
CAGES OF HELL: SOME VOICES WE HEAR, SOME WE CHOSE NOT TO

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ABSTRACT

How often do we wonder about eating the delicious and savory chicken back to our way to home from work? Yes many times, we all enjoy our favorite foods and the most popular one across the world being chicken. But how many of us actually think about behind the scenes of the processes involved in making and preparing these chickens?

On the contrary, by any means I'm not concluding that people should stop eating chicken or eating chicken or any kind of meats is wrongful altogether, but not being aware and informed about the situation of these animals is wrongful. Understanding and taking a stand in any way possible is what the youth should be striving to do. Nonetheless, there are people who will always pronounce "*if it does no harm to humans or my life per say, I don't think it's of utmost importance!*" precisely this is the attitude I implore people to change.

The whole process of capturing these chickens, and the segregation of female ones for eggs and slaughtering¹ the male ones for meat is nothing less than a torture. Not many of us are aware of what happens in depth to the food we eat and how this can deeply affect our lives, country and us as a society on vast levels.

¹ * Article 21 of The Indian constitution : Protection of Life and Personal Liberty.

*The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 prohibits any person from inflicting, causing, or if it is the owner, permitting, unnecessary pain or suffering to be inflicted on any animal.

* Law Commission of India is an executive body established by an order of the Government of India. Its major function is to work for legal reform.

THE FIGHT FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS & BATTERY HENS

If a group of beings from another planet were to land on Earth - beings who considered themselves as superior to you as you feel yourself to be to other animals - would you concede them the rights over you that you assume over other animals? - George Bernard Shaw'

Being a dog lover and a vivid animal enthusiast I've always wanted to work for animals and their welfare, I once volunteered with a local rescue NGO and felt the happiest I had in longest. Very recently I also sent a mail to PETA India, asking them whether I could work as an intern or a simple volunteer but unfortunately they replied saying due to Covid-19 every operation had stopped. That's when I realized how I should have probably thought of engaging in this earlier, but nonetheless here I am still trying to do anything I can do spread awareness about the lovely animals gifted to us on earth!

Article 21* of the Indian consulate states that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal Liberty except or according to the procedure established by law. Our large country which is mandated by provisions, certainly has provisions for animals and animal welfare. **PCA** (prevention of cruelty to animals act) 1960* ,stated in the landmark judgement of **Animal welfare board of India vs Nagaraja & Ors 2014,SC611** which extended the rights guaranteed under article 21 to all living beings, the court stated directed the AWBI and governments to "take steps to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals" particularly since their rights have been protected under section 3 and 11 of the Prohibition of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Law Commission* has also drafted the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Broiler Chicken) Rules, 2017 vide Annexure Nos.1 and 2 of the Law Commission's Report No.269.

Many international statutes have provisions on protecting animal rights as well, the United Nations also proposed *The Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW)* which is an inter-governmental agreement to recognise that animals are sentient, to prevent cruelty and reduce suffering, and to promote standards on the welfare of animals such as farm animals, companion animals, animals in scientific research, draught animals, wildlife and animals in recreation.

Coming to the core of the topic I want to address, "Battery Cage hens", it is a housing system being one of the worst torture where hens are confined together in cages only affording approximately 67 inches, unable to spread their wings where the hen is exposed to the inability to even have space for the laying act. Emphasising on section 11 of the PCA act, stating that"

if a person keeps or confines any animal in any cage or any other receptacle which does not measure sufficiently in height, length to permit the animal a reasonable opportunity for movement” would be amounting to cruelty and would be punishable under this section. The people for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) forwarded information on the status of poultry in India and addressed various issues surrounding it.

Even though in 2013, the Animal Welfare Board of India concluded that battery cages were in violation of section 11 as stated above after issuing an advisory to all state governments stating battery cages should not be used and existing ones shall be phased out by 2017, But even after that being said PETA in 2018 eyewitness a footage show casing that chickens are still kept in crowded cages. These eyewitness said that the farmers apparently inseminated hens, while males who were considered worthless to the egg industry were burned down, crushed, suffocated or thrown into the water. They also alleged that the chicks breasts were cut off without any pain killers and they were shoved into these tiny cages.

Gauri Maulekhi, an animal protector and campaigner, who plays a key leadership role as the trustee of People for Animals a welfare organisation founded by Smt.Maneka Gandhi* filed the case on cruelty of battery hens going by the name of **Gauri Maulekhi v. State of Uttarakhand and others on the 14th august, 2018** whereby the Court was of the view that by reason of Section 11(3)(e) of the Act, commission or omission of any act in course of destruction of any animal should be deemed to be treating the animal cruelly, unless, of course, such destruction was aimed at arranging food for mankind. Even for such purpose unnecessary pain or suffering cannot be inflicted. In as much as treating animals cruelly establishes punishment of fine and imprisonment too, it goes without saying, that destruction or killing of animal, other than for arranging food for mankind, is barred. It was also opined by the Hon’ble High Court that the person sacrificing an animal can only sacrifice the same, not for the purpose of appeasing the Gods, as he believes, but only for the purpose of arranging food for mankind.

Recently Gauri Maulekhi ma’am tweeted imploring the Prime minister Narendra modi ji *‘People who harm animals often go on to harm humans. Stricter laws are the need of the hour, not only for protection of animals but also society at large.*’ Firmly standing for amending the PCA act with hashtags like #NoMore50 #AmendPCA.

We couldn’t agree any less, a society that does not respect any form of life cannot respect human life as well. Killing and ill treatment of animals is not just a menace for our present society but will also leave trails for the upcoming generations to come. As a Democratic and

liberalist nation we shall give our utmost priority to life no matter how small or big it is. We the youth stand upright for the protection of our citizens and our mute helpless animals but without the support of the government and awareness in the mainstream population the question is, till when can we? ²

² * Maneka Sanjay Gandhi is an Indian politician, animal rights activist, and environmentalist. She is a member of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament.