



By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

Beefing up the Law for No Beef

You have to throw a stone to figure out the ripple effect. That is what Subramanian Swamy did when he said on a national television show that Goa's beef eating tradition had to be changed. The BJP has, for some time now, made Goa a Hindutva laboratory, with its front organizations or politically connected organisations, either hosting conventions on aiming for Hindu Rashtra from 2023, or stating that India is already a Hindu Rashtra for centuries or stating that it should be culturally a Hindu Rashtra. These include RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini. They were clearly looking to see exactly how the reactions would be and perhaps also exactly how they could be polarized.

The ruling coalition partner Goa Forward's legislative head, Vijai Sardesai, when asked what he thought of this, said Subramanian had spoken in his individual capacity. So said Dattaprasad Naik, as a spokesperson of BJP. Before that, in view of the looming possibility of no-beef and the same becoming an election issue at the Assembly and Panchayat elections, Chief Minister Parrikar (then India's defence minister) had said that the individual choice would be respected but also sneaked in a caveat that he would always follow the law and by April 2017 he was already saying that he will saying nothing again about this.

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Came May 2017 and a ban on cattle slaughter is surreptitiously sought to be imposed, under the guise of these Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules. The notification bans sale and purchase, in animal markets, of bovines for slaughter.

In times gone by, Goa had several slaughter houses for cattle. These slaughter houses were mostly run by minorities. The first salvo of slaughter ban was fired in 1978, when cow slaughter was banned by a legislation called The Goa Daman and Diu Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act 1978 and sale of the beef of the flesh of cow was prohibited. However as the

ban was specific to cow, there was not much resistance, also perhaps as this happened barely two decades after the integration of Goa into India, as people were constantly reminded that they have to be focused on development and construction of a free Goa.

But then came the Goa Animal Preservation Act, 1995, enacted during the Congress rule in Goa. This was in the aftermath of the Ayodhya dispute when Congress was looking to playing the B team of the BJP after being on the verge of losing its majority on account of the political traction BJP was being able to gain by playing the Hindutva card.

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By this Animal Preservation Act, the slaughter of bovines, that is bulls, bullocks, male calves, male and female buffaloes, castrated buffaloes, and buffalo calves, was sought to be regulated. Certification was now required that the cattle is fit for slaughter. By certification was meant that the cattle was uneconomic for farming or dairy purposes or that the cattle was fit for slaughter on account of suffering from disease. This law was further amended in 2003 and 2010 to give the 1995 law more teeth. The Animal Preservation Act also sought to regulate the sale of beef only with appropriate certification.

The present ban on bovine slaughter has come under the guise of Rules for livestock markets under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. These Rules set out that a person who brings cattle to the market for sale has to furnish a written declaration from the owner that the cattle has not been brought to market for sale for slaughter, and that the purchaser shall not sell the animal for slaughter.

As of now, no animal markets exist in Goa. The beef traders purchase the cattle from random individual farmers in Goa, but the stock purchased in Goa is woefully inadequate for the daily consumption. Beefing up the Law for No Beef

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Only one slaughter house is prescribed as specified place for the purposes of slaughter in Goa. It is the slaughter house of the Goa Meat Complex. The traders on purchasing the animals for slaughter, then transport the cattle across the Karnataka border to the Goa Meat Complex for slaughter. Shortly after the Rules were notified in the Gazette by the Central Government, the beef traders faced the first rumblings of the notification in the form of being stopped at the Karnataka borders where the police at that end feared that they would face the rage of the gaurakshaks for not enforcing the Livestock Markets Rules if they let them pass. It took a verbal intervention by the Chief Minister to have the cattle pass the police exit point so they could then make their way to the vehicle entry toll booth.

As of now therefore the beef traders continue to purchase bovines from the animal markets across the border for slaughter. But clearly the Damocles sword of penalties for violation of Livestock Rules continues to hang over them. If no cattle was available for slaughter, by now the stock of cattle already admitted in the Goa Meat Complex would have got exhausted.

With the legislature party President of the ruling coalition partner, Goa Forward, making categorical statements that they will not allow beef ban in Goa, and off the cuff statements being made at various levels of governance and politics, the State is poised for some more play of words to diffuse the imminent beef ban, before the Government will HAVE to come completely clear in a writ petition filed by the Quraishi's Meat Traders Association of Goa, primarily on the plank of posing a threat to their right to carry on a trade or occupation of

their choice without being vulnerable to the consequences of enforcement of the Livestock



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This is, of course, apart from the serious challenge posed by a slaughter ban to the fundamental right of the citizens to their food choices and to access to nutritious food, within the parameters of the Constitution, to the rights of people dependent on cattle slaughter for their livelihood, which includes ancillary trades like the soap factories, the fertilizer production units, the toothpaste manufacturing plants, that utilize the non-beef products of slaughter. Not to speak of the burden on the already being crushed farmers, who have to tend cattle that are unproductive and will not be able to sell those cattle for cattle that they can productively use.

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