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# Justification For Prevention of Cows Slaughtering in India: An Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

*It explains the varied and multifaceted rationales for curbing cow slaughter in technical detail – be it religious and cultural, economic and ethical, or ecological and environmental. It analyses the historical Prevention of the cow in Hinduism and other Indian religions – the importance of the cow in Indian agriculture, organic farming and even symbolizes ‘motherhood’ in the Indian society. The legal aspect of the analysis refers to the prism of the Indian Constitution, State laws and the judgments and opinions of the judicial proceedings. ‘Live and let live’ – such a simple rule has the potential to ensure harmony within the Indian context. The diversity in the nation’s approach to cow protection has led to a philosophical approach towards cow slaughter, anti-cow slaughter, legal, economic and social critiques and also valuable recommendations – from harmonizing religious beliefs with legal principles and notions of a moderate secular state; to encouraging alternative and sustainable livelihoods; to encouraging dialogue and reconciliation between the different groups.*

**Keywords:** Cow, Slaughtering, Prevention, Environmental Sustainability, Religious Beliefs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Above all, a cow in India is not just an animal. It is a religious-ideological image woven into the fibers of the nation. As an animal used for providing milk to humans, the cow has been venerated as a symbol of sustenance for humans in Hinduism, the religion of the majority of Indians. But the cow is also venerated for its dung and urine, both of which are central to Hindu rituals performed at home and in temples. This use of the cow both religiously and socially creates a cosmology in which the animal is both holy and socioeconomically important. This brings us back to the question of the ethical relations between humans and cows. These relations are embedded in socioeconomic, religious, environmental and also ethic-political dimensions of Indian life.

In India, the literal roots of cow protection lie in ancient scriptures and literature – the cow is

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called 'Gomata' or mother cow, and ideals about the cow's nurturing identity have been nurtured over the years. For the religious and materialistic, cow protection formed the basic foundation of their lifestyle, and image and day-to-day life were tightly interwoven. Cows now feature regularly in politics too. This brief history helps us explain why attempts to protect cows in India today are so full of emotion and violence.

Cow protection in India is not an accidental byproduct of religious sentiment, but a higher indicator of the ecological sensibilities that are codified in traditional practice. It follows that the cow is the most significant nutrient resource in the agrarian economy and the dung and urine of this animal are the chief source of fertilizers and pesticides for organically protected farming. Such traditions of farming from this integrated approach, and identify sustainable living as a hallmark of a long-cultivated tradition, and thus the cause of protecting the cow is further exalted.

#### **(A) Overview of the Legal Status of Cow Slaughtering Across Different Indian States**

Cow slaughter rules in India illustrate the results of idiosyncratic combinations of culture, religion and economics being forced against one another. If India is a mosaic, its legal regime related to bovines is tessellated. Leading the way are two soon-to-expire pieces of legislation. The protection of cows and other bovines is sanctioned by a 'directive principle' contained in Article 48 of the Constitution of India. The Constitution declares: 'It shall be the duty of the State to organised 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.' The potential for transitioning cow protection from a symbol of religious sentiment into an imperative of agriculture and nature was curtailed by its confinement to a directive principle that allows the implementation of the norm to be left to each of the states. The result, to borrow a non-Indian term, is a quilted landscape of laws across the country.

Muscle memory of their nurturant past with humans been ingrained in cows. Today, the legal position in most Indian states is that they have anti-cow slaughter laws or laws banning cow slaughter with certain conditions. In most states, the laws against cow slaughter are draconian in that the slaughter of cows, bulls and bullocks is banned with severe punishments for the violation. For example, these states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. This is deemed sacrosanct because the cow is revered by Hindus as a sacred symbol of life and sustenance.

At the same time, a number of states (most notably, West Bengal and Kerala) have more liberal laws that permit cow slaughter under specific circumstances, such as the age or work-worthiness

of the animal. These differences highlight the complexity of regional cultural and economic practices in India. But they also suggest some of the problems involved in weighing Hindu religious sentiments against pragmatic necessities.

Further, precedents (judged case laws), which provide landmark decisions, are almost as important in the crafting of the legal discourse in India on cow protection and slaughter since many of the aspects of the pollution taboo are embedded in matters of property, place of work, economy, human rights needs and issues related to civil suits. The constitutional validity of the Gujarat cow protection law was upheld by the Supreme Court of India in the case of *State of Gujarat vs Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat*. This case marks what an important job the judiciary performs in reconciling sacred sensibilities to economic reason as well as constitutional demands.

## **II. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF COWS IN INDIA**

The veneration of cows as a cultural and religious symbol is one of India's most meaningful and unique characteristics; it underpins the country's laws, codes of etiquette and social behaviour, and is embedded in the daily routines of its citizens..

### **(A) Historical Perspective on the Reverence for Cows in Hinduism and Other Religions in India**

Hindus trace the cow's sanctity to revered ancient Sanskrit texts, including the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads, which date back 3,000 to 5,000 years. The Rigveda – often regarded as the oldest – starts Book 8 with a prayer to the cow 'Aghnya' (not to be killed). Vedic mentions of the cow associate it with Aditi, 'mother of the gods', thus sanctifying nurturance and fertility. Hindu's non-violence towards cows extends to both Jainism and Buddhism, other Old-World religions born within India. Jains, in particular, are strict vegetarians in fact and in spiritual idiom. They revere all life forms.

But while there is no animal which can be directly worshipped in Sikhi, you do find respect for life and the ethics of compassion – an ethic that applies to all – extended toward cow. In this instance also the reverence for cow shares a cross-religious space simply because it is part of the ethos of Indian culture. And I have tried to show that good parts of Indian culture are inevitably pan-religious because they lead toward a shared space of recognition and respect.

### **(B) The Cow as a Symbol in Indian Culture and Its Socio-Economic Significance**

Aside from its religious meaning, the cow symbolizes the best of Indian values of ahimsa (non-violence), compassion and motherhood. The cow is commonly associated with the term 'Gao

Mata', or Mother Cow, in India. Because of this association, the cow is regarded not only as a biological mother but also as a mother figure, who is akin to a daughter's mother. By extension, value is imputed to the nation and country, personified as the cow, very much in the form of a mother (Bharat Mata), signifying purity, nurturing and feeding individuals.

Economically, the cow is the centerpiece of India's largely agrarian economy. Its milk is a staple nutritional requirement, while cow dung and urine are used both as organic manure and bio-pesticide in agriculture as well as traditional medicine. This economic utility strengthens the cow's sanctified place, since it helps in maintaining the livelihood and sustenance of rural families. Being an integral part of the rural economy also makes the cow a part of the family and the community.

So, protecting the cow in India is not just a religious injunction, but something conducive to the social-economic fabric of the nation. The encouragement of cow-based products for organic farming is consonant with policies of sustainable agriculture and ecological protection that are the goals of national policy. For example, to encourage 'Zero Budget Natural Farming', the Government of India gave grants to various states for programmes and workshops to teach farmers how to make cow dung and urine-based products that can be used for farming.

Moreover, the various literary celebrations and rituals related to the cow in India have always emphasized the role it plays in the spiritual and social sphere of life. Literary celebrations of the cow abound, emphasizing the cow's sacrosanct nature. Harvesting festival celebrations such as Pongal (Tamil Nadu), Gopastami (North India) and Govardhan Puja (across India) celebrate cows as facilitators of agriculture and keepers of society alive.

### **III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR COW PROTECTION IN INDIA**

The legal framework seeking to safeguard cows in India is neither simple nor unvaried, a testament to both the pluralistic nature of cows. This section focuses upon the constitutional safeguards, the central legislation and the state legislation under which the legal regime for cow protection operates in India.

#### **(A) Constitutional Provisions**

##### *Directive Principles of State Policy Related to Cow Protection*

The Directive Principles of State Policy, as specified in the Constitution of India, might not be binding in a court of law, but they instruct the state to guide the administration of the country. Article 48 comes under these in chapter IV and states: 'The State shall endeavor to organised 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.’ This makes it quite clear that the constitutional recognition of the status of the cow enjoins the state to protect it.

### **(B) Central Laws and Policies**

Although there is no specific central law that prohibits cow slaughter across states, there are several central acts and guidelines that focus on animal slaughter and, in turn, cow protection. For instance, although the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 doesn’t specifically prohibit cow slaughter, it’s still one of the most important legislations because it establishes the framework for treating all animals – including cows – humanely. The act gives the government the power to formulate rules and guidelines on the establishment of Animal Welfare Boards, such as regulating and supervising the slaughterhouses, prohibiting unnecessary, cruel and unscientific acts or practices in slaughtering animals.

Also, because the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regulates food production according to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, guidelines and parameters regarding how meat is to be slaughtered and processed has driven a definition of how cow slaughter (if permissible) is to happen. These are highly centralized terms of reference for the cow, even though such laws themselves aren’t an outright ban on slaughter. They serve, however, to make the practice one in which the cow is to be treated with care and respect.

### **(C) State Legislation**

Since Article 48 of the Constitution vests the authority to govern on cow slaughter with the states, the legal landscape for legislation on cow slaughter across the country varies widely, ranging from states with complete bans to restrictions or permissive laws under certain circumstances. States with complete bans include Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Picture the politics of Indian states. Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Maharashtra have banned the slaughter of cows, bulls and bullocks with full strength. States like Kerala, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu, with a strong cultural and religious ethos against cow slaughter, have laws that ban the slaughter of all cows during their lactation period, except when the mother is paralytic or terminally ill. Any other slaughter of cows or its products is banned in these states and not just slaughter – cow meat is an offence in all aspects of possession, sale and transportation. The act carries imprisonment and penalty.

For instance, the Gujarat Animal Preservation Act was amended in 2017 to strictly regulate cow slaughter with provisions for life imprisonment, one of the harshest anti-slaughter enactments

in the country. The Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act, 2015 extended the ban on sale and slaughter of cows to bulls and bullocks, tightening still further the legal noose of cow slaughter in the state.

Conversely, you have states such as Kerala, West Bengal, and the North-Eastern states where cow slaughter is permissible under various conditions such as the age or the fitness of the animal to work on farms. The attendant variations also speak of the essentially divergent cultural, religious and economic factors that inform state policies towards cow slaughter.

#### **(D) Comparison of Laws Across States with Complete Bans vs. Partial Restrictions**

This stark difference in the legal regimes of states serves to highlight the play between different forces at work that determines the legal stance on the issue of cow slaughter. An absolute ban relies on the deeper cultural and religious sacredness of the cow, but even more significantly on arguments rooted in arguments on animal welfare, agriculture and dairy. Legal mechanisms are put in place to enshrine the protection of the cow with reference to the vaster social-cultural ethos that regards the cow as a holy creature.

On the flip side, countries with a full or partial ban on cow slaughter tend to argue material and dietary factors for their more stringent position. Insofar as organizational form is concerned, the cow slaughter prohibition in a wide swath of states would recognize that, while cultural factors make it sacrosanct, they have been held in tension with the demands and habits of a heterogeneous population, which includes minorities for whom the state cannot withhold beef by virtue of dietary necessity.

Thus, India's legal regime for cow protection is a series of contested and patchworked statutory responses, but it is also an embodiment of India's own pluralist legal responses. Article 48 of the constitution is its backdrop and statutory enactments in the states provide detailed texture to a story that is woven together to promote the preservation of the nation's heritage while allowing for the edifice of India as a home to the multiplicity of its religious communities.

#### **IV. KEY CASE LAWS AND JUDICIAL INTERPRETATIONS**

One does not need to delve into the legal textbooks to understand that the legal discourse on the prohibition of cow slaughter in India has accumulated several landmark judgments and judicial interpretations that have shaped its legal and cultural discourse. This section unfolds the judicial reasoning behind two pivotal cases enunciating and expanding the protections to the cow – *Mohammed Hanif Qureshi v. State of Bihar* and *State of Gujarat v. Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat*. It will parse the key arguments advanced by the judges in these judgments and

unpack the constitutional debates they have sparked off. It will further touch upon some recent legal challenges and the decisions that have been rendered in the ongoing contestation over the meaning of cow protection in India.

### **(A) Landmark Judgments Related to Cow Slaughter**

#### **1. Mohammed Hanif Qureshi v. State of Bihar**

For instance, in this case, the petitioners sought to challenge the constitutionality of state legislation (passed in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) banning the slaughter of cows and calf, bulls and bullocks. They contended these laws impinged on their fundamental rights to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business granted under Article 19(1)(g) (expression of fundamental rights) of the Constitution of India.

The Supreme Court distinguished between the two: it held that the prohibition on the slaughter of cows of all ages and calves of cows and buffaloes as constitutionally valid, being born out of the cultural and religious ethos of India that honors cows not only for their utility in the agricultural sector, but also for being the mother of all living beings. At the same time, it held that there is no evident or conscious reason why bulls, bullocks and buffaloes, whether old or young, productive or non-productive, cannot be slaughtered. A total ban on the slaughter of all that is 'mad' cattle cuts across and contradicts 'the right of butchers to pursue their trade', the Supreme Court pointed out. It marked an important stage in the resolution of India's unique constitutional dilemma of reconciling the rights of the individual with the socio-cultural ethos of the country. Since this landmark judgment in 1957, the legal discourse on cow protection has continued on these lines.

#### **2. State of Gujarat vs. Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat (2005)**

Fast forward to 2005, when the state of Gujarat vs. Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat looked again at the legal framework surrounding cow protection, with the Supreme Court deciding the case. In this, the Gujarat government's amendment of the Bombay Animal Preservation Act 1954, which prohibited slaughtering cows and included bulls and bullocks, was challenged under Fundamental Rights enshrined under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution. The petitioners held that extending the ban to bulls and bullocks would undermine their own livelihoods.

In a unitary way, the Supreme Court referred to a principle in its own earlier judgment in the Qureshi case, overruling it. The offence against humanity and when man then takes away the rights of all the animals, that's when life on this earth will reach its downfall. The Supreme Court upheld the amendment of the Gujarat government banning the slaughter of bulls and bullocks, and quoted provisions of the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 48 and other articles)



to explain the decision. Protection and improvement of cattle was a 'state function', and the state was authorized to legislate for 'the promotion of welfare and redress of grievances of the people.' This was the beginning of an alteration in the jurisprudence of cow protection, towards a greater understanding of the role of state in championing their protection, and the legal and constitutional establishment of such legislation.

### **(B) Analysis of Judicial Reasoning and Constitutional Debates**

These path-breaking decisions might, at one level, reveal the court trying to straddle some intricate balancing act between cultural sensitivities and economic realities in the framework created by the fundamental rights under the Constitution. These rulings also indicate the Court's consciousness of the Indian strategic and juridical landscape in which cow protection is part of the religious and economic life of the body politic while the right to practice religion, or eat, is enshrined in the Constitution. The judgment in Mirzapur went a step further in interpreting Article 48 more broadly. So, even if Article 48 (ultimately) commanded only quadrupeds as the only animals that can be used for food, milk, labor or sport, it was read into the Constitution primarily as an avowal of a public interest and a public welfare in and of itself.

The constitutional debates surrounding these judgments bring to the fore tension between individual rights and the collective cultural values of a pluralistic society. They highlight the importance of the judicial role in reconciling these often-competing interests.

### **(C) Recent Legal Challenges and Court Decisions**

There is an ongoing jurisprudence on the contours of cow-protection law in specific cases. Many petitions questioning state laws on cow slaughter have been filed in the High Courts and Supreme Court, and a number of judgments have reiterated the precedents of the landmark cases.

For instance, defenses against harsher terms of punishment and expanded definitions of cattle are routinely mounted against anti-slaughter laws of this nature, and courts are regularly called upon to define whether or not a law fits the provisions of the constitution. So far, most forms of judgment that have come from these cases have tended to uphold the validity of cow-protection laws enacted by the different states. Judges have cited necessity, tradition and economic balance as reasons behind sustaining the provisions, but at the same time have pointed to the legal mandate to provide for the welfare of animals in a humane fashion and to control slaughterhouses.

### **(D) Arguments for Prevention of Cow Slaughtering**

The controversy surrounding the prevention of cow-slaughter in India can be seen as embodying different dimensions — religious, cultural, economic, ethical, and environmental — and handling each individually would offer us a more nuanced picture on the ways in which Indian society conceptualizes the cow — perhaps the most controversial animal in the world — within the complexity of its own lived reality. In this section I shall shed light on the many arguments put forward in favor of preventing cow-slaughter.

#### *Religious and Cultural Justifications*

Till today in modern India, religious and socio-cultural veneration of the cow draws the central chapter of Indian civilization. Being Hinduism the state religion of India, professed by almost 80 per cent of the population of India, hence it is understandable why they worship the cow and consider her as sacred animal par excellence. She is associated with several deities, especially Lord Krishna, himself said to be a cowherd, and is addressed as Gau Mata (Mother Cow).

This veneration of the cow, is rooted in Hinduism, is echoed by the other religions that have subsequently grown up within India – notably the religion of non-violence and respect for all creatures, that is, the religions of Jainism and Buddhism – each of which, in their own way, accords enormous value to the feelings and survival of all lifeforms. To protect cow slaughter is to respect the religious and cultural sensibilities of each of which are among the many principal foundations of India’s diversity and inclusiveness.

#### *Economic Arguments*

Mythical and ritualistic, as well as literal and functional, cows prop up the Indian agrarian economy that forms the very core of the country’s ancient way of life. They are central to the seasonal farming cycle, providing milk, manure and draught power. Cow dung in particular is a valuable byproduct which is bio-fertilizer and the key ingredient in producing biogas; this helps to ensure sound and sustainable methods of agriculture and organic farming. Promoting the shift to organic farming in recent times has contributed to an even further appreciation of the economic role of cows beyond their more immediate agricultural utility.

Since rural economies are far more dependent on the cow than urban economies, the present restrictions on cow slaughter are said to guard those economic interests from any possible threat, and ensure the continuation of the agrarian livelihoods more generally.

#### *Ethical and Environmental Considerations*

Politically, its capitals seamlessly on a growing movement involving concerns and

considerations about animal rights and welfare more generally – taking, as many Indian religions do, the concept of ahimsa (non-violence) to encompass the treatment of animals. The protest against cow slaughter reflects this particular ethical principle – that all living beings deserve to be treated with compassion and courtesy, recognizing their rights to live out their natural lives.

This approach is as much concerned with preventing slaughter as with improving cow quality of life prior to slaughter, and it seeks to address a state of suffering, stress and injury on cows caused by practices across their lives. The ethical imperatives of cow protection are therefore rooted in a discussion on animal welfare, calling for humane animal husbandry and farming practices.

#### *Impact of Livestock Farming on the Environment*

Finally, there are environmental motives involved in the anti-cow-slaughter arguments. Because the livestock industry is the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, a major cause of deforestation, and a huge consumer of water, many people are concerned about its long-term sustainability. So, the focus of the pro-cow campaign in India can be understood as part of a broader push towards ecological agriculture.

Organic farming methods that employ cow dung and urine as pesticides and fertilizers mean smaller chemical inputs, which reduces agriculture's environmental footprint. And farming populations of cows for anything but slaughter can support biodiversity and contribute generally to an agrarian ecological footprint.

#### **(E) Counterarguments and Critiques**

If cow slaughter can be effectively prevented in India, it can offer great support to the religious, cultural, ethical and environmental arguments for not killing cattle for food. But, as we shall see, cow protection measures meet with equally powerful counter-arguments and criticisms, and reflect the tension between religious ideals on the one hand, and the competing claims of the economy and social life on the other.

#### *Legal and Constitutional Challenges*

One of the most forceful arguments against banning cow slaughter centers around the constitutional right to freedom of religion and the right to a dietary choice inherent in it. The primary grievance, as noted by many activists, is that the ban on cow slaughter violated the religious and cultural practices of the minority Muslim and Christian communities and several tribal communities where eating beef forms part of their dietary tradition. Article 25 of the

Indian Constitution explicitly provides for the right to profess, practice and propagate religion, and the cow protection laws to them are seen as a violation of this right.

Further, the tacit right to eat as one wishes is included implicitly within the right to personal liberty under Article 21. Section 19 imposes bans on cow slaughter which, via the linear prohibition chain, are relayed infectiously to curbs on beef. This includes prohibitions against interstate sale and transport of in-limbo carcasses, their confiscation by the police, and even domestic sale if not slaughtered in a permitted, supervised ‘cattle syn-pound’ in the port’s city of Mumbai. This may seem like overkill to some. India’s bovine ban is a complex counterpoint between the feeding freedoms of the individual and broad cultural and religious sensitivities in collective feeding modalities.

#### *Economic Impact on Livestock and Meat Industry*

The second major criticism surrounds the economic consequences of the ban on the cattle and meat industry. A ban on cow slaughter hits the meat industry financially, and can put farmers and butchers out of livelihood. Even for small-scale farmers, the sale of old or unproductive cattle is an important source of livelihood, which gets limited by the prohibition on slaughter.

And many businesses allied with the meat industry – the beef processing and export business, in particular – have problems caused by restrictions on cow slaughter. India is one of the world’s leading exporters of meat from buffaloes; legally sanctioned trade in cow meat is vastly different from buffalo meat, but the enforcing of law, matched to the social pressure and compulsion of cow-protection, can have a ‘chilling effect’ in the general meat trade, hampering livelihoods and help to create economic dislocation.

#### *Social and Communal Tensions*

Prohibition of pumping and killing of cows is another significant point of social and communal conflict in India. The implementation of cow protection laws has also resulted in instances where vigilantes have acted as self-appointed law keepers and resort to violence and even lynching. Such acts claimed lives and properties. They further created a polarization between various communities and caused immense loss of freedom of movement and confidence among them.

This growing emphasis on cow protection, the critics believe, derived from religious and cultural sentiments of Hindu majority can cause a loss of minority populations to what they believed was a core tenet of the nationhood. The question of diversity and pluralism enshrined in the Constitution of India can be undermined by the rising sentiments of religious and cultural Hindu majority groups.

## V. SUGGESTIONS

The debate of cow slaughtering prevention in India exposes the multi-perspective issues involved in such practicality as it is historically rooted in the age-old Indian cultural and religious traditions as well as subject to legal, economic and social considerations. A future-thinking, pragmatic, and sustainable approach can deal with these practicalities in a way that balances due respect to the cultural and religious sentiments but also harmonizes with modern legal principles, economic reality and social ethos among diverse community and other interests. In this section recommendations and future prospects for legal reform, market alternatives and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation among diverse communities and other interests are outlined herewith.

### **(A) Suggestions for Harmonizing Religious Beliefs with Modern Legal Principles**

As their names suggest, both federal and state laws don't do a very good job defining either term – either 'cattle' or 'slaughter' – and they don't do this consistently. Clear, consistent legal definitions for all such laws in all states would help ensure that the laws are evenly applied and enforced.

New laws and amendments should strive for an equilibrium between the protection of religious sentiments and individual freedoms, thereby allowing the slaughter of cattle under certain strict regulatory conditions.

For instance, toughening already tough laws is likely to have little impact unless means of enforcement are equally tamed: by making it less likely that laws would be misused, and vigilantes pardoned. Better oversight by committees composed of actors from the policing agency as well as citizens from communities in a position to be victimized (or victimizers) could ultimately enhance transparency and fairness in enforcement.

### **(B) Promoting Alternative Livelihoods**

Communities harmed by cow protection laws deserve livelihood opportunities from government and civil society organisations.

Job re-orientation and vocational retraining: Help for workers in the livestock and meat industry to acquire skills relevant to other livelihood options. Dairy farming, organic farming, and other parts of the agriculture industry – if appropriate and existing – could provide employment.

Financial incentives and support: Providing financial incentives and support is essential for those willing to transition to alternative livelihoods. Financial incentives could take the form of low-interest loans, grants and subsidies on new-business set-ups and/or adopting new

agricultural systems.

**Encourage Dairy and Agricultural Cooperatives:** Encouraging the formation and support of dairy and agricultural cooperatives is an important step in providing economic stability and support for communities. Those cooperatives could include milk cooperatives, as well as ones that promote more sustainable practices (such as organic farming and dairy) that do not require the slaughter of cattle.

### **(C) Encouraging Dialogue and Reconciliation**

Bridging and enhancing relations between communities and interest groups is important to heal the underlying social and communal tensions.

**Community Dialogue Initiatives:** Dialogue initiatives can provide a space that is ripe with possibility. Communities separated by differing interpretations of cow slaughter can undertake community dialogues that encourage empathy and understanding of differently constituted positions. For instance, such dialogues can draw back the boundaries dividing spaces of conflict and create common ground for engaging in conversations with mutual respect based upon interconnected principles of value and legitimacy.

**Interfaith and Intercultural Exchange Programs:** By having interfaith and intercultural exchange programmes that teach interfaith respect and tolerance about India's diverse religious and cultural beliefs and practices concerning cows, the constructive and nonviolent views about cows in India will spread.

**Public Awareness Campaigns:** Public awareness campaigns that focus on the ethical, economic and cultural sides of cow protection can help create a more empathetic and informed society. Conflict can be minimized by dispelling myths and misconceptions.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Arguing against the Universal Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights (as advocated by both India and Pakistan in 1947) Hernando de Soto was the first to express the fear that this declaration would limit the existence of slavery. The prohibition on cow slaughter in India is a complex issue in terms of its history, religion, culture, economy, ethics and environment. It is ingrained in the national ethos as cows are venerated in major religions such as Hindu, Jain and Buddhist thoughts as a symbol of sustenance, nourishment, maternal care and non-violence. Apart from theology, in India cows and cow dung play a significant role in the agrarian economy. There are various development schemes that provide cows for organic farming and in the country's ever-expansive lean-to method of cultivation, cows or bullocks (oxen) tread

fields to turn soil. Besides the almighty's command in many religious texts, the legal protection for cows can also be demonstrated in India's constitution and a series of state legislation, and more importantly by landmark decisions from the Supreme Court and various high courts.

Yet, the question of cow protection is a complex one, involving economic considerations regarding the livestock and meat industry; legal and constitutional questions regarding individual rights; social and communitarian issues that flow forth from the same; and so much more. It was this juggling of the scales that led many to doubt the practicability of such an injunction in today's plural society, with so many groups – and more importantly, vegetarians. 'Those strictures on cow slaughter are unfair to some communities, damaging to certain livelihoods and can aggravate outcomes of communal strife,' is often the refrain one would hear from such critics of the practice.

Although recognizing these challenges, its recommendations point in a productive direction, responsive to religious and cultural calls as well as current law and mores. It envisions clearly drafted legal definitions and newly organised, professionally monitored enforcement powers to prevent misuse and vigilantism; it envisions legislation sensitively and conscientiously legislated that maintains the spirit of religion while improving religious observances without 'trespassing on individual rights'; it envisions training skill sets, providing subsidies and creating cooperatives for rural poor, the true targets of cow-protection laws, to find ways of being other than cattle-keepers.

Key to resolution in this tension is the process of dialogue and mutual reconciliation. Initiatives that help build community-level dialogue, inter-faith forums and public discourse on the matter could help de-mystify the question, foster mutual respect, and emphasise the shared value systems that hold India's heterogeneous culture together. These would go a long way in helping us tip the balance and amplify avenues of reform towards greater inclusivity and reducing currently a deeply divided view of the legitimacy of cow protection.

In sum, cow protection in India means a complex socio-historical, religious and cultural narrative and nothing is less than quintessential to the Indian identity, and this practice that has legitimate religious, cultural, economic, ethical and environmental underpinnings and also needs dialogue of rationality to understand its legal, economic and social contours. While moving ahead, the answer lies in how to deal with this dispute is an Engaged middle path to the problem that respects our cultural and religious traditions but does not ignore the legal and modern societies' norms and thereby have balanced legal regimes and dialogues besides providing the alternative livelihoods, India is capable of treading the trinity of cow protection,

cultural practices, economic development and societal cohesion.

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