling of human identity with the animal, across the race, caste and class spectrum. The

Hindu then, for instance, would need to reconcile the idea that the (lactating) cow is *not* their 'mother'. The Raika may need to consider that enforced human-to-camel kinship might come at the cost of intra-camel ties and camel flourishing.

Instead, what new forms of interspecific flourishing – even kinship – between humans and other animals become possible *outside* of the bounds of instrumentalisation and exploitation, wherein animals are neither property, not commodity? What possibilities, furthermore, for *human* liberation arise when animals are no longer used as bartering bodies upon whom unevenness of intra-human power are sustained and endured? How can Raika sovereignties be imagined when the need for real accountability for historical injustices are not obscured by the brief hope of relief offered by animal capitalism? Critical development visions must forge new pathways, drawing on these possibilities for those at the outermost margins of recognition and consideration, nomads *and* species.

## Acknowledgements

This paper is haunted and animated by the beautiful, long-lashed camels – each so singular, so individual, and indeed, so abstracted as production and cultural commodities. The enduring memory of the severely sickened bull-camel in Sirohi; a lactating mother with twin daughters in the Sirohi herd; and the intensively incarcerated bull-camel in musth outside Jaisalmer particularly drove this paper. My greatest thanks is undoubtedly to Amit Deol of People for Animals Sirohi, for going above and beyond to ensure the logistical ease of conducting fieldwork in remote regions. I am grateful to Krithika Srinivasan, co-editor of this Special Issue, whose astute insight has shaped and improved this paper. I am so grateful to the five anonymous reviewers, who truly helped this paper achieve its potential. Thanks as always to Katie Gillespie, and the members of the Deakin SSH writing group for feedback, and to Lyla Mehta and Rosemary Collard for shepherding our special issue on 'The species turn in Indian identity politics.' The fieldwork for this paper was fully enmeshed with my rescuing a beautiful and extremely sick puppy from a Jaisalmer slum, who died 10 days later of suspected distemper, despite the medical care and love. I named this sweet little puppy Marley. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Marley.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Australian Research Council (grant number DP180101294).

## ORCID iD

Yamini Narayanan https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4851-904X

## References

Asnani R (2020) Rajasthan: Bans fail to loosen sand mining mafia's vice-like grip. The New Indian Express. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/feb/21/rajasthan-bans-fail-to-loosen-mining-mafias-vice-like-grip-2106356.html (accessed 15 November 2021)

Bornstein S and Younan M (2013) Significant veterinary research on the dromedary camels of Kenya: Past and present. *Journal of Camelid Science* 6: 1–48.

Brandlova K, Bartos LK and Haberova T (2013) Camel calves as opportunistic milk thefts? The first description of allosuckling in domestic bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*). *PLoS One* 8(1): 1–9.

Bazzoli I, De Marchi M, Cecchinato A, et al. (2014) Factors associated with age at slaughter and carcass weight, price, and value of dairy cull cows. *Journal of Dairy Science* 97(2): 1082–1091.

Bourgois P (1988) Conjugated oppression: Class and ethnicity among Guaymi and Kuna banana workers. *American Ethnologist* 15(2): 328–348.

Brara R (1992) Are grazing lands wastelands? Some evidence from Rajasthan. *Economic and Political Weekly* 2(8): 411–418.

Chacko P (2019) Marketizing hindutva: The state, society, and markets in Hindu nationalism. *Modern Asian Studies* 53(2): 377–410.

Chandran R (2020) South Asian herders fight for right to roam as pressure to settle grows. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/instant-article/idUKL5N26N43K (accessed 8 February 2021)

Collard R-C and Dempsey J (2017) Capitalist natures in five orientations. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 28(1): 78–97.

Connell A, St Denny E and Martin S (2021) How can subnational governments develop and deliver distinctive policy agendas? *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 1−17. doi:10.1177/0020852321996429

Crowley SL (2014) Camels Out of place and time: The dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*) in Australia. *Anthrozoös* 27(2): 191–203.

CSE (2021). CSE's report on mining – rich lands poor people – released in Rajasthan. https://www.cseindia.org/cses-report-on-mining-rich-lands-poor-people-released-in-rajasthan-435 (accessed 31 March 2021)

Das RJ (2015) Critical observations on neo-liberalism and India's new economic policy. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45(4): 715–726.

Deckha M (2020) Unsettling anthropocentric legal systems: Reconciliation. *Indigenous Laws, and Animal Personhood. Journal of Intercultural Studies* 41(1): 77–97.

Dhar A (2014) Camel made Rajasthan state animal. *The Hindu*. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/camel-made-rajasthan-state-animal/article6167575.ece (accessed 7 December 2020)

Farm Policy Exports (2019) Subsidy spotlight: India. https://www.farmpolicyfacts.org/2018/10/subsidy-spotlight-india-2/ (accessed 15 January 2021)

FAO (2021). Policy support and governance gateway. *FAO*. http://www.fao.org/policy-support/policy-themes/pastoralism/en/ (accessed 19 April 2021)

Francione GL (2020) Some brief comments on animal rights. *Animal Frontiers* 10(1): 29–33.

Garibaldi A and Turner N (2004) Cultural keystone species: Implications for ecological conservation and restoration. *Ecology and Society* 9(3): 1–18.

Ghai R (2021) Understanding 'culture' of pastoralism and 'modern development' in Thar: Muslim pastoralists of north-west Rajasthan, India. *Pastoralism* 11: 3.

Gellner D (2014) Introduction. In Gellner D (Ed.). *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1–23.

Gilbert J (2014) *Nomadic Peoples and Human Rights*. New York. NY: Routledge.

Gillespie K (2018). *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*. Chicago*:* University of Chicago Press.

Gillespie K and Narayanan Y (2022) Global atmospheres of violence: Shifting terrains of othering in feminist multispecies witnessing. In Adams J and Gruen L (Eds.). *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*. London: Bloomsbury. 335–353.

Giraud EH. (2019). *What Comes After Entanglement? Activism, Anthropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gupta P, Gokarıksel B and Smith S (2020) The politics of saving muslim women in India: Gendered geolegality, security, and territorialization. *Political Geography* 83: 1–10.

Haraway D (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ibrahim F (2011) Re-making a region: Ritual inversions and border transgressions in Kutch. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34(3): 439–459.

ICAR. (2017). Camel milk gets the food tag from FSSAI. *Indian Council of Agricultural Research*. https://icar.gov.in/node/4644 (accessed 3 December 2020).

Jenkins R (1998) Rajput Hindutva, caste politics, regional identity and Hindu nationalism in contemporary Rajasthan. In Jaffrelot C and and Hansen TB (Eds.). *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 101–120.

Jodha NS (1985). Population and the decline of common property resources in Rajasthan, India. *Population and Development Review* 11(2): 247–264.

Kabachnik (2007). The Place of the Nomad: Situating Gypsy and Traveler Mobility in Contemporary England. PhD thesis, University of California.

Kohler-Röllefson I (2016). Camel dairying: The solution to rescuing Rajasthan's state animal. *Down to Earth.* https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/economy/camel-dairying-the-solution-to-rescuing-rajasthan-s-state-animal-53537 (accessed 3 December 2020)

Kohler-Röllefson I (1995) Camels in the land of kings. *Natural History* 104(3): 54–61.

Köhler-Röllefson I (2015). Why Rajasthan's camel protection law is not enough to save its camels. *Down to Earth*. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/why-rajasthan-s-camel-protection-law-is-not-enough-to-save-its-camels-49292 (accessed 19 April 2021)

Köhler-Röllefson I (2017). Shifting camel cultures. https://www.india-seminar.com/2017/695/695_ilse_kohler-rollefson.htm (accessed 20 October 2020)

Köhler-Röllefson I (2018). Purdah, purse and patriarchy: The position of women in the Raika shepherd community in Rajasthan (India). *Journal of Arid Environments* 149: 30–39.

Kohler-Röllefson I and Rathore HS (1998) *NGO strategies for livestock development in Western Rajasthan (INDIA): An overview and analysis.* Oberamstadt.

Kohler-Röllefson I, Rathore ISH and Mathias E (2009) Local breeds, livelihoods and livestock keepers' rights in south Asia. *Tropical Animal Health and Production* 41(7): 1061–1070.

Kurien V (2005) *I too Have a Dream…[as Told to Gouri Salvi]*. New Delhi: Lotus Collection. Roli Books.

Lerche J and Shah A (2018) Conjugated oppression within contemporary capitalism: Class, caste, tribe and agrarian change in India. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(5–6): 927–949.

Lestel D, Brunois F and Gaunet F (2006) Etho-ethnology and ethno-ethology. *Social Science Information* 45(2): 155–177.

Lodha S (2016) Subregions, identity and nature of political competition in Rajasthan. In Kumar A (Ed.). *Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions Within Regions*. London: Taylor & Francis Group. 399–429.

Marx K and Engels F (1970) *The German Ideology*. Arthur CJ (Ed.). New York: International Publishers.

Marwah IS (2019). Provincializing progress: Developmentalism and anti-imperialism in colonial India. *Polity* 51(3): 498–531.

Meena K (2020) Borders and bordering practices: A case study of Jaisalmer district on India–Pakistan border. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 35(2): 183–194.

Mosse D (2020) The modernity of caste and the market economy. *Modern Asian Studies* 54(4): 1225–1271.

Moudgil M (2020). Camel milk inspires hope for herders. *Mongabay.* https://india.mongabay.com/2020/10/camel-milk-inspires-hope-for-herders/ (accessed 3 December 2020)

Narain I and Mathur P C (1990) The thousand year Raj: Regional isolation and Rajput Hinduism in Rajasthan before and after 1947. In Frankel FR and Rao MSA (Eds.). *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1–58.

Narayanan Y (2018) 'Cow protection' as 'casteised speciesism': Sacralisation, commercialisation and politicisation. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 41(2): 331–351.

Narayanan Y (2019a) 'Cow is a mother, mothers can do anything for their children!' Gaushalas as landscapes of anthropatriarchy and hindu patriarchy. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 34(2): 195–221.

Narayanan Y (2019b) *Jugaad* and informality as drivers of India's cow slaughter economy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 51(7): 1516–1535.

Nibert DA (2013). *Animal Domestication & Human Violence: Domescration, Capitalism and Global Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Padalino B, Aube L, Fatnassi M, et al. (2014). Could dromedary camels develop stereotypy? The first description of stereotypical behaviour in housed male dromedary camels and How It Is affected by different management systems. *PLoS One* 9(2): 1–7.

Potts S (2019) Defining capitalism: The case for (relational) abstraction. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 51(5): 1197–1200.

Probyn-Rapsey F (2014) Review article: Multispecies mourning: Thom van Dooren's flight ways: Life and loss at the edge of extinction by Thom van Dooren. *Animal Studies Journal* 3(3): 4–16.

Quicke SP and Green C (2018). "Mobile (nomadic) cultures" and the politics of mobility: Insights from indigenous Australia. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 43: 646–660.

Randall M (2019). To save India's camel culture, a New dairy Is selling milk and cream cheese. *Atlas Obscura.* https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/camel-milk-in-india (accessed 19 April 2021)

Robbins P (2004) Pastoralists inside-out: The contradictory conceptual geography of Rajasthan's Raika. *Nomadic Peoples* 8(2): 136–149.

Sahoo S (2013) Doing development or creating dependency? NGOs and Civil Society in India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36(2): 258–272.

Salzman PC (1986). Shrinking pasture for Rajasthani pastoralists. *Nomadic Peoples* 20: 49–61.

Sanbonmatsu J (2017) Capitalism and speciesism. In Nibert D (Ed.). *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*. Santa Barbara: Praeger. 1–30.

Srinivasan K and Kasturirangan R (2016) Political ecology, development, and human exceptionalism. *Geoforum; Journal of Physical, Human, and Regional Geosciences* 75: 125–128.

Sud N (2020) The actual Gujarat model: Authoritarianism, capitalism, Hindu nationalism and populism in the time of Modi. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*: 1–25. doi:10.1080/00472336.2020.1846205

Taylor LJ (2007). Pilgrimage and the moral geography of the US/Mexico border. *Mobilities* 2(3): 383–393.

Tanyas B (2016) Experiences of otherness and practices of othering: Young Turkish migrants in the UK. *Young* 24(2): 157–173.

Thomas R (2020). Pastoralists push for recognition at the UN. *The Third Pole.* https://www.thethirdpole.net/2020/09/30/pastoralists-push-for-recognition-at-the-un/ (accessed 8 December 2020)

Wadiwel DJ. (2015). *The War Against Animals*. New York: Brill Rodopi.

Wadiwel, D. (2018). Chicken harvesting machine: Animal labor, resistance, and the time of production. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 117(3): 527–549.

Weber KT and Horst S (2011) Desertification and livestock grazing: The roles of sedentarization, mobility and rest *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice* 1(19): 1–19.

Wilson HH. (1840). trans. *The Vishnu Purana*. London: The Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland.

Yiftachel O (2020) From displacement to displaceability: A Southern perspective on the new metropolis. *City*. 24(1–2): 151–165. doi:10.1080/13604813.2020.1739933