
BETWEEN FAITH AND FLESH: A CONSTITUTIONAL TUSSLE OF ANIMAL WELFARE IN PLURALISTIC INDIA

R. Tejeswini, National Law University Odisha

ABSTRACT

The article takes a close look at the ideological clashes and cultural barriers behind animal welfare law in India and makes the argument that constitutional rights to equal treatment and secularism don't quite fit with a religiously motivated classification system of animals where the cow is a special, almost sacred figure while other animals remain unprotected from the everyday cruelty inflicted on them. Based on a B.R. Ambedkar's historical account of cow-cult as a caste-solidification tool instead of a benevolent act, the essay describes how Article 48 of the Directive Principles, State level prohibitions of slaughtering and the courts' changing attitude to Jallikattu in *Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja* and finally a reversal of that decision in 2023 shows selective animal welfare decisions under the influence of majoritarian sentiment and caste politics and not based on an animal's ability to suffer. And, the article examines the disunified legal system regarding the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, and subordinate laws on animal experimentation, performance animals, and stray-dog management, that reveals not only a legal but also a cultural dimension to the protection given, without reference to common ethical principles. Finally, the article considers whether a secular, caste-neutral vegan ethic of universal sentience can supply the coherence that current law lacks, while remaining attentive to the economic and cultural stakes such a shift poses for Dalit and minority communities. It concludes that a genuinely pluralistic and constitutionally consistent animal welfare regime requires replacing symbolic, hierarchy-preserving protection with a universal ethic of compassion.

INTRODUCTION:

The contemporary India is a place where two major ideals meet; constitutional future of equality and secularism and the deep-rooted cultural and religious belief that determines the social life. One of the major elements in this matrix is the strong religious symbol, the cow, whose transformation due to an agrarian need to virtually unmanageable religious symbol, leads to the explanation of the correlation of faith and politics and the welfare of animals. On the other hand, in most cases, the non-religious animals are exploited, sanctioned by culture and also law at times. This duality demonstrates that there is a latent tendency of selective welfare, where some animals receive reverence and protection and other animals are not considered a part of the moral community and are as such, not entitled by the law to protection.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book *Beef, Brahmins and Broken men*, an annotated critical selection of the untouchables,¹ offers a critical understanding of the role of sanctification of cow since it was more based on the consolidation of caste strata rather than compassion and welfare. This kind of knowledge of the past demonstrates how farcical animal welfare in India is, i.e. when cow is accorded constitutional protection, other animals like bulls in jallikattu, goats or chicken in every day meal, etc. are being neglected to the extent of being abused, despite the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals Act, 1960² being in force. Pluralism in India has thus been having its advantages; it has resulted in a welfare hierarchy, whereby the cow has been granted a constitutional sacrosanctity and the rest of the animals are relegated to the sidelines.

It is against this context that the veganism trend has been increasing as a counter - narrative. Conversely, veganism, as opposed to selective welfare, argues that all sentient creatures must be treated equally and dismisses hierarchies grounded on beliefs or custom. It also challenges the privileging of cows without looking at the misery of chickens, goats and bulls by avoiding meat, milk, and animal products. This article will critically analyse Ambedkar's argument, trace the historical growth of cow sanctity, examine contradictions of selective welfare, and explore whether veganism and other alternatives can sustain as solutions in pluralistic India.

¹B.R. Ambedkar, *Beef, Brahmins, and Broken Men: An Annotated Critical Selection from The Untouchables* (Alex George & S. Anand eds., Navayana 2019).

²Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, No. 59, Acts of Parliament, 1960 (India).

THE CONSTITUTIONAL IDEALS OF EQUALITY, SECULARISM AND ANIMAL WELFARE:

Firstly, The Constitution of India guarantees equality before law under Article 14³ and right against discrimination under Article 15,⁴ these provisions ensure that state action must remain neutral and inclusive. Article 25⁵ deals with freedom of religion, but this freedom is subjected to reasonable restrictions to ensure public order, morality and health. Courts have consistently held that religious practices, however sincere, cannot override fundamental rights. This principle is important while considering laws that are influenced by religious reverence for cows, which not only results in constitutional sanctification of cows over other animals but also led to the marginalization of beef - eating communities.

Secondly, Article 48 of the Directive Principles of State Policy states that “The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.”⁶ The Article clearly limits itself to cows, thus excluding the welfare of other domesticated animals that contribute to the primary sector. Though Directive Principles of State Policy is non -- justiciable, this provision carries political weight and has shaped state -- level legislation. Hence, it must not just be confined to cows but also include animals as well.

Therefore, the scope of Article 48 must be widened so as to include other domesticated animals such as chicken, goat etc. which do not have any religious significance but play significant role in our day - to - day life. Further, the larger constitutional balance lies in expanding the application of the principle of equality before law (Article 14) and prohibition of discrimination (Article 15) to not just to human beings but to animals as well, in order avoid “selective welfare”, wherein only cows are granted constitutional protection because of their religious significance. This approach will ensure that religious beliefs inform but do not dictate law, thereby preserving pluralism, constitutional morality and animal welfare.

³India Const. art. 14.

⁴India Const. art. 15.

⁵India Const. art. 25.

⁶India Const. art. 48.

SACRALITY OF COWS AND SELECTIVE WELFARE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The evolution of the sacred cow, when viewed through the lens of animal welfare, reveals a layered story of cultural symbolism overshadowing consistent ethical concern for animals. Cows played an important economic role such as providing milk, leather, and agricultural labour, during the Vedic period, but cows were not considered sacred in all parts of the society, and eating beef was not a taboo to all communities. Agricultural societies later enhanced their sacred value and they got integrated into the religious books and cultural symbols. The cow was getting a higher status and, at the same time, the sanctity of other animals was diminishing to that extent that they even became morally invisible, and the cow's elevation was based on its being so closely tied to providing one's bread and butter as well as being the beast of burden.

Colonial times put more emphasis on the symbols tied to the cow. Reformers and national leaders connected cow safety with identity of culture and resistance in politics. Gandhi, as an illustrative example, related his concept of non-violence and compassion to cow protection, but still, he emphasized that cow's ethical side does not mean neglecting other animals or not being nice to them. Then again, nationalist groups treated cow as the most important symbol of unity and resistance against the rule of the colonists. This kind of politicization, of course, granted more power to the symbol of cow protection but also it turned down the broader idea of animal welfare to the level of a privileged one species, the cow, which was treated as the icon of Indian culture without any compassion towards the rest of animal kingdom being developed at the same time.

After getting independence the Directive Principles of State policy, Article 48, reflected the historical pattern. It commanded the Government to keep cattle breeds safe from extinction and prevent cow slaughter, with justification in “scientific” and “agricultural” terms while refraining from the use of religious terms. Although the provision did not result in legal consequences, it did convey the idea behind the protection of cattle as a resource for economy. Religious feelings but eventually led to cow protection laws that could be enforced legally in many states. These laws, even if they have been interpreted as agricultural efficiency, frequently have been related to cultural and religious symbols. As a result, Dalit and Muslim communities have been subjected to the control of their dietary habits. In practice, cow protection became less about animal welfare and more about enforcing social hierarchies.

THE AMBEDKARITE LENS: BEEF, BRAHMINS AND THE BROKEN MEN:

B.R. Ambedkar's writings on untouchability remain among the most incisive critiques of caste, religion, and power in India. In his work *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables?*⁷ Ambedkar advanced a provocative thesis: the transition from beef-eating to cow-worship was not a natural evolution of Hindu religiosity but a deliberate strategy by Brahmins to reclaim supremacy after Buddhism's rise. This shift, he argued, created a new social order in which dietary practices became markers of purity and pollution, ultimately stigmatizing those who continued to consume beef, the "Broken Men." While on the surface, ban on beef -- eating was considered as a welfare measure to safeguard the cow, which was valued cattle for milk, labour and social symbolism by the agrarian societies, deep down the shift reflected discrimination not only against beef - eaters, who were treated as untouchables, but also against other animals who were not protected because of the lack of religious status.

The Invention of Taboo:

Ambedkar traced the origins of cow-worship to a political manoeuvre. In early Indian society, beef was widely consumed, including by Brahmins. Buddhism, however, challenged Brahminical dominance by rejecting ritual sacrifice and priestly authority. To counter this, Brahmins abandoned beef-eating and elevated the cow to a sacred symbol. By inventing the taboo against beef, they distinguished themselves from Buddhists and other communities, reasserting their moral superiority. This transformation was not merely religious but deeply political: it allowed Brahmins to reclaim cultural hegemony by redefining purity in terms of diet. What was formerly the norm was suddenly considered undesirable and anyone who practiced it is a heretic. So, while other animals like goats were still kept for sacrificial rituals and also included as the diet cows who had been given a god-like status, were protected and worshipped.

Therefore, Ambedkar points out to modern India that the stigma has been legalized through laws and policies giving priority to cow protection over animal welfare overall. This selective treatment brings to light the conflict between constitutional morality and cultural majoritarianism. The Constitution on one hand guarantees freedom of religion equality non-discrimination, but however, it supports cow protection in a fashion which sustains caste and

⁷B.R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables?* (Amrit Book Co. 1948).

communal hierarchy. Ambedkar has shown us that the regulation of eating habits is not a matter of health or science but of control to decide membership or exclusion in a society. In this way, animal welfare is a tool for exclusion and the cow being pure, the beef - eaters become outlaws.

Authentic commitment to protecting animal rights can only come when one moves away from the idea that one can selectively pay tribute to some animals but not others. It is very important to change the way cruelty is defined so that modern-day practices such as factory farming and industrial transport are added to the list of acts which can cause cruelty accusations, as well. Above all else, India should recognize the principle of universality in animal welfare and not make animal rights dependent on religious reasons to the benefit of particular species, only. Such a stance would conform to India's constitutional value of the principle of equality and freedom while also giving recognition to Ambedkar's vision of abolishing caste-based oppression.

From Ambedkarite perspective, animal protection is not just about defending animals from harm, it is much bigger than that. It is about revealing how laws and policies are used by those in power to maintain social control and at the same time, how their implementation often reflects the biases of the powerful. To be sure then, by facing up to the way cow protection laws are selectively enforced and putting universal welfare systems in place India could reach a constitutional morality that is inclusive, secular, and sincerely caring.

SELECTIVE WELFARE IN PRACTICE:

The paradox of Indian animal rights boils down to a preference of one animal over all others, where the cow remains an exceptionally safeguarded being through the country's religious sentiments, but the slaughter of various animal species still remains common. It must also be noted that in several Indian states, legal restrictions are placed on cow slaughter from both their religious connotations and political support from the majority community. Still legally the killing of buffaloes, goats, pigs, and poultry is allowed, and their care is mostly subject to the rules of the industry standards, which focus on efficiency rather than concern to the animal. As a result, the concept of moral hierarchy is born, in which one animal is treated as an idol while others are being turned into money-making assets without comparable legal protection. Such practices as Jallikattu, bullock cart races and for that matter, different animal sports reveal and at the same time, challenge the underlying contradiction of this moral system. These events, rooted and celebrated in the culture, are claimed and defended as an integral part of the local

tradition. Yet, these very practices not only involve the harm of animals in front of the public but also elicit the worldwide criticism of cruelty.

The selective nature of the welfare is attributed by the overlapping of forces:

- The cow's sacred symbolism in Hindu traditions,
- The use of cow protection as a tool of majoritarian cultural politics,
- Historical narratives that linked cow reverence with nationalist resistance, and
- Legal frameworks that absorbed religious sentiment into constitutional and statutory law.

Besides these, other contributing factors lead to the establishment of a system that treats animal rights as stratification of privileges and not as a universal right. This stratification leads to reinforcing cultural hierarchies. As such, from an animal welfare standpoint, this selective form of reverence violates the principle of compassion underlying animal Welfare by displaying that the protection is not based on an animal's capacity to suffer but is based on cultural identity and political symbolism.

THE CASE OF BULLS AND JALLIKATTU: TRADITION V. WELFARE:

In contrast to animal rights, some cultural activities such as Jallikattu can be a form of resistance. When Supreme Court banned Jallikattu because it violates prevention of cruelty to animals Act in *Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja* (2014),⁸ massive protest spread through Tamil Nadu framed as the defence of Tamil language and heritage. As a result, the state passed an amendment to allow the performance of Jallikattu under the pretext of cultural rights. This case, because of this, reveals the role of culture as a defence of an ancient tradition against animal rights. The law was challenged and modified to include the cultural defence of tradition as a legal ground for animal use. Plainly “Veneration vs. Violence Dichotomy” exists when it comes to Indian animal welfare issues. The cow is the most venerated animal in the country and because of this cannot be butchered in many states, while the bull is the one that is traumatized through Jallikattu sport.

⁸*Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja*, (2014) 7 SCC 547.

Though, this difference is only the result of people's religious and cultural feelings. One of the two sides is being taken as a symbol and the other is being used as a sacrificial lamb. That the cattle used for Jallikattu is considered as an important factor in the Thevar community's caste pride is one reason among others behind the protesters' demand not to ban the Jallikattu. To those protesters, Jallikattu represented a public assertion of pride in their caste, as well as showcasing manliness in their community's eyes. The support of Jallikattu was That means a manifestation of both caste pride and cultural identity.

The pattern of the judiciary in the Supreme Court shows that judicial decision-making has swung back and forth on this issue. The Supreme Court firmly banned Jallikattu in 2014 and held that animal welfare cannot be ignored by cultural practices and traditions for the benefit of animal welfare. But, in the year 2023, while in *Animal Welfare Board of India & Ors. v. Union of India & Anr.*⁹ the Apex court approved the changes made in by Tamilnadu to allow jallikattu, thereby conceding essentially to the populist pressure of culture. That means, it shows that how even the reasoning of the court could have given a way for popularizing the culture and mass mobilization through identity politics and This way weakening constitutional rights on compassion.

The event also shows from the animal welfare angle that India is only selectively applying the logic of protection. Cow protection is so strong that even the killing, butchering or harm of the cow is prohibited because of her sacred symbolism. Contrarily, the welfare of bulls has been considered as negotiable if only the culture, tradition, and caste pride would allow or demand such a sacrifice. This kind of selective implementation weakens the idea of universal compassion and reveals that animal welfare protection laws aren't uniformly applied but are based on a combination of identity, tradition, and political symbolism. It also shows very clearly the way cultural and political rights, which are used as shield, can prevail over and ignore statutory protections with a result that animals continue to be at risk of being treated in cruel manner even when animal welfare laws have been established.

THE BURDEN OF PLURALISM: WHOSE CULTURE, WHOSE ANIMAL?

The constitutional promise of India of pluralism meets frequently at the crossfire with the majoritarian political culture. There is hardly any field that demonstrates this as much as the

⁹*Animal Welfare Board of India v. Union of India*, 2023 SCC OnLine SC 661.

animal welfare laws. The language used is about compassion and protection, yet the word “animal welfare” often means different things to different people, more or less being an extension of the dominant values. The cow, considered sacred in the Hindu religion, is shielded by the law in most states from being slaughtered. Yet, this legislation stems from the sentiment of the majority rather than reflecting uniform concern for animal welfare. Other livestock like buffaloes, goats, pigs, and poultry continue to fall within the legally sanctioned categories of slaughter and exploitation, while their suffering only gets mitigated by the minimum welfare standards laid down by the industry guidelines that stress productivity over welfare issues. As a result, it is the majoritarian cultural values that shape the laws when one community's value is considered superior.

This particular preference by the lawmakers of the cow to be one of the protected animals brings deep social and economic consequences for the Dalits and minorities. To many for beef and other meats, are not only food they prefer but also an affordable source of nourishment and a means of livelihood. The beef eater is made an offender of the highest degree through the process of legalizing the consumption of beef. The law, in this case, turns the food preference into a stigma and even worse an identity of a group whose culture may be questioned, leaving the person's social standing and livelihood vulnerable. Contrary to this dominant caste's cow protection ideology that excludes other communities, the dominant community's idea of animal protection can be described, at least partly, as their mode of exclusion in society where they equate “faith” with “purity” and those who consume beef with “impurity.” Here is revealed how animal welfare is deeply bound up with the caste and communal politics: the cow is the emblem of the superior culture, while the flesh denotes the marginalized group.

The irony is that in both cases, slaughter bans and cultural sports like Jallikattu, the animal's sentient reality is sidelined. In slaughter bans, the cow is protected not because of its suffering but because of its symbolic value in religious identity. In Jallikattu, bulls are subjected to trauma in the name of tradition, their welfare subordinated to cultural pride. The Supreme recognized this cruelty, and banned Jallikattu under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.¹⁰ Yet, mass protests in 2017 reinstated the sport. In 2023, the Supreme Court accepted the amendments¹¹ and, in doing so, gave way to cultural pluralism. In this judicial wavering, there was a clear case of culture as a symbol winning out legal safeguards, to the detriment of

¹⁰Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, §§ 3, 11(1)(a), (m), No. 59, Acts of Parliament, 1960 (India).

¹¹*Animal Welfare Board of India v. Union of India*, supra note 9.

animals who have been constitutionally blessed with an empathetic heart. A pluralism burden is mainly borne by marginalized groups, not by the majoritarian community.

Dalits and other minority communities are excluded through their eating practices, while at the cost of human identity politics animals are turned into images that have no meaning beyond. In Hinduism cow is worshiped, bull is mistreated and others are seen as things of money and power, all within a setup supposed to uphold the welfare of animals. True pluralism implies transcending such partial veneration and embracing a universal ethic of compassion that safeguards all creatures equally, be it that such compassion is prompted in us by their cultural symbolic value. For as long as Indian animal welfare is limited in the understanding of animals as morally worthier beings, i.e. their level of legal protection is based not on their capacity to suffering or consciousness but on how much cultural and political value is attached to the animal, animal protection will remain a symbolic act without substantive effect.

THE BROADER LANDSCAPE OF ANIMAL WELFARE LAWS IN INDIA:

Beyond the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act,¹² there is a broader animal welfare system in India which includes other animal welfare legislation but also codes and standards issued by government bodies, the Indian Veterinary Council (IVC) and other professional associations. The PCA Act remains central. Though, and its failure to be enforced has highlighted significant structural deficiencies in the Act. The PCA Act criminalizes pain and suffering in excess of necessity about experimentation and transport, and established the AWBI. Penalties remain archaic (as little as 50100 Rupees); enforcement of the PCA Act is spasmodic, and welfare considerations are only invoked where they coincide with cultural baggage (as with the protection of cows). This selective invocation limits the scope of the PCA Act to only address systems of cruelty in transport, factory farming and entertainment provision, despite clear recommendations by the courts for reform over the last decade this has yet to occur.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972¹³ - This aims to protect wild animals, birds and plants by establishing Sanctuaries and National parks. It is more about the conservation of animals than their welfare. Yet, concerns cruelty issues like poaching and smuggling.

¹²Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, *supra* note 2.

¹³Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, No. 53, Acts of Parliament, 1972 (India).

Breeding of and Experiments on Animals (Control and Supervision) Rules, 1998¹⁴: Controls the use of animals in laboratories by registration of facilities and Institutional Animal Ethics Committees to prevent suffering; Performing Animals (Registration) Rules, 2001:¹⁵ Animals used for entertainment like circuses and films have to be registered; Still, lack of vigilance has limited its effectiveness.

Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2023¹⁶: Deletes the requirement that the Administration should take a permit and kill dogs as a means of noise nuisance management and instead introduces instead new rules which include humane, sanitary methods of dealing with strays, consisting of sterilisation with a view to registration and vaccination.

It forms a major departure from past Municipal policies. B an (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), 2023:¹⁷ This introduced Penalties for the offences under the relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code. It embodies a change in the law indicating a harsh punishment to the animal cruelty offences.

Even so, implementation is variable. Temple elephants and festival bullocks are kept in captivity and subjected to stress; stray dogs and cattle are subject to inconsistent municipal control; and farm animals within industry are subject merely to market forces rather than welfare rules. In practice, rules are selectively applied: strong protection exists where there is religious value, e.g. cow protection, weak protection exists where animals are unimportant, e.g. stray dogs. Perhaps there is an inherent contradiction between principle and practice: India arguably has the most complex animal welfare legislation, but weak outcomes through archaic sanctions, low institutional capacity and uneven enforcement.

The solution to this isolation lies in reforming the PCA Act by enhancing penalties, strengthening the AWBI with enforcement authority, and universalizing welfare protections. India would then open the doors to a truly non-partisan ethic of compassion.

THE RISE OF VEGAN IDEOLOGY: A NEW PARADIGM?

The emergence of vegan ideology in India is a concerted effort to dissociate animal welfare

¹⁴Breeding of and Experiments on Animals (Control and Supervision) Rules, 1998 (India).

¹⁵Performing Animals (Registration) Rules, 2001 (India).

¹⁶Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 (India).

¹⁷Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, No. 45, Acts of Parliament, 2023 (India).

from religion, to eschew the special pleading and analogy of Gau Raksha (cow protectionism) and set up a universal ethic of anti - speciesism. Traditionally Indian debates on animal welfare have remained entangled in religious symbolism and privileges towards the cow contra other animals. Buddhism's emphasis on compassion to all sentient life and other such non - ethnocentric traditions have theorised other animals as having equal positive moral standing as a means to articulate their rejection of caste hierarchy. Veganism restates the need for equal behavioural treatment to all sentient life based on universal, secular moral standards, this way reformulating welfare as a universally applicable, non - caste based philosophy. Simultaneously veganism is being challenged by pluralism.

Food is political in India, deeply embedded in sacred caste notions, regional political ethos, and economic concerns. For Dalits and other minorities, cattle meat was traditionally the cheapest source of proteins and livelihood. For many middle and working castes, dairy products, leather products, and meat was a means of economic survival. In such a context veganism imposed on a single benchmark risked replicating exclusionary patterns and ignoring the food and economic realities, and positing itself as an only elite lifestyle choice, available predominantly to urban affluent groups, rather than the only ethic.

Many Indians have been following vegetarian diets, but this voluntary abstention is greatly motivated by concepts of religious purity, rather than the ethical concerns for animals. The challenge for veganism is This way to reconcile its universal judgments with local social-ecological contexts. Veganism, in this sense, can also be revolutionary at an animal-welfare level. It presents a different and more inclusive conception of animals globally, consistently and inclusively rather than the widely-funded laws that do “justice to some animals and not others.” It embraces “animal-sentience” and attitude towards animals that resonates far more with our constitutional charter of “equality” and “non-discrimination” and takes animal Welfare one step closer in this way. Despite various anti-speciesism initiatives introduced before it, Indian courts have, at times, recognized animal-sentience though such recognition has so far, been confined to reference to the categories of “holy animals”. A recognition of this kind, by courts that is, perhaps is just the opportunity the proponents of the veganism movement on the ground in India are in need of to make their case for adequate legal protection against contraventions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.¹⁸ the 1960 about this,

¹⁸Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, supra note 2.

planning to buy a dog or shoot an elephant may just be the beginning.

Globally, vegan movements have grown and ethical debates around animal rights and environmental concerns from livestock farming, plus different choices related to personal health. Such movements find particular resonance in India about youth and urban populations who are nowadays very much aware of climate change, sustainability, and animal ethics. Veganism So creates a global moral structure that, in this way, confronts localized hierarchies of value. India through this system could identify its moral compass as well as confront animal welfare inconsistencies of the country.

Sustaining veganism in India rests on its capacity to bridge universal compassion with diverse cultural expressions. Remaining a symbol of Western luxury disconnected from the lives of the deprived may cause alienation. But should it become a secular, caste-neutral ethic focused on sentience, it might signal a radical transformation in the country's ethical landscape, turning animal welfare from occasional devotion into unceasing compassion. Mostly, such would be the nature of the change in the concept of veganism that moves away from the tradition of treating cows, bulls or cowsheds as sacred, to a genuinely inclusive and respectful attitude towards the rights of many animals.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE ETHICAL FUTURE:

India's animal welfare issues is more than a debate about faith versus flesh; it is also a battle between the hierarchical past and the possibility of a democratic, empathetic future. The exalted position of the cow shows how religious faith can influence law and politicians, but at the same time it shows how selective veneration, separated from broader values, can continue inequalities through the same mechanisms. This way, the discussions on food and animals are not just minor issues; these discussions bring to light caste, citizenship and justice-related issues. Liberal ideals, for example, can be used to justify exclusion as much as inclusion when mobilized wrongly. Selective animal welfare, where certain animals are given protection but others are ignored, persists and leads to the degradation of both moral consistency and the legal order. A caring society should go beyond the image of sanctity through worship and develop a sense of universal care for the lives of animals. This can be seen through compassion based on the symbolic meanings of a culture should be replaced by universal compassion.

Vegan ethics is gaining popularity and is now serving as a dream scenario of animal rights

discourse that is based on secularism, caste neutrality and equality. It brings a new shift that moves discussions from “holy animals” to “sentient beings.” The real diversity will take shape when the helpless ones who are the “Broken Men” marginalized by the caste hierarchies or the animals in the human cultural conflict are protected. Mostly, the dream is the creation of an ideal where the diversity is celebrated without loss of sympathy, and the sacred has not been the domain of myths but rather a form of inclusive concern for all beings is demonstrated through action.