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ANY FALSEHOOD WILL DO TO RIDICULE MAJORITY

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The new Rules have been framed to prevent widespread cruelty to animals, and based on the apex court's directives. Where does a ban on beef consumption come in?

Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to keep the focus on development, his detractors have used every opportunity over the last three years to shift the discourse onto issues triggered by the antics of fringe elements in the Sangh *Pariwar* or to distort routine governmental activity flowing out of court orders and see phantoms where none

exists.

A case in point is the recent hullabaloo about the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017. The purpose of these rules is to protect animals from cruelty and not to regulate the trade in cattle for slaughter houses. It is also meant to curb illegal sale and smuggling of cattle and applies specifically to animals bought and sold in the notified live stock markets and animals seized as case properties by law enforcement agencies. They do not cover other areas.

But more importantly, these rules have been made in compliance of an order of the Supreme Court in Gauri Maulekhi vs Union of India and Others, which primarily related to cattle smuggling to Nepal. In this case, the court ordered on July 13, 2015, that the Government should frame guidelines to prevent animals from being smuggled out of India for the Gadhimai Festival in Nepal, during which there is large-scale animal sacrifice. The apex court also directed the Director General (DG) of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) to examine the issue in detail and suggested certain measures to curb trans-boundary [smuggling of cattle](#). The court asked the Government to implement these recommendations and notify rules in regard to Livestock Market and Case Property animals. The court issued a final order on July 12, 2016, in which it said that rules must be framed under Section 38 of the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#) Act, 1960, within three months.

Following these directions, the Animal Welfare Board of India prepared the draft rules incorporating all the suggestions made by the Supreme Court in this case, and the draft rules were notified on January 16 this year, inviting objections and suggestions within 30 days from persons affected by the amendments. The Government received 13 representations, which were examined, and eventually rules were notified last month.

Have you heard any of these facts or anything about the order of the Supreme Court in the cacophonous debate that is currently on in different parts of the country on these rules? Also, is it not an absolute perversion to say that these rules are aimed at curbing beef-eating?

The background is as follows:

Gauri Maulekhi of Dehra Dun petitioned the Supreme Court in 2014 seeking its intervention to stop the transportation of lakhs of animals from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttarakhand across the India-Nepal border for a barbaric ritual sacrifice at the Gadhimai Festival held once in five years in a village called Bariyarpur in Nepal. This is the largest animal sacrifice in the world and involves the gruesome slaughter of about half a million animals including sheep, buffaloes, pigs etc over a span of two days and 70 per cent of these animals that are put on the chopping block are smuggled into Nepal from India.

At the very first hearing of this petition in October, 2014, the court issued a direction that no live cattle and buffaloes should be illegally exported from India to Nepal. Thereafter, it directed the DG, SSB, to call a joint meeting of representatives of the States, talk to the petitioner, evolve a comprehensive plan and submit the report to the court. The DG prepared the plan as directed by the court.

He said in his report that lakhs of people from India cross the border when the festival is held. "In view of the open and porous nature of the India-Nepal border, it is difficult to prevent cattle crossing over if effective measures are not taken in the hinterland to prevent the transportation of animals up to the border, due to the large numbers involved. Therefore, concerted efforts are required to be taken by every agency across the states mandated to prevent cattle smuggling and animal sacrifice."

He told the court that the transport of these animals involved 17 violations, including provisions of the Constitution, Acts of Parliament and Rules made there under and judgements of the Supreme Court, apart from economic ramifications like yearly drainage of large population of productive animals, setback to agriculture and animal husbandry and illegal activities in respect of sale and transportation of livestock and cross-border smuggling.

The report recommended legally-mandated institutions and mechanisms like the constitution of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelties to Animals in every district, establishment of State Animal Welfare Boards in every State as directed by the Supreme Court, creation of training modules on animal welfare for law enforcement agencies and a general prohibition on animal slaughter "at any religious or public place", and setting up of monitoring and evaluation committees to prevent such cruelty to animals.

More significantly, the report said that rules should be framed "to regulate cattle markets to ensure that healthy cattle are sold only for legally authorised purposes"; animal transportation should be done only in accordance with various Acts and Rules in vogue; and rules must be framed for disposal of seized cattle to ensure that they do not get recycled into smuggling.

The court directed the Government to implement these recommendations and frame the Rules as suggested by the DG, SSB, in his report to the court. The Government took extra time to implement the order and eventually came up with the Rules in question.

What has any of this got to do with the consumption of beef or cow protection in particular? Is it a sin to implement the orders of the Supreme Court? This is an absolutely bogus controversy created by the pseudo-secular brigade which indulges frequently in its favourite pastime of mocking at Hindus for their reverence for the cow. Hindu-hating communists in Kerala cooked beef on the roadside and consumed it to register their 'protest' against the Rules framed as per directions of the court. Sadly, the Congress too is going along the same road these days. The Youth Congress too used the occasion to mock at the Hindus. They cooked and ate beef along the roadside in Thiruvananthapuram. The people will teach them a lesson.

(The writer is Chairman, Prasar Bharati. Views expressed here are personal)