



Cruelty against Livestock

Lipakshi Rathore

Student of University College of law, MLSU, Udaipur.

ABSTRACT

This article presents a brief study about the 'cruelty' that is committed against 'livestock'. It discusses the meaning, object, history, statistics & prevention strategies of cruelty against livestock. Animal cruelty is a crucial topic that needs to be addressed on a large scale. Every time when someone encounters any kind of abuse against an animal, they should protect the animal & report it immediately. These innocent voiceless creatures need our help and we need to be stand by them.

Introduction

"Life is as dear to a mute creature as it is to a man" -Dalai Lama.

Animals, whether tame or wild, inhabit a pious role in our Indian culture. But inhumanity and violence against animals has crossed all the boundaries. Animal cruelty not only includes monstrous killing but repeated torturing and neglect to provide essential food & care to animals. Every day cases related to animal abuse are reported but it is just a thin end of the wedge because most of the cases don't get reported.

Statistics show that-

- Around 5 Lac animals are hurt and killed and even raped between 2010 and 2020, according to a report of India Today.
- India has been given a "C" under the Animal Protection Index (API) and declared as an average performer under the Sanctioning Cruelty Category.
- In India, up to 2, 50,000 animals become victims of hoarding per year.
- More than 115 million animals, mostly dogs, cats, pigs, rats, birds get killed in experiments for food, drug and chemical testing every year, all over the world.

These animal cruelty statistics have shown that how grievous the position of animals is.

Meaning of livestock

Livestock are tamed animals that are kept for different uses & profit. They are kept to produce labor and various products like milk, meat, eggs, fur, wool and leather. They are raised particularly on a farm or ranch but they are different from pets. Poultry is exception here. They differ from country to country. In some countries, livestock include primary cattle, sheep, alpaca, horses, pigs, goats, donkeys & mules and in some other areas, animals such as buffalo, oxen, camels, reindeer & yak dominate.

History

At the time of revolt of 1857, Hindu and Muslim sepoys in the army of East India Company, came to know that their paper cartridges' gunpowder were greased with cow and pig fat, which hurt the sentiments of hindu and muslim sepoys and resulted in 'sepoy mutiny'. After a few years **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** demanded the closure of *cow slaughter* from the British and recommended the formation of *Go-Samvardhini Sabhas*. Later in 1870, cow protection movements had grown tremendously in Punjab, Rohilkhand, North-West Frontier Province and Oudh state [now Awadh]. The *Arya Samaj* played a huge role in converting the people's sentiment into a National Movement.

In 1882, the first *Gaurakshini Sabha [cow protection society]* was established in Punjab and the movement outstretched in North India, Bengal, Central provinces, Bombay and Madras regime. From 1880 to 1893, around hundreds of *Gaushalas [cow shelter homes]* were opened. These organizations used to rescue stray cows and nurture them in 'gaushalas'. Movement for cow protection reached at its peak in 1893. Large public meetings were holding in Nagpur, Banaras and Haridwar to oppose the beef-eaters. Around thirty-one to forty-five *communal riots* broke out in the period of six months and 107 people were killed approximately.

Some significant leaders of the *Independence Movement* such as **Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malviya** and **Rajendra Prasad** opposed cow slaughter and suggested a ban on cow slaughter, after India gained its independence. In 1940, one of the Special Committees of the Indian National Congress declared that the slaughter of cows must be totally prohibited, whereas, on the other side, another committee of the congress resisted the prohibition on cow slaughter by stating that the meat and leather of the cow would help in earning foreign exchange when sold or exported.

After independence, the Central Government directed the State Governments through a letter, on 29 December 1950, not to implement total prohibition on slaughter by stating that “Hides from slaughtered cattle are much superior to hides obtained from the fallen cattle and fetch a higher price. A total ban on slaughter would be detrimental to the export trade and work against the interest of the tanning industry in the country.”

In 1955, **Seth Govind Das** who was a senior congress member of parliament and independence activist, drafted a bill for nationwide ban on cow slaughter but the then prime minister **Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru**, strongly opposed this national ban and claimed to resign if the bill got passed in the parliament. Later, the bill was failed by a vote of 95 to 12. Prime Minister J. Nehru stated that the individual states can make their laws on cow slaughter and called the nationwide ban as a “wrong step”. **Jayaprakash Narayan**, an Indian politician and independent activist, also wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in 1966, for a ban on cow slaughter but the Prime Minister did not accept the demand.

Slaughter

In India, the slaughter, especially cow slaughter is disputed because cattle’s status is loved and revered among those people who follow religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Cattle slaughter has been curbed by different reasons – Faith in the principle of Ahimsa [non-violence] followed by Jainism, Lord Krishna’s bond with cow is a symbol of love, respect and protection mentioned in Hinduism.

Here are some key highlights that will present the condition of livestock –

- As per the data of, ‘20th Livestock Census’, there are about 305.86 million bovines [cattle, buffalo and yak], 75.38 million sheep, 9.08 million pigs, 145.76 million goats and approx. 900.10 million poultry is present in the country.
- According to an April 2023 report of the ‘US Department of Agriculture’, India is the 2nd largest beef exporter in the world, exported more than 1.8 million tons of beef that year. US come after India, as it sells a large part of its beef domestically.
- India is the largest producer of buffalo meat. In 2018-19, India exported 70.62% of its buffalo meat production, contributed to 1.28 million tons of deboned buffalo meat, valued as 25,570 million rupees [US \$ 3.91 billion].
- According to an ‘Export report’, 2022, India is the 11th largest exporter of sheep and goat meat. India exported \$80.65 million of sheep and goat meat that year.
- According to the statistics of, ‘Export data for Dairy Products’, India ranked 1st in milk production in the world, with a 27% of global production.
- India is the 3rd largest producer of eggs in the world, with a production of about 4.2million tons [75.62 billion] of eggs per year.
- India is the 7th largest producer of chicken meat in the world, with a production of 4.2 million tons, per year.
- As per an ‘Export report’ of 2022, India is the 46th largest exporter of pig meat in the world, exported worth \$3.87 million of pig meat that year.
- According to a June 2024 report of, ‘Council for Leather Exports’, India is the 2nd largest exporter of leather garment, 3rd largest exporter of saddlery & harnesses and the 4th largest producer of leather goods in the world.
- As per a research, in India, the slaughter rate for cattle as a whole is 21%, for buffaloes it is 42%, for pigs 99.2% and 43% for goats.
- Statistics show that, in India, there are about 4,100 licensed & authorized slaughter houses but 27,350 unauthorized or illegal slaughter houses.
- “Cattle theft” is prominently done by the organized groups or mafia gangs, who pick up the cattle and sell them to these ‘illegal slaughterhouses’ for meat production.
- According to a report of, ‘Mercy for Animals organization’, around 1.8 land based animals are slaughtered per year, on the basis of consumption by per person.

These data show that, India is way more ahead than most of the countries in cruelty against farm animals.

Legislation

Laws against cattle slaughter has been made in most of the states and union territories of India. 20 out of 28 states have made different laws regarding the regulation & prohibition of cow slaughter and sale of cow’s meat. In these states & union territories there are no restrictions on slaughtering of cows

– Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Meghalaya, Nagaland, West Bengal, Tripura, Mizoram, Puducherry, Daman & Diu and Dadar & Nagar Haveli. The ban regarding cow slaughter in J&K was revoked in 2019.

In February 2017, the Supreme Court ordered the State Governments to cease illegal slaughterhouses and set up implementation committees to monitor the treatment of animals, used for production of meat and leather. In a landmark judgment of 26 October 2005, the Supreme Court confirmed the constitutional validity of anti-cow slaughter laws, administered by State Governments of India.

The “preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice” is Entry 15 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, meaning that the States have exclusive power to make the laws regarding the prevention of slaughter and conservation of cattle.

On 26 May 2017, the Ministry of Environment of the Government of India, led by Bhartiya Janta Party, put a ban on the sales & purchase of cattle for slaughter at animal market all over the India, under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals statutes. Even though the Supreme Court discontinued the ban on sales of cattle in its judgment, given in July 2017 and gave relief to beef and leather industries.

Importance of livestock

India has the largest livestock population which accounts for 21.5% of cattle, 43.11% [111.27million] of buffalo, 159.77 million of goats, 74.96 million of sheep and 9.08million of pig population for meat, milk and fiber production [as per a report of Government of India,2017].

Livestock are known for producing food of high nutritive value. Hides, skin and fiber obtained from them are used for industrial and export operations, valuable by-products like droppings, dung and bones are used for manure and fuel purposes and horns & teeth for creating fancy items. Livestock rearing issues part time to full time employment. Dairy farming, birds farming, aquaculture and sericulture have become the source of regular income for millions of people. With the available marketing facilities, livestock owners are selling even the last drop of milk and eggs, by providing door step services and earning greatly in this field.

How can we prevent the cruelty?

As a human, we can take some steps to help animals and stop cruelty against them. The steps are –

- If you find a stray, feral or abandoned animal, feed them with the best quality of food and clean water you can get and contact an animal rescue or shelter, on the spot. Make sure that they have a strict no kill policy, so that the animal does not end up being a part of those million animals that get killed every year, just because they are unwanted.
- Quit eating meat. Millions of animals can be saved every day by this single step. If we move to eating meat only 2-3 times a month, billions of animals can be saved every month.
- Go vegan, if you can. It is a much better option for both the animals and your health. Research has shown that, people who follow a vegetarian diet have comparatively good health & higher living rate than those who take meat often. According to nutritionists, vegetarian people have more & healthy food options than non-vegetarians.
- Influence other people to quit meat and tell them about the benefits of opting a vegetarian life and how taking this step can save billions of animals every year. We can't force anyone but we can aware them.
- Donate food, clothes & money to animal rescues, animal shelters, animal welfare organizations and help animal rights groups. If you can't afford to donate, work for free for these organizations.
- If you encounter animal cruelty or neglect, contact or report the PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] or any local or national animal welfare organization or rescue, even calling police will help.
- Buy organic food or from a farmer's market as much as possible. It will be better for all of us, the environment, animals and our health.
- Make community for protection of animals from cruelty.
- Share stories & incidents of animal abuse you've encountered, online with people and write online petitions for animal protection and animal rights.
- Make genuine, online, free to click donation site for animal welfare.
- Be kind to every animal. Don't be a spectator and protect them from every abuse.

Conclusion

Millions of animals are suffering from violent practices in factory farms, slaughterhouses. In past few decades, India has killed more than 35% of animals for illegal trade & export and 65% for food. It is necessary to address cruelty against animals otherwise situation will become worse, species of animals

will come on the verge of extinction, there will be environmental imbalance and this will lead to a disastrous future. There is a need to take initiatives and make people aware about the existing laws regarding animal cruelty in India.

According to a report of, Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organization [FIAPO], more than 25,000 intentional and brutal acts of violence have been constituted against animals, in the past decade. FIAPO has estimated that the actual number of these violent acts could be ten times higher. According to a report, in India alone, more than 1100 broilers, 5 crore hens and 325 million cattle are tortured every year for milk, egg and meat.

India has made many laws against livestock cruelty but there exists a huge gap between legislation and its implementation. Sick penalties, finite resources and less awareness among people have left many animals helpless and vulnerable. Despite all these challenges, many initiatives are taken by the activists and NGOs. Now, it's time for us to take stand for innocent lives and advocate for a more compassionate India. And how can we do that? – By reporting against animal abusers, raising awareness, choosing cruelty free products, changing our diet to plant based food and supporting animal welfare organizations.

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