

Rawhide Based Entrepreneurs: An Assessment among the Rishi Dalit of Tala Upazila of Bangladesh

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Abstract

This paper examines the scenario of work and livelihood patterns of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community of Tala Upazila (sub-district) under the Satkhira district of Bangladesh. Its main concern is to focus on different dimensions of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in managing their services such as average working hours, income, the average cost per activity, value, availability of raw materials, preservation days by experience, place of sale, and material for preservation, etc. The study mainly relies on primary data collection through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) among the 25 rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community in a Upazila. It also highlights that lack of high technology, appropriate training, and financial support, they cannot complete the whole process of leather. To improve the raw leather-based service appropriate measurement should be taken immediately to protect and preserve this old service.

Keywords: Rawhide, entrepreneurs of rawhide, rishi Dalit, livelihood, working environment

1.0 Introduction

Rabindra Nath (50), a leather entrepreneur, highlighted:

I buy animal hide from the market and I use salt for processing and preservation. Then, within one week, I sell these hides in the big wholesale animal hide market at Natore. Many people think that, by investing money for a short time, one can do a brisk business during the Eid-ul-Adha (when goats and cattle are sacrificed and their hides are sold). For this reason, around that time, many new or inexperienced businessmen get into the hiding business. Actually, having no idea about the market price, they purchase hide at a high price and have to sell it at a low price. But, as an experienced entrepreneur, I take a calculated decision, observing the whole market during the Eid-ul-Adha, and buy hide at a profitable price.

Currently, a few the rishi entrepreneurs like Rabindra Nath are engaged in serving rawhide processing, using their limited resources, without support or intervention. But their livelihood cannot assure them a livelihood in modern Bangladesh.

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Dalit communities, especially the rishi people, constitute a marginalized group but one with great potential: if they could be integrated into Bangladeshi society. In the rishi community, rawhide-based rishi Dalit entrepreneurs collect raw leather from house to house, local market, or community level during the festival or to meet the daily animal meat demand. After collecting the animal hides they preserve these and sell them in the wholesale hide market without involving the activity of leather strip by using modern technology. These entrepreneurs are victims of human rights violations, limited employment opportunities, fragile livelihoods, and low social status. Yet rawhide-based entrepreneurs play a very important role in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh generally and so could the rishi Dalit, if they would be accepted as equals with other entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship development is an important aspect of rawhide-based entrepreneur empowerment. Dalits need to be encouraged to start-up businesses in order to improve their economic standard of living as well as to improve their overall status in the economy. If Bangladesh is to live up to the agenda of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the slogan of which is "No One Left Behind", Bangladesh will have to address the obstacles faced by rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community urgently. Bangladesh is proud of its record of having one of the best levels of achievement on the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000-to 2015 and wants to do the same with the SDGs. Here is one way to accomplish that goal but it is not a way that the Government or people of Bangladesh have thought much about.

If this article can help Bangladeshi and international readers to understand who these Dalit entrepreneurs, especially rawhide-based entrepreneurs, really are, this can help to create a demand for their services. That will help these entrepreneurs to play a more significant role, as they rightfully should, in Bangladesh's drive to make the SDGs reality by 2030. That can be this article's contribution to the development both of the rawhide-based entrepreneurs and of Bangladesh.

Most rawhide-based entrepreneurs do not have any institutional knowledge for delivering their services and even they have no knowledge of the contemporary progress of rawhide processing. These, along with a lack of social capital, make the situation of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in Bangladesh vulnerable.

Traditional rawhide processing through the entrepreneurs of rishi has a diverse and profound impact on the cultural context of Bangladesh, thus making a substantial contribution to the rural economy of the country. Yet the lives of the rawhide-based entrepreneurs of the rishi Dalit community represent a tale of unmitigated misery,

neglect, discrimination, deprivation, and marginalization. A major focus of this article is to try to understand and explain that paradox as well as suggest how we can reverse it. Yet first, the least we can do; is to give them a voice: we must hear their stories to understand their lives. This article attempts to give a systematic description of rawhide-based entrepreneurs of the rishi Dalit community by understanding their life and livelihood pattern.

2.0 Review of Literature

In Bangladesh, in recent years, a good amount of research reports on Dalits have begun to emerge. These are mostly done by various national and international NGOs, UN agencies, and other donor agencies. The focus of these studies is mainly the understanding of the situation and problems of Dalits such as their process of marginalization and issues of their human rights. Lately, Government has begun to include the issues of Dalit marginality in their policy discourse. However, it is limited to maintaining the quota systems for Dalit employment. Serious theoretical and academic literature on urban Dalits has begun to emerge. Studies by Uddin (2015) can be mentioned here. Uddin (2015) attempted to shed light on the vulnerability of Dalits from a theoretical lens proposed by Nancy Fraser (2007). Uddin argued that unless and until Bangladesh's nation-state and dominant mainstream society recognize the identity and cultural diversity of Dalits, all initiatives mostly by international donors to reduce the suffering of Dalits would not be successful. Ainoon and Hasan (2015) provide a detailed account of the socio-economic life of urban Dalits in Bangladesh. Their study focuses on the process of marginalization of Dalits by the wider society. The study also provided important insights into understanding the complex dynamics of urban Dalits society in contemporary Bangladesh.

The term 'entrepreneur' was first introduced into English, from French, in the early 18th century. The meaning is a kind of businessperson buys who factors of production in order to combine them into new products to sell: a small-scale value-adder. Actually, entrepreneurship as a creative activity that leads an entrepreneur to be innovated to introduce something new in society (J. A Schumpeter, 1955). This untouchability is usually found among the people of Dalits. If we want to understand the Dalits, we have to understand the Hindu caste system. Properly speaking, the full complex of attitudes, beliefs, and activities that comprise castes are found not only in India, although some of the processes inherent in the institutions are far more general (Murphy, 1986: 159). RishiDalitss experts at this: it is a part of their culture and they have survived on it for centuries. Each family has tended to specialize in a certain set of inputs, got to know their markets thoroughly, and then produce a limited range of products from them at a minimal level of cost. They add value partially by the combination of inputs and

partially by their labor, which is always the main feature of their production process. Their craft and art alone add significant value and differentiate their products in the market. Actually, rishi Dalits entrepreneurs have been subject to socio-economic exploitation through their engagement in low-income-generating occupations. Through the comparative study of many human cultures, past and present, anthropologists have gained an understanding of the basic characteristics evident in all of them. Every culture is an integrated and dynamic system of adaptation that responds to a combination of internal factors (economic, social, ideology) and external factors (environmental, climatic). Within a cultural system, there are functional relationships among the economic base (infrastructure), the social organization (social structure), and ideology (superstructure) (Haviland, 2008:47). But Dalit community is socially excluded from mainstream society. In scholarly literature, some scholars consider social exclusion to be synonymous to poverty, while others consider it as a means to explain poverty. Social exclusion can be defined as the “inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life and, in some characteristics, alienation and distance from mainstream society” (Duffy 1995: 17). Social exclusion is a multidimensional concept (Room 1995: 3). Scholarly literature on Dalit Communities explores how the Dalit struggle to survive in Bangladesh they lack basic services and live with no or inadequate housing.

Cosimo Zene (2002) focused on the changing relationship over time (1856-1994) between the Rishi, an ex-Untouchable jati of Bengal/South-West Bangladesh, and various groups of Catholic missionaries. The book's originality and importance lie in its multi-disciplinary approach which combines anthropological fieldwork, historical research, philosophical inquiry, and contemporary missiological debates. Moreover, it addresses issues of great current relevance in its discussions of Orientalism, Neo-colonialism, and Otherness. Mazharul Islam and Altaf Parvez (2013) highlighted a short mapping of the situation of Dalits in Bangladesh as well the actors who are working to protect and promote the rights of Dalit and excluded communities, this book focuses on the evolution of Dalit identity, forms of discrimination, violation of rights, and situation of Dalit based on secondary sources of data. Abdul Barkat et al, (2008) contradicted the basic spirit of the proclamation of and the basic premises of the Constitutional provisions of “equality, equity, freedom, and justice for all citizens.” This book advocates for abolishing this Act and returning the properties affected by the Enemy/Vested Property Act to their legal owners and/or inheritors, especially the Hindu minorities.

The finding of this article is totally different from the aforementioned competing titles chiefly due to its pedagogical features, its presentation of empirical research-based data, and compilation of case studies that reflect the contemporary

status of the rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi-Dalit community. In addition, it gives a substantial account of the economic potential of rawhide-based entrepreneurs and how their contributions can alleviate their status and the economic downturn they have been experiencing aside from social discrimination. In the Indian sub-continent, where most of the studies conducted on similar issues mostly focus on discrimination, untouchability, sub-human condition, etc., this article integrates the rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community with their potential; which could prove to be the key to unlock their economic potentials through discrimination-free entrepreneurship development.

3.0 Methodology

This is an empirical, explanatory, and analytical study. A combination of approaches has been adopted to collect qualitative and quantitative information. It is now widely recognized that there is no one best method for collecting data. A combination of methods was used to elicit information related to research objectives and questions. Several methods such as social surveys, focus group discussions, and observations were applied for this purpose. Seasonal calendar and SWOT analysis were collected from the rawhide-based entrepreneurs, concerned stakeholders, and individuals. Available data were incorporated through the tables, and boxes wherever applicable. The fieldwork of this study was conducted in thirteen Rishi paras from the Tala Upazila of Satkhira District, a south-western district of Bangladesh. There are 4,011 Rishi households are dwelling in 37 villages of 12 unions of the Tala Upazila (sub-district). From this population, all rawhide-based entrepreneurs were selected which makes up a total number of 25.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to identify the life and livelihood patterns of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community. The specific objectives of the study are:

- to know the average working hours, daily income, average cost per unit, value, availability of raw materials, preservation days by experience, place of preservation, and sale palace;
- to explore the problems and potentials; and
- to identify the area of intervention for the betterment of rawhide-based entrepreneurs.

3.0 Rationale of the Study

Entrepreneurship development is the key factor for ushering in the economic prosperity and well-being of any developing country. The available information on rishi Dalit entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is mostly on their social and historical trajectories, lack of access to basic services, and the nature of their marginalization. However, research on rawhide-based entrepreneurs in relation to their services is rare. No attempt has been made to understand the inner dynamics of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community and their potential, which is important for any future intervention. The present study provides systematic qualitative information about traditional rawhide-based entrepreneurs residing in the southwestern part of Bangladesh, especially in Tala Upazila (sub-district) in the Satkhira District. This study has been designed to provide qualitative as well as quantitative information for understanding their services. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide input to undertake appropriate action for the development of rawhide-based entrepreneurs in the rishi Dalit community.

4.0 Scope of the Study

The major areas covered by the study are livelihood patterns for measuring rishi Dalit entrepreneurs, the procedure of services, problems faced by entrepreneurs, and also focus on their potential issues by using different tools and indicators. The main variables considered to achieve the objectives of the study are year of experience, hours of work, daily income, per unit value, cost and earning, problems, and potential of rawhide-based based rishi Dalit entrepreneurs.

5.0 Findings of the Study

Hiding an animal needs more skill and art than one might realize. Within a few minutes, the whole animal must be completely skin-free, the skin must come off in one giant piece, but the only instrument which can be used is a small knife. How many of us could do it or even know how to start?

After the rishi expert accomplishes that task, which would be impossible for the less skilled, the oily hide is then left out to dry. The entrepreneur adds a thin layer of salt to prevent the rawhide from rotting. The sight of these animal hides, hanging over a bamboo pole, is one way to know that one is in a rishi community in a culture where signs are few.

Rawhide is considered to be a valuable raw material. During Muslim religious feasts, many cows and goats are slaughtered, for food or for sacrifice, which is a godsend for rishi who know what to do with their rawhides. (FAO, 2009). Still, they rarely get

such godsend: the majority of rishi who deal in rawhide earn the barest minimum of income needed to survive. The problem is that the entrepreneurs lack the cash to purchase that critical mass of animal hides needed to produce a sufficient income. Those whose goats and cows have been killed will not allow rishi to run up and hide their dead animals for free: because it is well-known that the skins have a market value. There are companies or larger business organizations which will buy all the owners' hides and cart them away at a more-attractive price, then process them into leather clothing and accessories for sale. So the rishi gets a few hides that they can afford and do with them what they can. For centuries, that has been their story.

The marketing channels for hides and skins are geographically analogous to the administrative division of the country: that is District, the town ("Upazila"), and groups of villages ("union"). A typical marketing channel of hides and skins has been illustrated by Raha (1989): the processing of dead animals goes from producer-farmer to rishi to butcher to faria to bepari to the trader to aratdars and last to tannery (TICI, 2005). The rishi starts the process by the "disgusting" work of collecting the hides. They have no refrigerated facilities to build a stock of hides or bargain for the best price. They have to move the hides quickly or lose them to the flies and dogs. So, after flaying the animals, they sell the hides immediately to traders. The rishis travel several miles, mostly on foot, bicycle, or van, to carry their hides to a trader they know, who will deal with them. For not everyone will not talk to, let alone trust a rishi.

Not enough research has been done on the hides and skins market in Bangladesh. Stephens (1977) studied the leather market and recommended improvements in flaying, curing, and a grading system for hides and skins. Chowdhury mentioned that two Government-appointed committees studied constraints on the development of leather and leather-based industries and suggested ways and means for improvement (1982). Chowdhury conducted a study and identified the defects in the process of flaying, curing, and handling hides and skins: he made recommendations for the healthy growth of the industry.

Table 1: Average year of experience, hours of work, and daily income

Experience (Years)	No.of entrepreneurs (%)	Average		
		Year of experience	Hours of work	Daily income (BDT)
Below 6	5 (20.00)	3.80	9.40	330.00
6 to 10	7 (28.00)	9.42	7.85	438.57
11 to 20	7 (28.00)	17.28	7.50	483.33
21 to 30	3 (12.00)	30.00	9.33	487.90
31 +	3 (12.00)	36.66	7.00	450.00
All	25 (100.00)	16.24	8.14	488.48

Source: Field Work, 2019

Information is elicited from 25 entrepreneurs on average experience, hours of work, and daily income from rawhide occupation (table-1). The analysis of the above table indicates the average experience is 16.24 years, working hours is 8.14, and average daily income is 488.48 BDT. The table again shows that rawhide-based professional with 21 to 30 years of experience works 9.33 hours and their daily income is 487.90 BDT whereas with 6 years' experience group work 9.40 hours and their daily income is 389 BDT.

Table 2: Average per-unit cost, revenue, and earnings by type of rawhide

Type of hiding	Average per unit			Per unit revenue (BDT)	Earning (BDT)
	Cost (BDT)	Other costs (BDT)	Total cost (BDT)		
Goat					
Large size or over star	95.00	30.00	125.00	205.00	80.00
Medium size	65.00	25.00	90.00	145.00	55.00
Small (male) size	28.00	22.00	50.00	109.00	59.00
Small (Female) size	26.00	22.00	48.00	81.00	31.00
Cow					
Large size (hybrid)	2130.00	127.00	2257.00	3100.00	843.00
Medium size (hybrid)	1958.00	123.00	2081.00	2700.00	619.00
Large size (local)	1647.00	116.00	1763.00	2500.00	737.00
Medium size (local)	1250.00	97.00	1347.00	2230.00	883.00
Calf	653.00	53.00	706.00	1168.00	462.00
Poor quality	200.00	45.00	245.00	313.00	68.00

Source: Field Work, 2019

Earnings vary according to the size of the hide, with some premium for a hybrid instead of local animals and, of course, large discounts for poor-quality hide.

Table 3: Distribution of place of rawhide collection by experience

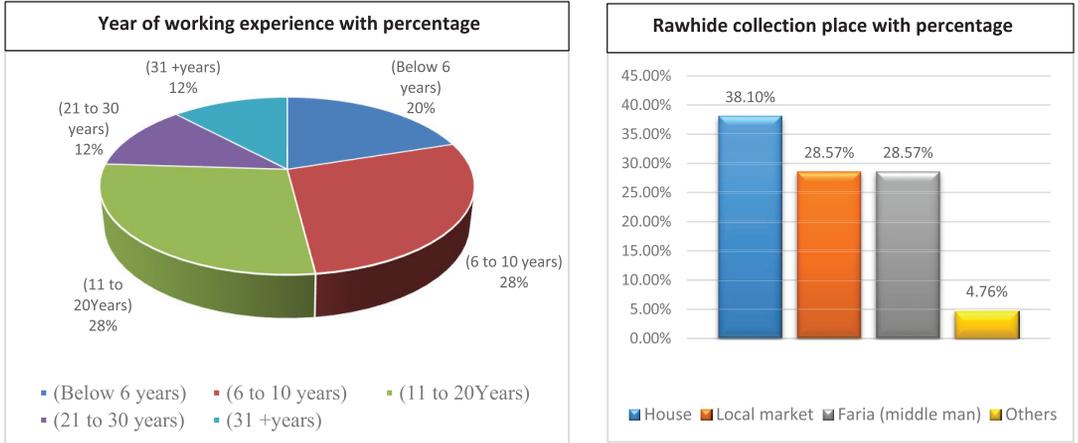
Experience (Years)	No. of households (%)	Place of raw skin collection (%)				
		All	House	Local market	Faria (middle man)	Others
Below 6	5 (20.00)	7 (16.67)	3 (7.14)	2 (4.77)	2 (4.76)	-
6 to 10	7 (28.00)	13 (30.95)	5 (11.92)	4 (9.52)	4 (9.53)	-
11 to 20	7 (28.00)	13 (30.95)	4 (9.52)	4 (9.52)	3 (7.14)	2 (4.76)
21 to 30	3 (12.00)	4 (9.52)	1 (2.38)	1 (2.38)	2 (4.76)	-
31 +	3 (12.00)	5 (11.91)	3 (7.14)	1 (2.38)	1 (2.38)	-
All	25 (100.00)	42 (100.00)	16 (38.10)	12 (28.57)	12 (28.57)	2 (4.76)

Source: Field Work, 2019

N.B: Due to multiple responses, household numbers have been increased from 25 to 42. Each household reported that they collected rawhides from one or more places.

Most entrepreneurs collect hides from the homes of the animals’ owners or from the local market although middlemen play a significant role.

Figure 1: Experience and place of rawhide collection by the entrepreneurs



Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 4: Days of temporary preservation for cow and goat hide by year of experience

Experience (Years)	No. of households (%)	Cow (%)			Goat (%)		
		Below 5 days	More than 5 days	Average days	Below 5 days	More than 5 days	Average days
Below 6	5 (20.00)	1 (4.00)	4 (16.00)	11.4	2 (8.00)	3 (12.00)	9.50
6 to 10	7 (28.00)	-	7 (28.00)	12.3	-	7 (28.00)	11.80
11 to 20	7 (28.00)	1 (4.00)	6 (22.00)	10.9	1 (4.00)	6 (24.00)	12.90
21 to 30	3 (12.00)	1 (4.00)	2 (9.00)	9.8	1 (4.00)	2 (8.00)	8.70
31 +	3 (12.00)	-	3 (12.00)	13.2	-	3 (12.00)	12.90
All	25 (100.00)	3 (12.00)	22 (88.00)	11.7	4 (16.00)	21 (84.00)	12.03

Source: Field Work, 2019

Most entrepreneurs preserve hides longer than 5 days before selling these.

Table 5: Distribution of sales place of rawhides by experience

Experience (Years)	Households (%)	Sale place (%)	
		Local market	Big market
Below 6	5 (20.00)	1 (4.00)	2 (16.00)
6 to 10	7 (28.00)	5 (20.00)	1 (8.00)
11 to 20	7 (28.00)	6 (24.00)	3 (4.00)
21 to 30	3 (12.00)	3 (12.00)	-
31 +	3 (12.00)	3 (12.00)	-
All	25 (100.00)	18 (72.00)	7 (28.00)

Source: Field Work, 2019

Most entrepreneurs sell their hides in the local market, rather than in the big market where they may get a better price. For some reason, the less-experienced entrepreneurs sell in the big market. Perhaps the more-experienced entrepreneurs have developed close personal connections in the local market over time, whom they would like to stay with. Perhaps, if they have “tied up” the local market, the newer entrepreneurs are forced to try their luck in the big market: a blessing in disguise.

Stories of Rawhide Entrepreneurs

Case Study 1: Piku Dash

Piku Dash, 42, son of Monindro Das and Abala Rani Dash. He is married to Monika Rani Das. Piku Dash finished his education in primary school. He has one son in high school and one daughter in primary school. Piku says that he started going to the local market with his trainer when he was only 10 years old, to help him carry the hides from home, where he helped to salt them. Later Piku collected the hides himself. The trainer gave him BDT20 plus food. After that, Piku was involved in the slaughtering of goats owned by his trainer. For this work, Piku got to hide and goats' guts. Later still, Piku ran the enterprise by himself, for which he was paid BDT25-30 per kilogram of hides processed. Then Piku purchased hides from his locality and sold these in the local market of Patkelghata Powerhouse at Khulna and became an entrepreneur in his own right. Now he collects a huge number of hides and sells these in the big rawhide wholesale market in Jessore. Then Piku began to purchase whole hides from his village. In addition, he purchases the goats from the markets and supplies goat meat for marriage ceremonies. Piku said that the people from his locality evaluate his work neutrally (without caste prejudice) because, in his area, the rate of education is very high. In this aspect, the role of Christian schools was very salutary. Piku drives a rickshaw as the Hazaribag tannery does not always pay a fair price, or only makes partial payment and wants to pay in installments. Piku has a shop on the riverside where he meets many rawhide businessmen and from here he has trained more than 15 people. Regarding raw leather, Piku says that the knowledge of the current generation is inadequate. Many Muslims are now involved in the rawhide business. Yet there is no longer any religious discrimination. During Eid-ul- Adha, Muslims purchase the cowhide at TK500 when the real price is TK2000. Piku concludes that the rawhide business is quite profitable. The table below summarises his argument.

Table-6: Purchasing, processing, and selling price of the skin of cow narrated by Pinku

Type of skin	Purchasing Price (BDT)	Amount and cost of salt	Processing	Selling Price (BDT)
Holder Skin (Cross, hybrid, or weight of 200 or 240 Kilogram)	2000-2200	6 KG salt (6X18=108)	Remove flesh from the hide using a knife and then wash the rawhide in freshwater. After washing, add salt to the rawhide then dry in the sun. This is enough to preserve the hide for more than one month. Then the processed rawhide is sold to the local leather businessman or sold in a famous skin market. But those who purchase the raw leather for making drums must add lime after heavy washing and drying.	2800-3200
200 kg weighted cow's skin	2000-2200	5 KG salt (5X18=90)		2800-3000
180 kg weighted cow's skin	1500-1800	5 KG salt (5X18=90)		2400-2500
80 kg weighted cow's skin	1000-1200	2 KG salt (2X18=36)		2200-2300
Heifer skin	700-800	2 KG salt (2X18=36)		1500-1600
Native cow's skin	500-600	2 KG salt (2X18=36)		1000-1200
Hide of calf or poor quality of the hide	100-150	2 KG salt (2X18=36)		250-300

*per mound needs one-kilogram salt and the price of per kilogram salt is BDT19

*if the skin is 50 square feet then the per feet price is BDT.80, Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 7: Purchasing, processing, and selling price of goat hide

Type of skin	Purchasing Price (BDT)	Expenditure for salt	Processing	Selling Price (BDT)
Over star (36 inches in length) and there is no spot on the skin	100	1 KG salt =BDT.18	Remove flesh from the hide using a knife and then wash the rawhide in freshwater. After washing, add salt to the rawhide then dry in the sun. This is enough to preserve the hide for more than one month. Then the processed hide is sold to the local rawhide businessman or sold in a famous rawhide market. But those who purchase the raw hides for making drums must add lime after heavy washing and drying.	200
Under star (below 36 inches length) and there is no spot on the hide	50/60	1 KG salt = BDT.18		140/150
Male hide	20/30	1 KG salt = BDT.18		100-120
Female hide	20/30	1 KG salt = BDT.18		80-100

Source: Field Work, 2019

As a successful entrepreneur, Piku Das has now four assistants (Noju Sheikh, Harun Mollah, Modhu and Khogen) who help him in running the rawhide business smoothly. To meet all necessary expenses including the salary of Assistants, he earns TK.20000 per month on average.

Case Study 2: Rabindra Nath

Rabindra Nath is a leather entrepreneur. His father and forefather were also involved with the business of rawhides. At just 15 years of age, he has been associated with the business. Now he is 50 years old Parbati Rani Das is his wife. Their eldest son is a candidate for a Higher Secondary School Certificate and their daughter is studying in grade- 6.

He purchases per cowhide from BDT500 to BDT2000 and for processing of this rawhide he uses 2 to 4kg salt for preservation. Then within one week, he sells this rawhide from BDT700 to BDT2200 in the big wholesale rawhide market at Natore. He purchases per goat hide from BDT30 to BDT180 and for processing of this hide he uses only 500-grams of salt for preservation. Then within one week, he sells this hide from BDT30 to BDT2000 in the big wholesaler rawhide market at Natore. He purchases per buffalo hide from TK1000 to TK1200 and for processing of this hide he uses 5 to 7 kg salt for preservation. Then within one week, he sells this hide from TK1600 to TK1700 in the big wholesale rawhide market at Natore. He purchases sheep hide per piece from TK70 to TK80 and for processing of this hide he uses only a half kg salt for preservation. He collects this hide from the different markets and then within one week, he sells this leather from TK100 to TK110 in the big wholesale leather market at Jessore, Natore, or even in the same local market where he collects this hide.

There are 8 to 10 rawhide warehouses in the local Patkelghata market. As an entrepreneur he has a warehouse room equivalent to 0.05 acres and the monthly rent of that warehouse is BDT3000. He purchases hide each Wednesday. However, he cannot do so every year. Exports are low and domestic sales are also very low, Rabindra says. He reports sadly that the sacrificed hides (from Eid-ul-Adha) of the previous year remain in his warehouse. Due to many alternatives, the use of rawhide is decreasing day by day. When they sell hide to the big companies, often the companies fail to pay all the money: most is often unpaid as it is totally export-oriented. For this reason, Rabindra says, Government should take various initiatives to solve this problem. Before taking up this profession he was a butcher. Those who want to use less salt dry this rawhide in the sun. He added that, by using salt, he dries water out of the rawhide, so the quality of the hide does not deteriorate. According to Piku, two months after Eid-ul-Adha, when Muslims sacrifice cows and

goats to Allah, the leather business is still good. During the two months following Eid-ul-Adha, the volume of business far exceeds the total business that goes on during the rest of the year.

Many people think that, by investing money for a short time, large returns may come from the rawhide business during the Eid-ul-Adha. For this reason, many new or inexperienced entrepreneurs invest at this time. Actually, they purchase the skin at a high price but sell it at a low price. But, as a traditional entrepreneur with long experience, he observes the market during the Eid-ul-Adha and makes the right decisions. Rabindra says that, during the regime of President Ershad (1982-90), the price of rawhide was very high because hides were processed quickly by a blue machine. However, due to this process, the hide was not treated as a durable product in the global market. Then the prices for rawhide collapsed.

Chart 1: Seasonal calendar of raw leather process

Duration	Level of Satisfaction	Description
April-May	Average	They get news wherever the cattle are slaughtered. Frequently they collect it from the local markets
June-July	Average	
August-September	Average	They collect rawhides during the different festivals
October-November	Average	
December-January	Average	
February-March	Average	
Overall Comments: The peak times of the year are during the moveable lunar feasts of the Muslims, when many animals are killed for food or religious sacrifice (<i>eid ul fithar and eid ul Adha</i>) Source: Field Work, 2019		

Chart 2: SWOT analysis of raw leather

Strength	Weakness
<p>There are few barriers to entry: little capital or training is needed and the work can be done anywhere a suitable rawhide is found.</p>	<p>Demand is seasonal The work is not difficult but not attractive The stench can be a problem</p>
<p>The work can be done by an individual/ a group The salt, knives, and few other inputs needed</p>	<p>There can be hostility from neighbours and the community to having such a business among them</p>
<p>are easily and cheaply available With practice and skill, the work is not difficult</p>	<p>Profits are not high Marketing channels are limited</p>
<p>Market information is easily available</p>	
Opportunity	Threat
<p>Minimum investment can generate maximum profit and more investment Low cash requirement helps get through lean times</p>	<p>The work is not eco-friendly Risk of disease Payment is unreliable</p>
<p>Additional profit may come through more labor or effort Entrepreneurs can supplement income with other work or business</p>	<p>Competition from inexperienced new entrants depresses prices</p>
<p>With capital and training, <i>rishis</i> could integrate skinning, tanning, and leather goods production to even out seasonal demand and survive the competition.</p>	

Source: Field Work, 2019

6.0 Major Observations Regarding Challenges

- Rawhide-based entrepreneurship can be done individually or in a group. It is a seasonal business and one can get more money by investing more in labour;
- The whole process of rawhide can be done only by using salt;
- Rawhide-based entrepreneurs' work environment is unhealthy and much of it is done in unsanitary, un-savory or unhygienic; there is a chance of being affected by some contagious diseases like anthrax, consequently, in the present situation, it is not an environmentally friendly job;
- Entrepreneurs are facing marketing challenges;
- Other alternative livelihood opportunities for rawhide-based entrepreneurs need to be identified due to their seasonal job nature;
- Entrepreneurs need subsidies to be economically viable and capable of assuring a secure and sufficient livelihood ;
- Often the quality of inputs used in rawhide processing is not really up to the mark: centuries of poverty have created a culture of making do with whatever is easy- and cheaply available and “near enough is good enough”;
- No proper storage facilities due to poverty;
- Entrepreneurs need occupational and entrepreneurial training;
- Raw hide-based entrepreneurs have significant export potential, while the rishi has neither the capital, the awareness, the overseas network, or the training to exploit;
- Rawhide as ancient prejudices wither away, there is the threat of Bengali intrusion into traditional rishi occupations, with a better connection to a wider market and more capital, creating competition that rishi cannot withstand and this will increase over time.

7.0 Recommendations

The following strategies can be recommended for the development of rawhide-based entrepreneurs and leather-related other relevant stakeholders of the rishi Dalit community for a viable economy in Bangladesh:

- The rawhide-based entrepreneurs who have more than 30 years of experience need to be used as a trainer for disseminating their skills and expertise.
- In contemporary, the value of rawhide is very low but the price of the finished product is very high, so modern technology for processing rawhide should be introduced among the rawhide-based entrepreneurs with the intervention of the state.

- The government of Bangladesh can allocate some fellow land like an economic zone in a remote place from the locality where a group of rawhide-based entrepreneurs can work together for making the finished leather by using hide. In addition, those who are experts in making footwear and leather goods among the rishi Dalit community can also work there. The whole activity can be monitored by the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) and the Institute of Leather Engineering & Technology (ILET).
- Different social media can play a positive role in promoting their entrepreneurship as they traditionally handled this situation very smoothly. Side by side encouraging community-based rawhide and other leather-based entrepreneurship rishi Dalit-based various entrepreneurs should be formatted with the help of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIS), Bangladesh Folk Arts and Crafts Foundation, and Small & Medium Enterprise Foundation. Through implementing the proper application of research-based knowledge the association will play a continuous role in improving the quality of products.

8.0 Concluding Remarks

Rawhide has low barriers to entry and can be done with minimum capital, training, tools, and education. However, the experience of Muslims with sacrificing animals every year means that this trade is not so disgusting and low-status that non-rishis will not do it. That means the rishis are facing competition not only from one another but now from anyone: there are far more Muslims than rishis in Bangladesh and the Muslims prefer to buy from other Muslims. The danger is that the rishis could be isolated into a very small, poor segment of the market at the lowest possible prices over time, which is not sustainable. The business is, like most rishi businesses, seasonal and not that profitable already. Bankrupt, itinerant animal skimmers have little bargaining power and are getting cheated by large, successful tanneries who simply don't always pay the full price due for the hides: and when the hide is transferred, so is the rishis' security. The work is disgusting and unhealthful, nor do neighbours welcome such a stinking, bloody, disease-spreading operation in their communities. It is yet another rishi trade with a not-so-great present and a murky future. Strategically, the best option is vertical integration: the rishis should not only hide the animal but then process and tan the hides and make them into leather goods for sale. But that would take a level of capital, training, and machinery/chemicals that the rishis do not have and can never acquire on their own.

Raw leather processing as a traditional service has both social and economic importance as means of a sustainable source of revenue. This type of service is viewed as entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. The results of the study indicate the importance as well as the utility of rawhide processing in rishi Dalit entrepreneurs of a sub-district under Satkhira district of Bangladesh. It also focuses on the overall livelihood scenario of raw rawhide-based entrepreneurs for providing their services. The only explanation for rawhide seems to be cultural and the low social status of the rishi Dalit: something “only a rishi would do”. For once, their low social status is protecting the rishis’ income. The activity of rawhide-based entrepreneurs should be recognized and supported with the help of government and non-government organizations. Scholars have observed increasing evidence that there is a substantial causal relationship between entrepreneurship, economic growth, and poverty reduction. It is believed that the growth of entrepreneurship ventures increases the money flow in the economy, in other words, triggers the circulation of money within the economy, creates job opportunities, and ultimately enhances the living standard of the society and of the economy. Certain measures can be taken to remove the obstacles to the development of raw leather-based entrepreneurs in the Tala sub-district level as well as the whole of Bangladesh.

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