



## Over-religious Activity, a Threat to Biodiversity (8): Dishonest Behavior to Bulls

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**ABSTRACT** Among all the animals worshiped in India, the Bull stands as prime being, the *Vaahana* (Vehiculum) of Lord Siva. The biological and ecological importance of this animal cannot be ignored for the growth of worldwide cow population, the richest source of milk. The unjustified behavior for this grand animal as an entertainment in the name of religion is an unfortunate human activity.

### INTRODUCTION

The structure of Hindu *Devataas* (cosmic powers) are designed scientifically as per *Tantra* Philosophy (spread to save), holding different weapons in their arms (more than two) and provided with an animal vehiculum called *Vaahana*. The weapons represent the modus operandi of their ecological powers (Padhy 2016), while the vehiculum is a simplified expression of the God's personality in animal form (Vitasaxis 1977). More to say, some animals like monkey, cow, bull, elephant, rat, birds, tortoise, snake, crocodile, fish etc. are worshiped directly in India; a rich source of love for biodiversity. Many mythological deities are worshiped having an animal head with human body or vice versa. The ten major divine incarnations of God Vishnu represent the Zoological and Anthropological evolution, out of which the initial four- *Matsya* (Pisces), *Kurma* (Tortoise), *Varaaha* (Boar) and *Nrusingha* (Lionman) are from animal kingdom (Panigrahy et al. 2002). The *Panchamukhee Hanumaan* is a unique integrated form of five animal heads represent the ancient animal classification developed in India (Padhy et al. 1999). Generally people are reluctant to kill a snake, a cat, a rat as they are associated with our mythology. In day to day ritual of Hindus like *Vaishvadeva Puja*, a special share of food is dedicated for dogs, crows and insects (Padhy 2008), which represents the highest philosophical thought for protection of animals. The conservation of birds, fishes, tor-

toises, rats, snakes and monkeys in various religious places is not uncommon in our country. Similarly the particular animal associated with the mythological deities is ordinarily not killed (rather conserved) by the sect of worshippers. This communication reflects on the essential necessity of special protection for the Bulls in Indian scenario.

### ECO-ETHICS AROUND LORD SIVA

God Siva's family is a unique representation of the natural environment. His residence at Kailash Mountain is a significant location amidst the vast ecosystem of the Himalayas, one of the most expanded Biodiversity. The animal vehiculum of Siva is Bull (Class (CL.) Mammalia, Order (OR) Artiodactyla, Family (FA) Bovidae – Ruminantia, *Bos taurus*, named Nandi a herbivore and of Mother Parvati – the Lion (CL. Mammalia, OR. Carnivora, FA. Felidae, *Panthera leo*) a powerful carnivore. Both the animals broadly represent the animal kingdom from ecological food chain point of view.

Lord Siva has another name Rudra (forceful, penetrating); an alternate name and application for the glowing Sun – the source of Solar Energy (Padhy 2011). Mother Parvati, called Goddess Durga – represents the "Shakti" (Energy, Power). The importance of the Sun and its energy source for the existence of world ecosystem is imperative (Photosynthesis → Autotrophic → Heterotrophic: Herbivore and carnivore) a joint venture of Siva and Parvati.

Sri Siva is worshiped as *Lingam*, the phallus, being fixed on a *Yoni* (Point of creation –

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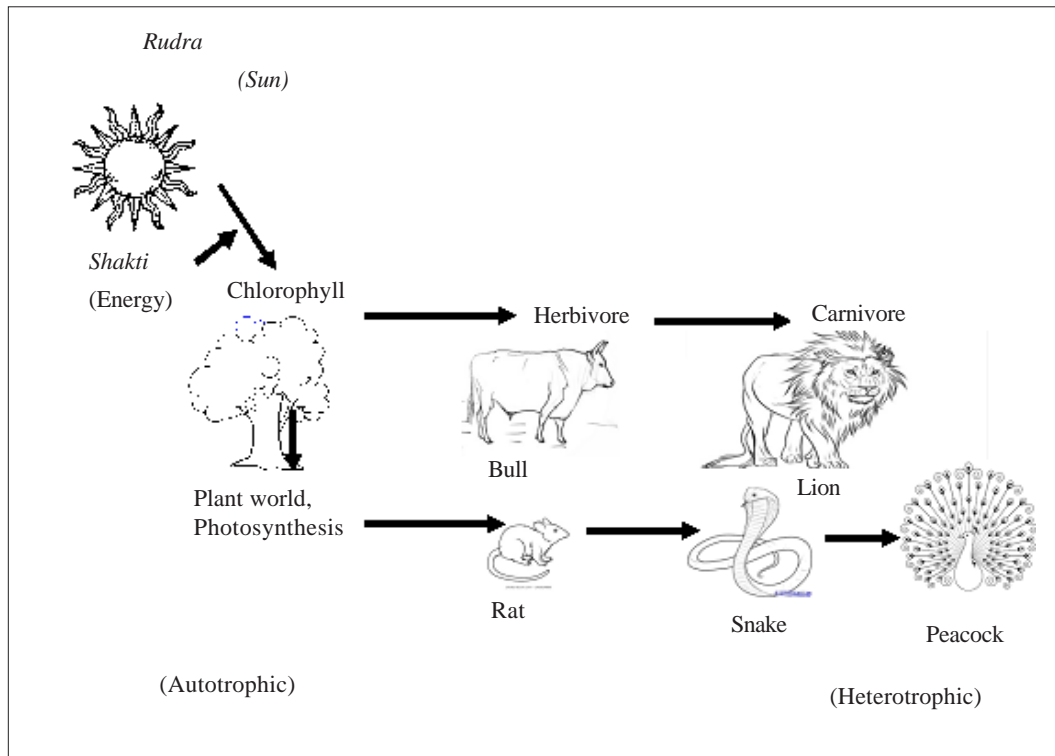
female sex organ). This symbolizes Siva as the power of creation of the Biological world. He is also regarded as the power of destruction of the cosmic ecology; where Sri Brahma and Sri Vishnu are the power of creation and maintenance respectively. Creation is ever associated with destruction. Both are contrary to each other, but one follows the other alternatively as a natural law.

The other animals associated with Siva's family are Peacock (CL: Aves, OR: Galliformes, FA: Phasianidae – *Pavo cristatus*), King Cobra (CL: Reptillia, OR: Squamata, FA: Elapidae – *Ophiophagus hannah*) and Rat (CL: Mammalia, OR: Rodentia, FA: Muridae – *Rattus rattus*). The former one and the latest are the animal vehiculum of Sri Kartikaya and Sri Ganesh respectively, the sons of Siva's family. King Cobra is a decorative ornament on the body of Lord Siva. These three animals in ascending order: Rat→

Snake→Peacock→ represent the food chain of the ecosystem; essential for the latter's maintenance with flow of energy in the form of food. Irrespective of their prey – predator relationship and being members of different class, order and family of biological classification, all the five animal members of Sri Siva's family remain together with social cordial relationship. This is a significant representation of the homo-static balance of the ecosystem as realized by ancient Indians. The whole system is elaborated in Figure 1.

**ETHICAL PROTECTION FOR BULL**

The bulls are used for cultivation and dragging of carts since the time immemorial. The religious epics throughout the world have tried emphatically to give protection (Padhy 2018) to these animals from various angles. Few selected examples are as follows:



**Fig. 1. Lord Siva's family Represents the food chain and flow of energy in the ecosystem (Rudra and Shakti are alternative names of Siva and Parvati respectively)**

The bull is capable of carrying load as well as dragging cart; let it enrich all with strength, majesty and long life (Yajur Veda: 21.17.18)

Let the farmer cultivate the field in happy mood moving behind the bulls presently. Let the bulls give pleasure to the farmer and complete the cultivation work comfortably. Tie the tether (to the neck of the animal) carefully and softly. Apply whip to goad them softly for pleasure sake (Atharva Veda: 3.17.5.6).

Those who express their mental generosity by offering a bull (as gift) to a deserving *Brahmin* (elite person): with the direction of *Devataas*, they secure cow wealth, good children and physical power (Atharva Veda: 9.4.19.20).

Oh cow! We have conserved this young and energetic bull for you. You have every freedom to move here within this herd (with that bull). Oh fortunate (Cow)! Do not leave us and complete your affluent nourishment (Atharva Veda: 9.4.24).

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

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

To ride on the back of cows or of oxen is any how a blamable act (Manusmriti: IV. 72).

There should be sufficient reserved space as pasture land around a village or thrice of that around a town for grazing (Manusmriti: VIII. 237).

Drive the bulls by creating different sounds from mouth or manage them to work by threatening softly with a leafy twig. Do not beat them repeatedly with a goad when they are hungry and tired. The owner of the bulls, should not drink even water till the animals are satisfied with food and drink. If they have worked hard in the morning, they should be given complete rest during the mid day period and allowed to work in the evening. (Mahabhaarata; c.f Rath 1981).

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 (Bible, Deuteronomy: 22.4).

Do not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together (Bible, Deuteronomy: 22.10).

God's messenger stated that like man, 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 (Qur'an).

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) (Qur'an). More work on ethical restrictions against animal cruelty in reflected in the previous communication of this series (Padhy 2018).

The bulls which are regarded as Nandi, develop certain significant body features from their early age. These symbols are considered as spiritual and blessings of the divinity for the animal. The owner of the calf allows it to have a free life as future Temple Bull-Nandi. In every village and town such free living Nandis are found to be roaming in the streets, moving with the cow herds or ruminating at lonely places. People are very hospitable to these animals. They respect the Nandi and feed them. Even it is observed that, the bull attends a house, hotel or vegetable vendor in right time to demand his share of food, provided out of love.

The importance of Nandi is very significant near any Siva temple. Pilgrims after *Darsan* (visit an idol) of the Lord come out of the temple and search for a living Nandi to feed it *Prasad* (food offered to God). As a token of the *Vaahana* of the master, a huge rock (or cement) idol of Nandi is placed before the entrance of any Siva temple. Sivaji, is named as 'Nandikaswara' (master of Nandi). In Bhubaneswar, Odisha a gigantic idol constructed in one rock is worshiped in the Premises of the famous Sri Lingaraja Temple. The Nandi hill of Karnataka is an important tourist place with a temple to worship the animal. It is customary for a Siva worshiper to whisper in the ear of the Nandi idol regarding his /her difficulty, which needs to be presented before the God. It is believed (also a fact of realization) that, Nandi rightly communicates the worshiper's difficulty to the master. People while entering a Siva temple first worship the Nandi, touch its testicles as teasing and embrace the hump of the idol with love and respect. The whole process is known as *Brushava Chalana* (Excitation of the bull), the first activity of a worshiper inside a Siva temple (Fig. 2). Ironically (as people talk), touching of the testicles of the animal makes it sensitive to react and jump, that shakes Sivji seated on his *Vaahana*. By this Sivji's concen-

tration gets disturbed and his attention is diverted towards the prayer of the worshiper. This is an interesting mythological co-ordination to express love for the bull.

### DISTRESS OF BULLS

#### Religious Activity

With a religious feeling the owner of the Nandi calf prefers to leave his animal in a pilgrim place, nearby any famous Siva temple. Accordingly, at Puri Dham Odisha (Padhy 2017d), a good number of bulls have assembled. All of them are shelter less, roam in the streets and create social problems like traffic Jam and fight between themselves in the mid of crowds. All these bulls belong to Lord Siva Sri Lokanath of Puri, who is regarded and respected as the conservator of Sri Jagannath temple. The inhabitants of Puri as well whole Odisha have utmost regard for Sri Lokanath. The Bulls of Puri look healthy, probably they get good food; but often suffer from stomach problems due to consumption of polyethylene papers and other garbage.

These indigested papers get accumulated in their intestine and cause high acidity which sometimes results up to the end of their lives.

Interestingly since some years before the onset of Ratha Yaatraa, the bull population of Puri are forced to leave the town in order to avoid their interference and disturbance during celebration. They are dragged away from the urban locality to distance places and prevented to come back early. The Odisha people love more Sri Jagannath, but fear Sri Lokanath with that intensity. This is the reason, no one has any complain against the bulls. Every one tolerates them with due respect as a religious order.

Throughout India people feed the bulls (and cows) in religious places as a token of their love for Sivji and his *Vaahana*. This is a profitable business for some people to provide grass packets to pilgrims and earn money. Similarly another bull business is decoration of the Bulls as Nandi and collection of money and clothes from door to door as gift for the animal God. Such Nandi bulls are trained to nod their heads dramatically before house holders, a good entertainment. Sometimes such decorated bulls in



Fig. 2. The Ideal of Bull in front of a Siva Temple  
Source: Internet

group run in circles and show certain circus activity before crowd gathering for better collection of money. It is a religious oriented profession of the Nandi owners. However, the pressure on the free living animal cannot be ignored. The religion linked greatest bull cruelty is reported from China (Padhy 2018) and it is not out of place to repeat the event (Box 1).

#### BOX 1

##### *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, You, Miao. It is a festival of dancing, singing, folk gathering with Bull fighting. The locals begin the day innocently by catching 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.

### Bull Fighting

Bull fighting is a physical contest between the animal and humans. The human participant attempts publically to subdue, immobilize or kill a bull, usually according to a set of rules, guidelines or cultural expectations. This is the most dangerous occupation of man against beast. There are many different forms and varieties of bull fighting in various locations around the world. This exciting sport is highly enjoyed by people. In this sports, a bull especially bred for this purpose, fights a man in the arena and is usually killed in the end.

Every year approximately 250,000 bulls are killed in bullfights. The fighter here is called Matador. He makes use of a red cloth to make the bull angry. When he waves the cloth, the bull gets excited and attacks. Veterinarians, zoologists and ex-matadors have the opinion that the bulls are submitted to unnecessary stress and suffering both in and out of the ring. In this sport, the bullfighters are also heavily injured or killed. A report says, a total of 533 matadors have been killed in Spain since 1700AD. However, bull-fighting is legal in most places of the world but also banned in some.

Bullfighting traces its roots to prehistoric bull worship and sacrifice in Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean region. This sports is often linked to Rome. It is a traditional spectacle in countries like Spain, Portugal, parts of southern France, Tanzania as well as in some Latin American countries like Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru. In course of time France adopted it with their own distinctive form.

Throughout the world many people, animal activities and animal welfare advocates, consider this sports as a cruel, barbaric blood sport in which the bull suffers severe stress and ultimate end in a slow and torturous death. However in Spain, Bullfighting is at a popular level related with religion and religious folklore, and traces its origin in 711AD.

### Jallikattu

Pongal is a 4 days harvest festival celebration in South India during which the third day is known as *Mattu* pongal. *Mattu* means bull. Jallikattu is a sports with bulls played on that day. It is claimed that this sports has a history of 2500 years. Tamil ancient literature like Silappati Kaaram, Kalithogai and Malaipadu Kadaam has Jallikattu reference. It is emphasized that Jallikattu is to thank the nature, not to torment bulls. It is an ancient Tamil event and typically practical in Tamil Nadu. It is also claimed that the bull taming sports played in Mohenjodaro (2500-1800 B.C) long ago refers to Jallikattu.

The word Jallikattu is derived from '*Sallikattu*.'; '*Salli*' means coins and '*Kattu*' means package or bundle. The prize of coins that are tied to the bull's horns are attempted by participants to retrieve. It is also called as *Manju Virattu* – literally bull chasing. It is an ancient Tamil event where the participants try to embrace a bull. It displays the bravery of a person who embraces the bull. The whole event can be described step-wise as follows:

1. The bull is released from a gate into the competition field which is called '*Vadivasal*'.
2. Contestants attempt to wrap their arms around the hump of the bull and hold on to it to win the award.
3. Only one person is allowed to attempt at a time.



4. Generally pulikulum bulls, kangayam breed bulls and Bangur bulls are used in this game.
  5. The bulls are trained before they face the event. Use of drugs, liquor or other irritants are strictly prohibited on the bulls.
  6. The participants must only hold on to the bull's hump and, try to tame it by bringing the bull to stop. Any variation of holding neck, horn or tail is considered disqualification.
  7. There are certain variations in the process called *veli virathu*, where the bull is directly released into open ground instead from a closed gate.
  8. In another variation (*vatam manjuvirattu*) the bull is tied with a 15 meter rope to move in a circle (*vatam*). A team of 7 to 9 participants are allowed to attempt to untie the gift token that is tied on the bull's horn. The game is allowed for 30 minutes.
- Google is flooded with bull taming pictures and jallikattu news. Report says, with in the period 2008 to 2014 43 human beings and four bulls died and 5000 people were injured. Out of the latter, about 3000 had serious injuries. In the year 2017, 23 human beings and 5 bulls died along with 2500 human injuries. A report of January 18, 2018 reported the death of a teenager and 4 oth-

er spectators. In another two events 79 and 26 people were reported as injured. There were lot of opposition for Jallikattu by various Animal Welfare Organizations and the intervening of Supreme Court could not solve the problem. On January 2017 there was a protest rally opposing the ban of Jallikattu (Save Jallikattu) and even that could not end the cruelty to the bulls in the name of history, religion, culture, sports, interest of people and demand with political motive. One of the latest news of 2019 is reflected in Box 2 (*The Hindu*, National daily, 16.01.2019, P. 7).

### LAST LINES

2018-2019 is the 150<sup>th</sup> *Jayanti* (birth anniversary) year of Mahatma Gandhi, celebrated worldwide. Gandhi understood that non-violence is a mental behavior for non-exploitation of sentient creatures. It means absence of ill will (Gandhi 1950). This is the only neutralizing factor against the brutal activity of mankind and save the world from destruction of biota (Gandhi 1948-49). Non-violence is not a theoretical basis for ecological implementation of biodiversity conservation, was rightly realized and implemented in the life of Mahatma Gandhi in the past century itself. *Ahimsa*, should also be equally extended to plants, a fact that is reflected in the International journal '*Gandhi Marg*' (Padhy 1999). Gandhi has said (Khasho 1995):

*"Man has no power to create life, therefore he has no right to destroy life".*

*"We cannot have an ecological movement designed to prevent violence against the nature, unless the principle of nonviolence becomes Central to the ethics of human culture".*

*"A society can be judged by the way it treats its animals".*

*"It is arrogant assumption to say that human beings are lords and masters of the lower creatures. On the contrary, being endowed with greater things in life, they are the trustees of the lower animal kingdom".*

*"I need no inspiration other than Nature's. She has never failed me as yet. She mystifies me, sends me to ecstasies".*

Mahatma Gandhi was an apostle of applied Human Ecology (Khasho 1995). Along with all scientific preventions and implementations for the protection of ecology, the human race should

#### BOX-2

##### **29 Injured during 'Jallikattu' in Tamil Nadu, India**

A total of 29 people sustained minor injuries at the 'Jallikattu' (bull-taming) event held in Alanganallur in Tamil Nadu's Madurai district on Thursday.

The event, which was largely incident-free, however, saw the death of one spectator who suffered a cardiac arrest, officials said.

District Collector \_\_\_\_\_, who addressed the media after the start of Jallikattu, said only six tamers were referred to the Government Rajaji Hospital. Many others sustained only minor injuries.

He said, "A total of 748 tamers were registered and 697 took part. A total of 1, 400 bulls were registered but only 729 were to enter the arena".

The players who entered in batches of 100 competed in eight rounds with finalists (those who tamed more than three bulls) entering the last round.

be kind to nature and biological life for their conservation and sustenance. Moreover, screening of the plants and animals as endangered species, conducting of workshops, and formulation of rules with high assumptions has less value for protection of biodiversity compared to glimpse of love for them. Man should take care of the divine manifestation as the guardian of nature, as Bhagavad Gita says (Padhy 2019).

India is flooded with Siva temples starting from Amaranath to Rameswaram. In every village one can witness a Siva temple with a Nandi Idol. People make a vow to visit at least once in their life time the *Dwadasha Yotirlinga* (12 famous Siva temples), established by Sri Aadi Shankaracharya at different places of our country. Let us not be over religious in our activity to spoil the biodiversity (Padhy 2016, 2017a-d, 2018; Padhy and Mohapatro 2016) and become a negative social medium to torture the Bulls. Gandhiji has rightly commented:

“Cow protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world. Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow”.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is devoted in respect to Mahatma Gandhiji (on his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary), Father of the Nation of our Mother Land ‘Bharat’, with a unique *Mantra*:

‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others’; the highest ethics of Applied Human Ecology.

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