Marginal Occupations and Modernising Cities
Muslim Butchers in Urban India

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On 29 October 2009, the Supreme Court of India passed a judgment ordering the final closure of the 95-year-old Idgah abattoir in Delhi. The abattoir was shifted to a mechanised modern plant in the eastern fringes of the city. Using the issue of relocation and modernisation as a starting point, this essay addresses the impact of planning and transformation of urban spaces on traditional and marginal occupations. Located in a multi-sited ethnography of the working lives of people in the meat sector, it emphasises the complexities of understanding an entangled reality. Butchers live and work in an intricate web of social, spatial and occupational relations. Hence, spatial and technological relocation is not only about losing skill sets and livelihoods. It challenges the very access to labour and uproots people from social and emotional spaces critical for stigmatised and marginal occupations who draw strength and support from familiar landscapes.

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Indian cities are making efforts to bring "order" within urban spaces.[1] Neo-liberal demands for aesthetics, safety, health and hygiene propose modernisation, mechanisation and relocation of polluting units, among other things. This, in effect, seeks to get rid of unclean, polluting, unsightly aspects in new world class cities (Baviskar 2002; Chatterjee 2004; Gill 2006; Kumar 2011). Within this praxis, the Supreme Court of India has ordered the closure of all polluting and non-conforming industries through a series of judicial orders in the last two decades. Located in this larger dynamic, this essay tries to unravel the complex and entangled reality of Delhi's butchers – a community traditionally working in a stigmatised and sensitive occupation, now at the brink of technological, structural and spatial transformation. The essay focuses on the work and occupational life of a Muslim community in urban India[2] and analyses the implications of a modernising city on traditional, marginal and stigmatised occupations. More specifically, I analyse the impact of urban planning and transformations in the everyday context of a Muslim occupational group in contemporary Delhi. I approach the issue from the vantage point of a community of Muslim butchers in Delhi in the context of the closure of the nearly 100-year-old Idgah abattoir in December 2009 and map the transformation. In doing so, I also try to open the world of butchers: a community that is ignored in the sociology of Muslims and the sociology of occupations.

The study documents the experiences of Delhi's butchers through continuous dialogue during the relocation debate and the impact on them after the final closure of the Idgah abattoir, as they deal with changing dynamics of the occupation, particularly in the relocated mechanised, privatised environment. Through the narratives of the butchers I attempt to provide a deeper insight into understanding the work of a community engaged in a marginal and stigmatised occupation – an attempt to enter worlds that are often left unexplored or at best under explored. The research is based on a multi-sited ethnography conducted in the Idgah abattoir, in and around the modern Ghazipur abattoir, butchers' homes, meat shops, offices of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and meetings of the All India Jamiatul Quresh (AIJQ). The research focuses on Muslim butchers of Delhi, mainly of the Qureshi *biradri*; it also documents the narratives of the dalit Hindu butchers and meat shop owners and the dalit women who sell left-over animal parts. Though the gendered dimensions of the subject cannot be denied or relegated, the essay does not address the issue. It

needs to be pointed out that given the paucity of data, the political and economic scenario and the silence and secrecy often associated with an issue as sensitive as meat dispensing, particularly buffalo meat,[3] accessing the field was challenging initially, but once accepted, the butchers were forthcoming and cooperative. However, the private firm that leases the abattoir was far more inaccessible.

It needs to be flagged that there are three interconnected issues in this context which are part of the larger dynamics affecting the life, livelihood and legitimacy of the work of butchers. The first set of issues is located in the polemics around cow slaughter. The cow emerged as a symbol of Hindu nationalism in the colonial period leading to the formation of organisations like the Gaurakshini Sabha. The Constitution of India in the Directive Principles of State Policies directs the state to "take steps to prohibit cow slaughter". This has led most states in newly independent India to quickly pass laws banning cow slaughter. In the last few years, some states have passed more stringent laws against cow and bovine slaughter, particularly the states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. These laws and mobilisations against cow slaughter have put significant pressure on butchers, particularly buffalo butchers. The second set of issues may seem to contradict the first set, but meat, more specifically buffalo meat, is a vibrant and growing sector in the Indian economy and a major foreign exchange earner. The growth in the industry has changed the organisational structure, ownership, technologies and supply chain of the meat industry. Some butchers have turned exporters and suppliers[4] to upmarket meat shops and malls. This growth however benefits a very small section among butchers and does not necessarily augur well for small and medium individual and low-level butchers.[5] The third set of issues relates to the nature and course of sanitation, animal rights and the environmental discourse. Located in a particular social and class dimension, there is significant mobilisation against butchering within the pollution and animal rights framework. I have not discussed these issues at length here and focus primarily on the relocation of the workplace and its implications on the occupation. I first explain the ethnography of work and locate the marginality of butchers. The subsequent section documents the contours and complexities of relocating the Idgah abattoir. The third addresses contested terrains between policies and people through the voices from the margins.

The People and Ethnography of Work

Community, Place and Marginality

This essay focuses on butchers[6] who slaughter and dispense buffalo meat and sheep and goat meat, commonly referred to as mutton. Slaughtering in India is traditionally done manually by *halal*[7] or *jhatka*[8] method. Halal is also referred to as *zibah* and *zabiha*. Jhatka butchers belong to the Khatik caste and are dalit Hindus.[9] Muslim butchers are from the Qussab or Qureshi biradri[10] which is among the *Pasmanda* (backward) Muslim biradris in India.

By and large, the Qureshi biradri is an endogamous occupational group primarily engaged in slaughtering sheep, goats and bovines and selling meat. They are pejoratively and widely referred to as *kasai* and sometimes Qussab, while the community prefers to call itself "Qureshi". The latter is an ascribed title, possibly adopted by the biradri around the time of the caste census of 1911, when a number of castes were socially upgrading themselves. Though there are internal social, occupational and regional distinctions, the biradri has maintained linkages within the neighbourhood, the city and even across the country. The main avenues of maintaining this link are: endogamous marriages, a common occupation, loosely structured biradri panchayats (for personal and social issues like marriage, divorce and internal disputes), habitation in a common locality, and a formal biradri or caste association like the AIJQ. These networks give the community a support structure of socialisation and social control (for example, in some cases, panchayats can impose sanctions). These linkages also provide the Qureshis with a sense of security, identity, mutual aid and credit for personal reasons (marriage, birth, death, illness) and occupational reasons (expansion, renovation or initial costs of starting up) and political mobilisation in crisis. Diametrically opposed yet closely interlinked to these small close networks is the butchers' distance with the larger society, both spatially and socially. Though this is not the exact focus here, it would be relevant to briefly outline the popular perception of butchers and their occupation, and the social location of butchers in Indian society.

There has been a tendency to sensationalise and demonise butchers and their workplace. Popular culture represents butchers amidst filth and squalor and as ruthless. To quote a few instances, according to the philosopher Georges Bataille (1929), "the slaughter house is cursed – cursed and quarantined like a boat with cholera aboard" (Young Lee 2005: 7). In Victorian England, the slaughter men were considered "the most demoralised (sic) class of all" (Samanta 2006: 2001). More recently and closer home, Sam Miller, describing a slaughter space in Delhi, writes: "It was a scene of cruelty and comradeship, a giant courtyard of death and laughter" (Miller 2010: 120). The recent Hindi film *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) is another instance where butchers are shown as rough and ruthless, flashing knives at the slightest provocation.[11] In the Indian context, butchers are one of the lowest in the varna system. Slaughtering and dispensing has always been the preserve of traditionally backward caste Hindus and Muslims. Handling meat, carrion and dead animals is considered one of the most polluting occupations in the divisions of caste and labour. Butchering as an occupation and butchers per se have also always been at the periphery of the city and society. In fact, most old cities have a locality dedicated to the butchers variously known as Khatik basti, Gali Khatikan, Kasai tola, Kasai basti or Qasabpura, for instance. These neighbourhoods were located at the margins of the city while it was being planned. Anthropologists and urban historians of Delhi have also indicated the conjunction between occupation and neighbourhood.

Though there is a body of work on the walled city, Old Delhi or Shahjahanabad – the city named after and built by Shahjahan (1592-1666), the Mughal Emperor with "a passion for building" – most studies focus on the palace, gardens, mosques, and bazaars. However, the few that do talk about the lives of the city's common people highlight the importance of the mohalla (localities) as an occupational and social unit. Ehlers and Krafft (2003: 19) explain the location and planning based on occupations in the context of the city planning of Shahjahanabad.[12] Goodfriend, basing his study in the walled city of Delhi, explains how oral histories indicate that people of certain trades and occupational groups lived in specific pockets.

> Social status was reflected in distance from the Emperor's palace. This formed the basis for the social ecology of the city. Areas such as Gali Dhobiyan (washermen) Phatak Teliyan (oil pressers), Mohalla Churiwalan (bangle makers) and Qasabpura (butchers) were noted for the occupations of their inhabitants. The lower occupations were relegated to the edges of the city (Goodfriend 1983: 120).

An eminent historian of Delhi Narayani Gupta, elucidates that the poorer sections of the city were located at the city's periphery, viz, Mori Gate, Farashkhana, Ajmeri Gate, Turkman Gate, and Delhi Gate (Gupta 1981: 120). In fact, there is a mention of Qasabpura in Shama Mitra Chenoy's (1998) historical study of the walled city and a mention of a Qasab Masjid near Turkman Gate in a map of Shahjahanabad dated 1850 in Ehlers et al (1992). Needless to add, the butchers' residencies and workplace (then Turkman Gate) in the walled city were at the margins of the city and farthest from Red Fort. However, with expanding city limits, these neighbourhoods and workplaces are unwanted and resented in the middle of the city and this has paved the way for urban policies of relocation.

The People at Work

The number of people involved in the sector is difficult to estimate due to methodological reasons. It is not possible to get data from the MCD because not all the people involved are registered butchers and the number of people changes based on the day of the week and time of year.[13] According to the Jain Commission report (Jain 1994: 13), the livelihood of 40,000-50,000 people was linked to the Idgah abattoir (ibid). According to the AIJQ press release of 25 October 2009:

> The closure of the Idgah slaughter house has left about 600,000 families of Qureshi community without business. The butchers, livestock traders and people associated with the related business are deprived of their family trade.[14]

Clearly, these are two extremes. However, it needs to be pointed out that there has been a rise in meat consumption between 1993 and 2009 and the export sector has also grown substantially which might have led to an increase in the labour force associated with the meat market. Besides, the commission accounts exclusively for workforce in the abattoir while the AIJQ figure includes livestock, meat and ancillary industries.

The people involved in the meat industry or occupation broadly comprise the following: merchants, self-employed butchers and workers. Merchants include large shop owners, suppliers to restaurants and supermarkets and meat exporters. They procure the animal from the livestock market and delegate the slaughtering and other manual work to employees. Self-employed butchers are owners of small or medium-sized shops which they manage alone or with the help of immediate kin. Workers constitute the largest section of people who work in this sector, both inside and outside the abattoir. They include both skilled (butchers in the abattoir, skilled workers in shops) and unskilled workers (rickshaw or cart pullers, cleaners, helpers, animal handlers). Again, there are two distinct subdivisions among skilled butchers based on labour: the *kameldar*, who slaughters the bovines, and the *sallakh*, who slaughters goats and sheep. They work primarily in the abattoir.[15] The sallakh and kameldar are paid per animal. The worker in the shop cuts and dresses the meat. He is paid either weekly or monthly. There is also the ubiquitous *adhathi* (broker, intermediary middleman, or commission agent as they prefer being called), who are an important link in the market dynamics. Their role in the chain is necessary yet problematic. On the one hand, they do not have a good reputation because it is said they make a substantial profit in transactions, sometimes through the *hatha* system (where they do not disclose the price to the seller). On the other hand, they have an important role to play in linking the livestock market and farmers, and in helping butchers work on credit due to their personal contacts and credibility with the *beopari* (livestock trader).[16]

A Day in the Idgah Abattoir[17]

The Idgah abattoir was constructed by the colonial government in the early part of the last century, operational from 1914. According to biradri elders, there was a slaughtering space in Shahji ka Talab behind Turkman Gate[18] before the Idgah abattoir was constructed. The abattoir[19] is located in Motia Khan close to Sadar thana (police station). It covers an area of seven acres, which includes the livestock market, the abattoir and the offices of the MCD (Jain 1994), the municipal body responsible for the maintenance of the abattoir. The government owns the space and also provides water, electricity and maintenance of the space (that is, the salaries of the veterinary doctors and cleaning staff). For this, the merchant butcher pays a nominal fee per animal to the MCD. The butchers in the abattoir have a licence issued by the MCD which they are obliged to show if demanded by the officials in the abattoir.[20] The space is divided into two sections: the *mandi* or livestock market and the slaughtering area. The latter is again divided into three sections: halal, jhatka and buffalo. Due to religious reasons the halal and buffalo sections are adjacent to each other while the jhatka section has different entry and exit points within the same premises.[21]

The abattoir operates from 5 am to 12 noon everyday, except Tuesdays since this is an auspicious day for Hindus and is therefore observed as a meatless day by most people.[22] A normal day starts before the crack of dawn because the trucks (carrying livestock from Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh) ply by night and also because fresh meat has to reach the shops by 8 am. The day starts with the livestock owners

and commission agents coming and setting up shop. The shopkeepers, suppliers and slaughterers walk in soon after.

The first transaction takes place in the livestock market. It is an open area with some sheds on the side, set up by the commission agents. The livestock market is a place bustling with a variety of sights, sounds, odours, and action. At first, the place may seem completely chaotic. There is a jostle of livestock, livestock owners, animal handlers, truck drivers and their helpers, commission agents and their assistants, shop owners and suppliers and their assistants, the cart pullers and tea vendors, all making way in the same space. Amidst all of this there is also harmless fun and banter or heated arguments. Commission agents normally sit out on plastic chairs or charpoys talking with the livestock owners, shopkeepers and suppliers, or just sipping tea. The literate among them can be seen reading Urdu and sometimes Hindi newspapers. A truck driver, livestock owner or animal handler who has just arrived from a long journey may be seen washing his hands and face in a corner or feeding and giving water to the animals in lairage (waiting).

Depending on the day of the week, the shop owners or restaurant suppliers place the required demand to the commission agent. Communication often happens in a particular vernacular, which is a mix of Urdu and Arabic. The commission agent then negotiates with the livestock owner, while the helper or animal handler exhibits the animals. The meat yield is estimated through visual examination based on size, breed, age, musculature and fat distribution. Once the negotiation is over, the buyer of the livestock takes charge of the animal and proceeds to the ante-mortem section to pay the slaughtering fees to the MCD official (in occupational parlance *parchi katana,* or getting receipts) and subsequently to the slaughtering section.

Inside the abattoir, the shop owner or supplier approaches his regular slaughterer and passes on the live animals to him for slaughtering and de-skinning. The process is carried out manually, with a helper in case of buffaloes and alone in case of sheep and goat. Sometimes the job is shared by two brothers who work as a team and share the remuneration. The knife for slaughtering is called *salla* (hence the term sallaakh) and cutting the jugular vein is called *zibah karna* or *halal karna,* but in occupational parlance it is called *salla pherna*.[23] The slaughterer separates the butchered animal into three distinct commodities: carcass, waste and animal hide, each following distinct trajectories and destinations. The carcass, which is the main commodity, is sent to the meat shop, restaurant or processing unit. The hide goes to the *chamda* mandi (skin and hide wholesale market). The waste, that is, head, hooves and entrails are generally sold to dalit women who later sell them in economically deprived neighbourhoods. Work in the livestock market and slaughter house normally ends by noon. The MCD workers and some contract labourers clean the place and prepare it for the next morning. Most people go back home, take a siesta and then run errands, like getting knives sharpened or collecting dues or just socialising. However, work in the shops continues through the day and evening.

The life of the butchers primarily revolves around the mandi, *kamela* (abattoir), mohalla (locality) *dukaan* (shop), and the primary meat and by-product processing units which are located in the vicinity. People reside in specific pockets around the abattoir, namely, Qasabpura (Qureshnagar), Rakabganj, Chhatta Lal Miyan, Turkman Gate, Delite cinema (locality behind Delite theatre), Bara Hindu Rao, and Kali Masjid. These are the oldest continuing butchers' residencies in the city.[24] Work in the abattoir is embedded in a complex system of social and occupational relations. There is long-term reciprocity based on trust and mutual relations which often cut across generations between the different actors. For example, a shopkeeper will transact business with the same commission agent to procure livestock from when he started his shop. At times, the earlier generations of shopkeepers would have also interacted with the same agents or possibly even his father. Similarly, slaughtering and selling the hide and waste is also passed on to the same person that the shopkeeper has been working with since he started his shop or again possibly even a generation before that. This does not mean that relations are always static, ideal and egalitarian among the different levels and actors. Sometimes, there is mutual discord or there is a different style of working between father and son, where the son changes the set of people his father worked with or vice versa.

There is a certain rhythm and sociability between the different people at different stages. This is evident during work as well as in personal interactions. Transactions are often informal with distinct occupational expressions (which are often of Arabic origin),[25] particularly between the commission agent, merchant and slaughterer. Since the level of literacy is low, transactions are quite often verbal or illegibly written in small notebooks or scribbled on small slips of paper. There are no ledgers or legally binding records and documents, particularly in the abattoir and livestock market. Now the shopkeepers maintain proper documents for tax purposes and for the MCD. The relationship between the employers and employees is fluid and interdependent. The labour market in meat and the ancillary industries operates on small social and geographic scales within localities; most people are known to each other either directly or through word of mouth.

From Idgah to Ghazipur: Big Leap Forward?

The Story of Slaughter House Reforms

The history of slaughter houses has seen a gradual progression from individual ownership to state ownership to commercial or private ownership. Slaughter houses were initially either privately owned or the butchers slaughtered their animals outside the shop in full public view. The concept of a common abattoir was introduced in the 19th century when city regulations became important. "The abattoir, like the railway station and the department store, was a structure utterly unseen before the 19th century" (Otter 2005). In fact, the word abattoir can be traced back to 1809 and owes its origin to Napolean's five abattoirs around the city of Paris. There is a long and chequered history of transformations which made it mandatory to

slaughter animals outside the periphery of the city. This led to the construction of five public abattoirs outside Paris in 1818 followed by Versailles in 1830, Marseille in 1848 and Lyon in 1858 (Muller 2008: 47). Slaughter house reforms gradually became a phenomenon in the 19th century in various cities – Berlin (Brantz 2005), London, Mexico city (Pilcher 2005). The period saw a profound restructuring in the way butchering and the nuisance trades in general operated in cities. Objections, regulations and legislations emanated from three diverse concerns – clean cities and urban planning, environment and hygiene concerns, and cruelty against animals. These developments were also connected to other large-scale developments, like growing cities and urbanisation, population growth, new industries, the development of new technologies, expansion of scientific knowledge and the transformation of political agencies and public hygiene regimes (Brantz 2005) and underscored the shift to an industrialised society.[26]

British policies in India reflected similar thought. Oldenburg (1984), writing in the context of Lucknow, locates colonial policies of urban reconstruction along three axes – safety, sanitation and loyalty. Pushing of nuisance trades to the periphery was a significant marker in the colonial urban dynamics. Tanners, dyers, lime kilns, hide trade, and the slaughter house were high on the list of nuisance trades in the city. Such policies dispossessed economically marginal groups thereby reflecting the class divide of the colonial policymakers (Sharan 2006: 4906). Samanta's (2006) study on the Calcutta slaughter house, places the reforms in the context of an expanding army or its culinary requirement, with the pressing need for sanitation and hygiene in a burgeoning metropolis and a growing leather industry. The Idgah abattoir in Delhi, which was constructed in the early 20th century, indicates that it too was a product of the colonial discourse.

Idgah Abattoir and the Contours of Relocation

Located in diverse concerns, the issue of the Idgah abattoir has been a locus of activity for the MCD, environmentalists and the judiciary, and workers in the meat industry, particularly the butchers. Though relocating the abattoir was proposed and discussed in the colonial administration[27] in the 1930s, the issue came to the fore with the introduction of the Master Plan Delhi, 2001. In the postcolonial period, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) envisaged that the existence of noxious trades (like pottery, tanning and slaughtering) should be located outside the periphery of the city. The issue gained momentum in the 1990s through the combined and sometimes overlapping concerns of urban planning of health and hygiene, mobilisations against cow slaughter, the right-wing anti-Muslim agenda, and a proactive judiciary. There were strong protests from local residents in areas near the proposed sites and the proposals were dropped. With the Supreme Court order of July 2004, Ghazipur was finalised as the site for the mechanised abattoir but again there were objections and litigations from butchers as well as residents of Ghazipur.

In the butchers' memory and narratives, the crisis dates back to 1990 when a member of the community, Md Iqbal Quershi, filed a civil writ petition (CW no 2267 of 1990) by way of public interest litigation in the High Court of Delhi for issuing mandamus to the MCD to make the functioning of the slaughter house more hygienic. In the meantime, another writ petition (CW no 158 of 1991) was filed by some private citizens, educational institutions and socio-religious organisations including Shri Sanatan Dharma Sabha (Hari Mandir) situated in the Nabi Karim area close to the abattoir asking for "closure and removal" of the slaughter house because it was a "health hazard" and "nuisance". The court directed the relocation and modernisation of the Idgah abattoir. According to the court order, the Idgah abattoir had outlived its utility and lacked in all modern techniques of slaughtering and proper treatment of effluents. The high court in its judgment on all petitions directed the MCD to close the slaughter house with effect from

Table 1: Chronology of Main Events Leading to the Closure of Idgah Abattoir

	CW 2267/1990
1990	Iqbal Qureshi Negligence of MCD
1991	CW 158/1991 Private citizens and Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Hari Mandir Health hazard and nuisance
1992	CW 830/1992 All India Meat and livestock exporters' association To make available slaughter house for export
10 October 1992	High Court judgment Closure of slaughter house w e f 31 December 1993
1992	CW 2961/1992, Maneka Gandhi Inhumane, unhygienic, horrible conditions
March 1994	Closure of slaughter house and reduction to 2,500 animals per day
March 1994	Butchers on strike
March 1994	Formation of J D Jain Commission to give directions and observe compliance of court order
July 2004	Supreme Court orders closure and relocation to Ghazipur
October 2009	Supreme Court orders final shut down of Idgah abattoir
December 2009	Idgah Abattoir shuts down; butchers asked to work from Ghazipur

31 December 1993. The court observed that, "the existence of the slaughter house in the congested locality was proving to be hazardous to the health of the people residing in the vicinity and the conditions prevailing there were appalling". In its judgment of 18 March 1992, the court ordered the closure of the slaughter house, but if it functioned it ordered a substantial reduction in the number of animals slaughtered. As a response to the court's order, the butchers went on strike for three months. Between 1994 and 2004, the relocation plan remained on the agenda but status quo was maintained due a variety of reasons, including resistance from the butchers and protests from local residents where it was proposed to be shifted. However, on 14 July 2004, the Supreme Court of India passed an order directing the MCD to construct a modern abattoir in Ghazipur, east Delhi. The Idgah abattoir finally stopped functioning in December 2009 amidst protest and a strike by the butchers. It is now under the MCD. The structure that was once the abattoir is razed. The space is broadly divided into two sections. One part is used as a parking lot and the other as a site for an MCD plant.

The Shift to Ghazipur: Changes and Challenges

The Ghazipur mechanised abattoir was constructed between 2004 and 2008. A private firm was given the contract for construction, and they in turn handed it over to the MCD. The jhatka section was officially made operational in December 2008 followed by the halal and buffalo sections. However, the MCD could not run the mechanised abattoir when it was operating in full capacity due to logistical issues. The operating costs, particularly electricity used in running the plant, were very high (since it is a completely air-conditioned unit). It also required specialised maintenance for the hi-tech plant, a further expenditure which the MCD did not budget for. Consequently, it was leased to a private firm for a period of 10 years. The firm manages the abattoir and the old actors access it via a fee system. The firm also uses the plant for its meat export business.

There are two separate units in the new set-up: the abattoir and the livestock market, which is located approximately a kilometre away from the abattoir. A large iron gate with a guard and three smaller gates lead to the abattoir. There are four gates in the main abattoir: Gate A for the workers, Gate B is closed (possibly an emergency exit), Gate C for dispatch of meat, and Gate D for officials. The new abattoir is a completely closed unit with armed guards at every entry and exit point. Outsiders are not allowed unless they come with prior permission of the company and are shown around by the staff of the company. Though there is a class divide here, there is no designated exit for halal and jhatka sections.

The shop owners and suppliers or their representatives buy the animals from the livestock market and take them to the abattoir. There they deposit the animals and pay the fee and are given a token and wait for delivery at the dispatch gate. Sometimes they have to wait for a few hours to get the carcass and waste. The abattoir has modern amenities like stunners, cutters, conveyor belts, cleaners, rendering unit, and water treatment plant. The machinery is imported from Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and France. Workers follow the assembly line system of production. Nine workers are required in the six-step procedure. It includes: stunning, slitting the jugular vein, flaying, evisceration, splitting, washing, and chilling (the last step is not required for fresh meat sold in the domestic market). Most of the work is done on machines. Here each worker performs the same minute operation during a full workday.[28] The carcass is transported to the destination by vehicles either owned or hired by the shop owners or suppliers. The abattoir works three shifts per day catering to the domestic market and the exporters; a shift is run exclusively for the firm that leases the abattoir. It employs 450 people per shift, mostly technicians, and about 125 butchers. The butchers are properly attired; they have uniforms, gloves and boots. The interactions are professional and impersonal. Even now, the butchers are paid daily wages ranging from Rs 250-Rs 400 per day. The firm has employed a supervisor (a Qureshi from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh) who recruits butchers and supervises their work, but the butchers are not on the pay roll of the firm. The relocation of the abattoir from Idgah to Ghazipur in effect means transformation at three levels: technological change, structural reforms and spatial relocation of the abattoir. The following section documents the butchers' narratives with regard to these changes.

The Impact on Livelihoods and Beyond

This section documents the narratives of the butchers and locates them in the larger debates on occupations and urban planning.

Assigning Honour to a Stigmatised Occupation

The relocation from the traditional system in Idgah to the new system in Ghazipur signals a huge shift for the labour force. There is a shift from independent work to daily wage work. The butchers' narratives reflect this loss of independent agency in the new Fordist style of working. As Md Aquil Qureshi, president of the Delhi Meat Merchants' Association,[29] put it: *Ye ek azad kaam thha lekin ab ye bandish mien hai* ("This was an independent occupation, but now it is in chains"). For the butchers, working independently was one of the mechanisms with which to assign honour and prestige to their work. Hence the loss is deeply felt by most. Though some butchers feel their work to be arduous and messy, they also feel it is important. However, they take great pride in, and associate immense prestige with, their occupation. As Mushtaq, a slaughterer in Idgah, put it: *Ye koi aam kam nahin hai. Taaqat aur mushaqqat ki zaroorat hai* ("This is no ordinary work one needs strength and skill"). Butchers assign skill and masculinity to the occupation. The expertise is passed on and often confined to close kin and members of the biradri through an apprenticeship. According to Hughes (1962), society delegates dirty work to people who act as agents on its behalf and then proceeds to stigmatise them. However, the people involved in such occupations have "arrangements and devices by which men make their work tolerable and even glorious to themselves and to others" (Hughes 1971: 342). An empirical study by Hannah Meara (1974) on Turkish butchers and American meat cutters explicates how people in marginal occupations delegate honour to their work. This is also reflected in Searle-Chatterjee's research on the sweepers of Varanasi: "they (the sweepers) consider their work to be dirty rather than polluting and that in most cases they attribute lowliness to the power rather than the superiority of others" (1979: 284).

Labour and Livelihood Concerns

For the people working in the Idgah, there are three major shifts in terms of labour patterns: (i) exit from the occupation; (ii) shift to Ghazipur; and (iii) transfer of labour from Delhi.

(i) Exit from the occupation: When a sector is modernised there is a shift from a labour-intensive to capital-intensive sector, hence the most obvious and tangible impact is clearly on livelihood. The change has affected the livelihood of people in two specific ways. One, the old skill becomes redundant in the wake of new technology and, two, a mechanised unit needs fewer labourers. This was clearly reflected in Zakir's narrative,

a kameldar interviewed in Qasabpura in December 2010: *Pehle kaam milta thha ab yun hi phir raha hoon* ("Earlier I used to get work, now I am just loitering around"). However, the government did not provide viable exit options to those who would have to opt out of this occupation, particularly those who are older than 50 years of age and hesitant about learning the new skill. *Main 52 saal ka hoon, kya is umr mien phir se padhai karoon*? ("I am 52 years old, should I go to school at this age?") (Rafiq, slaughterer, December 2009.) These people are now mainly unemployed. Sometimes they work for festivals where animals are sacrificed, like Bakr Id and the Aqiqa or naming ceremony of new-born Muslim children. They normally go from Qasabpura to other Muslim neighbourhoods on Bakr Id and work for the festival. Though they earn well on these occasions, these opportunities are few and far between and definitely not a regular source of income. Studies on the Indian labour market (Harriss-White 2003) show its segmented nature and how it is at best difficult and at worst impossible to get access to the labour market without specific contacts. The Sachar Committee report also indicated that India's Muslims face discrimination in the job market. Being Muslim, particularly "kasai", further complicates and reduces their employment chances outside the meat and livestock sector.

(ii) Transfer of labour to Ghazipur: Members of the Qureshi biradri say that just 25-30 boys from the biradri have been absorbed in the new set-up where 5,000 were earlier working. Previously, the slaughterers were paid per animal. Now they are paid daily wages, which, as they say, is also not on a regular basis. According to Jameel Qureshi, one of the butchers who shifted to Ghazipur immediately after the relocation in December 2009:

> In Ghazipur, I earn Rs 300 a day. But I spend Rs 100-150 per day for food and conveyance. The company does not provide anything else apart from the daily wage; no medical facility, no holiday, no transport or dearness allowance, not even a cup of tea. On certain days I went to Ghazipur, and did not get work, those were the worst days because I spent money on commuting but did not earn. I used to earn 500-600 in a day at Idgah and that too in less number of hours and spent nothing, lunch was always at home.

(iii) Transfer of labour from Delhi: The butchers present an interesting contradiction to the general trend of migration to Delhi. A group of butchers from Qasabpura Delhi now travels to neighbouring towns in Uttar Pradesh for work:

> As I met with an accident on way to Ghazipur abattoir, since I would lose the day's work if I reported late, I ran behind a bus and fell from the running bus. After that incident I don't go there anymore. I commute to Hapur everyday. It is very far, but the wages are better. I get Rs 500 a day and am assured of work there (Rahil bhai, slaughterer, December 2010).

The butchers mention that sellers and makers of specialised knives are also affected. The leftovers and hides are also often retained by the company and delivered directly to the leather factories. So a range of suppliers and the first stage and second stage processing units in the by-product industries also stand to lose in the changed dynamics of the meat industry.

Social and Occupational Linkages

Closely related to livelihood issues is the access to livelihood in small and connected geographical and social networks. In Idgah, each merchant or shopkeeper had a regular set of slaughterers that they worked with. Naushad says, *Ye pata hota thha ki hamare kaam hai kal subah, lekin ab koi guarantee nahi hai* ("We knew that we would have work tomorrow, but now there is no such guarantee"). Personal ties and relations are important in recruiting labour (Hanson and Pratt 1992). Shaw and Pandit (2001), for instance, indicate that local labour markets often work on small geographic scales and are based on "place-based" interactions of employers and workers. Coming from different geographical regions and sectors, there is a range of literature which emphasises the relevance of local and social ties. Nadvi (1999) demonstrates that social networks, based on kinship, family and localness, influence production relations in the case of the surgical instrument cluster of Sialkot in Pakistan. Substantiating her work with strong field-based inputs from Arni town in Tamil Nadu, Harris-White (2003: 177) has flagged the importance of "caste-clustering" in contemporary occupations. According to Ben-Porath (1980: 1), "Some transactions can take place only between mutually or unilaterally identified parties".

The importance of trust embedded in social networks and relations as a risk-minimising strategy is reinforced in a study on the livestock trade in Kenya (Mahmoud 2008). Studies indicate strong linkages between the social and the occupational domains.[30] In the Indian context, literature emphasises the relationship between trade and occupational networks as being associated with certain castes and communities. Though most of this literature focuses on business communities and networks, it nevertheless highlights the critical link between social and occupational ties. According to Harish Damodaran, "economic behaviour is embedded in concrete social relations, wherein actors are seldom atomised individuals or anonymous buyers and sellers with no past record of interaction" (2008: 1). Vidal and Cadene (1997) identify kinship, credit and territorial links as the three critical factors in the "webs of trade". According to Gupta and Channa, "In the Indian world view an occupation is not simply an economic pursuit. There is a specific link between caste and occupation specifically so among the "service castes" (1996: 103). In their study on the zardozi workers of Delhi, they illustrate that "biradri" as a "localised community provides economic and social security to an otherwise disadvantaged group". For a sensitive occupation like butchering, this social and personal network is of crucial significance. It would be relevant to point out that since butchers worked within the local networks, personal relations and the engagement with the employer were direct and strong. This is not so in their engagement with a private firm.

Access, Space and the Familiarity of Space

Since the abattoir is now leased to a private firm, the butchers have lost direct access to the workplace. They now access it through the firm. Their main angst is losing access to the abattoir. They locate their problems to the leasing of the abattoir to

a private firm. When a butcher passed away after a massive heart attack in the livestock market, they said that it was due to the stress of the business. There is a gradual withdrawal of the state by leasing out the abattoir to a private firm. This has made the butchers totally dependent on a private agency. The butchers are conscious of this concern and articulate it: *Allana aye ya Allana ka bhai aye ya koi bhi private company aaye, wo toh apna hi fayda dekehnge, hamien sarkar ki madad chahiye takay hamien kisi ke agay majboor na hona pade* ("Whether it is Allana [referring to Frigorifico Allansons, the firm that runs the abattoir] or Allana's brother, or whoever it maybe, a private company will seek its own interest. We seek the support of the government so that we are not forced to depend on anybody") (Sadiq Qureshi, Qasabpura, December 2010.)

Most butchers grapple with the loss of familiarity of space, which is a physical, economic and emotional struggle for them. This cannot be quantified and explained in absolute terms. However, the occupation and the Idgah abattoir as a site are closely intertwined with the basic socio-economic fabric of the biradri. Referring to the chaos in Idgah, Niyaz wistfully pointed out *Us bhheed mein ham sab ki ek jagah thi* ("All of us had our place in that crowd"). According to Wacquant (2007: 241), marginalised urban populations identify with and feel "at home and in relative security" in socially filtered locales. He considers such spaces as humanised and culturally familiar spaces and the loss of such landscapes is in effect a "the dissolution of place" for people at the margins.

Policies and People: Contested Terrains

The butchers say they were not actively consulted during the planning or construction of the abattoir. Hence there is a gap between the services and the people who use them. There are practical issues with the new set-up which have an indirect yet crucial impact for the butchers. This section briefly points out some of these practical and everyday concerns.

Increase in cost: Since the abattoir was mechanised and leased out, the nominal fees that the merchants paid for using the MCD space has increased from Rs 5 to Rs 50 for sheep and goat and from Rs 50 to Rs 250 for buffalo.

Rise in transportation costs: Since the abattoir in Ghazipur is about 20 kilometres away from Idgah, the butchers, particularly at the labour level, have to spend about Rs 50 to Rs 100 per day in commuting, which is a substantial drain on their wages. For meat shop owners this means that they have to spend more money to transport meat, adding to the already increased fee. The distance from the abattoir to the meat shop also means they have to bribe officials along the route even if they have the parchi or required papers from a certified abattoir. According to Afaque, an affluent meat shop owner in central Delhi, "the longer the distance the larger the bribe".

Loss of time due to distance: Since meat is a highly perishable commodity, time is of crucial significance for the butchers. Fresh meat needs to be sold at the earliest, particularly in the summer months, between April and October. Butchers often suffer losses due to the time spent in transporting the product from Ghazipur as well as the time spent waiting at the Ghazipur abattoir for the meat to be delivered.

There is now a much more stringent restriction on the amount of meat they can access and this is limited to two small or one large animal per shop. According to butchers, this rule is in force since 1994. However, it is more strictly implemented by the firm because they would like to wind up the shift at the earliest so they can use the plant for their own work. Referring to the reduction in meat supply to the shopkeepers, Kishanlal articulates, "Delhi just had one railway station, now there are six. So you deal with the needs of a growing city. How come these concerns are not shown, when it comes to meat?" (president Jhatka Association, Karol Bagh, Delhi, January 2011).

Corruption and bribing: The relocation and lack of access has also compelled some to resort to illegal slaughtering in their living spaces. Apart from the health concern, the bigger issue for the butchers is the corruption they are willy-nilly part of. In case of a raid, either the shop is sealed or a large amount of money is paid as bribe to health department officials and the Delhi police. As Shahid says, "For us the choice is simple, either bribe or starve". It needs to be flagged that only the well-off butchers are able to pay up and extricate themselves.

Sensitivity in transporting meat, especially buffalo meat: Previously, since most of the meat shops or processing units were located in the bylanes of the abattoirs in Idgah, this was not a concern. However, transporting meat and waste from east Delhi, the butchers fear, can be a sensitive issue, particularly since they have to cross the Akshardham temple complex.

Technical issues of mechanisation: According to the butchers, the machines used in the mechanised abattoir are not suited for Indian conditions, since Indian cattle are of smaller breed. The machines are not suited for the smaller breed of animals, since they were designed in Europe and meant for the larger animals. Indian bovines are leaner and therefore are sometimes unable to survive the stunning process which results in losses. Also, there is a religious and practical issue associated with the stunning of animals before slaughter. Both Muslim and Hindu butchers feel that stunning affects the quality of meat and reduces the shelf life of fresh meat in a tropical country. Deep freezing and air-conditioned shops are increasingly becoming necessary to preserve meat. This in effect means better and more expensive infrastructure and higher electricity costs. Such transformations reflect a deeper process of recasting urban spaces.

In the larger picture, the structure of the meat industry is changing rapidly. Setting up and running a mechanised industrial plant needs substantial capital. This has resulted in the emergence of a few relatively large firms owning the entire chain of production, from the livestock to meat and beyond. These transformations have changed the structure of the industry in such a way that lower or mid-level butchers find it

difficult to become part of the new system. Shop owners also find it difficult to compete with firms which work on the economies of scale and also have the ability to absorb short-term losses. However, the transformation is most tangibly felt by the skilled butchers who now work as labourers and constitute the largest section of people in this occupation.

Conclusions

Primarily through the narratives of the butchers, I elucidate how the changing dynamics have affected the butchers' lives and engagement with their long-term occupation.[31] Though there are class differences among the butchers as well as a difference based on the sphere of activity, people at all the different levels in the occupation battle occupational and practical issues resulting from the change. They have all been affected in varying strengths and degrees. The butchers and particularly the Qureshi biradri resisted relocation from the very outset. They were vociferous about the fact that the abattoir be modernised in the same premises. One of their initial demands was to renovate but not relocate. Their initial concerns were distance from their residence, redundancy of their traditional skill, adjusting and learning a new skill, and losing the familiarity of working in Idgah. Though the initial concerns are still relevant, leasing the abattoir to a private firm has presented them with a far more complex situation to deal with. State leasing of government-owned property to private agencies has created new conditions of control access and ownership. The privatisation of a public space is creating new urban cultural economies.

Butchering is an occupation which finds itself at the cusp of colonial urban policies, social aversion, religious sensitivities and a fast changing modernising city. While urban India is growing and reconfiguring in various ways, these spaces are not including within it marginal occupations like butchering which are somewhere being submerged in the deluge called the "urban turn". Butchering has been a marginal and stigmatised occupation across geography and history and each phase of planning the city just pushes the abattoir and its workers more towards the periphery. The above narratives explain how this marginality is being sharpened in the context of the current transformations, leading to new and more nuanced forms of urban marginalisation.

The change has tangibly reduced and altered butchers' livelihood chances. The assurance that came with occupational membership and a skill set no longer guarantees livelihood opportunities. Often, butchers do not have the economic wherewithal or education to move out and get employment in other sectors. Butchering as an occupation has clear linkages with the social and spatial life of the people. Because they are often spatially and socially peripheral, marginal sections are at best embedded or at worst confined in these contexts. Such networks are important in seeking employment and more importantly offer a moral and social safety net which the butchers are now clearly deprived of. Planning, modernisation and mobility of the sector has not necessarily resulted in upward mobility for most butchers and slaughterers. The slaughterers who gained employment in the new set-up moved from independent to daily wage work. I do not argue that people should be confined to the same traditional occupation over generations. But this entry and exit should be a matter of choice rather than being pushed out because they cannot compete in the changed dynamics. Last but not the least, there is a deep disconnect between how butchers view their lives and their work and the state's notions of hygiene and modernisation which excludes the butchers from the process. These issues are worth considering with regard to proposed abattoir relocations and mechanisations in other cities, and also the modernisation of traditional occupations.

NOTES

1 For recent literature on urban transformations see, for instance, Bapat (1990), Banerjee-Guha (2009), Butcher and Velayutham (2009), Desai and Sanyal (2011), Dupont (2011), Lama-Rewal and Zérah (2011), Mahadevia (2008), Shaw (2007), Shaw and Satish (2007). For studies that provide specific insights into the informal sector in neo-liberal economies focusing on livelihood issues see Sharit Bhowmik (2005), Bhowmik and More (2001) on the street vendors and Shinoda (2005) on the sweepers of western India. Gill (2006) and (2009) "field economics" approach to poverty analysis, using a mix of survey and ethnographic data to challenge received notions of the nature and extent of narrow income poverty and multiple deprivations experienced by those working in the informal waste recovery and plastic recycling economy of Delhi. A detailed analysis of specialisation, capital, and value in various segments of this labour-intensive, "green" informal market is undertaken, with explicit recognition of its wider social and political institutional context, and how it is shaped by unequal interactions with civil society and the state. In particular, the book focuses on the identity and agency of subordinate scheduled caste groups-living literally and metaphorically on the edge of the city-in negotiating "a decent life" in today's neo-liberal environment. The case studies of the ban on recycled polythene bags and the industrial relocation order illustrate the channels through which these actors collectively seek to resist the perceived anti-urban poor status quo, driven by powerful middle class coalitions through legislation or judicial fiat, with varying degrees of success. In doing so, the book exposes the complex, and at times contrary, policy reality binding poverty and deprivation, formal and informal markets, the state and citizenship in contemporary urban India". Kaveri Gills *Of Poverty and Plastic*, (2009) analyses the impact of environmental legislation on people in the informal waste recovery and plastic recycling economy of Delhi. The adverse impact of globalisation on small-scale industries, with specific reference to the household units engaged in manufacturing locks, is addressed in Sharma et al (2005). Whitehead and More (2007) explain how the spatial restructuring of Mumbai is pushing manufacturing units and the working classes to the suburbs and periphery of the city.

2 There is also a new and growing literature on Muslims in Indian cities which incisively outlines that Muslims in Indian cities are spatially segregated in distinct enclaves. See, for instance, Shaban (2010), Gayer and Jaffrelot (2012) and Gayer and Mahajan (2011). Some of the main themes in this literature focus on violence, spatial segregation and social exclusion.

3 Cow slaughter has been a sensitive issue in the Indian political landscape and even the cause behind Hindu-Muslim riots in the past. The Gaurakshini Sabha, 1882 (cow protection committee) started by Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj was one of the potent markers of the Hindu revivalist movements in the 19th century and provoked a series of communal riots in the 1880s and 1890s. Most states in independent India, except West Bengal, Kerala and the states in north-east India, prohibit cow slaughter, hence buffaloes are slaughtered. The Constitution of India, in the Directive Principles of State Policies, directs the state to "...take steps to prohibit cow slaughter..." The anti-cow slaughter campaign gained momentum again in 1966 for a national ban on cow slaughter which also resulted in communal riots. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been actively campaigning for a law banning cow slaughter since it came to power in 1998. In recent times, The Supreme Court, in a trend-setting judgment, reversed a 36-year-old ruling and upheld the constitutional validity of a

Gujarat law imposing a complete ban on slaughtering of bulls and bullocks, often misused to get around the ban on slaughter of cows. Since September 2005, the Narendra Modi-led BJP government in Gujarat, with support from the opposition, has banned bovine slaughter. It is also banned in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In March 2010, the Karnataka assembly also passed a bill banning the slaughter of cattle. In February 2010, a delegation of religious leaders presented a memorandum – signed by over 80 million people – to then president, Pratibha Patil, demanding the complete ban on cow slaughter in the country and for the creation of a separate ministry for the protection and promotion of Indian cow breeds. The 20-member delegation included Baba Ramdev, former Rashtriya Swayam Sewak (RSS) chief K S Sudarshan, Gokarna Peethadhishwar Shankaracharya Shri Raghaveshwar Bharati Swamiji and Sadhvi Rithambhara, among others. For details on anti-cow slaughter see, for instance, Hansen (1999), Jones (2007) and Jha (2011).

4 A supplier supplies directly to the shop or restaurant or he may supply to a second-level supplier who cleans, trims and freezes the meat in a processing unit which he then supplies to the meat shop or restaurant.

5 Suppliers can buy better and pay more hence affecting livestock pricing and quality, consequently increasing the price of meat. Since small and medium-level shops are often located in lesser affluent neighbourhoods, business is affected.

6 Due to religious and occupational reasons, there are distinct domains for chicken, mutton, buffalo meat, and pork. Some shops sell both chicken and mutton, but pork and buffalo meat are always sold in distinct shops. A few upmarket shops and meat sections in malls sell chicken, mutton and pork, and also sea food under the same roof, but these sections are generally either segregated or the products frozen and sealed.

7 Halal is the process of slaughtering as per the Islamic shariat. The jugular veins are slit by the butcher who recites a Quranic verse thrice and, if uttered with proper reverence, he is exonerated from the guilt of shedding blood.

8 Jhatka, literally meaning blow in Hindi, is the process of slaughtering an animal in a single stroke. It is the preferred process of slaughtering by Hindus and a mandatory requirement for Sikhs. The jhatka method is used for all Hindu sacrifices.

9 Hindu and Muslim butchers have distinct social and occupational domains. They also have different intermediaries and suppliers. The relationship is mostly cordial and functional; for instance, they discuss critical issues like the relocation but maintain distinct social domains.

10 The idea of caste in the classical sense is contested in Islam, purely on theological reasons. However, it cannot be denied that Muslim society in India is a population divided into many different groups each with its own unique history and culture which could be studied apart from the whole in its own terms (Ahmad 1978; 1983; Alavi 1972; 1995; Ali 2002; Ansari 1960; Bhatty 1996; Jairath 2011). Though stratification among Muslims is not identical to the Hindu caste system, there is a differentiation and stratification of sorts, based on occupation, endogamy and residence. Imtiaz Ahmad referred to this as "caste like formations". Various terms are used to define these categories among Indian Muslims: *nasl*, *zat* and biradri (also transliterated as *beradari*, *biradree*, *baradari*, and *beradari*; it originates from the Persian word *biradar* meaning brother). According to Hamza Alavi, a biradri is a basic unit of social organisation.

11 Séverin Muller (2008) flagged and critiqued this inclination to demonise the site and the people in his ethnography of an abattoir in north-west France.

12 Ehlers and Krafft describe the division of the city's space into public (thoroughfares, roads and bazaars), semi-private (the alleyways of the mohallas for instance which could only be reached through several gates) and private (courtyard houses).

13 Market activity is higher in winter. But there are lean phases during Hindu religious festivals, particularly during the nine-day *navratri* festival which is observed twice a year – once before Shivratri in March-April and immediately before Dussehra in October. Sometimes, wholesalers and suppliers prefer to buy and store meat (if they have freezers) and sell it when the demand is higher. But mid-level and small shopkeepers still rely on fresh meat.

14 According to its constitution, the AIJQ is a "social organisation of the Quresh community" or in Hindi "*Quresh biradri ki Akhil Bharatiya samajik sanstha*" established in 1924 and registered under the societies Registration Act XXI of India, 1860.

15 The abattoir is a very male domain and working there is considered by butchers as very masculine. The young men in the abattoir and mohalla often draw inspiration from masculinities depicted in Hindi cinema – from either the main lead or the anti-hero – whoever is depicted as more masculine.

16 Denis Vidal, in his study on networks in the grain market, also highlights the importance of the adhathi. For details see Vidal (2000).

17 Though the terms slaughter house and abattoir are often used interchangeably, there is a difference in origin. The term slaughter house was used at the time when there were small and privately-owned slaughter houses. With the sanitation and hygiene discourse gaining ground, there was a special area like a large hall designated outside the city for slaughtering purposes. The term gained coinage with Napolean's five abattoirs (constructed by the state) outside the city of Paris in the 18th century; hence the word abattoir comes from the old French word *abattre* (to come crashing down). There are three kinds of abattoirs in India: municipal slaughter houses (like Idgah, where basic services are provided for the butchers at a nominal fee for the local retail market), government slaughter houses (for example,
the Deonar abattoir in Mumbai) and private abattoirs (owned and managed by a private firm for a small domestic market but primarily the export market). The former are also known as meat processing plants or industrial slaughter houses.

18 This corroborates with historians like Narayani Gupta who say that the poorer sections of the population lived in the periphery of the walled city, in areas like Turkman Gate.

19 Though the Idgah abattoir has been dysfunctional since December 2009, I describe it in the ethnographic present rather than the past because that is the way I documented the work.

20 Meat shops also have a licence. This rule came into effect in 1904, see Gupta (1981).

21 The jhatka section was added to the Idgah abattoir in the immediate post-independence period. This was also the time when cow slaughter was banned in Delhi and only buffalo slaughter permitted.

22 The abattoir is closed for three days during the biannual Hindu Navratra festival. This has been practised since 1994. Apart from these holidays, the state government or central government may declare a meatless day to observe festivals like Mahavir Jayanti for instance.

23 This work is done by the butcher in the abattoir although earlier a maulvi (priest) would first slit the jugular vein while reciting Quranic verses. This practice is still followed in Kolkata, for instance. Interview with Shamshu, meat shop owner, Hogg market Kolkata, 17 December 2008.

24 There are also some old butchers' residencies in neighbourhoods like Basti Nizamuddin and newer pockets in areas like Seelampur and Inderlok.

25 For instance, *khammas raas* means five heads or specifically five animals in occupational parlance. In Arabic, *khams* means five and *raas* means head.

26 However, there was resentment to this change among butchers (Muller 2008). The class dimension of health, hygiene and animal' rights concerns was also critiqued by scholars, which problematises the simplicity of the situation.

27 For details on the colonial discourse around modernisation and urbanisation, see, for instance, Sharan (2006).

28 It needs to be pointed out that Fordist system of assembly line production where each person does a specific task in the larger process started with the meat packaging industries in Chicago way back in the 19th century. In fact, it is argued that Henry Ford drew inspiration from this system as well as from Oliver Evan's automatic flour mill which was patented in 1785.

29 In an interview in November 2010.

30 There is a disciplinary debate between economists and anthropologists of over or under emphasising the role of social ties. This was also raised by Geertz (1978: 28) between what he termed "substantivists", who see the market as an institution so embedded that it escapes the realities of the real world, and "formalists", who define it as a purely competitive extension of the neoclassical market. Granovetter later addressed the above issue but argued that "all market processes are amenable to sociological analysis and that such analysis reveals central not peripheral features of these processes" (Granovetter 1985: 505).

31 They are not without agency; they have also addressed and engaged, protested and mobilised themselves throughout the debate, which again is beyond the purview of the present paper. But I have addressed this in an earlier work, "Resistance in Contemporary Urban India: The Delhi Abattoir and the Politics of Relocation", a presentation at Pune University, February 2008.

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