Over-Religious Activity, a Threat to Biodiversity (7): Ethical Restrictions against Animal Cruelty to Protect the Environment - A Review

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ABSTRACT Since the Vedic period, there is attempt to protect the biodiversity through ethical restrictions, reflected in various epics. Harming animals is widely considered as one of the lowest and cruellest activity of human beings. Animal cruelty may be for food, religious sacrifice, scientific experiment, business purpose or over carriage; it has a negative impact on the growth and sustenance of the animal world. Let the human society follow the ethical restrictions and save the biodiversity.

INTRODUCTION

Religious epics have ever focused on ethical dictums to drive the human society in right track. In India, Veda, Smriti (ethical law books) and Gita stand as a tripod to stabilise the culture and channelize the human life, in right prospective. The new concept 'Dharma of Ecology' forwarded by Dr. T.N. Khoshoo, the eminent environmentalist is justified, to meet the various threats to our environment. This work should start from an individual as he suggests. In this context, the various dictums presented in the Dharmic epics of Hindu religion shows torch to stop animal cruelty, an anti-ecological activity (Padhy 2000, 2014; Padhy et al. 2006). This communication is aimed to focus on certain selected ethical dictums, which has educative value against cruelty to biodiversity that is spread over in our country as well throughout the world along with religious practices (Padhy 2016, 2017a, b, c, d; Padhy and Mohapatra 2016).

SELECTED ETHICAL DICTUMS

Vedic Concept

Veda has many *Slokas* which are thought provoking from ecological point of view. Modern environmentalists consider that, these advise oriented Vedic concepts are the most ancient ideas of mankind for conservation of the

biodiversity (Khoshoo 1995). The most important Vedic concept *Yajnya* states that, all the plants, animals and micro-organism of the nature work with a sacrifice motive and interacts with each other from work culture point of view (Padhy 2010).

Three selected famous versions of Yajurveda says:

"May all living beings look at me with a friendly eye, may I do likewise, and may we all look each other with the eyes of a friend" (36/18).

"The whole universes with its creatures belong to the Lord (Nature). No creature is superior to any other, and the human beings should not have absolute power over the nature. Let no species encroach upon the rights and privileges of other species. However, one can enjoy the bounties of nature by giving up greed" (40/1).

"Look upon all the animate beings as your bosom friends, for in all of them there resides one soul. Behave with others as you would with yourself. All are but a part of that universal soul. A person, who believes that all are his soul mates and loves them all alike, never feels lonely. He experiences the intense joy throughout his life" (40/6).

Manusmriti

'Smriti' refers to *Dharma Sashtra* (ethical law books) which includes social laws, usages,

customs, manners and moral codes. They are post Vedic, with applied sociological value. There are twenty major Smruties and fifty minor. Manusmriti the first ethical law book of the world has encouraged non-violence to sub-human beings and vegetation from ethical, social, sympathetic, administrative, dietic and religious point of view, which has reflected on the conservation of biodiversity (Fig. 1), from ecological stand point (Padhy 2000). The conservation laws of Manu originate in three forms (1) ethical dictum in the form of advice (2) offensive dictum-declared as punishable, and (3) self-restriction dictum - a committer of environmental sin is asked to undergo penance; a prevention to commit the mistake again (Padhy et al. 2006).

Some selected dictums from Manusmriti against animal cruelty are as follows:

An elite person must seek a means of subsistence which either causes no or at least little pain to others and live by that except in time of distress (Manusmriti IV/2).

Whether he dwells in his own house, with a teacher or in the forest must never even at the time of distress, cause an injury to any creature (V/43).

He who does not seek to cause the sufferings of bonds and death to living creatures but desires the good of all beings, obtains endless bliss (V/46).

He who does not injure any creature attains without an effort what he fixes his mind on (V/47).

In order to preserve living creatures let him an ascetic always by day and night, even with pain to his body, walk carefully scanning the ground (VI/68).

Persons leading their livelihood at the cost of pain directly or indirectly to animals, were highly discouraged in the society through their non-entry into festive rituals like *Ssraaddha* (III/152, 162, 164, 166).

A person, who owns the profession of selling flesh, was considered so degraded socially that none was expected to receive gifts (*Daana*) from him (IV/84).

As many hairs as the slain beast has, so often he will suffer a violent death in future births, who killed it without a lawful reason (V/38).

He, who injures innoxious beings from a wish to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither living nor dead (V/45).

He who does not eat meat like a *Pissaacha*, becomes dear to man and will not be tormented by diseases (V/50).

Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures (which is detrimental to the attainment of heavenly wish); let him therefore shun (the use of) meat (V/48).

Considering the origin of flesh and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let him entirely abstain from eating flesh (V/49).

Fig. 1. Attempts for conservation of biodiversity as reflected in Manusmriti
Source: Padhy 2000

He who permits the slaughter of an animal, he who cuts it up, he who kills it, he who buys or sells meat, he who cooks it, he who serves it up and he who eats it, must all be considered as the slayers of animals (V/51).

The above involves a chain of events and persons to create the consciousness of non-killing an animal.

The guilt of one who slays not as that of him who eats meat for no purpose (V/34).

There is no greater sinner than that man who seeks to increase the bulk of one's own flesh by the flesh of others (V/52).

Me the *Maam-sha* will devour in the next world, whose flesh I eat in this life; the wise man declares this to be the real meaning of the word flesh (*Maamsha*) (V/55).

The king being the administrative head, whose conduct is expected to reflect on the society, is advised not to involve in hunting, a cruel play which involves unwanted death of innocent animals (VII/47-50).

The king was empowered to punish a careless driver of cart, who causes the death of any man or domesticated animal (VIII/296-98).

Even a blow struck against man or animals in order to (give them) pain, shall be inflicted with a fiscal punishment proportion to the amount of pain caused (VIII/286).

Let him gently place some food on the ground for dogs, crows and insects (III/92).

Let him not travel with untrained beasts of burden, nor with (animals) that are tormented by hunger or disease, or whose horns, eyes and hoofs have been injured, or whose tail has been disfigured (IV/67).

Let him always travel with (beasts) without urging to goad them much (IV/68).

Let him not interrupt a cow who is suckling (IV/59).

A damage caused by a cow within ten days of her calving, should not be considered as a cattle mischief. Moreover it is advised that there should be sufficient reserved space as pasture land around a village or thrice of that around a town for grazing (VIII/242).

Bhagavad Gita

In the Gita Srikrishna has not discussed much about *Himsaa* and *Ahimsaa* in relation to conservation of biodiversity. His approach is altogether different than the other views, which can be summarized as follows (Padhy 2014).

The Gita says: "Perception and realization of one imperishable divine existence as undivided and equally present in all individual beings is the only means for the conservation of the biodiversity". The Divine personality as: "He has endowed with numerous arms, hands, thighs and feet on all sides; many bellies and heads in all directions with innumerable mouths, teeth, eyes and ears all round, extended in countless forms pervading everywhere" (Gita: 11/16, 23; 13/13) stands as the most appropriate representation of the global biosphere as a single unit as per the modern ecological science. This is the true essence of worship to the divinity.

From environmental point of view, the physical body of every living organism is a combination of Nature's abiotic factors and the life force. The life force is named as *Chetana Shakti*, *Aatma*, *Jiivaatama*, *Jivana*, *Para Prakriti*, *Beeja*, *Kshertrajna* etc in Gita. The life force is pervaded within all living organisms in equal form. The divine life-force and the biological world are intimately associated with each other. The person who realises the existence, evolution, holding power, fostering and pervading of the life-force in every living being and who understands the joy and sorrow of others as his own self, with a similar view, is worthy to be the worshiper of the almighty. Gita's strong view is perception of the divine existence in all the living forms is the true essence of worship to the divinity and the only means for the conservation of the biodiversity.

Gita is a part of epic Mahabhaarata. The latter has clearly mentioned that, too much desire for woman, too much attraction to play games, killing animals for pleasure and drinking wine for amusement spoils the *Shree* (Lakshmi, fortune, wealth, beauty, lustre, prosperity, auspiciousness, glory, splendour, decoration, goddess of wealth, goddess of learning, good fortune) of a human personality (Banaparba 13/2).

The various selected narrations of Gita with diversified approach in this regard are as follows:

The soul dwelling in the bodies of all can never be slain (Gita 2/30).

The wise look with the same eye on a *Braahmana* (a learned and cultured man), a Cow, an Elephant, a Dog and a Pariah too (5/18).

Who is delighted in the welfare of all beings, attains the beatitude of *Brahma* (5/25).

He (whose mind being harmonized in Yoga) sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself; he sees the same in all (6/29).

He who sees Me (the universal self) present in all beings, and all beings existing within Me, never loses sight of Me, and I never lose sight of him (6/30).

He who, established in oneness, worships Me abiding in all being; abides in Me, no matter what he does (6/31).

He who looks on all as one, on the analogy of his own self, and looks upon the pleasure and pain of all with a similar eye-is regarded as supreme (6/32).

The life element by which this universe is upheld- is my higher *Prakriti* (nature) (7/5).

All beings have evolved from the two fold *Prakriti*: *Para* (life-principle) and *Apara* (material); I am the source of the entire creation (7/6).

I am the life in all beings (7/9).

Know Me as the eternal seed of all beings (7/10).

I know all beings, past as well as present, may, even those that are yet to come; but none knows Me (7/26).

All beings reside within the Supreme *Purusha* and by whom all this is pervaded (8/22).

My divine (power of) yoga is the sustainer and creator of the beings (9/5).

Know that all beings abide in Me (9/6).

All beings enter my *Prakriti* (the prime cause) during the final dissolution and I generate them again at the beginning of next creation (9/7).

Animating my *Prakriti*, I send forth again and again all this multitude of beings helpless under the regime of *Prakriti* (9/8).

I am equally present in all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me (9/29).

I am the self-seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings (10/20).

I am the consciousness (life-energy) in living beings (10/22).

I am the seed of all life (Genetic principle-DNA). No creature, moving or inert, that can exist without Me (10/39).

Those who are engaged in the welfare of all beings- verily they come unto Me (12/4).

He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate to all-is dear to me (12/13).

He who is not a source of annoyance to his fellow-creatures, and who in his turn does not feel vexed with his fellow-creatures- is dear to Me (12/15).

Whatsoever being, animate or inanimate, know it as an emanated from the union of *Kshetra* (matter) and *Kshetrajna* (spirit) (13/26).

He alone truly sees, who sees the supreme lord as imperishable and abiding equality in all perishable beings, both animate and inanimate (13/27).

Whatever forms (species of various kinds) are produced, in any wombs whatsoever, the nature is the conceiving Mother, while I am the seed-giving Father (14/4).

The eternal; *Jiivaatmaa* in the body of beings of the biodiversity (*Jiivaloka*) is a part of My own being (15/7).

I support all creatures by My vital energy (15/13).

I am seated in the hearts of all (15/15).

The Yogi established in identity with *Brahma* in all beings attains supreme devotion (18/54).

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them to revolve as though mounted on a machine (18/61).

Holy Bible

Bible conveys a coordinated message, that at some time the earth faced dissolution with heavy rain and flood, and man was alerted by the divinity (nature) to protect the biosphere as a prime moral obligation. The myth opens a vista to realise that, it should be ever a human responsibility to take care of the biodiversity, ancient days or modern time. Human commitment in this regard is above any religion; but later the facts have pervaded into religious scriptures.

In the old testament of Bible it is narrated that, when men began to increase in number (over populated) and wickedness entered into their character all the people on earth had corrupted their ways, earth was filled with violence due to human activity, God (nature) wanted to wipe out mankind along with animals and other creatures. During that time there was a righteous man, blameless among the people, named Noah, who was in coordination with the eternal spirit. Noah was the tenth generation of Adam. He received a divine message that, after seven days there will be heavy rain for forty days and nights, which would bring the flood water that, would destroy all living beings (Biodiversity). He was advised to build up an ark and to collect a pair of each living creatures, male and female and con-

serve them inside the ark with facilities for their food during flood time. Noah and his family worked accordingly. The waters inundated the earth for hundred and fifty days and slowly receded. Meanwhile all the creatures on the earth along with mankind were wiped out, except Noah and those with him in the ark. Finally after more than one year from the day of first occurrence of the rain, the earth was completely dry and Noah came out of the ark along with his family and other animals by the order of God. God said "Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you - the birds, the animals, all the creatures that move along the ground - so they can multiply on the earth and be beautiful and increase in number upon it" (Genesis 8: 17).

Noah and his family might have struggled hard to protect the animals and save the ship from the flood waters for a long time of one year. The intension of Noah was a clear expression of his attitude for the conservation of biodiversity at the time of dissolution. The mythical description spread the message that, mankind being the supreme being of creation and guardian of the nature should not be a defaulter to take care of the biodiversity (Padhy 2006).

Few more selected ethical restrictions against animal cruelty focused in Bible are as follows:

So God created man in his own image...

God blessed them (man) and said "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1: 27, 28). This is the highest ethics of Bible that man is the ruler (guardian, authority, conservator, care taker) of the Biodiversity.

Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death (Exodus 22:19).

Do not have sexual relations with animal and defile yourself with it. (Leviticus 18:23). This shows that, the animals should not be harassed sexually by man.

You shall not murder (Deuteronomy 5: 17). This is a part of the Ten Commandments declared by Lord.

If you see your brother's donkey or his Ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him to get it to its feet (Deuteronomy 22: 4).

If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mothers with the young (Deuteronomy 22: 6).

Do not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together (Deuteronomy 22: 10).

Do not muzzle an Ox while it is treading out the grains (Deuteronomy 25: 4).

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know my Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10: 14,15). The coordinated relation between the master and his pet animals is clear in this version.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught". Jesus said, "Come and have breakfast." Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them (his followers) and did the same with the fish (John 21: 10, 12, 13). The feeling of equality between man and animal can be marked here.

Qur'an

The following descriptions of Qur'an are collected from a paper presented in an international conference held in Chicago from 11th to 13th November, 1997 to which representative of all major religions had been invited to discuss about (1) Peace, (2) Environmental problems and (3) Education. The author's name and publication authority is not reflected.

If without good reason anyone kills a sparrow, or a creature lesser than that even, the living creature will put his plaint to God on the day of judgement, saying : so and so killed me for no purpose.

It is thus stressed that the purposeless and arbitrary killing of the living creatures of nature, whether large or small, is prohibited, and that those who do so will be called to account by God on the last day. Sparrow is an example only. The ethics is applicable for the whole animal world.

Qur'an expresses about the animals is that, they are a 'Community' (*Umma*). God's messenger has taught that Muslims should act kindly not only towards human beings but to all living beings.

The most merciful one is merciful towards these who are merciful. "Act kindly to those on the earth, so that those in the heavens (the angels) will be merciful to you."

God's messenger also commanded that bird's nests should not be disturbed, or the eggs or chicks stolen.

The prophet Muhammad used to enjoy the protection of animals and birds, that they should

not be ill-treated, but should be well looked after and kept clean, and employed in work suitable to their natures, and should not be loaded with burdens greater than they can bear. He put a ban on hunting and forbidding the arbitrary hunting of animals for pleasure.

There is a (divine) reward for giving any living creature to drink.

There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you.

Prophet Muhammad also insisted on the protection of animals and the kind treatment of them. His concern that they should be well treated, protected, and not abused or degraded is truly noteworthy. The prophet prohibited torture and abuse of animals.

A woman was sent to hell because she tied up her cat and neither gave it food nor allowed it free to hunt the cockroaches.

God's messenger stated that like men, animals employed in various tasks had the right to rest, and when stopping to rest or journeys, in particular insisted that the animals' needs should be met and that they should be rested.

Whenever someone arrives at a stopping place, he would never start the prayer until he had removed the loads from the pack-animals (and left them free to rest).

Islam religion permits that no living creatures is tormented or abused. Whether man or beast, all living creatures have rights (of their own). Those who violate their rights or disregard them will be punished in the hereafter by God if it not possible for them to be punished by the authorities here.

Concept of Ahimsaa: Buddha, Jaina and Gandhi

The theme of non-violence has a popular meaning of "Non-killing of living beings."

In this context, it is necessary to put forth two distinct ideas on non-violence, as:

1. The Vedic concept
2. The Ascetic concept

The Vedic concept of *Ahimsaa* (non-violence) states that only that type of injury is *Himsaa* (violence) proper, which is against the Vedic injunction. It is a big question whether Veda ever sanctioned *Himsaa*? Various interpretations in this regard are in support (MacDonald and Keith 1912) or against the Vedic concept of *Himsaa* (Das 1960).

The ascetic view of *Ahimsaa* means not to cause suffering to any living being at any time

either by mental, vocal or bodily activities (Tahtinen 1976). In this context the Gandhian view of non-violence, derived from the ascetic sources says that non-violence is not essentially regarded for all biological life, it is rather the non-exploitation of sentient creatures. Gandhi understood that, non-violence is a mental behaviour. It means the absence of ill will (Gandhi 1950). The themes of non-violence and humanity (*Maanavikataa*) can act as neutralizing factors against the brutal activity of mankind and save the world from destruction of biota (Gandhi 1948-1949).

The Jains have very laboriously dealt not only with *Ahimsaa* but also with the meanings of *Himsaa*. To them, *Himsaa* means the hurting of life-principles due to passionate activity. They consider, even when there is injury to life, it cannot be considered *Himsaa* if the person is not motivated by any kind of passion and carefully follows the code of right conduct. On the other hand, if one acts out of ignorance motivated by passions, violence takes place irrespective of whether another being killed or not. The types of *Himsaa* as per Jains are as follows:

- a) 1. Thinking of violence
2. Making preparations for violence
3. Actual commission
- b) 1. Done by one self
2. Caused to be done through others
3. By consent
- c) Caused by the passions
- d) 1. By mind
2. By speech
3. By body

Jains consider any kind of injury to any one is *Himsaa*. Violence includes not only killing and physical injury, but also curtailing the freedom of thought and speech of others. The Jains respect the life of even the smallest creatures. They explain that, the ignorant who commit *Himsaa* by mind, speech or body suffer for long in the great forest of rebirths.

The Buddhist *Ahimsaa* is defined as that "by which another being is not harmed". It is an antidote to the mental factor *Himsaa*. The Buddhist monk uses alms food not for sport, indulgence, decoration, beautification, but simply eats what is necessary for the support and sustenance of the body for keeping it unharmed. This is practise of non-violence towards oneself and casually turns to a rule it is applicable to other living beings. Hence, the phrase "Nonviolence to all living beings" includes both the agent and other living beings. The Buddhist non-violence

seems to have been mainly mental. The mental non-violent attitude is to give up the faults of ill-will. One must remain with a heart free from ill-will.

The doctrine of Buddha many be broadly understood as the path leading to the uprooting of all future suffering that can be uprooted. Violence which deliberately results in some forms of suffering can be seen to be evil against this background. A Buddhist should at any rate avoid the practice of tormenting others and not earn his livelihood as a cattle-butcher, a pig-killer, fowler, deer-stalker, hunter, fisherman, thief, executioner, jailer or through any other cruel occupation.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Harming animals is widely considered as one of the lowest and cruellest activity of any human being. This cruelty may be for food, entertainment, religious sacrifice, scientific experiment, for business (Fur, Ivory, Skin, Nail, Bone, Circus etc.) and over carriage purpose. Animals are the greatest source of milk. The cow is worshiped and respected in India as mother since the Vedic age. But to get more milk from the mother cow, the way the calf is prohibited to suck the udder is cruelty. Moreover, the use of chemical injections to produce more milk from a mother animal crosses all the limitations of ethical sense. Animals and birds are used for human food purpose. They are grown in forms with much care. But the living beings, the way they are carried to markets before their death is a great reflection of human cruelty.

Animal cruelty throughout the world due to religious activity and superstition are reflected as follows:

Animal Sacrifice in India

Durga/Kali is focused as the Hindu Divine Mother. The act of animal sacrifice before the Mother has been in existence since centuries. This activity is related with the *Tantra* philosophy. Mostly goats, sheep, pigeons, cocks are scarified before the Mother on certain ritual occasions. Many people take a vow before a deity to perform animal sacrifice in case of one's particular desire is fulfilled (*Maanasika*). On the specific day of sacrifice, people in groups go to the Goddess temple with music and dance along with the frightened animal. After offering puja the slaughterer sacrifices the animal openly be-

fore the audience. The mutton is cooked and served as *Prasad*.

In some communities, swine is used as sacrifice animal. In such case the animal is beaten to death. The roaring sound of the animal on every strike of bamboo sticks by a group of people creates a horrid sight of animal cruelty.

In certain tribal community buffalo are scarified in the agricultural field for better production. Some portions of its meat and blood are sprinkled in the field with the faith to enhance the fertility.

Every living being is an offspring of the divine Mother. People are biased with religious dogmas and superstitions to offer her own children as a sacrifice to the Mother, the great. There are notable temples throughout the country for animal sacrifice with flow of blood streams on the occasion day. Different authorities have tried to put a stop to it with varying degrees of success. Even court imposition on ban of animal sacrifice has little effect to such instances.

Massacre of Thousands of Animals

Animal sacrifice reaches its extreme during "Gadhimai festival" held at Nepal. Millions of devotee assembled in the holy temple of mother Gadhimai, the Hindu Goddess at Bariyapur in Nepal. The festival comes every five years. Upto 400,000 animals are slaughtered in just two days. Part of this sacrificial herd are 40,000 buffalos, which are not considered sacred since they are the vehiculum of the Hindu God of death - Yama. The by-products of the sacrificed creatures - bones, meat and hides are sold off to various companies for their uses. Good commercial activity is associated with this religious practice. Unfortunately many adherents unable to afford livestock, simply kill rats, snakes and pigeons or any animal they get with them.

The Truth behind Kosher Killing

According to Jewish tradition strict guidelines are prescribed for preparation of kosher food. Bulls, cows, sheep and other livestock must be humanely slaughtered by a 'Shohet' - a butcher certified by a Jewish Court (a rabbi) to kill animals for food as prescribed by Jewish law. The Shohet performs a deep slice on the throat of the animal which renders it instantaneously unconscious. It is a quick and painless death procedure of the animal concerned. In 2004 and 2007, PETA (People for Ethical Treatment to

Animals) discovered that kosher killing is not properly followed in many places. In Kosher slaughterhouses in Iowa and Nebraska the animals are murdered while they were fully conscious violating both federal and Kosher law. The workers directly dig into the throats of the animals with a hook to speed up the bleeding process. In such treatment the cows were even seen attempting to stand up consciously as their blood flowed freely.

Many countries have laws that the animals be stunned or sedated prior to being slaughtered. In Sweden and Denmark this process is strictly followed regardless of any contradicting beliefs. But in the Muslim practice 'halal' an exemption is often granted based on religious belief. In the later process the activity is offered to God as sacrifice of Hindus. However, a good news (Box. 1) awaits for Animal Welfare Activists.

BOX. 1: ANIMAL RIGHTS PUSH DUTCH SLAUGHTERING REFORMS

Jewish and Muslim groups have agreed to make changes to prevent unnecessary suffering to bovines.

Observant Jews and Muslims follow religious laws that dictate that they eat the meat of animals that have been slaughtered according to strict rules, including that the animals are conscious and healthy when their throats are cut (Koser and Halal). Animal welfare activists say the practice causes unnecessary suffering.

Responding to intense pressure from various activists, Jewish and Muslim groups have agreed to make some necessary changes in an effort to preserve their age old slaughtering practices. But, even though a compromise solution was developed, the Dutch Party for the Animals is planning to introduce legislation early this year in an attempt to ban religious slaughter. (*The Hindu*, National Daily, Visakhapatnam: January 3, 2018, Page 20).

Owl Sacrifice

Many superstitious beliefs are associated with owls. Romans believed that owls were 'suspicious' because of their nocturnal habit. They had strong belief that these creatures foretold

the death of their leaders - Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, Marcus Agrippa. In course of time old beliefs gave a way to new ones, such as owl hooting or screeching got related to death of a newborn. Owls were also associated with witches and ghosts. Owl nesting in a house is considered as a haunted one. Dreaming of an owl meant encounter of an accident and its appearance in day time makes an expectation of major misfortune. In old Roman practice owls were actually burned during festivals and their ashes scattered in the Tiber River.

In India, Goddess Lakshmi represents the beauty, good luck, wealth, source of food, diversified nature, perfection, completion, purity and cleanliness. Owl is the considered as the vehiculum of this wealth goddess. Wealthy people are convinced that, if the vehiculum of the wealth goddess is scarified with some black magic, she cannot fly away from their house and their richness will remain everlasting.

There was thrilling news of owl sacrifice as a religious activity in the Diwali night, published in news media and T.V. The price range of an owl for sacrifice range in upward of Rs. 30,000/- to 40,000/- per bird. The cost of the bird is no doubt high, which is more business provoking for animal traders and the sacrificer being a rich person hardly bothers for the tune of payment. In general, religious beliefs and dogmas are highly contagious. If this superstition migrates from place to place and initiates such negative activity, it may cause the end of this bird population quickly in an area (Padhy 2016).

Black Dog Syndrome

In many religious beliefs and superstitions dark-coloured animals are considered as evil, inauspicious. In earlier days of Christianity, a large black dog called the 'grim' was believed to move frequently in graveyards. Appearance of a black dog 'grim' near the window of a sick person was considered as an indicator of his death. It was believed once that vampires took the form of black dogs and are related with their roaming the countryside right after the attack of livestock. These dogs were considered as the negative forces behind the livestock attacks. This negative belief is named as black dog syndrome which resulted to less adoptability, less friendly and more intimidating of this animal. Compared to other pets, black dogs are harder

to sell. Even in animal shelters they are often the last to find a home. They are frequently euthanized due to these negative beliefs.

In contrast, in Hindu religion the black dog, black cow and crow are considered as divine representative of planet Saturn (*Sani*). People running with a negative effect of Saturn in their horoscope worship these animals and feed them daily, a positive activity of conservation.

Eating Dogs to Cure Ailments

In the northern mountains of the Philippines, an indigenous tribe inhabit named 'Igorot'. They have a belief that the dogs are spiritual guardians with mystical characteristics. Dog's teeth are said to protect from snake bites and thunder lightening. They wear dog teeth as necklace which is enriched with magical properties. They decorate their body with dog tattoos in order to gain the canine's agility and power.

The Igorotes eat dog meat during their healing rituals. In course of time the eating of dogs in most special occasions has turned to a daily habit. This has enhanced the poaching of dogs rampantly causing ecological threat.

In India, the dog population has gone up in urban areas. Their mischievous activity, quarrel between themselves to cause sound pollution in midnight, attack to children and live stocks are identified as extra urban problems in addition to spreading of 'Mad dog' disease. They also carry a number of skin diseases. Frequently attempt is taken by Municipality authority for their vasectomy to check dog population. However, in urban and rural areas people feed the dogs and crows in the morning with love and affection as a daily habit with religious feelings.

The Unfortunate 'Aye-aye'

The tiny creature found in Madagascar called 'Aye-aye', is a rare nocturnal primate related to the lemurs. It has rodent like incisor teeth and an elongated twig like finger on each hand. This unfortunate mammal is now in endangered condition due to its long middle finger. In course of evolution the animal has developed a long middle finger used as a tool to snatch insects inside tree barks and branches. The Malagasy people of Madagascar believe that the middle finger of the Aye-aye is pointed towards them to cause a certain doom. They also believe that, the crea-

ture will crawl into their homes at night and stab them in the heart with its long finger. This negative feeling of local people responsible for dropping them dead on the spot leading towards their endangered status. Practically the animal is friendly and curious by nature.

Entertainment Enters into Religion

In India different types of animals sports are organised and celebrated. Each of these sports activity has its own historical origin. Such sports are also observed in different other countries of the world in variegated form and name. No doubt these sports originated first for entertainment and in course of time gambling entered into it. Finally the sports and gambling entered into religion and become a part and parcel of the latter. Such activities are Jallikattu (Tamil Nadu), Cock fighting, (Andhra, Telangana, Odisha), Kambala (Karnataka), Bullock Cart competition (Odisha), Sheep fighting (Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha), buffalo fighting (Assam), Bull fighting (Odisha) and bulbul bird fighting (Assam and West Odisha). These sports are also found in different form throughout India, but are rampant in the places specified. Little details of the above sports are as follows.

Jallikattu

The other name of these sports is 'Eru thazhuvuthal' and 'Manju Virattu'. It is a game specified to Tamil culture. A trained Bull (Pulikulam breed or Kangayam breed) is released into a crowd of people (male) and multiple human participants attempt to grab on the large hump of the bull with both arms and hang on it. This is a game worthy of bold and free people. However, the name Jallikattu (Jalli - Coins, Kattu - Bundle) links the sports with gambling. This sports is celebrated in Tamil Nadu during Pongal following day of Makara Sankranti.

Cock Fighting

This game is spread throughout the world. Cocks with knife fight with each other and thousands of people enjoy the game with betting of money upto lakhs. This sport is prevalent during Makara Shankranti in Andhra and Telangana.

Kambala

It is a buffalo pair running race that occurs in Karnataka. Recently hundreds of people marched with 300 he-buffaloes at Moodbidri town (Karnataka) in Kakshimna Kannada district demanding lifting of the ban on Kambala.

Bullock Cart Competition

In Odisha at certain places this competition is organised to encourage the farmers. There is no negative report for this sport, however goading and beating the animals to run fast is not free from cruelty.

Sheep Fight, Bull Fight, Buffalo Fight

Two equally competent male animals are encouraged to fight with each other. People enjoy the sports at the cost of injury to the animals. These activities are also related with religious functions.

Bulbul Bird Fighting

It is a favourite game of Assam and some parts of west Odisha. The birds are tied with strings by the masters of the opposite parties. They are provoked to fight. They screen and nibble each other. Bulbul fights are organised to mark the Marvest festival of Bogali Bihu in the Hayagriva Madhava temple of Hajo, about 30 Km from Guwahati.

In all the above sports, cruelty for the animals can be marked exist in silent form. The entertainers hardly realize this. Moreover linking the animal sports with religious events opens ways for its bonafied and free access. Even when there is ban from courts against animal sports, people revolt and go for strike in favour of organising such events.

Extinct Thylacine was Not Evil

It was the largest known carnivorous marsupial of modern times. It is commonly known as Tasmanian tiger or the Tasmanian wolf (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*). Now it is extinct, was a native to continental Australia, appearing like a large size dog an apex predator, was naturally nocturnal. The animal was typically shy, secretive and avoiding human contact. It is wrongly

characterised as a blood drinker. But it had feeble jaws and incapable of handling prey much larger than 5 kgs. Researchers believe that they only ate small animals.

People's crazy superstitions was responsible for the extinct of the animal since 1930s. An unnatural evil became associated with the Thylacine. The creatures were often associated with mysterious deaths of livestock's and characterised as vicious poultry thieves. Even at one time the Government offered £1 bounty for every Thylacine killed. This erroneous belief was popular until 1980s, fifty years after extinction of the animal. In 2011, a study conducted by the University of New South Wales concluded that the jaws of the Thylacine were not nearly as strong to carry livestock as widely believed by early people. This is how a false superstition caused the extension of an animal from the world ecosystem.

Killing Bear Cubs for Their Spiritual Abode

In Japan the Ainu people regard the brown bears as gods. They believe that since gods dwell in the spiritual world, these bears ought to be sent there. The Ainu people grab the bear cubs from the wild. If the mother is found near her baby, she is killed immediately so as to not disrupt the process of sending the baby to Gods. The cuddly cub is then brought back to the village and nursed to full health. If necessary the women of the village help to grow it by breast-feeding.

After two years or so, when the grisly festival begins, the creature is taken out of the holding cage and tied down in the centre of the village. The villagers begin shooting it with blunted arrows. If the bear is still alive the villagers either crush its head or strangle it to death. Its brain, tongue and eye balls are then removed and the skull is filled with flowers. Similar activity is also followed by neighbouring Nivkh people or Gilyaks of Sakhalin Island with little modification.

Hanging a Bull for Future Peaceful Year

In China Naoyu festival is a religious gathering held every June 2 of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is a celebration of different ethnic groups such as Dong, Yao, Miao. It is a festival of dancing, singing, folk gathering with Bull fighting. The locals begin the day innocently by catch-

ing fish and offering prayers. By the end of the day they grab one of the Bulls, tie a noose around its neck and hang it tied to the branches of a tree. The animal struggles until it dies. This slow and painful death of the animal is believed to bring about a peaceful year and a prosperous harvest for the community.

Peacock Feather Business

Peacock (*Pavo cristatus*) is the National Bird of India. It has rich religious legendary involvement in Indian traditions. The bird's feathers are inordinately used for religious purpose with good commercial income. For example, in the authors place, Ganjam District, Odisha the peacock feather business gears up during the *Chaitra* month upto Rs. 50 lakhs per season with an average of Rs. 1.5 to 2 lakhs per shop. The procurement of the feathers in huge number is questionable which is supplied from Jodhpur of Rajasthan and Agra of Uttar Pradesh. This may cause in a setback of peacock population in the natural biodiversity, an apprehension of negative national interest (Padhy 2017b).

Prisoning Animals for a Good Day

According to Hindu belief, if a day's activity or any journey starts by seeing a fish, turtle, Ichneumon (Mongoose), albino rat, a cow feeding her calf or listening the songs of a parrot, every activity of that day and journey turns successful. People keep aquariums with coloured fishes and turtle. They feed them and take care of them. But the animals are not that free as they are in a natural environment. The Mongoose, a firstly moving animal in the nature is tied with a string and forced to loiter in a small space. The harmless albino rats are confined inside cages. Every living being has its own feeling. They are unable to express or if at all they express in their own languages, we are unable to catch it. The parrots inside a cage are forced to sing. We enjoy it. But the birds forgets its flying habit and turns motionless even if brought out of the cage after few years.

In pet shops, poor, helpless animals are imprisoned in tiny cages without even enough space to turn around. Their sad and pleading eyes can be marked. Birds are forced to live inside little cages. And for what beneficial purpose? Birds are meant to fly.

In addition to the above all, there are many animal sports which are not linked with religious activity such as circus play with animals, monkey dance in streets, dog fighting, greyhound racing, horse racing etc. In the later the animals are medicated to show more vigorous activity, is not free from cruelty.

Donkey Slaughter for Healing in China

Throughout the world in many under developed countries donkeys are the primary means to transport food, water, firewood, goods and people. However, in China they are used for another purpose, production of a traditional medicine called 'Ejiao'. This medicine is made from the gelatin extracted from boiled donkey hides. Ejiao was once prescribed to supplement lost blood and balance 'Yin' (the passive female presence in the universe as per Chinese Philosophy) and 'Yang' (the active male force in the universe - Chinese Philosophy). But nowadays it is used for a range of ills such as delaying ageing, increasing libido, preventing infertility, miscarriage and menstrual irregularity in women. Ejiao is a centuries old medicine, but its modern popularity began to grow from around 2010. There are many companies in China to produce the medicine. The price of Ejiao has risen up around 45 fold in the last fifteen years.

The demand for donkey has increased in China and once the highest world's population of the animal in that country has fallen to 6 million from 11 million. Unlike other animals, donkeys do not have intensive breeding. A female produce one foal per year. Now Chinese companies have begun buying donkey skins from developing nations at high cost. This may cause a potential crisis of donkeys throughout the rest of world. Out of a global population of 44 million, around 1.8 million donkeys are slaughtered per year to produce Ejiao as per a published report from United Kingdom. Even researchers from Chinese universities warned that, the demand and craze for Ejiao may cause the animal endangered (Nuwer 2018).

Snake Throwing Competition

The fifth day (*Panchami*) of the month of Shrawana of the lunar calendar is named as "*Naga Panchami*". It is a day for traditional workshop of snakes observed by Hindus throughout In-

dia, Nepal and other countries where Hindu adherents live. But the way snakes are worshiped in a village Agapura, 40 km away from Bagusarai District of Bihar, India is horripilation. In the snake worship event of the village, people play with poisonous snakes. They throw snakes to each other just like toy and flowers. There are records for death of people due to snake bite, yet this practice continues there. People walk freely furling snakes on their hands and neck. Even children are not afraid of the poisonous reptiles. This game is also arranged in many other places of Samastipur District, Bihar. A week long *Mela* (fair) is celebrated for snake game.

Collection of so many poisonous snakes for the purpose and torturing them in the name of worship is negatively eco-friendly. It is a dangerous entertainment in the name of religious activity (Published in an Odia daily newspaper - 'Prameya' Sunday Issue, 13 January 2018).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the world NGOs are working for animal care. The progressive Animal welfare society (PAWS) established by a group of women at Washington in the year 1967 tops the list. They provide shelter to homeless animals, cares for sick, injured and orphaned wild life until they are returned to their own natural habitat and educate people against animal cruelty.

In India, there are many such NGOs to take care of animals listed as follows:

1. People for Animals India
2. Sanjay Gandhi Animal Care Centre (SGACC)
3. Peta India
4. Visakha Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA)
5. Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)
6. Friendicoes
7. Stray Relief and Animal Welfare (STRAW)
8. Circle of Animal Lovers
9. Pet Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)
10. Animal Rahat
11. Furry Flyers
12. Delhi Society for Prevention of cruelty in Animal (SPCA)
13. Plant and Animals Welfare Society - Mumbai (PAWS - Mumbai)
14. Animal Helplines in Delhi and NCR
15. Wild Life SOS

16. The Bombay Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
17. Help in Suffering
18. Vet Helpline India
19. State Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Odisha
20. Param Foundation

In addition to the above there are local organisations throughout the country that work silently with a greater purpose to save the animal diversity. One such organisation famous in Odisha state devoted to save the Vedic age animal black buck is *Antelope servicapra* (*Krishnasara Mruga*) which is in endangered state. This animal is under conservation at Vaidya Narayan - Tamil Nadu, Gir Forest - Gujarat, Sawai Madapur - Rajasthan, Kanha National Park - Madhya Pradesh and other places of India. In Odisha they are conserved at Bhitara Kania of Cuttack district and Balukhanda of Puri District. In south Odisha (Ganjam: home district of the author) near village areas around Buguda, Bhetanai and Ramanda the animal lives in a natural habitat and Government has declared this area as their game reserve. In this area, the common people are motivated to conserve the animal being influenced by the Vedic age epic 'Manusmruti' and 'Bhagawata'. This most sensitive animal is declared as an Ecological Indicator since thousands of years ago and emphasized to take care of them (Padhy et al. 1997). This shows that religious epics have a positive impact on the society to create eco-conciseness. Human endeavour to conserve the biodiversity is well reflected in ancient Indian epics, Bible, Koran, Buddhist and Jain religious books which needs deep study.

It is rightly reflected in Gita: "The scripture alone is your guide in determining what should be done and what should not be done. Knowing this, you ought to perform only such action as is ordained by the scriptures (Gita 16/24).

Biotic consciousness is the first step towards their conservation. The religious epics throughout the world have attempted emphatically to create eco-consciousness among the human community, with the description of different aspects of biodiversity in diversified contexts. Man has to learn the lessons of religion to protect the plants, animals and micro-organisms around him; instead of turning over religious and spoil them.

It is a request to all NGOs working throughout the world to make the best use of the basic

theme of *Dharma* (fundamental principle of human life) to motivate people in this noblest work to stop animal cruelty and protection of biodiversity. The scientific journal “The Ecologist” published from London has devoted its first issue (2000) to discuss on the theme “Religion and Conservation of Environment”. The basic theme of all the articles published in that issue was ‘Religion and the Wisdom Associated with it can only save the environment’. This central idea is based on a Vedic theme “*Dharma Rakhyati Rakhyata*” - If principle is saved, all are saved.

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