

There are a large number of pastoralists and pastoral groups in the state of Maharashtra which one of the largest in India . The pastoralists belong to several different groups such as Dhangars , Gawlis , Gollas, Kurumars , Mathura Lamhans, Bharwads. We rear different animals including cattle , sheep , goat , buffalo , horses , ponies,poultry under nomadic, semi nomadic and migratory systems . In Maharashtra we are clubbed together under the category Nomadic Tribes ( NT) .

We live close to nature and the products produced by the animals we rear are natural and of high quality . As our animals graze on a variety of different fodders and medicinal herbs the quality of the milk and meat produced by us is special. The dung from our animals fertilises fields helping in organic food production . Some of our animals provide fibre which is an important item in the rural areas. However, we have been neglected by the state and it's policies . This is largely because we are not organised. Our nomadic lifetsyle makes it difficult for us to come together unlike other communities.

Through this manifesto we request the state of Maharashtra to understand our problems and our concerns so that policies in future are made keeping in mind the special problems faced by nomadic and migratory communities .

## **Pastoralists Manifesto Maharashtra 2019**

### **Identity**

- 1.1) Migratory pastoral communities in the state are often denied access to various government services and schemes as they do not have proper identification documents or papers such as birth certificates, ration cards or Adhar cards . The state must initiate programs to ease the process of obtaining these documents.
- 1.2) We request that pastoralists who migrate should get special identity cards.. We further request that their migratory status be accounted for in their Aadhar cards .
- 1.3) Migratory pastoralists are often the victims of harassment, exploitation and criminalisation. Women, children and senior citizens from the communities are particularly vulnerable . Special provisions are to be made to ensure the security of migratory communities especially when on migration . It is requested that these migratory groups also be able to avail the benefits of the Atrocities Act that the SC and ST communities currently enjoy.

- 1.4) Pastoralists and their livestock are to be included in the Census records . Special efforts to be made to include those families who are on migration when the census is taken
- 1.5) For those pastoral groups who rear dairy animals and produce milk, opportunities for representation in local dairy unions must be there.

## **2. Knowledge systems**

- 2.1) Programmes for the protection and conservation for livestock breeds reared by pastoralists should be initiated.
- 2.2) The traditional wisdom and knowledge especially with respect to rearing animals must be acknowledged and respected.
- 2.3) Research on the value addition of products produced by pastoralists should be encouraged so that pastoral communities can get more income from their livestock .
- 2.4) Programs to incentivise the production of organic livestock produce should be developed.

## **3. Services**

- 3.1) An enabling market environment for the production and sale of livestock products from pastoral groups is to be created.
- 3.2) Pastoral Producer Groups on the lines of Farmer Producer Groups to be encouraged
- 3.3) Veterinary services should be made easily accessible and available for migratory pastoralists. Mobile veterinary services and laboratory facilities would help track disease, monitor and survey outbreaks and help improve public health.
- 3.4) To ensure safety of pastoralists and that of their animals,while on migration good quality tents , nets, solar lamps , power banks, mobile chargers should be made easily available .
- 3.5) In the state of Karnataka, if an animal dies in an accident the owner is paid a compensation of five thousand rupees per animal. Can a similar provision be made in the state of Maharashtra?

## **4. Access to Resources**

- 4.1 ) Pastoral groups depend on grazing lands and the commons. Diversion of these lands to other use such as industry, infra structure , wildlife sanctuaries has created several problems

for migratory groups . Pastoralists who depend on these grazing lands must be consulted before land is diverted to other use.

- 4.2 ) A comprehensive fodder policy needs to be drafted keeping in mind the concerns of migratory pastoral groups and their requirements .
- 4.3 ) Traditional migratory routes and grazing patterns to be mapped in consultation with pastoralists
- 4.4 ) Bans on grazing in sanctuaries, reserved forest areas, grasslands and other areas to be reviewed . New plans for the management of these lands are to be made in consultation with migratory pastoralists.
- 4.5 ) Some forests and grazing lands hold sacred and cultural significance for pastoralists as our gods and deities reside there . By banning entry into these areas we are denied our cultural heritage . These too should be reviewed.
- 4.6 ) Migratory communities need access to water for their well being as well as that of their animals. Future water policies must be drafted keeping this in mind .
- 4.7 ) When traditional pastures are lost to dams or other development projects, it severely affects pastoralist communities. Migratory routes are disrupted , grazing lands submerged and livelihoods destroyed . A system of compensating these groups for their loss must be planned for, when these development programmes are initiated.

## **5 Education**

- 5.1 ) Mobile schools, creches and nurseries specifically for the children of migrating pastoralist communities should be planned for so that children of migratory communities are not deprived of an education.
- 5.2 ) Provisions should be made that children of migratory communities can travel with their parents and attend schools in different villages. The facility exists in certain parts of the state where transfer letters are provided by the heads of schools to children from migratory households .
- 5.3 ) Residential schools and hostels of high quality must be created for pastoral children where children are also imparted knowledge on livestock care and management, fodder varieties, migration and herding etc.

## 6 New Opportunities and Avenues

6.1) Due to the decrease in grazing land several people are being forced to exit pastoralism. Without opportunities or facilities for a proper education it is difficult for these people to find jobs which can sustain them with dignity . Alternative skills and livelihood opportunities need to be taught to pastoral groups especially the youth from these communities to enable them to take up alternate occupations.

6.2) For those members of migratory pastoral groups (eg. Dhangar, Gawlis , Bharwad, Maldhari, Mathura Labhan, Kurumar etc.) who wish to sedenterise , provisions for purchasing land for a permanent homestead or for furthering other occupations need to be made.

6.3) The government brings out schemes for pastoralists . A recent scheme of the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Maharashtra Mendhi Va Sheli Mahamandal namely the Raje Yashwantrao Holkar Mahamesh Yojana was inaccessible to needy shepherds as it was made available only online through the internet . Several shepherds are not educated and do not have access to the internet . Further, an eligibility criterion for applying for this scheme was that the applicant should have undergone training in sheep rearing from the Corporation . We demand that this condition/criterion be relaxed for traditional sheep rearers as it makes a mockery of the knowledge and wisdom of traditional pastoralists.

Signed

Pastoral groups representing Dhangar, Gawlis , Bharwad, Mathura Labhan, Kurumar, Golla communities across the state of Maharashtra

This document was prepared with the help of Anthra and CPC