

Animals & Religions In India



Note to the readers

The sections of this report that reference and interpret various religious texts and rituals should not be construed as an endorsement of these beliefs or practices. They are presented solely for academic and analytical purposes.

PREFACE

This report, "Animals and Religions in India," is a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between religion and animals, focusing on the relevant teachings and practices of five major religions: Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Drawing from the scriptures of each religion, this report incorporates teachings that emphasise compassion, nonviolence, and ethical treatment of animals. It outlines the plight of animals in and outside industrial farming, which often conflicts with these teachings. It also features interviews with contemporary religious leaders from across these faiths, offering valuable perspectives on the moral responsibilities embedded in their respective traditions and calling for a renewed commitment to animal welfare in today's society.

India's legal system includes several laws and constitutional provisions that protect animals, including the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 and various provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023. However, there are significant challenges in enforcing these laws, particularly when religious practices conflict with legal protections. In addition, the report thoroughly analyses the legal framework surrounding animal usage in religious practices in India.

This report calls on religious communities, policymakers, and society to bridge the gap between religious principles of compassion and our relationship with animals, advocating for stronger legal protections and returning to ethical, nonviolent practices that align with religious doctrines.

Ultimately, this study aims to inspire a conscious rethinking of how animals are treated in India, encouraging religious and secular communities to prioritise their well-being in all aspects of life — whether through religious practice, law, or everyday actions.

Table of contents

Note to the readers:	2
PREFACE	3
The Role and Significance of Animals in Indian Religious Contexts	6
Perception of Animals in Major Indian Religions	9
2.1 HINDUISM	9
Introduction	9
Pre-Vedic Period	10
Vedic Period	11
Post-Vedic Period	11
Teachings and Common Practices	13
Elephants and Dogs in Hinduism	16
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	18
Conclusion	20
2.2 ISLAM	21
Introduction	21
Teachings and Common Practices	23
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	27
Conclusion	30
2.3 SIKHISM	31
Introduction	31
Teachings and Common Practices	32
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	35
Conclusion	36
2.4 CHRISTIANITY	37
Introduction	37
Teachings and Common Practices	38
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	41
Conclusion	41
2.5 BUDDHISM	42
Introduction	42
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	50
Conclusion	50
2.6 JAINISM	51
Teachings and Common Practices	53
Animals Subjected to Farming Systems	57
Conclusion	58
Legal Framework and Animal Welfare	59
Case Studies of Legal Intervention Concerning Animal Sacrifice	63
Gaps in Animal Protection Laws and Regulations	63
Interfaith Perspectives on Animal Welfare	65
Insights from Religious Leaders on Ethical Animal Values and Environmental Concerns in India	67

Conclusion on Animals and Religions in India

72

Acknowledgment

73

CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ANIMALS IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

“

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

- Mahatma Gandhi

”

India, a country of rich diversity, is a secular state in an established constitutional framework. This diversity is reflected in its people's myriad religious practices, each with unique opinions and beliefs regarding animals and their treatment. Religious teachings often influence animal welfare by shaping cultural beliefs, norms and practices. Maintaining balance within the ecosystem, including animals, plants, and humans, is essential. Consequently, protecting and ensuring the welfare of animals is a key responsibility in preserving this balance, as emphasised in various religious texts and the Constitution of India.

In India's diverse religious landscape, animals are regarded as having significant symbolic and ethical importance, representing various spiritual values and worldviews. Each major religion in India offers a unique perspective on animals, highlighting their deep connection to human life and ethics.

Hinduism views animals as essential to the cosmic order and human life, rooted in the principles of reincarnation and karma. Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas advocate for nonviolence and compassion towards animals, portraying them as integral to the divine scheme. Rituals and myths frequently feature animals; for instance, Vishnu, a principal deity, has been incarnated as various animals, including fish, tortoises, and boar. Additionally, many deities, such as Lord Ganesh and Nandi (the sacred bull), are depicted with animal attributes, emphasising the sacred connection between humans and animals and reinforcing ethical teachings on respect and compassion.

Islam places significant emphasis on the compassionate treatment of animals, viewing it as an essential aspect of faith and ethical behaviour. The teachings of Islam, as reflected in the Qur'an and Hadiths, guide Muslims to treat all living creatures with kindness and respect. Animals are considered valuable not only for their roles as livestock or companions but also for their inherent worth as creations of God. The Qur'an specifically mentions the importance of caring for animals. For example,

Surah Al-An'am (6:38) states, "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." This verse highlights that animals, like humans, deserve respect and care and are part of the divine creation.

Additionally, Surah Al-Nur (24:41) says, "Do you not see that Allah is exalted by whoever is within the heavens and the earth and by the birds with wings spread [in flight]?" This verse emphasises the significance of animals in the creation and their role in glorifying God, further underscoring the importance of treating them with compassion. The Hadiths also reinforce this perspective. The Prophet Muhammad emphasised mercy towards animals, stating that those kind creatures will receive God's mercy in return. Such teachings underscore the belief that exhibiting care and compassion towards animals is virtuous and reflects one's faith and acknowledgement of the divine order. In essence, Islamic practices and beliefs advocate for the humane treatment of animals, recognising their importance in the natural world and urging humans to fulfil their duty of care.

Sikhism's central scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, underscores the importance of protecting and caring for animals, aligning with Sikh values of equality and empathy. The principle of "Sarbat da Bhala" (welfare of all) extends to animals, reflecting their integral role in the interconnected web of life and reinforcing the religion's commitment to nonviolence and compassion.

Christianity views animals as part of God's creation, which humans are entrusted to care for and protect. The Bible frequently mentions animals, reflecting their significance and symbolic roles within the natural order. Christianity's approach to animals is deeply rooted in biblical teachings that emphasise stewardship, compassion, and ethical responsibility. Ancient beliefs advocate for the humane treatment of animals, viewing them as part of God's creation, deserving respect and care. For instance, Proverbs 12:10 states, "The righteous man care for the needs of his animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. ..." stating the ethical responsibility to ensure animal well-being. Deuteronomy 25:4 further reinforces this by commanding, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," ensuring that animals used on farms are not deprived of their needs. Additionally, Exodus 23:12 extends the Sabbath rest to animals, emphasising that they, too, deserve rest and care.

Buddhism emphasises the reverence for all life forms, guided by nonviolence and compassion (karuna). Buddhist teachings advocate for the cultivation of loving-kindness (metta) and discourage harming any sentient being. The concept of rebirth as an animal is viewed as an unfavourable outcome of past actions, yet the inherent value of animal life is respected, promoting empathy and reducing harm to all creatures.

Jainism, an ancient Indian religion, is renowned for its rigorous commitment to nonviolence towards all living beings. Jains follow strict vegetarianism and take extensive measures to avoid causing harm, which also extends to insects. This commitment extends beyond physical actions to encompass thoughts and intentions, reflecting a profound respect for all life forms and integrating nonviolence into every aspect of spiritual practice.

Across these diverse traditions, the symbolic and ethical roles of animals illustrate a complex interplay of cultural, spiritual, and moral values. They reveal how each religion perceives the natural world and the human-animal relationship, offering rich insights into the moral and spiritual dimensions that shape interactions with the animal kingdom. For centuries, animals have held significant and diverse roles in religious contexts in India.

CHAPTER

2

PERCEPTION OF ANIMALS IN MAJOR INDIAN RELIGIONS

2.1 HINDUISM

Introduction

The rich tapestry of Hinduism originated in an amalgamation of ancient beliefs and traditions enshrined in texts such as the Upanishads. These writings were composed by Vedic sages around the 2nd century BCE.¹ The term “Hindu” itself can be traced back to the ancient Persian term “Hindu,” which in turn was derived from “Sindhu” (the Indus River) and initially referred to the populace residing to the east of the river.² The Aryans migrated to the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent thousands of years ago and gradually merged with the local cultures over the centuries. At the time of their arrival, the northwest was already home to the Indus Valley civilisation, which was centred around cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.³

This intricate historical and philosophical backdrop significantly shapes the multifaceted and evolving nature of Hinduism as a dynamic religion. As a religion, Hinduism encompasses a wide variety of practices and beliefs. There isn't a single viewpoint regarding the relationship between humans and animals within Hindu belief systems. Instead, we can examine a few examples to gain a better understanding of the general belief system. The prevailing beliefs shape how Hindu traditions view the relationship between humans and other animals. First, humans were viewed as part of a continuous spectrum of life, and second, humans are considered the ideal form of biological life, with a status superior to that of any other animal. The Hindu belief in reincarnation suggests that the current position of any living being in the cycle of life is the result of past deeds, governed by the strict law of karma. This implies that the universe operates under a fundamental moral structure and may lead to the subordination of animals.⁴

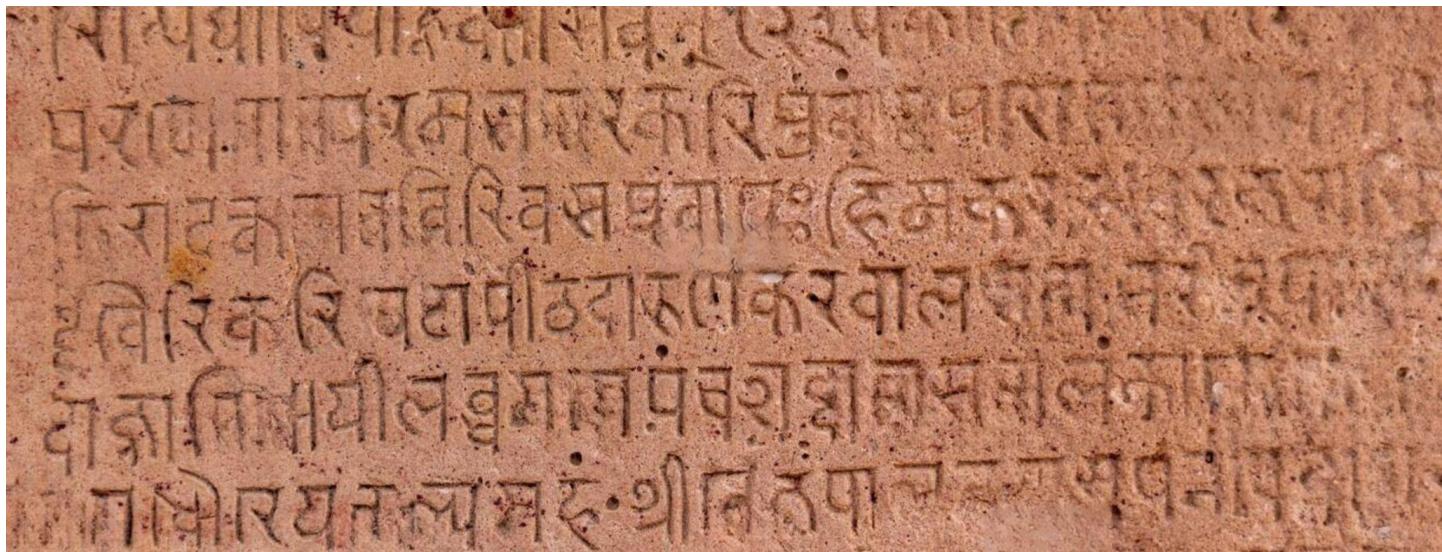
A study of Hindu religious scriptures, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Gita, along with social and moral codes, reveals some general guiding principles. These principles include having compassion for living beings and the belief that

¹The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization , Asko Parpola).

² (Exploring the archaeology of Hinduism [Nayanjot Lahiri, Elisabeth A. Bacus University of Delhi](#), University College London 01 May [2004 - World Archaeology](#)(Taylor & Francis Group) Vol. 36, Iss: 3, pp 313-325)

³(Animal Welfare in World Religion Teaching and Practice Joyce D'Silva .Page no 101)

⁴ (Paul Waldau, “Religion and Animals” in Peter Singer (ed.), In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave 69-83 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)



nonviolence is the highest duty – **Ahimsa Parmo Dharma** – and that one should not be violent towards any living being.⁵ The history of Hinduism is commonly divided into several distinct periods of development, each characterised by unique cultural and religious transformations.

Pre-Vedic Period

The initial phase, known as the pre-Vedic period, extends from prehistoric times to approximately 1750 BCE. This era included the Indus Valley Civilisation, also known as the Harappa Civilisation, one of the world's earliest urban cultures that flourished in the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent.⁶ This ancient civilisation, known for its advanced urban planning and sophisticated culture, has left behind numerous artefacts that offer insights into its religious and social practices. Among these artefacts are seals, many of which depicted animals, reflecting the civilisation's close relationship with nature and religious reverence for certain animals.

One particularly intriguing seal features a horned figure seated in a posture similar to the Lotus position, surrounded by various animals. Early excavators named this figure "Pashupati," an epithet of the later Hindu god Shiva. This seal suggests that some elements of what would later become Hinduism were already present in the religious practices of the Indus Valley Civilisation.⁷ Excavations in the Indus Valley have uncovered emblems depicting bulls, including a seal that depicts a godlike figure surrounded by animals such as elephants, tigers, and antelopes.

These suggest the symbolic importance of animals and may have been linked to deities or spiritual beliefs. For the Aryans, cows were considered a source of wealth, while horses were used as both charioteers and horse riders. Unsurprisingly, horses became symbols of military strength, conquest, and power.⁸

The end of the pre-Vedic period coincided with the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation and the beginning of significant migrations and cultural shifts, leading to the rise of the Vedic period. This transition set the stage for the development of the Vedic religion, which profoundly shaped the trajectory of Hinduism.⁹

⁵ (Satish C. Shastri, Environmental Law 23 (Eastern Book Company, Lucknow, 2012).

⁶ (Michaels, Axel (2004), Hinduism. Past and present, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press)

⁷ (Ranbir Vohra (2000). The Making of India: A Historical Survey. M. E. Sharpe. p. 15. Bongard-Levin, Grigorii Maksimovich (1985). Ancient Indian Civilization. Arnold-Heinemann. p. 45.)

⁸ (Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark. "Seals and Sealing Practices in the Indus Valley Civilization." Expedition Magazine, vol. 40, no. 1, 1998, pp. 21-29.)

⁹ (Witzel, Michael. "Early Sanskritization: Origin and Development of the Kuru State." Electronic Journal of Vedic

Vedic Period

During the Vedic period (approx. c. 1500–500 BCE), animals played an essential role in Hindu rituals and symbolism. The **Rigveda**, the oldest of the Vedas, frequently refers to cows as symbols of wealth and prosperity. At the same time, horses were central to the **Ashvamedha Yajna**, a grand ritual involving horse sacrifice that demonstrated a king's power and divine favour. Rituals of the time involved sacrifices of various animals, such as goats, sheep, and cattle, to appease the gods and ensure communal prosperity.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the **Ishopanishads** profess the following perspective on the natural world: "The universe, along with its creatures, belongs to the land. No creature is superior to any other. Human beings should not be above nature. Let no one species encroach on the rights and privileges of other species."¹¹ Moreover, the Atharvaveda demonstrates a practical concern for animal welfare, featuring spells and hymns intended to protect and heal animals.¹² The Veda itself states that the supreme being incarnates in various forms, including that of different species, and emphasises the importance of protecting wildlife and domestic cattle. It also specifies that cattle should be honoured during ceremonies and not sacrificed.¹³

The Vedic teachings discuss the belief that all plants and animals have a soul, and their souls can move to different living beings based on their karma. Among Vedic rituals, it is also considered essential to feed both animals and plants as part of daily prayers.¹⁴

Furthermore, the **Bhakti movement**'s devotional poets and saints reinforced love, nonviolence, and compassion towards animals during the medieval period, further solidifying vegetarianism and ethical treatment of animals in farming practices.

Post-Vedic Period

During the post-Vedic period, there was a notable shift towards contemplating the philosophical and ethical implications of human interactions with animals. The Upanishads, specifically the **Chandogya** and **Brihadaranyaka Upanishads**, emphasise the principle of nonviolence and highlight the interconnectedness of all life. This trend suggested a burgeoning awareness of the divine essence present in all living beings.¹⁵

Epic narratives like the **Mahabharata** and **Ramayana** delved into moral dilemmas concerning the treatment of animals at this time. For example, the Mahabharata story of King Shibi illustrates the principle of protecting life at any cost,¹⁶ while the **Bhagavad Gita** supports the broader principle of Ahimsa.¹⁷ Among the principal virtues called the divine equipment (Daivi Sampat), the **Gita** counts non-injury–Ahimsa.¹⁸ Moreover, in the Mahabharata, the killing of animals in the name of Yajna has been condemned as an undisciplined act.

Additionally, **Jainism and Buddhism**, which emphasise nonviolence and compassion, significantly

Studies, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, pp. 1-26)

¹⁰ Keith, A. B. (1925). The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads. Harvard University Press.

¹¹ (Animal Welfare Board of India v. A Nagaraja, (2014) 7 SCC 547.)

¹² Bloomfield, M. (1897). Hymns of the Atharvaveda. Oxford University Press.

¹³ (Dr. Paramjit S. Jaswal, Dr. Nishtha Jaswal, et.al., Environmental Law (Allahabad Law Agency, Faridabad, 2015).

¹⁴ (Ajai Mansingh, "Stewardsof Creation Covenant: Hinduism and the Environment" 41(1) Caribbean Quarterly 59 (1995).

¹⁵ Olivelle, P. (1996). Upanisads. Oxford University Press.

¹⁶ Ganguli, K. M. (Trans.). (1883-1896). The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa

¹⁷ Sarma, D. S. (1979). The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation. Penguin Classics.

¹⁸ (Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy: Vol II 510 (Motilal Banarsi Dass Publishers, Delhi. 2010)

shaped the ethical treatment of animals in the post-Vedic period. This led to a broader acceptance of vegetarianism and stricter dietary practices within Hindu communities.¹⁹ These historical perspectives continue to influence contemporary Hindu beliefs and practices related to animal welfare.

According to the **Yajnavalkya Smriti** and the **Vishnu Purana**, God's grace can be had by not killing his creatures, and the act of killing mute animals and birds is a sin.²⁰ The **Padma Purana** mentions that those who sacrifice cattle are doomed to perdition.²¹ Kautilyan jurisprudence, which encompasses the legal and ethical principles outlined in the ancient Indian text **Arthashastra**, includes provisions for **wildlife protection**. The text specifies that the Superintendent of the slaughterhouse is empowered to impose the highest form of punishment, amercement, on individuals who engage in activities such as entrapping, killing, or injuring deer, bison, birds, or fish. This applies to creatures declared to be under state protection or those kept in reserved enclosures, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to safeguarding the welfare of wildlife.²²

Hindu deities are often depicted closely associated with specific animal forms, such as Ganesh, who is the Elephant-God, and the tiger is considered the vehicle of the Goddess Durga. At the Jakhoo Temple in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, dedicated to Hanuman, a large population of monkeys is considered holy by pilgrims and, therefore, is not harmed. Similarly, at the famous Karni Mata Temple in Deshnoke, Rajasthan, around 20,000 rats, known as kabbas, live within the temple premises. Vishnu is considered omnipresent and transcendent by his followers. He is also worshipped in various avatars or reincarnations, some of which are represented as animals in iconography, such as the fish, the tortoise, and the boar.²³ This reflects the Hindu belief that there is no dividing line between the forms that gods or goddesses can take.²⁴

The Hindu scriptural tradition also pays considerable attention to the relationship between animals and humans, with the cow being a popular symbol and still considered sacred by millions.²⁵ Throughout the Hindu mythology, the interconnectedness between animals and humans has been emphasised by depicting certain animals as the vahanas or mounts of gods and goddesses and portraying some beings as half-human and half-animal. Furthermore, individuals who could overcome their shortcomings and dedicate their lives to the service of God were symbolised as half-man and half-animal, reflecting their transformation and virtue. For example, Hanuman, a central figure in the Ramayana, is depicted as God. However, as an example of complete surrender and devotion, he is revered as a deity, and his companions, Sugriva and Bali, also receive respect. This portrayal inspires individuals seeking spiritual elevation and protects primates, as they are revered by devout Hindus. Moreover, the incorporation of Naga, the snake deity of the Naga tribe of ancient India, into Hindu mythology illustrates its association with Lord Krishna and its role as a protector of wealth. The festival of Nag Panchami involves placing milk pots in fields and forests to feed the snakes, reflecting their revered status among Hindus.²⁶

¹⁹ Chapple, C. K. (1993). *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*. SUNY Press.

²⁰ (Satish C. Shastri, *Environmental Law 23* (Eastern Book Company, Lucknow, 2012)

²¹ (Dr. Paramjit S. Jaswal, Dr. Nishtha Jaswal, et.al., *Environmental Law* (Allahabad Law Agency, Faridabad, 2015)

²² Supra 14

²³ (Philosophy of Religion – Religions of the World – Hinduism available at:

http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/phil_of_religion_text/CHAPTER_2_RELIGIONS/Hinduis_m.htm)

²⁴ (Sharon Guynup and Nicolas Ruggia, "Rats Rule at Indian Temple," available at: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/06/0628_040628_tvrats.html)

^{25, 26} (S. Shanthakumar, *Introduction to Environmental Law 15* (LexisNexis, Gurgaon, 2015).

²⁶ Ajai Mansingh, "Stewards of Creation Covenant: Hinduism and the Environment" 41(1) Caribbean Quarterly 59 (1995).

If we re-examine the ideal of Rama, it could be argued that Rama diligently works for the welfare of all society in ways that align with the concept of family. From this perspective, the concept of “**family**” is expanded to encompass all beings, including animals. The Hindu inclination for using family metaphors recognises the use of maternal imagery for the Earth and a sense of familial connection for animals and other beings.²⁷ In Hindu mythology, animals are imbued with sacred significance, such as the elephant (associated with Ganesha), the monkey (Hanuman), the peacock (vehicle of Kartikeya), and the eagle (Garuda, vehicle of Vishnu), each embodying divine attributes. The concept of Vishnu's avatars, such as Matsya (fish) and Varaha (boar), underscores the divine presence in all forms of life.²⁸ Additionally, many deities have animal companions, such as Shiva's bull, Nandi, and Durga's lion, among others, symbolising various virtues.²⁹

The cow, another sacred animal in the Hindu tradition, is revered as Gau Mata (Mother Cow), and is integral to various rituals and daily practices.³⁰ This animal holds great symbolism in Hindu culture, representing the Earth. She is seen as a being that embodies life and sustenance, generously providing milk while only consuming water, grass, and grain. Hindu tradition honours the cow through garland adornments and special feedings at festivals like the Gopashtami festival. Cow's milk – especially ghee – is regarded as “pure,” often used in Hindu rites and rituals. Additionally, the cow is associated with **Kamadhenu**, the divine wish-fulfilling cow. Her milk and ghee are integral to Hindu worship, penance, and rites of passage.³¹ Cow slaughter is treated as the highest form of sin according to the **Rigveda**, X, 87.16. Moreover, the **Yajurveda**, XII, 47, 49 says, “No person should kill animals helpful to all, and by serving them, one should obtain heaven.” Even in the Rigvedic times, a feeling of revulsion seems to have grown against the custom. The cow gradually acquired a special sanctity and was referred to as “Aghnya” (meaning “not to be slain”). Verse 29 of Hymn 1 in Book X of the Atharvaveda forbids cow slaughter in the following words: “The slaughter of an innocent, O Kritya, is an awful deed. Slay not cow, horse, or man of ours.”³²

In Hinduism, it is believed that all animals possess souls similar to those of humans. According to this principle, animals have their own lives, interests, and capacity to experience pain and thus should be treated with respect and not subjected to harm or killing.

Teachings and Common Practices

Hinduism, deeply influenced by its sacred texts, has a profound reverence for all life forms, including animals. The Vedas and Upanishads, foundational scriptures, offer insights into Dharma (righteousness), rituals, and spiritual wisdom. These texts emphasise the ethical treatment of all life forms, teaching that all beings possess a soul (Atman) and are manifestations of the divine. This belief fosters a sense of kinship with animals, leading to the principle of Ahimsa, which is central to Hindu ethics and influences practices such as vegetarianism and animal protection.

²⁷ (Arti Dhand, “The Dharma of Ethics, the Ethics of Dharma: Quizzing the Ideals of Hinduism” 30(3) J Relig Ethics 347 (2002)

²⁸ Bhattacharji, S. (1996). Legends of Devi. Orient Blackswan.

²⁹ Zimmer, H. (1946). Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization. Harper & Row.

³⁰ Dhand, A. (2002). The Dharma of Ethics, the Ethics of Dharma: Quizzing the Ideals of Hinduism. Journal of Religious Ethics, 30(3), 347-372.

³¹ Why do Hindus worship the cow? Available at: <https://www.nhsf.org.uk/2007/05/why-do-hindus-worship-the-cow/>

³² State of Gujarat v. Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab Jamat, AIR 2006 SC 21.



The **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** further shape Hindu thought and cultural practices. The Ramayana highlights Lord Rama's respect for all living beings, including animals, and the Mahabharata emphasises the importance of living in harmony with nature. The **Bhagavad Gita**, part of the Mahabharata, guides righteous living in accordance with Dharma, including the protection of animals.

These texts inspire Hindus to view animals with compassion and reverence, as reflected in rituals and festivals that honour animals and advocate for their protection and welfare as an integral part of righteous living, encouraging a deep respect for all forms of life. The Bhagavad Gita also strongly supports the idea that the divine presence exists within all beings, reflecting the teachings of the Upanishads.

In the **Rigveda**, animals are often described as integral parts of the natural world, created by the gods to inhabit and nourish the Earth. The hymns celebrate the diversity of animal life, recognising their roles in the cosmic order. For example, Rigveda 10.90 (Purusha Sukta): This hymn describes the cosmic being (Purusha) from whom all life originates. It mentions different animals that emerged from Purusha, symbolising their sacred status as part of the divine creation. The cow (Aghnya) is specifically mentioned as an entity that should not be harmed, highlighting the sanctity of life. Animals are viewed as integral participants in this order, and their well-being is crucial for maintaining balance in the universe. The Rigveda reflects a moral and ethical framework in which animals are respected and valued. While some hymns acknowledge the use of animals in rituals and sacrifices, there is also an underlying ethos that calls for their protection and care.

Rigveda verse 6.28.1 is a prayer for the well-being of cattle, asking for their protection from harm. It reflects the importance of animals in the Vedic economy and the moral responsibility of humans to care for them.³³ There is a verse in the Rigveda, which says: "The yatudhana, who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals, and he who steals the milk of the cow, Lord, cut off their heads with your flame."³⁴

³³ Rigveda 6.28.1

³⁴ Rigveda 10.87.16

The **Ishopanishad** also emphasises the unity of the person with all beings: "Those who see all creatures in themselves and themselves in all creatures know no fear. Those who see all creatures in themselves and themselves in all creatures know no grief. How can the diversity of life delude the one who sees its unity?"³⁵

The realisation of unity in a person's daily life means recognising the presence of the Divine within every being. As the **Mundaka Upanishad** suggests, this understanding leads the wise to devote themselves to selfless service, seeing the Lord of Love in all creatures.



The most popular part of the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad Gita, in which (chapter V:18) Krishna imparts spiritual teachings to Arjuna about the divine presence in all beings: "Wise ones see the self-same thing in a Brahmin, wise and courteous, as in a cow or elephant, Nay, as in a dog or an outcaste."³⁶ This statement reflects a deeper understanding of unity and the intrinsic worth of all life, beyond social status or species classification. He further taught about the three paths of Yoga: knowledge, action, and devotion. He also explains that the Yoga practitioner sees "the self in all beings standing" and "all beings in the Self." In simple terms, a person who practices Yoga and spiritual wisdom recognises that the true self, or essence, is present in every living being. They also understand that all living beings are interconnected and share a fundamental essence. It's about seeing unity and interconnectedness in life, realising that we are all part of the same greater whole.

Elephants and Dogs in Hinduism

India's rich diversity includes a variety of wild animals, including the revered **Asian elephants**. The elephant-headed God, Ganesha, is worshipped by Hindus. The rapid population growth and

³⁵ Isha Upanishad 6:7

³⁶ Bhagavad Gita V:18

agricultural expansion have led to the destruction of the forests where these elephants once roamed freely. As their habitat diminishes, elephants often come into conflict with local farmers, causing damage to their crops. Elephants are exploited in various forms today, from providing repetitive tourist rides to assisting loggers in moving cut-down trees. Most of these highly social animals are kept alone, which likely causes them deep distress. Training methods are also painful and distressing.

Additionally, many Hindu temples keep elephants, a practice particularly common in Kerala, which is believed to house about one-fifth of India's 2,500 captive elephants. They are often kept chained by one leg, leading to sores and infections. On festival days, they are painted, adorned, and compelled to carry heavy images of deities or musicians, such as drummers. Given that elephants are sensitive to sudden loud noises, this is a distressing experience for them.³⁷

Dogs, too, hold a special place in Hinduism, symbolising loyalty, protection, and the connection between the physical and spiritual realms. In the **Mahabharata**, the dog that accompanied **Yudhishthira** to heaven symbolises unwavering loyalty and righteousness, ultimately revealed as the God of Dharma. Another significant depiction is **Shvan (meaning "dog")**, the **Celestial Sentinel**, who guards the afterlife's threshold and enforces cosmic order, illustrating dogs' spiritual role in maintaining universal balance. In the Vedic scriptures, dogs like **Sarama** are portrayed as both divine protectors and figures linked to darker themes, reflecting their complex role in ancient Hindu culture. Their presence in these ceremonies underscores their connection to spiritual values and the belief that all life forms are sacred. In Hinduism, dogs embody fundamental religious principles, appearing as loyal companions, guardians, and symbols of alertness, faithfulness, integrity, and righteousness.³⁸

Despite being regarded as religious symbols, the conditions of dogs in India, particularly free-roaming dogs, are often appalling. India has a significant street dog population, estimated to be around 60 to 70 million.³⁹ These dogs often face harsh living conditions, including malnutrition, diseases, and injuries from traffic accidents.⁴⁰ Health issues are prevalent, as many dogs suffer from diseases like rabies and malnutrition due to a lack of vaccination and proper care. Injuries from traffic accidents or fights often go untreated, leading to severe complications. Harsh environmental conditions, such as extreme weather and scarcity of clean water, further exacerbate their plight. Human interaction poses another challenge, with many dogs facing cruelty, abuse, and neglect, often due to fear or misunderstanding. The rising population of free-roaming dogs, in the absence of efficient implementation of sterilisation programmes being carried out, intensifies competition for scarce resources and exacerbates their living conditions. Furthermore, the social stigma surrounding street dogs often leads to their perception as nuisances, resulting in cruel treatment and neglect.

Additionally, many dogs bought as pets are later abandoned by their human companions due to their inability to care for them. These animals often end up on the streets, facing starvation, disease, or abuse. In puppy mills, female dogs of popular breeds are often overbred to the point where their bodies can no longer cope, after which they are typically abandoned or sold once they are no longer profitable.⁴¹

Despite animal protection laws, enforcement is often weak, and practices such as illegal breeding and culling of dogs are still employed in some areas. The rapid urbanisation in India also contributes to

³⁷ Swaminathan Natarajan, 07/09/20. The Woman Trying to Save India's tortured temple elephants. BBC World Service. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-54026294.

³⁸ Canine Companions Dogs in Hindu Mythology (ramana-maharshi.org)

³⁹ New Rules Seen Worsening India's Stray Dog Problem (voanews.com)

⁴⁰ Breaking barriers for India's street dogs | The Humane Society of the United States

⁴¹ Puppy Mills - The Sickening Truth Behind Illegal Breeders in India (dawgiebowl.com)

habitat loss and increased risks from traffic, making life even more challenging for these animals. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including the better enforcement of animal welfare laws, public education, and the implementation of programs such as sterilisation and adoption to improve the lives of street dogs in India.

Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

The evolution of animal farming practices in Hinduism can be traced back to the Vedic period, when cattle were highly valued as symbols of wealth and prosperity. The Rigveda, one of the oldest Hindu scriptures, highlights the usage of cattle in agri-practices, with cows revered both for their role in farming and as sacred animals. However, cattle were also used in rituals, including sacrifices during this time. As Hinduism evolved, especially during the Upanishadic period, the emphasis on nonviolence became more pronounced. By this time, the cow had become even more sacred, with their slaughter being prohibited in many regions. Industrial farming methods began to take shape in the late 20th century as demand for meat, dairy, and eggs increased with India's growing population. This shift towards intensive animal agriculture is aimed at maximising production and efficiency.

Farmed animals are often confined to small, overcrowded spaces where they cannot move freely or exhibit natural behaviours. Hens⁴² are commonly kept in battery cages, unable to spread their wings, while pigs are placed in gestation crates where they cannot turn around. This confinement leads to physical ailments such as muscle atrophy, deformities, and severe psychological stress. Animals become frustrated and aggressive due to a lack of stimulation, resulting in unnatural behaviours like pecking, biting, or self-harm. Animals endure long journeys to slaughterhouses in cramped conditions without food or water, exposed to extreme weather. Many die or suffer severe injuries before reaching their destination. While regulations may require animals to be stunned before slaughter, improper techniques often leave them semi-conscious during the process, prolonging their suffering.⁴³

Animals in Dairy

In Indian dairies, **oxytocin**, a hormone that aids in milk ejection, is commonly used. The misuse of synthetic oxytocin in dairy farming has harmful, severe effects on cows and buffaloes. It causes damage to their uterus, leading to complications like uterine prolapse and reduced fertility, making it harder for the female animals to conceive. The hormone can also cause intense and painful uterine contractions, leading to significant discomfort for the animals. Over time, repeated use of oxytocin can accelerate the cow's ageing process, leading to an early decline in their health and lifespan. Additionally, the quality of milk produced may be altered, affecting the health of calves that rely on it. Cows and buffaloes may also become dependent on synthetic oxytocin for milk letdown, disrupting their natural ability to produce and release milk. Persistent use of oxytocin makes animals suffer from painful conditions such as mastitis (udder infection) and uterine prolapse. Oxytocin's usage was banned in 2018 due to its unethical administration on cattle and buffalo.⁴⁴ However, these practices persist in many cow shelters and cattle-rearing places.⁴⁵

Separating calves from their mothers shortly after birth is another common practice in dairies, causing distress to both the calves and their mothers. On the other hand, male calves are either slaughtered for veal or neglected and abandoned since they don't produce milk.

⁴² [Chickens from intensive farms worries urban India \(worldanimalprotection.org.in\)](https://worldanimalprotection.org.in/chickens-from-intensive-farms-worries-urban-india)

⁴³ [fiapo.org/fiaporg/wp-content/uploads/2020/Slaughter Campaign Report.pdf page=5.30](https://fiapo.org/fiaporg/wp-content/uploads/2020/Slaughter-Campaign-Report.pdf)

⁴⁴ [Why is retail sale of oxytocin banned? - The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/why-is-retail-sale-of-oxytocin-banned/article3030333.ece)

⁴⁵ [Animal cruelty: Delhi HC comes down on spurious oxytocin use in dairies \(newindianexpress.com\)](https://www.newindianexpress.com/india/2018/jul/10/animal-cruelty-delhi-hc-comes-down-on-spurious-oxytocin-use-in-dairies-1083310.html)

According to Professor Nanditha Krishna, the dairy industry has become a big business. Prof. notes that with the introduction of tractor farming, the male calf that would have been used on the farms was either abandoned or killed. Only the female calf is permitted to live for future milk production. She further notes that if Hindus want to protect the cow, they must cut down milk production by cows and stop the export of milk and milk products.⁴⁶

Birds in Poultry

India raises millions of egg-laying hens yearly, making it the world's third-largest egg producer. Until recently, many of the hens were kept in battery cages. According to a Mongabay article, these cages do not allow the hens to stand straight, turn around, or even spread their wings. They prohibit the hens from expressing their natural behaviours, such as perching, nesting, laying their eggs privately in a nest box, and roosting.

Now, India seems to be gradually moving towards cage-free systems. Reports by the Law Commission of India (2017) and NEERI recommend moving away from battery cages and highlight the benefits of cage-free housing systems, both for animal welfare and environmental management.⁴⁷

In 2013, the Animal Welfare Board of India advised phasing out battery cages by 2017, but this was largely ignored; in 2019, Animal Equality investigated hen farms across several states and found several instances of cramming many birds in small cages and other violations of animal welfare.⁴⁸



Destruction of Marine Life

Overfishing depletes fish populations and disrupts the ocean ecosystem. Animals such as dolphins, turtles, and seabirds are frequently caught as bycatch⁴⁹ in fishing nets, resulting in unnecessary deaths. Additionally, pollution poses a major threat as a result of fishing, with oceans filled with

⁴⁶ Joyce D'Silva Book Animal and religion in world, Page 98 As explained by Professor Nanditha Krishna

⁴⁷ [\[Commentary\] Factory farming for eggs impacts India's environment \(mongabay.com\)](https://mongabay.com/2017/07/commentary-factory-farming-for-eggs-impacts-indias-environment/)

⁴⁸ Animal Equality, 2019. Investigation: India's Egg Industry. <https://animalequality.org/news/investigation-indias-egg-industry/>

⁴⁹ dakshin.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Gupta-et-al_2019-Conservation-and-livelihood-implications-of-trawler-bycatch-towards-improved-management.pdf page=2.26

plastic waste and discarded fishing gear. Marine animals often ingest these materials or become entangled in them. Species like whales and sea turtles may suffer from internal injuries and starvation due to plastic ingestion.

These forms of suffering highlight how animal farming strays from the respect and compassion promoted in Hinduism's principle of Ahimsa and compassion towards all creatures. Addressing these issues requires greater awareness, stronger enforcement of animal welfare laws, and a cultural shift towards treating animals with dignity and care.

Conclusion

Hinduism views animals as essential parts of the universe and often connects them with Gods and spiritual teachings. Ancient texts, such as the Vedas and epics like the Mahabharata, emphasise nonviolence, encouraging kindness and compassion towards all living beings. However, today in India, many animals suffer significantly, especially in industrial animal farming, where they are not respected as essential creatures in their own right and are mistreated. Cows, which are sacred in Hinduism, often face harsh conditions in the dairy and meat industries. Animal exploitation and abuse go against the teachings of Ahimsa (nonviolence) and the respect traditionally shown to animals in Hindu culture. Wild and street animals also suffer from habitat destruction, illegal hunting, and neglect, showing a clear disconnect between ancient teachings and modern practices.

2.2 ISLAM

Introduction

The word "Islam" means "submission," and being a Muslim means submitting to the one true God, Allah. Muslims believe that everything happens by God's will, as he is the Creator and controller of the universe. Islam also means peace, as submitting to Allah brings peace within oneself. Islam is one of the oldest religions in the world, with many prophets and messengers who tried to convey the message of Allah to the people. Among them, there were four messengers upon whom divine books were revealed: The Torah was revealed to Prophet Musa (Moses, peace be upon him). The Zabur were revealed to Prophet Dawud (David, peace be upon him). The Injeel was revealed to Prophet Isa (Jesus, peace be upon him) And the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

The Qur'an, Islam's holy book, is regarded by Muslims as the word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who is considered the last Prophet. They believe that the Qur'an was revealed to him by the angel Gabriel (Gibril). Over the course of 23 years, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shared the verses he received with his scribes, who recorded them. The Qur'an is central to the Muslim faith and comprises chapters called Surahs and verses called Ayahs, which provide teachings on life and spirituality. In India, Islam became deeply rooted, particularly in northern India and the Deccan, marked by the construction of mosques, madrasas, and the spread of Islamic culture.⁵⁰

The Qur'an instructs Muslims to strictly adhere to what is considered **halal**, meaning actions, foods, and practices that are deemed permissible within Islamic law. This requirement forms a fundamental aspect of a Muslim's daily life, guiding them to follow practices that are allowed and approved by the teachings of Islam.



⁵⁰ ¹ [Islam's Impact on India | Encyclopedia.com](#)

In the Islamic faith, it is believed that Allah has entrusted humans with the responsibility of caring for and protecting animals, reflecting Allah's will. The teachings of Islam emphasise that people are answerable to Allah for the way they treat animals and that every action is known to Allah. Therefore, it is considered immoral to hunt animals for mere amusement, use animal skins for personal gain, force animals to engage in unnatural behaviour or cause them unreasonable harm.

The Qur'an describes Allah's creation of the world, stating, "He laid down the earth for His creatures."⁵¹ "... and the earth too He spread out, bringing waters and pastures out of it, and setting firm mountains (in it) for you and your animals to enjoy."⁵²

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasised treating animals with compassion and respect, teaching that they should only be killed when necessary. Any action to the contrary is viewed as a violation of the divine will and is considered a sinful act. The **Qur'an** highlights the creation of certain animals to remind humans of the blessings bestowed upon them by God. These animals exemplify how the world is designed to fulfil human needs, encouraging people to recognise and appreciate the divine kindness and care surrounding them (Surah 16, verses 5 to 8): "(Allah) created cattle for you and (you find) in them warmth, useful services and food, and a sense of beauty when you bring them home and take them to pasture. They bear your heavy loads to lands you could not reach except with great personal effort. Verily, your Lord is Compassionate and Merciful; (He created) horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and ornament. And He created what you do not know." The Qur'an, however, underlines that the world has been created for the benefit of man (Surah 2, verse 29).⁵³

Islamic tradition acknowledges that animals have their worth, even though humans are seen as the central part of creation.⁵⁴ Muhammad himself stated, "**Whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah is kind to himself.**" He further compared good and bad deeds done to animals to similar actions taken by humans. The Qur'an says that animals form communities, just as humans do: "There is not an animal that lives on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but they form communities like you."⁵⁵

Qur'an 17:44 notes that nonhuman animals and the rest of nature are in continuous praise of Allah, although humans may not understand it. The commentator Ibn Taymiyah argued regarding the Qur'an verses that state that Allah created the world to serve humanity, "In considering all these verses it must be remembered that Allah in His wisdom created these creatures for reasons other than serving man, for in these verses He only explains the benefits of these creatures [to man]." There are, then, essential traditions within Islam by which possible arrogance by humans can be checked.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Qur'an 55:10

⁵² Qur'an 79:30–33

⁵³ Qur'an 5:96

⁵⁴ Paul Waldau, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* 69-83 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)

⁵⁵ Surat Al-'An`am [verse 38] (Qur'an 6:38)

⁵⁶ Paul Waldau, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* 69-83 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)



While Islam acknowledges the importance of meeting human needs, it also advocates for the compassionate treatment and protection of animals. The Qur'an contains numerous verses that **encourage Muslims to actively care for nature, with particular emphasis on the welfare of animals.** These teachings emphasise that Allah values all living beings and deserves to be treated with kindness, compassion, and respect. This framework guides Muslims in their interactions with the natural world and emphasises the interconnectedness of all living beings.⁵⁷

Teachings and Common Practices

The Qur'an guides Muslims on living a good life, covering worship, morals, and laws, and promoting harmony with all living beings. It highlights the significance of animals in creation, teaching that they deserve kindness and respect as signs of God's creation with their own rights. The Qur'an permits the usage of animals for food and clothing, but emphasises they must not be mistreated or harmed.

The Qur'an emphasises that animals, like humans, inherently follow the purpose for which they were created, though they lack free will and live in complete submission to natural laws set by Allah. This submission reflects the Islamic principle of aligning with God's will.

Islam also teaches that humans are Khalifah (stewards) of the earth,⁵⁸ entrusted by God to manage, protect, and care for the environment and its resources responsibly. This stewardship calls for justice, sustainability, and respect for all creation. Animals in the Qur'an are depicted as more than utilitarian creatures — they have emotions and spiritual connections.

The Qur'an mentions,

... Allah cares for all creatures: "There is not a creature that moves on earth whose provision is not His concern. He knows where it lives and its final resting place."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Pablo Lerner and Alfredo Mordechai Rabello, "Prohibition of Ritual Slaughtering (Kosher Shechita and Halal) and Freedom of Religion of Minorities" 22 J L & Religion 62 (2006)

⁵⁸ Qur'an 6:165, 38:26

⁵⁹ Qur'an 11:6



... "And the camels and cattle We have appointed for you as among the symbols of Allah; for you therein is good. So mention the name of Allah upon them when lined up [for sacrifice]; and when they are [lifeless] on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy and the beggar. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may be grateful."⁶⁰

... "And the cattle, He has created them for you; in them, there is warmth (warm clothing) and numerous benefits, and you eat them. And for you, in them, there is the enjoyment of beauty when you bring them home in the evening and lead them forth to pasture in the morning. And they carry your heavy loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful. And He created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and as adornment. And He creates that which you do not know."⁶¹

The Qur'an mentions the perceived human benefits derived from animals. For example, cattle are described as sources of warmth and food through their wool and meat, respectively, and their presence adds beauty to life, whether they are brought home in the evening or led out to pasture in the morning. Additionally, animals like horses, mules, and donkeys are acknowledged for their roles in transportation and as symbols of adornment. The Qur'an even alludes to the existence of other creatures and benefits unknown to humans, illustrating the vastness of Allah's creation.



By highlighting the importance of animals and the ethical obligations humans have towards them, the Qur'an encourages a compassionate and thoughtful approach to all living beings.

Hadith Views Surrounding Animals

A **Hadith** is a collection of reports that describe the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet

⁶⁰ Surah Al-Hajj (22:36):

⁶¹ Surah Al-Nahl (16:5-8):

Muhammad (peace be upon him). These reports are considered a significant source of guidance for Muslims, alongside the Qur'an. Hadiths help explain and provide context to the teachings of the Qur'an, offering practical examples of how to live according to Islamic principles. This body of work contains detailed accounts of what Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said and did, as remembered and reported by his companions.

Hadiths are classified into different categories based on their authenticity, with the most trusted collections being those of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. They are crucial in Islamic law (Shari'ah) and are used to shape the moral and legal aspects of Muslim life.

The Islamic perspective on our relationship with animals can be expanded by studying Hadith literature. Hadiths not only reinforce the teachings found in the Qur'an but also offer additional context and examples that help Muslims understand the principles of animal welfare.

Several Hadiths refer to the merit of being kind to animals as follows:

... "The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked if acts of charity, even to the animals, were rewarded by God. He replied: 'Yes, there is a reward for acts of charity to every beast alive.'"⁶²

... "Do not clip the forelocks of your horses, not their manes nor their tails, for the tail is their fly-whisk, their mane is their covering, and the forelock has good fortune bound within it."⁶³

... Whoever kills a sparrow in jest, will come on the day of Judgement chirruping to God and saying that the man killed it in jest, took no benefit from it, and did not leave it to eat the fruits of the earth.⁶⁴

... Any hunting is forbidden when one is on the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁶⁵

One Hadith refers to the use of animals for riding from one place to another. In it, the Prophet is recorded as saying: "Do not use the backs of your beasts as pulpits, for God has only made them subject to you so that they may bring you to a town you could only otherwise reach by the fatigue of the body."⁶⁶

Hadiths record that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came across a camel in a very poor state. When he discovered the owner of the camel, he said: "Don't you fear God about this animal, whom God has given to you? For the camel complained to me that you starve him and work him endlessly."⁶⁷

One Hadith recounts how a thirsty man dipped his shoe into a well to get water for a dog who was dying of thirst. For this act of kindness to an animal, his sins were forgiven.⁶⁸ It also recounts how making animals fight each other, as in cock fights or dog fights, is unlawful.⁶⁹

Another Hadith mentions **"A good deed done to an animal is as meritorious as a good deed done to a human being, while an act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as an act of cruelty"**

⁶² Bukhari 322; also Muslim vol. 4 Hadith 2244, also Mishkat, bk 6, ch 7, 8:178

⁶³ In Alfred Guillaume, 1924. The traditions of Islam. An Introduction to the Study of Hadith literature. Narrated by Abdullah-al-Salami, Abu Dawud, also Awn, 7:216,217, Hadith 2525

⁶⁴ Sahih Bukhari, Adhan 90.

⁶⁵ Qur'an 5:96

⁶⁶ Awn, 7:235 Hadith 2550

⁶⁷ Sunan Abu Dawud 2186. Musnad Ahmad 1654 and 1662

⁶⁸ Sahih Bukhari 557, Anbiya' 54

⁶⁹ Abu Daud, Jihad 51; Tirnidki Jihad 30

to a human being.”⁶⁵

Halal Practices

“Halal” is an Arabic term which means permissible or lawful in Islam. Halal food is the Islamic dietary standard prescribed in the Shari’ah.⁷⁰ Muslims follow dietary guidelines clearly outlined in the Qur'an. According to these guidelines, most foods are considered permissible (halal). However, some animal foods are explicitly forbidden (haram), such as pig meat, carrion, and some other, usually wild, creatures.⁷¹ The concept of halal food goes further than the literal meaning and is used in the Qur'an in conjunction with the word “tayyib,” meaning pure, healthy, good or natural. The Qur'an explicitly says: “People, eat what is good (tayyib) and lawful (halal) from the Earth ...”⁷²

One of the crucial aspects of halal dietary laws is how meat is prepared; Muslims follow a certain process for slaughtering animals. Halal slaughter traditionally involves cutting the animal’s throat without stunning the animal first, while saying a prayer, Bismillah (in the name of God), in acknowledgement that one is taking away a God-given life. The method of slaughter is designed to be quick, reducing the animal's suffering as much as possible. This reference goes on to enlarge on killing, “So every one of you should sharpen his knife and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably.”⁷³ Shaddid b. Aus said: “Two are the things which I remember Allah’s Messenger having said: ‘Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way, and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way’”⁷⁴ While these rules provide a clear framework, there is a lot of variation in how Muslims around the world apply them in their daily lives. Different cultures and regions have their unique cuisines and food traditions, all within the boundaries of what is halal. So, while the core principles remain the same, the eating habits of Muslims can differ widely depending on where they live and their cultural background.⁷⁵

Animal Sacrifice

Sacrifice holds a deep and symbolic significance in many religions, and Islam is no different in this regard. In religious practices, sacrifice is often seen as an act of devotion, where something of great value is offered to God to seek favour, forgiveness, or express gratitude. The concept is rooted in the belief that giving up something precious demonstrates one's faith and commitment to divine will.

Islamic theology places great importance on the concept and practice of **animal sacrifice**. The most significant form of sacrifice is observed during the festival of **Eid al-Adha**, which occurs at the end of the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. This festival commemorates the profound act of faith demonstrated by the Prophet Ibrahim (known as Abraham in Judeo-Christian traditions). According to Islamic teachings, Ibrahim was commanded by God to sacrifice his beloved son as a test of his faith. However, just as he was about to carry out the command, God intervened and provided a ram (a male sheep) to be sacrificed in place of his son. This event is celebrated by Muslims worldwide as a symbol of obedience, submission to God, and divine mercy. During Eid al-Adha, Muslims who can afford it participate in the ritual of animal sacrifice. This act is not limited to those who have completed the pilgrimage; it is performed by Muslims worldwide. The animals typically sacrificed

⁷⁰ [What is Halal? The Meaning of Halal Explained In Reference to Food \(halalhmc.org\)](https://www.halalhmc.org/what-is-halal-the-meaning-of-halal-explained-in-reference-to-food)

⁷¹ Qur'an 2:168

⁷² Qur'an 6:145

⁷³ Sahih Muslim 1955 a, Book 34, Hadith 84

⁷⁴ Sahih Muslim 1955 a, Book 34, Hadith 84

⁷⁵ [Understanding Halal: The Muslim Eating Laws \(learnrreligions.com\)](https://www.learnrreligions.com/understanding-halal-the-muslim-eating-laws)

include goats, sheep, cows, or camels, depending on local customs and resources.

In mainstream **Sunni Islam**, the slaughter of animals by humans is not only permitted but is also seen as a divine ordinance. This practice serves a dual purpose, as it is believed to fulfill a religious obligation while also acting as a means of controlling human violent tendencies by channelling them into a controlled and spiritually guided process.⁷⁶

A crucial aspect of this sacrifice is the principle of sharing. The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided into three parts: one part is kept for the family, another part is given to relatives and friends, and the final portion is distributed to those in need, especially the poor and vulnerable. By ensuring that the less fortunate are included in the feast, the act of sacrifice in Islam is viewed as a religious duty and a means of fostering unity and compassion within society.

"The Qur'anic approach is not meant to take animal sacrifice as an end in itself; it is meant to be used as a means to serve a social need".⁷⁷

On the other hand, Surah 22:37 provides evidence that animal sacrifice is not a means to absolution or salvation by stating, "Their flesh and their blood reach, not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth him."

Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

In Islam, farming methods are derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The teachings emphasise a balance between human needs and the protection of God's creation, advocating for practices that do not harm the environment or living beings. One of the key concepts under Islam, as mentioned earlier, is that of "Tayyab," meaning pure, wholesome, and good. This principle encourages the use of natural, healthy, and sustainable farming methods, promoting the avoidance of harmful chemicals, artificial additives, and practices that could lead to environmental degradation. The focus is on maintaining the purity and health of the land, water, and air, as these are seen as gifts from God that should be preserved for future generations.

Animal welfare is another critical aspect of Islamic farming practices. Animals should be well-fed, provided with clean water, and kept in comfortable conditions. Islamic teachings promote the concept of **"Zakat," or charity**, which includes a certain way of treating animals used in farming. Overworking or mistreating animals is strictly prohibited, as they are considered a trust from God, and their well-being is a priority.



⁷⁶ Muhammad ibn 'Umar Al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. See Abdal Hamid [Fitzwilliam-Hall], *Islamic Environmental Ethics*, 63

⁷⁷ AL' Hafiz B.A. Masri, 2007. *Animal Welfare in Islam*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation

Islamic teachings stress that animals should be housed in environments where they can express natural behaviours, such as grazing and socialising. **Animal farming**, however, does not allow animals to live in "communities,"⁷⁸ which is against the teachings of Islam. They are either kept in solitary confinement or in such large groups that natural grouping of families or a "pecking order" is impossible. They are, in effect, imprisoned. Yet one respected Hadith states clearly: "It is a great sin for a man to imprison the animals which are in his power."⁷⁹ **The confinement of animals in factory farms** suggests that they are unable to praise God "with wings outstretched,"⁸⁰ nor can **they** "enjoy" the pastures, waters and mountains that God has created for both them and humanity.⁸¹



Slaughtering an animal is a difficult and unpleasant process. From the animal's perspective, it usually starts with a stressful journey in a truck, where they may experience discomfort, fear, hunger, and thirst. The ride itself can be overwhelming, and sometimes the animal might even suffer injuries along the way. After the journey, the animal arrives at the slaughterhouse, which is a completely unfamiliar and intimidating environment. The strange sounds, strong smells, and unfamiliar surroundings can be frightening and confusing for the animal, adding to their stress and anxiety. As science indicates, animals do not lose consciousness instantaneously when their throats are cut; they must endure a period of possible pain and, indeed, confusion and distress as they bleed to death. Some argue that the pain from the cut is not immediately felt. It can happen (in humans, too) that a very traumatic experience can sometimes induce temporary analgesia. This entire experience, from the journey to the arrival at the slaughterhouse, can be distressing and uncomfortable for the animal.

The Qur'an emphasises that Allah cares for every animal and knows "where it lives." This implies that He would favour environments where animals are treated with kindness and allowed to live naturally, such as cows grazing freely in open pastures. It is stated that: "We must look after the livestock that Allah blesses us with. As we provide the care and resources that our animals require, we will be following Allah's commands."⁸²

Farmed animals are often subjected to physical alterations to make them more manageable. Sheep raised as livestock often have their tails removed, either by cutting or by using a tight rubber ring

⁷⁸ Qur'an 6:38.

⁷⁹ Sahih Muslim, Zakat 48

⁸⁰ Qur'an 24:41.

⁸¹ Qur'an 79:30-33

⁸² ARC, 2014. Islamic Farming. www.arcworld.org/projects02bd.html?projectID=634

that cuts off blood flow, causing the tail to wither and fall off. Moreover, hens raised for eggs often have the tips of their beaks cut off, a procedure known as beak trimming. This is done even though the beak is a susceptible organ, essential for various natural behaviours such as foraging and pecking. This mutilation prevents the birds from harming one another when they are kept in overcrowded and stressful conditions. In environments like battery cages, the natural pecking order among the hens is disrupted. Without the ability to establish a hierarchy, the birds can become frustrated and confused, often leading to aggressive behaviour, including pecking at one another. The mutilation of beaks forces these birds to adapt to unnatural and harmful conditions.



In Islam, **kindness to animals is considered a moral duty, reflecting the belief that animals have intrinsic worth beyond their utility for food, clothing, and work.** Mutilations such as beak trimming and tail docking are prohibited, ensuring that animals are treated with dignity. There are two verses in the Qur'an which explicitly condemn the common practice of slitting the ears of ageing female animals and turning them loose. **One such verse compares this mutilation of the animals to the work of the Devil.**⁸³

Wild Animals

The Qur'an encourages a deep sense of responsibility towards all living beings, reflecting a broader ethical perspective encompassing these animals. This holistic approach underscores the idea that every creature deserves kindness, regardless of their habitat. A disciple of the Prophet Muhammad related one Hadith, which makes it clear that people should not interfere in the lives of wild animals but should respect them. When they were travelling, the Prophet left the others, who took two young birds away from their mother in the nest. The mother bird hovered above with fluttering wings, and when the Prophet returned, he said, "Who has injured this bird by taking its young? Return them to her."⁸⁴

⁸³ Qur'an 4:119

⁸⁴ Muslim, also Awn, Hadith 2658



Aishah Abdallah, Wilderness Leader, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, questions: Should we not expect Muslim ethicists, imbued with the teaching that all created beings are unique signs that glorify the Creator and that each is created in truth and right, to be foremost in striving to protect the earth's remaining wildlands?⁸⁵

Conclusion

In Islam, the treatment of animals is rooted in the principles of compassion, respect, and care for all creatures as part of God's creation. The religion also emphasises sustainability and environmental stewardship. The Qur'an and Hadith advocate treating animals kindly, recognising their intrinsic value and forbidding unnecessary harm. At the same time, the practice of animal sacrifice holds great significance in the Islamic culture to date. On the other hand, animal farming practices, such as confinement, mutilation, and overcrowding, diverge significantly from Islamic principles of compassion. The environmental degradation caused by industrial farming also contrasts with Islam's teachings on preserving the earth as a trust from God.

⁸⁵ Islamic Values, Relating to Wildlands and Wildlife, & Wilderness Leadership. Presentation by Aishah Abdallah, Wilderness Leader, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication. Rosales 2017

2.3 SIKHISM

Introduction

Guru Nanak (1469–1539) was the esteemed founder of the Sikh faith. He was born into a Hindu family in India during a period of strained relations between Hindus and Muslims. After experiencing a profound spiritual awakening, Nanak reached the understanding that there exists no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. He firmly believed that all humans are the children of the same divine entity, often called "Waheguru" or the "wondrous enlightener." The Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, contains 5,894 verses and preserves the works of the gurus, as well as writings from some Muslim Sufis and Hindu saints.

Sikhs are encouraged to embody virtues such as Sat (Truth), Santokh (Contentment), Daya (Compassion and Kindness), Nirmal (Humility), and Pyare (Love). Guru Nanak also urged Sikhs to avoid harmful vices, including cruelty towards others.⁸⁶ Guru Gobind Singh later modified this, teaching that the five qualities/virtues which the Sikhs should emulate are Daya (Compassion), Dharam (Righteousness), Himmat (Courage), Mohkam (detachment), and Sahib (Majesty/Dignity). These qualities form the bedrock of Sikh ethics and are integral to the character of an ideal Sikh.

Daya is central to Sikh ethics, emphasising empathy for others' suffering and selfless action to relieve it. For Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last human Sikh Guru, compassion was a divine quality to be cultivated, recognising the divine presence in all beings and the oneness of creation. It extends to all living creatures and is practised through kindness, charity, and service (seva), especially towards those in need. **Dharam** deals with justice and one's moral duty, urging Sikhs to live with integrity, stand for truth, and protect the oppressed. **Himmat** embodies the bravery to face challenges, fight for justice, and remain strong in one's beliefs and actions. **Mohkam** is about staying free from material desires while focusing on spiritual growth and balance. **Sahib** represents self-respect and honour, living with grace and upholding the dignity of oneself and the Sikh community.⁸⁷ These five virtues are essential to Sikh ethics, shaping a life of spiritual wisdom and moral strength. Guru Gobind Singh envisioned Sikhs as saint-soldiers, embodying these virtues to live fulfilling lives that contribute to societal good. These qualities create a balanced approach that aligns with divine will, promotes justice, and supports spiritual growth.

The Holy Book of Sikhism

The Guru Granth Sahib (also called Adi Granth), the sacred scripture of the Sikh religion, serves as a guide for promoting peace and harmony. It underlines the significance of recognising God as one and treating all individuals as brothers and sisters, which is fundamental to fostering unity and global peace. What sets this text apart is its inclusivity; it amalgamates the teachings of various saints, Bhakts, and Sufis from diverse religious, caste, and regional backgrounds in India. This makes it the world's first interfaith scripture, encouraging everyone to coexist harmoniously.⁸⁸ **The scripture also strongly emphasises** that kindness and care should extend to all living beings, teaching us that **every creature deserves respect and compassion. The Guru Granth Sahib encourages a world where love and empathy guide our actions, fostering a more profound sense of**

⁸⁶(Sikh Wiki, u.d. Guru Granth Sahib against cruelty.) www.sikhwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Granth_Sahib_against_cruelty.

⁸⁷ <http://sikhguru.org.uk/sikhsim/sikh-beliefs/five-virtues-and-five-evils/> :

⁸⁸ (Jagroop Kaur, "The Concept of Peace and the Guru Granth Sahib" 66(3) Ind J Pol Sc 649 (2005)

connection and responsibility towards all life.⁸⁹

Teachings and Common Practices

The Guru Granth Sahib contains various passages that express concern for the welfare of animals. These texts emphasise the interconnectedness of all living beings and advocate for compassion and respect towards animals as they're all part of God's creation. **The Guru Granth Sahib teaches that harming animals is against the principles of Sikhism, as it contradicts the values of compassion, humility, and respect for life that are central to the faith.** These teachings encourage Sikhs to view animals as fellow beings who share the Earth with humans, deserving of protection and humane treatment. The emphasis on nonviolence and respect for all life forms in the Guru Granth Sahib reflects a broader spiritual worldview that values harmony between humans and the natural world. The scripture guides followers in their spiritual journey and ethical responsibilities towards animals and the environment.

Guru Nanak says that **living beings are formed of air, water and fire and are subject to pleasure and pain.** Guru Nanak wrote: "There are beings and creatures in the water and on the land, in the worlds and universes, form upon form. Whatever they say, You know; You care for them all."⁹⁰

Animals, along with nature, are viewed as meditating on the Divine: "Mortals, forests, blades of grass, animals and birds all meditate on the Divine"⁹¹ This verse depicts that animals are in a relationship with God. Guru Granth Sahib demonstrates concern for animals and those humans who are suffering: "Always cognize the near presence of God, through the practice of the Name, Avoid hurt or injury to any sentient being so that peace may come to your mind, Be humble by helping and serving those afflicted with misery and want, to achieve God- consciousness. Nanak testifies that God is the exalter of the fallen and lowly."⁹²

The Guru says, "The merit of pilgrimages to the sixty-eight holy places and that of other virtues do not equal having compassion for other living beings."⁹³

Guru Granth Sahib teaches that **God resides in all creatures, and therefore, harming an animal is like harming a part of God's creation.** The verses encourage Sikhs to treat animals respectfully, avoid unnecessary harm, and practice kindness daily. These teachings align with the broader Sikh principles of compassion (Daya), humility (Nimrata), and equality (Sarbat da Bhala), guiding followers to extend their compassion to all living beings, including animals.

Saint Kabir Shabad in Guru Granth Sahib on Animals

In Sikhism, a Shabad is a sacred song selected from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Shabad, or hymns from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, are known as Gurbani, or the Guru's word.⁹⁴ It is the quintessence of Sikh spirituality and is mentioned 2546 times in the Guru Granth Sahib.⁹⁵ Many gurus and Sufis composed Shabads, and chanting these Shabads allows Sikhs to achieve a higher consciousness and union with God and Guru.

⁸⁹ [Message of Guru Granth Sahib - SikhiWiki, free Sikh encyclopedia.](#)

⁹⁰ Guru Granth Saheb, p466)

⁹¹ (GGS, p455.)

⁹² (GGS, p322)

⁹³ (GGS, p136)

⁹⁴ [What Is the Meaning of Sikh Term Shabad? \(learnreligions.com\)](#)

⁹⁵ [Name of Gods: The Concept of Naam | WaheguruNet](#)

Saint Kabir was a 15th-century poet and mystic whose teachings bridge Hindu and Muslim traditions. His verses, which focus on a direct, personal connection with the divine and reject ritualistic practices, profoundly influenced Sikhism. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus admired Kabir's emphasis on devotion, equality, and inner purity. As a result, many of Kabir's hymns are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, aligning with Sikh teachings on compassion, humility, and the rejection of caste distinctions. Kabir's hymns, as mentioned below, also prompt questions around the killing of animals and is a vital part of Sikh spiritual thought.

Some of those hymns are:

... **"You say that the One Lord is in all, so why do you kill chickens?** ... You seize a living creature and then bring it home and kill its body; you have killed only the clay. The light of the soul passes into another form. So tell me, what have you killed? And what good are your purifications? ..." Why do you bother to wash your face? And why do you bother to bow your head in the mosque? Your heart is full of hypocrisy; what good are your prayers or pilgrimage to Mecca? You are impure; you do not understand the Pure Lord. You do not know His Mystery. Says Kabir, you have missed out on paradise; your mind is set on hell."⁹⁶

... "The dinner of beans and rice is excellent when flavoured with salt. Who would cut throats to have meat with his bread?"⁹⁷

"Kabeer, they oppress living beings and kill them and call it proper. When the Lord calls for their account, what will their condition be? Kabeer, it is tyranny to use force; the Lord shall call you to account. When your account is called for, your face and mouth shall be beaten."⁹⁸

... "You kill living beings and call it a righteous action. Tell me, brother, what would you call an unrighteous action? You call yourself the most excellent sage; who would you call a butcher?"⁹⁹

Kabir, in his Shabads (hymns), speaks about the importance of showing love and care to **all living beings, highlighting the interconnectedness of all life and that cruelty towards animals is against the principles of compassion and spirituality.**

In modern times, Sikhs have issued statements concerning their relationship with animals. At the significant meeting of the faiths in Assisi in 1986, the Sikhs stated their relations with animals. It reads: Humans should conduct themselves through life with love, compassion, and justice. Becoming one and being in harmony with God implies that humans endeavour to live in harmony with God's creation. A further statement was made in 2003 as follows: **Like all creation, the world is a manifestation of God. Every creature in this world, every plant, every form is a manifestation of the Creator. Each is part of God, and God is within each element of creation. God is the cause of all and the primary connection between all existences.**¹⁰⁰

Dietary Practices

Sikhs have various opinions about eating meat, and these views can differ based on individual beliefs

⁹⁶ page 1350 of the Guru Granth Sahib. (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, available at: <http://www.srigurugranth.org/1350.html>)

⁹⁷ page number 1374, Guru Granth Sahib

⁹⁸ page 1375, Guru granth sahib

⁹⁹ Page 1103 (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, available at: <http://www.srigurugranth.org/1103.html>)

¹⁰⁰ M. Palmer and V. Finlay, 2003. Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/15083> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO, p134

and practices. For some Sikhs, especially those who have taken a deep commitment to their faith through a special initiation called Amrit or baptism, the choice to become vegetarian is a significant part of their religious practice. Baptised Sikhs, known as Khalsas (or "Pure Ones"), are deeply devoted to their guru and are committed to their faith. They are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, even willing to die for their beliefs. By becoming vegetarian, these Sikhs aim to align more closely with their spiritual values, emphasising compassion and nonviolence towards all living beings. This choice reflects their commitment to living a life that avoids causing harm to animals and respects the principles of their faith.¹⁰¹ Several Sikh groups support a vegetarian diet, likely because early Sikhism attracted many followers who were Vaishnavite Hindus and opposed to eating meat. Some Sikhs are strongly dedicated to being vegetarian and often refer to various teachings that promote this practice.¹⁰²

Furthermore, all Sikh gurdwaras (temples) operate **langars**, which are community kitchens serving free vegetarian meals to everyone, irrespective of caste, religion, or social status. The typical meal includes rice, chapati, dal (lentils), and vegetables.



Some modern Sikh spiritual guides are sympathetic to vegetarianism. For example, Sant Rajinder Singh writes: "Many also find such plant-based diets are beneficial for spiritual growth. Those who meditate and connect with the Light within them see it also shining in all other human beings and all living things. Thus, they choose to treat different forms of creation as younger brothers and sisters in one family of God. Such people often choose a plant-based diet consistent with their spiritual values."¹⁰³ Stating the spiritual reasons for caring for all creatures, Sant Rajinder Singh writes, "This Light (of God) exists as much in the humble ant as in the powerful lion. It shines in the snake as well as the cow. It shimmers in the fish, as well as the birds. When we look at life through the eyes of the soul, we witness God in even the humblest and most grotesque creatures. With that angle of vision, we develop a love for all that exists."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Weston Area Health NHS Trust, u.d. Sikhism. www.waht.nhs.uk/en-GB/ NHS-Mobile/Our-Services/?depth=4&srcid=2008.

¹⁰² Sikhi Wiki, u.d. Cruelty and Food. https://www.sikhiviki.org/index.php/Cruelty_and_food

¹⁰³ Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj, u.d. World Vegan Day. www.sos.org/sant-rajinder-singh/world-vegan-day/

¹⁰⁴ Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj, u.d. Vegetarianism and Spirituality. www.sos.org/vegetarianism-and-spirituality/

Animal Slaughter

Guru Gobind Singh prohibits Sikhs from consuming kutha—meat that is slaughtered according to the practices of Muslims or Jews. This prohibition stems from the Sikh belief that killing animals as part of a religious ritual or in the name of God is not acceptable. This is why Sikhs do not eat halal or kosher meat, as these methods involve specific religious practices and beliefs.

For Sikhs who consume meat, the preferred method of slaughter is called **Jhatka**, and is not tied to any religious meaning or symbolism. This involves quickly beheading the animal with a single stroke, which Sikhs believe is the most painless way to kill the animal. However, **the act of slaughtering animals contradicts the teachings of the Sikh faith, which emphasises the principle of not causing harm to any living beings.**

Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

Punjab, the heartland of Sikhism, is predominantly an agrarian society where agriculture, and dairy farming and poultry farming form the backbone of the economy. Traditionally, small-scale farmers in Punjab have reared cattle and oxen for ploughing fields.

The Guru Granth Sahib emphasises the sacredness of life, with numerous verses highlighting that animals should be treated with the same respect as humans. On the contrary, in India, over 1,000 broilers, 4 crore egg-laying hens, and 300 million dairy cows are bred, confined, and subjected to farming each year.¹⁰⁵ Cows and buffaloes are usually tethered and confined to cramped, poorly ventilated barns or sheds. This confinement often leads to physical ailments such as joint problems, infections, and a weakened immune system. The lack of proper sanitation in these facilities also increases the risk of diseases, compromising the animals' health.¹⁰⁶



Moreover, as was stated earlier, the Sikh scripture questions the morality of killing chickens or causing harm to any living being. However, poultry farming causes widespread use of coops and cages where chickens are confined in cramped conditions, unable to move freely as they would in a natural environment.

¹⁰⁵ [Ending Animal Cruelty in India - Mercy For Animals](#)

¹⁰⁶ [In Punjab, nearly 18,000 cattle died due to lumpy skin disease last year, reveals RTI | Chandigarh News - The Indian Express](#)



Poultry farming often results in poor hygiene and increased stress among the birds, indicating a misalignment with the Sikh principle that "the One Lord is in all," as stated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Conclusion

In Sikhism, the relationship between humans and animals is rooted in Daya (compassion) and the belief that the divine (Waheguru) exists in all beings. Saint Kabir's hymns have been of great influence in the Sikh scripture and they question the righteousness of killing animals, urging compassion for all life. Sikhism prohibits ritually slaughtered meat, such as halal or kosher, as killing in God's name contradicts divine compassion; even jhatka slaughter, though considered more humane by Sikhs, conflicts with the faith's call to avoid harm.

2.4 CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

Christianity originated in the 1st century CE in the Roman province of Judea, in present-day Israel and Palestine. It began as a movement within Judaism, centred around the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish preacher who lived from around 4 BCE to 30 CE. Jesus' followers believed he was the Messiah (the Christ), a prophesied saviour who would redeem humanity.¹⁰⁷

After Jesus' crucifixion by Roman authorities, his followers, led by apostles like Peter and Paul, began spreading his teachings. They emphasised that Jesus' resurrection was a sign of his divine nature and that faith in him could lead to eternal life. Over time, this message spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, eventually evolving into a distinct religion, separate from Judaism.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are the two main sections of the Christian Bible. The Old Testament sets the stage for the coming of Jesus, and the New Testament fulfils and expands upon its themes through the life and message of Christ. Christians believe that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection provide salvation for humanity, offering eternal life to those who believe in him as the Saviour.

The core teachings of Jesus encompass love and compassion, the Kingdom of God, repentance and forgiveness, humility and service, faith in Jesus, and the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity eventually spread globally, becoming one of the world's largest religions. It has diverse denominations and interpretations of Jesus' teachings. However, the core principles of love, faith, and service remain central to Christian belief.

Biblical Symbolism of Animals

The Bible is full of symbols, and animals are an essential part of this. Both in the Old and New Testaments, animals are used to represent important lessons about faith, obedience, and taking care of what we have been given. In Christianity, animals often embody spiritual truths, virtues, and divine messages. Some of the animals that play a significant role include the lamb, dove, lion, ox, eagle, serpent, fish, raven, and dragonflies. They serve as reminders of God's creation, reflecting qualities like innocence, sacrifice, and resurrection. Through these symbols, animals in Christianity offer insights into moral teachings and the relationship between humanity and God's natural world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ [History of Christianity and role of Christian churches | Britannica](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Biblical Symbolism of Animals - The Flow Living](#)



Source: The Indian Express

Teachings and Common Practices

Christians deeply incorporate the teachings of Genesis into their faith, viewing the creation story as a foundational element of their belief system. According to Genesis, God is the supreme creator of the universe, bringing the world and all its creatures into existence. This includes the creation of humanity, whom God made in His image, giving them a unique role and responsibility. Genesis accounts for the belief in God's sovereignty, the sanctity of life, and humanity's stewardship over creation, which are major to Christian doctrine and ethics. However, Christianity became deeply focused on affirming the correctness of its official teachings, as this was seen as the only way to secure eternal salvation in heaven. This led to the development of an anthropocentric and perhaps theocentric system of beliefs.

However, some of the analogies employed by Jesus demonstrate a profound appreciation for the splendour and harmony of nature. On one occasion, Jesus uses the mother hen protecting her chicks: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!"¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Luke 13:34



On another occasion, when Jesus finds a man with a withered hand, his disciples ask if it is permissible to heal on the Sabbath rest day. He replies: "He said to them, 'If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep?'"¹¹⁰ Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath," and he heals the man. Jesus gives a similar answer to another question about the Sabbath: "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?"¹¹¹

In his teaching to his disciples, **Jesus makes repeated use of the analogy of the good shepherd who cares for his flock.** He engages with Simon Peter: "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord', he said, 'you know that I love you'. Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs'. Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you'. Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep'. The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you'. Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep'."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Matthew 12:11–12

¹¹¹ Luke 13:15

¹¹² John 21:15–17



... "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep, and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They, too, will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."¹¹³ These shepherd references are perhaps based on similar verses in the Book of Isaiah.¹¹⁴

John's gospel also records how Jesus went to Jerusalem and became angry when he witnessed the lively trade of sacrificial animals attached to the Temple. Cattle, sheep, and doves were being sold for sacrifice, as well as money-changing taking place: "So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He said to those who sold doves, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'"¹¹⁵

Christian teachings on animals are rooted in the belief that God is the creator of all living beings, including animals, as Genesis describes. While animals are seen as part of God's creation, Christianity has historically placed humans in a dominant position over them, often interpreting the biblical concept of "dominion" as granting humans authority over animals. This perspective has led to a range of views within Christianity regarding the treatment of animals. Some interpretations emphasise stewardship, advocating for the responsible and compassionate care of animals as part of God's creation. Others, particularly in historical contexts, have viewed animals as subordinate to humans, justifying their use and exploitation for human purposes. In medieval times, for example, animals were sometimes put on trial for actions deemed malicious or devilish, reflecting a complex and often contradictory relationship between Christian teachings and the treatment of animals.

Over time, however, there has been a growing emphasis within Christian thought on the importance of kindness and compassion towards animals, with some modern Christian movements for ethical treatment of animals based on biblical principles of love and care for all of God's creation. Ecologically unsustainable methods in agriculture have also led to environmental degradation on a massive scale. In response, some Christian groups advocate for sustainable agriculture, aligning with biblical stewardship and care for creation principles under the broader concept of "Creation Care."

¹¹³ John 10: 14–16

¹¹⁴ Isaiah 40:11

¹¹⁵ John 2:15–16

Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

The Bible encourages compassionate treatment of animals, as reflected in Proverbs 12:10: "**The righteous care for the needs of their animals.**" Yet any form of animal farming inherently subjects animals to exploitation and suffering. For example, these systems confine animals in cramped and overcrowded spaces, restricting their movement and preventing them from engaging in natural behaviours. For example, **chickens in poultry are frequently kept in battery cages where they cannot spread their wings, and pigs are confined to gestation crates, unable to turn around.**

Christian ethics stresses the importance of treating animals in alignment with stewardship, which holds that humans are responsible for caring for all of God's creation. For example, Deuteronomy 25:4 prohibits muzzling an ox while treading out the grain.

The practice of animal farming relegates animals to mere commodities, leading to practices that prioritise profit over animal well-being.¹¹⁶ This commodification is at odds with the Christian belief in treating animals with respect and dignity as part of God's creation.

Conclusion

Christianity teaches that all creatures are part of God's creation and should be treated with care and respect. The Bible's use of animals as symbols—such as the lamb, dove, and shepherd's flock—reveals their spiritual significance. While humans are given dominion over creation, Christianity highlights stewardship by treating animals with compassion.

¹¹⁶ [Animals used for Consumption – India Animal Fund](#)

2.5 BUDDHISM

Introduction

Buddhism, one of the major world religions, was established by Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha, during the 6th century BCE in the regions that are present-day Nepal and India. This period was characterised by extensive social and religious evolution within ancient India, as it was a time of great change, with new ideas and practices emerging in both society and religion. After Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment while meditating under the Bodhi tree, he dedicated his life to sharing the profound teachings of Buddhism. He shared the core principles of Buddhism, which include understanding the nature of suffering, the causes of suffering, and the path to overcoming it. The ultimate goal in Buddhism is to reach Nirvana, a state of perfect peace and freedom from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, i.e. a state of liberation and enlightenment.¹¹⁷



The Buddha's Early Life

Siddhartha Gautama was a prince who became deeply troubled by the suffering he observed in the world. A story about the young Prince Gautama's growing awareness of suffering describes how he once went into the countryside and saw some recently ploughed land. He noticed all the small creatures, like worms and insects, killed by the plough. He also saw the complex lives of the ploughmen and the tiredness of the oxen pulling the plough. The scriptures say he got off his horse and walked gently and slowly over the ground, feeling very sad. He thought about how all living things come and go, and in his sadness, he said to himself, "How sad all this is!" This experience led him to meditate deeply on the suffering in the world and eventually leave the palace.

Following his enlightenment, he established the Sangha, or monastic order, and spread his teachings

¹¹⁷ Buswell, R. E., Jr., & Lopez, D. S., Jr. (Eds.). (2013). *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton University Press

across India and beyond.¹¹⁸

Core Teachings of Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path

The Four Noble Truths serve as the cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy, outlining the nature of suffering, its origins, the potential for its elimination, and the path to its cessation. Meanwhile, the Eightfold Path offers comprehensive guidance for ethical behaviour, mental cultivation, and the development of wisdom, all of which are indispensable for achieving enlightenment.¹¹⁹

From the earliest stages of Buddhism, documents consistently portray animals as inferior to humans, both in their existence and abilities. "The animal world is viewed as an unhappy place – as the Buddha said in the Majjhima Nikāya, 'So many are the anguishes of animal birth.'"¹²⁰ As a result, early Buddhists held that humans, due to their elevated status, were justified in benefiting from practices that might cause harm to other animals.¹²¹

While Buddhists generally view rebirth as an animal as undesirable, considering it a punishment for past misdeeds, they still hold some degree of respect for animal life. However, the tradition also carries a predominantly negative view of animals compared to humans. Thus, in Buddhist thought, being reborn as any animal other than a human is regarded as a significant setback, indicating that the being did not fulfil the higher aspirations necessary for a human rebirth in previous lives.¹²²

The Buddha, however, placed great emphasis on fostering loving-kindness, known as metta, and frequently urged his followers to nurture this quality, along with compassion for those in distress.¹²³

Holy Books and Schools of Buddhism

Buddhist texts, integral to the Buddhist tradition, were originally passed down orally by monastics before being transcribed into various manuscripts in Indo-Aryan languages. Within Buddhist traditions, texts are often divided into categories like buddhavacana, the "word of the Buddha," which includes many "sutras," and other writings such as shastras (treatises) and Abhidharma.

Buddhism does not have a single "holy book" like the Bible or Qur'an, but it has several important texts. It has a collection of scriptures, Tripitaka or Pali Canon in Theravada Buddhism, and other texts like the Mahayana Sutras in Mahayana Buddhism.

Tripitaka (Pali Canon)

- **Sutra Pitaka:** This contains the teachings of Buddha, including sermons and discourses. In the Jataka tales, part of the Pali Canon, the Buddha recounts his previous lives in various forms, including animals, to illustrate moral lessons about compassion and ethical conduct. For example, the Buddha being reborn as a deer emphasises the value of kindness and self-sacrifice (Jataka 499 - The Story of the Wise Deer).

¹¹⁸ From the Buddhacarita Acts of the Buddha, recorded in Buddhist Scriptures, selected and translated by Edward Conze, Penguin Classics 1979, first edition 1959

¹¹⁹ Harvey, P. (2012). *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁰ Paul Walda, "Animals" in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion* 18-19 (Macmillan Reference USA, New York, 2005)

¹²¹ Paul Walda, *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals* 3-7 (Oxford University Press, New York, 2001)

¹²² Paul Walda, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* 69-83 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)

¹²³ Dharmachari Subhuti, "Is Buddhism Sensible?" in Christopher Lewis and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (eds.), *Sensible Religion* 147 (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Surrey, 2014)

- **Vinaya Pitaka:** This deals with the rules and regulations for monastic life, governing the conduct of monks and nuns. The Vinaya Pitaka includes regulations aimed at preventing harm to animals. For example, monks are discouraged from causing harm or killing animals (Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga, 1.21.1).
- **Abhidhamma Pitaka:** This is a detailed philosophical and doctrinal analysis of the teachings found in the Sutra Pitaka.

Mahayana Sutras

- **Lotus Sutra:** A key text in Mahayana Buddhism, emphasising the possibility of Buddhahood for all beings. This sutra teaches the universality of Buddhahood and emphasises compassion for all sentient beings. Chapter 3, "The Parable of the Burning House," illustrates the importance of compassion and saving beings from suffering.¹²⁴
- **Heart Sutra:** This is one of the most famous Mahayana texts, dealing with the concept of emptiness (Śūnyatā). Although it mainly discusses the nature of emptiness, it implies compassion for all beings. The concept of emptiness underpins the idea that all beings are interconnected and deserving of compassion.
- **Diamond Sutra:** This is another important text that focuses on the nature of perception and the concept of non-self. It is for the practice of non-attachment and compassion. It teaches that all beings should be treated with kindness and respect, reflecting the broader Mahayana emphasis on universal compassion.

Each of these texts plays a crucial role in guiding the practices and beliefs of Buddhists across different traditions.¹²⁵

Teachings and Practices

Buddhism blends a deep respect for nature with guidelines for daily living.¹²⁶ Buddhists have many lists of virtues to follow daily. Buddhist monks have many more rules to adhere to than lay people. The Buddha's teaching is summed up in **the four Noble Truths:**

1. Suffering (dukkha) is real and can be seen everywhere. We all suffer.
2. There are causes of suffering, mainly our selfishness and attachments.
3. These causes can be transformed, and our suffering terminated.
4. The way to transform and terminate suffering causes is by cultivating the right path.

The last Truth is divided into the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path on Right Livelihood requires Buddhists to choose work that aligns with Buddhist principles, particularly respect for all life. As a result, Buddhists generally

¹²⁴ Lotus Sutra, Chapter 3.

¹²⁵ [Buddhism - Mahayana, Dharma, Sutras | Britannica](#)

¹²⁶ Philip Sarre, "Environmental Values: Western, Eastern or Global?" in Amitava Mukherjee (ed.), Environment and Development: Views from the East and the West 284-287 (Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007). 71 Paul Waldau, The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals 3-7 (Oxford University Press, New York, 2001)

avoid occupations involving the trading or slaughter of animals, though some may still be involved in raising animals destined for slaughter.

Furthermore, Buddhism recognises five Cardinal Virtues: Faith, Vigour, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom. Under Vigour, the teaching says: "**However numerous sentient beings are, I vow to save them,**" presumably meaning to help them on their path towards enlightenment.

The monks have many other rules listed in the Pratimoksha, some demonstrating concern for animals. For example, they are not allowed to build a hut if "it involves the destruction of living beings," nor are they allowed "deliberately to deprive an animal of life."¹²⁷



Other aspects of the religion emphasise compassion for all living beings. **The Five Precepts** are the basic rules by which all Buddhists, both lay people and monks, should live. The first of the five precepts bans the taking of life and, in its broadest sense, would ban the killing of both humans and sentient beings.

One of the main focuses of Buddhism is on suffering in the world (the First Noble Truth of the Buddha says that "life is suffering"). Since suffering is something which they want to eliminate, and since animals can also suffer, Buddhists believe that they should not inflict suffering on them. Buddha's awareness of animal suffering is believed to have influenced his quest for Nirvana or enlightenment. Many Buddhists believe that the Buddha promoted vegetarianism, and most Buddhist monks in China, Vietnam, and Korea are strictly vegetarian. However, most Buddhists do eat meat in practice and it's important to note that specific practices regarding diet can vary widely based on regional customs and specific Buddhist traditions.¹²⁸

Buddhism also exhibits a pervasive dismissal of different animals, which is linked to the tradition's strong emphasis on hierarchical thinking.¹²⁹ In Buddhist scriptures, animals are sometimes portrayed negatively as pests competing with humans.

From an analytical perspective, Buddhism's views on animals are shaped more by the belief in human superiority than by a detailed understanding of animals' lives.¹³⁰ In Buddhist scriptures and practices,

¹²⁷ Recorded in Buddhist Scriptures, selected and translated by Edward Conze, Penguin Classics 1979, first edition 1959

¹²⁸ Keown, D. (2005). Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press.

¹²⁹ 5 Paul Waldau, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave 69-83 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)

¹³⁰ Paul Waldau, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave 69-83

the teaching of compassion often results in clear concern for all living beings, and Buddhism generally holds a kind and sympathetic view towards nonhuman life. A Bodhisattva, aiming for Buddhist enlightenment, is taught that their first and most important duty is to respect all living beings' lives, dignity, rights, and wishes. In the Mahayana tradition, there is a special vow where the Bodhisattva promises not to enter Nirvana until all beings are saved. There's also a famous story about a Bodhisattva who sacrificed himself to feed a hungry tigress who had just given birth.¹³¹

Animal Ethics in Buddhism

1. Ahimsa: Ahimsa, which translates to "nonviolence" in English, is a foundational Buddhist principle. It signifies **the commitment to refraining from causing harm to any living being, both physically and mentally.**

2. Karma and Rebirth: Buddhism believes all living beings are subject to the universal laws of karma. According to this teaching, our actions have profound consequences that can extend beyond our current lives. The concept of samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, includes all sentient beings, emphasising that animals are not exempt from this cosmic continuity. Therefore, causing harm to animals can generate negative karma, which may lead to future suffering in subsequent lifetimes. Taking an animal's life unnecessarily is considered a bad action that negatively impacts the quality of one's next life, possibly resulting in rebirth as an animal that endures similar mistreatment. Buddhism inspires followers to treat all creatures with kindness and empathy, embodying a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all life.¹³²

3. Metta: "Metta," which means loving-kindness in Pali, is a fundamental meditation practice within the Buddhist tradition. **It involves the intentional cultivation of an attitude of boundless benevolence and compassion towards all living beings, extending to animals.**¹³³

4. Jataka Tales: The Jataka Tales are stories about the Buddha's previous lives, often featuring him as an animal. These tales highlight virtues such as loving-kindness and patience, which the Buddha perfected over many lifetimes.

Buddhism postulates a theory of dependent origination in which all beings (including humans) function only with others around them, and therefore, there is no independent existence. The goal of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment by ending suffering and ignorance that arise in the realms of reality. In Buddhism, empathy, compassion and nonviolence towards all beings, not just humans, are essential moral virtues that attract good karma, which can help attain enlightenment and liberation from the material world.

Asoka's Edicts

In the 3rd century BCE, Emperor Asoka played a significant role in the history of Buddhism and animal welfare in ancient India. **After converting to Buddhism, Asoka implemented policies aligned with the religion's emphasis on nonviolence and compassion.** He had edicts inscribed on pillars and rocks throughout his empire to prohibit animal sacrifices, restrict hunting, and establish veterinary hospitals. Asoka set up medical centres for both humans and animals. The 5th

(Wiley-Blackwell, 2006).

¹³¹ Susan L. Goodkin, "The Evolution of Animal Rights" 18 Colum Hum Rts L Rev 259 (1987)

¹³² Gethin, R. (1998). The Foundations of Buddhism. Oxford University Press.

¹³³ Nyanaponika Thera & Bodhi, B. (2008). Abhidhammattha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Buddhist Publication Society

Pillar Edict of Emperor Asoka provides a comprehensive list of animals for whom killing was prohibited:

... "Twenty-six years after my coronation, various animals have declared to be protected -- parrots, ruddy geese, wild ducks, bats, queen ants, terrapins, boneless fish, fish, tortoises, porcupines, squirrels, deer, bulls, wild asses, wild pigeons, domestic pigeons and all four- footed creatures that are neither useful nor edible. Those nanny goats, ewes and sows with young or giving milk to their young are protected, and so are young ones less than six months old. Cocks are not to be castrated (castrated), husks hiding living beings are not to be burnt, and forests are not to be burnt either without reason or to kill creatures. One animal is not to be fed to another."

... "Along roads, I have had banyan trees planted so that they can give shade to animals and men." ... "I have had wells dug, rest houses built, and in various places, I have had watering places made for the use of animals and men."¹³⁴

Asoka also declared that although thousands of animals used to be killed every day in his royal kitchens, now only three are to be killed, "And in time, not even these three creatures will be killed."¹³⁵

These measures substantially impacted the cultural and ethical environment of his time, leading to improved treatment of animals.¹³⁶ Some fragments of these pillars have been found as far away as modern Afghanistan, and scholars have been able to translate them. They tell a story that no living beings are to be slaughtered or offered in sacrifice.

Monastic Rules (Vinaya)

The Vinaya Pitaka, a component of the Theravada Buddhist canon, contains detailed rules for monastic conduct, including those concerning animals. **Monks were forbidden from harming animals and instructed to treat them with care and respect.** For example, rules prohibited monks from cutting plants or digging the ground to avoid harming small creatures.¹³⁷

Buddhism's focus on compassion and nonviolence shaped broader societal attitudes towards animals in ancient India. The religion's teachings **discouraged practices such as animal sacrifices, which are common in some religious rituals.** This influence contributed to a cultural shift towards greater compassion and ethical animal consideration.¹³⁸

Sacrifices

During the Buddha's era, animal sacrifices were common, but Buddhist teachings strongly opposed this practice. In several Pali suttas (discourses), the Buddha criticised animal sacrifice, advocating instead for a more meaningful form of sacrifice. Buddhism is regarded as having rejected the practice of sacrifice, considering it futile and wasteful for achieving either material prosperity or spiritual advancement.

¹³⁴ <https://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html>

¹³⁵ King Ashoka, Fourteen Rock Edicts, Minor Rock Edicts and The Seven Pillar Edicts in The Edicts of King Ashoka; An English Rendering by Ven. S. Dhammika, 1993. Buddhist Publication Society: Sri Lanka. DharmaNet Edition, 1994. buddhanet.net/ pdf_file/edicts-asoka6.pdf.

¹³⁶ Thapar, R. (1997). Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas. Oxford University Press.

¹³⁷ Horner, I. B. (1938). The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Pitaka). Pali Text Society.

¹³⁸ Chakravarti, U. (1987). "Buddhist Nuns in India" in The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Vol. 10, No. 1.

The **Samyutta Nikāya** III 84 1.9.6 condemns the performance of animal sacrifices. The Jatakas¹³⁹ provide corroborative evidence. In the **Matakabhatta Jataka**, the Bodhisattva strongly discounts the practice of sacrificing animals in feasts for the dead (matakabhattam) for the sake of deceased kinsmen. In **Aydicitabhatta Jataka**, the practice of sacrificing animals to the gods before the commencement of a journey on business and again after safe return from there with profit is deprecated. The tree spirit advises the itinerant trader to give up the sacrifice of animals as it leads to bondage. In the **Dummedha Jataka**, the Bodhisattva Prince Brahmadatta finds that the people of Benares celebrated the festivals of gods by involving the slaughter of sheep, goats, poultry, swine, and other living creatures. He considers this to be the wanton destruction of life due to superstition. To dissuade them from performing animal sacrifices, the Prince confined himself to offering perfumes and flowers, sprinkling the trees with water and circumambulating them. Eventually, he succeeded in stopping the practice of animal sacrifices, described as dussilakamma, an evil act. In the **Mahdsupina Jataka**, the Bodhisattva advises the king of Benares to avoid attending the sacrifices organised by the Brahmanas in which animals are slaughtered. In **Lomasakassapa Jataka**, sacrifice involving the killing of animals is described as futile in achieving one's objective.¹⁴⁰

One of the Jataka Tales records how a Brahmin prepared a goat for sacrifice. The goat laughed and then wept. The Brahmin asks the goat why he laughed and then cried. The goat replies that he had been a Brahmin in a previous existence, and because he had sacrificed a goat as a result, he had had his head cut off in the following 499 existences. As this is his 500th existence, he knows it will be the last time he will be sacrificed, so he laughs. But why did he cry? The goat replies: "Just as I have endured the suffering of having my head cut off in 500 existences because I killed a single goat...this brahmin, having killed me, will likewise endure the (same) suffering...And feeling pity for you, I cried."¹⁴¹

Additionally, the **Dhammapada** states: All living things fear being beaten with clubs. All living things fear being put to death. Put oneself in the place of the other; let no one kill nor cause another to kill.¹⁴² The Dhammapada also states: **The person who has laid down violence Towards sentient beings Who neither kills nor causes to kill, That one I call superior.**¹⁴³

The Buddhist rejection of animal sacrifice marked a significant divergence from Vedic (Hindu) practices of the time. While Vedic tradition viewed animal sacrifices as essential for pleasing deities and maintaining cosmic order, Buddhism, under the Buddha's guidance, condemned such rituals as morally wrong and unnecessary. Instead, Buddhism emphasised compassion, nonviolence, and ethical conduct as the proper paths to spiritual progress. **This rejection set Buddhism apart and appealed to those uncomfortable with the violence inherent in Vedic rituals, helping to establish Buddhism as an ethical alternative in the spiritual**

¹³⁹ The Jatakas are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal form. The future Buddha may appear as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant—but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates. In Theravada Buddhism, the Jatakas are a textual division of the Pali Canon, included in the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka. The term Jataka may also refer to a traditional commentary on this book.

¹⁴⁰ Y. Krishan, "To What Extent Buddhism Repudiated Vedic Religion?", available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29757093>

¹⁴¹ Recorded in R. Ohnuma, 2017. *Unfortunate Destiny: Animals in the Indian Buddhist Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁴² Dhammapada from Teachings of the Buddha, Thomas Byron. https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-5xsS5pSi8sQDrKnc/The%20Dhammapada_djvu.txt.

¹⁴³ The Dhammapada, Verses on the Way, 23, 405, tr. Glen Wallis, 2007. New York: The Modern Library.

landscape.¹⁴⁴

Life Release

Life Release is a cherished practice in Buddhism. This tradition involves Buddhists purchasing a captive animal, such as a bird, fish, or even an animal destined for slaughter, and setting it free.¹⁴⁵



The act symbolises compassion and is believed to generate merit, reflecting the core values of Buddhism. In Buddhism, compassion (karuna) and nonviolence (ahimsa) are fundamental values. Releasing a captive animal is a direct expression of these principles. By freeing an animal from captivity or the threat of death, Buddhists adhere to the first precept of Buddhism: to refrain from harming living beings. The moral aspect of Life Release is closely tied to the concept of karma. Buddhists believe that good deeds, such as saving a life, generate positive karma, leading to better outcomes in this life or future lives. Life Release is seen as a way to accumulate merit, helping to achieve a better rebirth or even progress towards enlightenment. Buddhism emphasises the importance of both compassion and wisdom (prajna). To ensure that Life Release truly benefits the animals and does not cause unintended harm, it is essential to perform this practice with careful consideration and awareness of its potential consequences.

Dietary Practices

In Buddhism, animals were expected to be treated with respect and care throughout their lives. In some cases, monks and practitioners would avoid eating meat altogether, adhering to a vegetarian diet to minimise harm to animals.

In **Mahayana Buddhism**, the scriptures depict the Buddha as strongly advocating for strict

¹⁴⁴ BBC, u.d. What Does Buddhism Teach about Animal Rights? www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zc3c7ty/revision/5.

¹⁴⁵ [Life-Release - Samye Institute](#)

vegetarianism under all circumstances. The **Lankavatara Sutra**, for instance, quotes the Buddha as saying, "I have not permitted meat eating by anyone. I do not permit it. I will not permit it." The Buddha explains that if no one consumes meat, there will be no taking of life.

On the other hand, the **Theravada scriptures**, specifically the Pali Canon, present a more nuanced view. These texts describe a specific situation in which monks, who typically relied on alms from the community for their one daily meal, were allowed to eat meat. **According to the Pali Canon, the Buddha permitted his monks to consume meat placed in their alms bowls, provided they had no reason to believe that the animal had been explicitly slaughtered to provide them with meat.**¹⁴⁶

Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

Usage of animals for food production violates Buddhist principles of nonviolence and compassion. For example, in the poultry industry, **the killing of male chicks is a common practice**. Since they cannot lay eggs and are not profitable for meat production, they are deemed expendable, resulting in the culling of millions each year, often within hours of hatching. Another example is that of "fish milking," where **female fish are manually forced to release their eggs**. This highly invasive method causes significant physical pain, trauma, and stress, disrupting the fish's natural physiological state and leading to lasting harm.

Buddhism teaches that every life has inherent value, regardless of its usefulness. The mass culling of male chicks disregards this value, inflicting unnecessary suffering and conflicting with the principle of *Right Livelihood*, which encourages avoiding harm to others in one's work.

The immobility, pain, and starvation caused by unnatural growth reflect a disregard for life's intrinsic value. These conditions highlight the stark contrast between the compassionate ideals of Buddhism and the realities of animal farming, as Buddhism discourages actions that cause suffering.

Conclusion

The principles of compassion and ethical treatment are central to the teachings of Buddhism and are extended to all living beings, including animals. The Buddha taught that every life is valuable, and harming any creature was considered morally wrong. The First Precept forbids taking life, and the Noble Eightfold Path's "Right Livelihood" discourages trades involving harm to oneself or another being. The Buddhist teachings emphasised that animals, like humans, can feel pain, fear, and joy. Because of this, causing harm to them was seen as a violation of the principle of nonviolence. The Buddha strongly opposed animal sacrifice, encouraging offerings of virtue and mindfulness instead. Additionally, the Jataka Tales and Emperor Asoka's edicts reveal a high regard for animal life and a clear stance against cruelty. Traditions like *Life Release*, where captive animals are set free, express compassion and the wish to relieve suffering.

While dietary practices differ across Buddhist cultures, many choose vegetarianism as a natural extension of the belief that causing harm to animals creates suffering and hinders one's progress towards enlightenment and freedom from the cycle of rebirth.

¹⁴⁶ dharmavoicesforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/buddhism_by_dharma Voices for.pdf

2.6 JAINISM

Introduction

Jainism is one of India's oldest religions, dating back to at least the mid-first century BCE. Even today, Jainism remains a significant part of Indian culture. The core teaching of Jainism is enlightenment, or spiritual liberation, which can be achieved through nonviolence and by minimising harm to all living beings, including plants and animals. Jainism, like Buddhism, emerged in northern India around the same time, with the concept of rejecting the animal sacrifices that were part of the earlier Vedic traditions. These two religions had a significant influence on Hinduism as well.

Jains believe their religion has been guided by 24 Tirthankaras, or enlightened teachers, throughout its history. The term "Tirthankara" literally means "ford-maker." In Jainism, a Tirthankara creates a safe path through the cycle of endless rebirths, known as samsara, leading to *kevala*, the ultimate liberation or enlightenment. As the last Tirthankara, **Mahavira** is especially revered for showing how to achieve this spiritual freedom. Those few individuals who have achieved kevala or enlightenment are called Jina (literally, "Conqueror"), and the monastic and lay adherents are called Jains ("Follower of the Conquerors") or Jaina¹⁴⁷. There is a story that tells how, in a past life, Mahavira was born as a lion. During that life, two monks taught the lion about the principles of nonviolence and the importance of not killing other beings. After learning these teachings, the lion stopped eating meat and eventually starved to death. As a result, the lion was reborn in heaven and later reincarnated as Mahavira. This story illustrates the fundamental principle of Jainism: **ahimsa**, or nonviolence, towards all living beings. Jainism upholds the most rigorous and uncompromising code of conduct regarding the treatment of animals.¹⁴⁸

Parshvanatha, also known as Pārśva or Pārasanātha, was the 23rd of the 24 Tirthankaras (spiritual teachers) in Jainism. He was born in Varanasi, India, and renounced worldly life to establish an ascetic community. He is among the earliest Tirthankaras and is recognised as a historical figure. While Jain traditions place him between the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, historians generally agree that he lived during the 8th or 7th century BCE. Born 273 years before Mahavira, Parshvanatha is regarded as the spiritual successor of the 22nd Tirthankara, Neminath, and is known for reviving Jainism. He is believed to have attained moksha (liberation) on Mount Sammeda (Madhuban, Jharkhand), also called Parasnath Hill, an important pilgrimage site for Jains. Parshvanatha is often depicted with a canopy of serpent hoods above his head, and his worship often includes Dharanendra and Padmavati, the serpent deity and goddess in Jainism. In the Jain legend, Parshvanatha's life is often associated with serpents. It is said that before his birth, his mother saw a black serpent beside her. Jain scriptures like the Kalpa-sutra recount that Parshvanatha once saved a serpent trapped in a burning log set aflame by an ascetic. This serpent was later reborn as Dharana, the lord of the underworld kingdom of nagas (serpents), believed to have protected Parshvanatha from a storm sent by a demon.

The teachings of Parshvanatha and Mahavira are interpreted differently by the two major Jain sects, Digambaras and Śvētāmbaras, which has led to ongoing debates. The Digambaras believe that there

¹⁴⁷ Britannica, u.d. Jainism. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jainism>.

¹⁴⁸ P.S. Jaini, 1979. The Jaina Path of Purification. Berkeley: University of California Press, quoted by C. Chapple, 2006. Animals and the Jaina Tradition, in P. Waldau and K. Patton (Eds). A Community of Subjects. New York: Columbia University Press, pp241–249

were no significant differences between their teachings, whereas the Śvētāmbaras maintain that there were notable distinctions. Parshvanatha introduced the "fourfold restraint"—the vows to abstain from taking life, stealing, lying, and owning property—which Mahavira later expanded to include celibacy, forming the five "great vows" (mahavrata) of Jain ascetics.¹⁴⁹

There's a well-known story of the life of the 23rd Tirthankara, Parshwanath, who was born a prince. On the way to his wedding to a princess, Parshwanath saw many animals cooped up outside her palace and, to his horror, found that they were being kept to be slaughtered for his wedding feast. He told his future father-in-law: "Animals have souls, they have consciousness, they are our kith and kin, they are our ancestors. They wish to live as much as we do; they have feelings and emotions...Their right to live is as fundamental as our own. I cannot marry, I cannot love, and I cannot enjoy life if animals are enslaved and killed." He became a monk and devoted his life to informing everyone that they must be compassionate to animals. He made such an impression that his bride-to-be also renounced her comfortable life, became a nun and devoted herself to animal welfare, and her father ordered that there would be no hunting, no shooting, no caging and no pets in his lands.¹⁵⁰

Neminathji, also known as **Neminatha or Aristanemi**, is the 22nd Tirthankara in Jainism. He is revered for his renunciation and spiritual teachings. On the eve of his wedding, Neminathji renounced the world after witnessing animals being prepared for sacrifice. This profound realisation led him to embrace asceticism, giving up his princely life to become a Jain monk dedicated to spiritual practice and meditation. Through intense meditation and penance, Neminathji attained Kevala Jnana (omniscience) and spent the remainder of his life teaching Jain principles, emphasising nonviolence, truth (Satya), and asceticism.¹⁵¹

Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jains believe in reincarnation—the ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This cycle is influenced by one's karma, which is the result of a person's actions. **According to Jain's beliefs, bad karma accumulates by causing harm to living things.** To avoid this, Jains are expected to follow a strict code of nonviolence. Jainism believes humans, plants, animals, and even elements like air and water have souls. As a result, the principle of nonviolence extends to all forms of life and nature. This makes committed Jains strict vegetarians. They also avoid eating root vegetables because uprooting them would kill the plant. However, they can eat vegetables that grow above the ground, which can be harvested without harming the entire plant. Jain monks and nuns also avoid actions like swatting mosquitoes or sweeping the ground, as these could inadvertently harm small creatures.

Today, the majority of Jains reside in India, with an estimated four million followers. Jainism's teachings have had a global impact, inspiring many, including Mahatma Gandhi, who admired Jainism's commitment to nonviolence and incorporated it into his movement for Indian independence.¹⁵²

Holy Books

Jainism has two main divisions that emerged early in its history: the **Swetambar** (white- clad) sect and the **Digambar** (sky-clad) sect. The Sacred Books of Jainism, known as **Agam literature**, consist of Lord Mahavir's teachings compiled by his disciples. Jains respect the contents of sacred

¹⁴⁹ [Parshvanatha | Tirthankara, India, 8th Century | Britannica](#)

¹⁵⁰ Satish Kumar, 2022. Jain Religion. Resurgence & Ecologist.

www.resurgence.org/satishkumar/articles/jain-religion.htm

¹⁵¹ [Neminathji Jain Jinalay - Jain Tirthsthaans \(jainknowledge.com\)](#)

¹⁵² [Jainism \(nationalgeographic.org\)](http://Jainism(nationalgeographic.org))

texts and revere them as holy objects. **The Agam Sutras emphasise reverence for all life forms and include strict codes of vegetarianism, asceticism, nonviolence, and opposition to war.**

The existing Agam Sutras are accepted as the authentic preaching of Lord Mahavira by the Swetambar sects, but the Digambar sect does not consider them genuine. Digambars follow two other texts written by great Acharyas (scholars) from 100 to 800 CE.¹⁵³ The Acaranga sutra says: "All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures **should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.** This is the pure, unchangeable, eternal law, which the enlightened ones who know have proclaimed..."¹⁵⁴

Teachings and Common Practices

In Jainism, there are no gods. Instead, Jains revere all 24 Tirthankaras, including Mahavira and his predecessors. These Tirthankaras are highly respected and serve as the ultimate source of authority in Jainism.¹⁵⁵



Jains believe the universe was never created and will never cease to exist; it is eternal but constantly changing, as it goes through endless cycles and is attributed to jiva and ajiva. Jiva represents consciousness, while ajiva refers to entities without consciousness. According to **Umasvati's Tattvartha Sutra**, there are 8,400,000 different species of life caught in these cycles. Each living being contains a life force, or jiva, which enlivens its environment. When a body dies, the jiva moves to a new form based on the karma accumulated in its previous life. In Jain cosmology, microorganisms and small animals with two, three, or four senses exist above single-sense jivas, followed by jivas with five senses. The highest grade of animals and humans possess rationality and intuition (manas).

The **Jain Declaration on Nature**,¹⁵⁶ written by Dr. L. M. Singhvi, says that Jains do not believe in an intelligent first cause as the creator of the universe. **The Declaration states that, as highly evolved life forms, human beings have significant moral responsibilities in their interactions with each other and the rest of the universe.**

According to Jainism, all living beings, from a clump of dirt or a drop of water to animals and humans, share a common trait: the ability to experience touch. Their concept of life extends far beyond the typical definition, which usually refers to the ability of plants and animals to take in food, generate energy, grow, adapt, and reproduce—qualities that distinguish living organisms from inorganic matter or dead beings. In Jainism, even the elements of the world are believed to

¹⁵³ P.K. Shah, u.d. Jain Agam Literature. www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/agamas.html

¹⁵⁴ Acaranga sutra 1.4.1. 1–2, pp41–42, quoted in K. Armstrong, 2007. *The Great Transformation*. London: Atlantic Books.

¹⁵⁵ Nalini Balbir, 23/09/19. *An Introduction to the Jain Faith*. The British Library. www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/an-introduction-to-the-jain-faith

¹⁵⁶ This declaration was written to officially include the Jain faith in the Network on Conservation and Religion and was presented to Prince Philip, President of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature International in 1990.

possess "touch, breath, life, and bodily strength."¹⁵⁷ In Jainism, it is believed that **the greatest good a Jain can do is to offer protection or fearlessness to all living beings, also known as Abhaydaan.**

Ahimsa is among the core principles of Jainism. It holds that **no living being has the right to harm or kill another living being**. Jainism recognises four forms of existence: gods, humans, beings in hell, and animals and plants. The last group is further categorised based on the number of senses. Laypeople are encouraged to avoid harming organisms with two or more senses, while monks and renunciants are expected to avoid harming living beings, including plants.¹⁵⁸

Mahavira established a set of guidelines to help individuals on their path to liberation. These rules aim to reduce and eliminate karma by following a strict code of nonviolence. He instructed his monks and nuns on how to avoid harming life in its many forms. This guidance includes detailed instructions on what and when to eat, how to travel, where and when to defecate, and from whom to accept food. It also contains lists of activities that should be avoided, such as attending weddings. These rules and recommendations for laypersons' occupations are meant to prevent harm to living beings. Mahavira even advised monks and nuns not to make gestures or points, as this could disturb or frighten animals, causing them to flee in fear of harm. As stated in Jain scriptures, "Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any creature or living being." Following this teaching, Jain monks are cautious while walking in their temples to avoid stepping on insects. Jain monks carry a brush while walking to gently sweep away insects from their path and avoid walking in the dark to prevent accidentally harming any living beings. They often cover their faces with clothes to prevent accidentally swallowing flies or other small creatures. They also strain drinking water to save any creatures that might be present.¹⁵⁹ **This deep respect for the natural world sets Jainism apart as potentially the most animal-friendly of the world's religions.**¹⁶⁰



¹⁵⁷ Christopher Key Chapple, "The Living Cosmos of Jainism: A Traditional Science Grounded in Environmental Ethics" 130(4) *Daedalus* 207 (2001)

¹⁵⁸ 55 Byjus Exam Prep, u.d. Jainism. <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/jainism>

¹⁵⁹ Susan L. Goodkin, "The Evolution of Animal Rights" 18 *Colum Hum Rts L Rev* 259 (1987)

¹⁶⁰ Christopher Key Chapple, "The Living Cosmos of Jainism: A Traditional Science Grounded in Environmental Ethics" 130(4) *Daedalus* 207 (2001)

The **Yogasastra of Hemacandra**, a Jain scripture, states, "Non-injury to all living beings is the only religion...this is the quintessence of wisdom; not to kill anything. All breathing, existing, living sentient creatures should not be slain, treated with violence, abused, tormented, or driven away. This is the pure, unchangeable law. Therefore, cease to injure living things. All living things love their life, desire pleasure and do not like pain; they dislike any injury to themselves; everybody is desirous of life, and to every being, his life is very dear."

The principle of ahimsa profoundly influences a Jain's life, prohibiting them from taking jobs that harm living beings. While Jains acknowledge that it is impossible to fully achieve the ideal of protecting all life forms, they strive to minimise unnecessary harm.

Centuries ago, Jains condemned the common practice of animal sacrifice to the gods as evil. It is generally forbidden to keep animals in captivity, to whip, mutilate, or overload them, or to deprive them of adequate food and drink. However, this instruction is modified concerning domestic animals to the extent that they may be roped or even whipped occasionally. Additionally, Jains emphasise protecting more developed beings, like humans, over less developed ones, such as animals and plants.¹⁶¹

Dietary Practices

The principle of nonviolence in Jainism also influences the adherents' diet;¹⁶² Jains follow a **lacto-vegetarian diet**, meaning they avoid meat, fish and eggs but consume dairy products like milk, cheese, and butter. They do not usually consume yoghurt or any food kept overnight, as microorganisms may have developed in both cases. Strict Jains also avoid root vegetables as the entire plant dies upon uprooting. Additionally, they avoid consuming vegetables that grow underground, such as potatoes, carrots, garlic, and onions. This is because harvesting these root vegetables would harm or kill the insects and worms living in the soil, which are believed to possess their souls. Onions and garlic are also avoided due to their classification as 'tamasic,' meaning they are considered to have the quality of darkness.¹⁶³

In 2021, the Pew Research Centre published its research on diet in the Jain community. Roughly nine in ten Indian Jains (92%) identify as vegetarian, and 157 of Jains (67%) abstain from root vegetables. More than eight in ten Jain vegetarians also say they would not eat food in the home of a non-vegetarian friend or neighbour (84%) or a restaurant serving non-vegetarian food (91%).¹⁶⁴

Animism and Sacredness of Life

Jains are animists. For them, everything natural is considered living, and all life is sacred. They believe in avoiding or minimising any harm to any form of life, even if it means limiting the taking of life for survival. Jains go as far as building refuges and rest houses for old and diseased animals, where they are kept and fed until they die a natural death. They place great value on the welfare of animals and the continued survival of individuals.¹⁶⁵ The Jain worldview is inseparable from the belief

¹⁶¹ Sam Woolfe, "Animal Ethics in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism" available at: <http://www.samwoolfe.com/2013/04/eastern-religious-views-on-animals.html>

¹⁶² [All About the Jain Diet: A Simple Guide to a Plant-Based and Non-Violent Lifestyle | Past and Present Diets \(pastandpresentdiets.com\)](https://pastandpresentdiets.com/)

¹⁶³ 61 Gautam Batra, 25.4.18. This Is Why Jains Don't Eat Onion and Garlic. The Reason Will Make You Respect Them. www.rvcj.com/this-is-why-jains-dont-eat-onion-and-garlic-the-reason-will-make-you-respect-them/

¹⁶⁴ K.J. Starr, 17/08/21. 6 Facts about Jains in India. Pew Research Center. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/17/6-facts-about-jains-in-india/

¹⁶⁵ E. Szűcs, R. Geers, et.al., "Animal Welfare in Different Human Cultures, Traditions and Religious Faiths" 25(11) Asian-Australas J Anim Sci 1499 (2012)

that the world is sentient and that the Earth can feel and respond to human presence. They believe that not only do animals have cognitive abilities such as memory and emotions, but everything around us, from the water we drink to the air we breathe, to the chair we sit on, to the light that enables us to see, all these entities perceive us through the sense of touch. However, we often take for granted their support and sustenance.¹⁶⁶

In Jainism, the concept of **jiv-daya** is connected to the principles of nonviolence and respect for all life forms. It transcends the mere avoidance of harm by embodying an active commitment to alleviating the suffering of all living beings, from humans to animals and even the smallest creatures, reflecting Jainism's belief in the interconnectedness of all life. This compassion is institutionalised within the religion, with jiv-daya recognised not only as a moral duty but also as a form of charity. In Jain temples and pilgrimage sites, donation boxes are dedicated to various causes. One is always earmarked for jiv-daya, supporting efforts like animal hospitals, shelters, and initiatives to prevent animal cruelty. In India, approximately 3,000 animal sanctuaries are known as **pinjrapoles**, most affiliated with the Jain community. These sanctuaries are predominantly found in Gujarat, a state in northwestern India with the highest concentration of Jains, who actively provide the funds and support needed to establish and sustain them.¹⁶⁷

Jains do not worship the cow as sacred, as many Hindus do. The cow is regarded as a being with all five senses and must be treated gently. **Hindus refuse to kill the sacred cow, while Jains uphold their principle of nonviolence, refusing to take any life.** There are also home shelters for unwanted cows, known as **gaushalas** (with **gau** meaning cow and **shala** meaning a place of protection). Jains may establish these cow shelters and sometimes collaborate in their management. However, these sanctuaries have faced criticism from animal welfare-oriented veterinary surgeons and some Western activists, particularly because sick and dying animals are not euthanised. Although a sick animal will receive care, it will not be euthanised. Outsiders may view this as unnecessary suffering, but for Jains, it is believed that the animal's karma dictates the timing of their death. In the meantime, the animal is cared for and made as comfortable as possible, reflecting the Jain commitment to compassion.

¹⁶⁶ Supra12

¹⁶⁷ 64 B. Evans, 2013. Ideologies of the Shri Meenakshi Goushala: Hindu and Jain motivations for a Madurai Cow Home. ASIA Network Exchange, 20:2,pp1–10



Animals Subjected to Farming Systems

Animal agriculture rears and confines animals in cramped, unnatural conditions, causing severe physical and psychological distress. The use of antibiotics, growth hormones, and other chemicals to maximise production further intensifies their suffering. Additionally, animal agriculture harms the environment, contributing to deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss by disrupting natural habitats and destabilising ecosystems.

Over generations, humans have selectively bred animals to make them more suitable for consumption. However, this manipulation has left domesticated animals less capable of surviving in the wild. Although humans have benefited, domestication through artificial selection has frequently compromised the well-being of animals.¹⁶⁸

The dairy industry, in particular, faces criticism for its mistreatment and exploitation of cows and buffaloes, where practices such as forced impregnation, the early separation of calves from their mothers, and the premature slaughter of animals are standard. The pressure for high milk yields is intense in commercial dairy farming. Around 75% of dairy farmers interviewed stated that if a cow's milk production drops by even 1 or 2 litres, the animal is deemed unprofitable and often sent to the slaughterhouse.¹⁶⁹ This highlights that the economic value of the animals often outweighs their welfare. This cycle of exploitation negatively affects the health and longevity of the animals and raises serious ethical concerns about their treatment.²¹² The frequent separation of calves from their mothers soon after birth, to prioritise milk extraction for human consumption, causes significant distress to both the mother and the calf, breaking their natural bond. In some cases, farmers use a

¹⁶⁸ [Is Artificially Selecting Animals For Consumption Ethical? - Animals & Society Institute \(animalsandsociety.org\)](https://www.animalsandsociety.org)

¹⁶⁹ [Two-year undercover study reveals cruel side of India's dairy industries - Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations \(fiapo.org\)](https://www.fiapo.org)

"khalbaccha"—a makeshift calf made by stuffing dead calves with hay or other materials—to deceive the mother into believing her calf is still present, encouraging her to continue lactating.

In contrast, Jain teachings emphasise nonviolence and the protection of all life forms. Jainism regards all living beings as inherently valuable and deserving of respect, making the suffering caused by animal agriculture a violation of its ethical principles, which prioritise compassion and the preservation of the natural course of life.

Some Jain movements now advocate for a shift towards veganism, promoting plant-based milk as an ethical alternative to dairy.¹⁷⁰ There is also growing recognition that organic milk is not a viable solution either, as dairy animals on organic farms are still slaughtered prematurely, and male calves are killed within days of birth.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Jains believe that every element of existence, air, water, plants, and animals, contains a living soul. Jainism's 24 Tirthankaras, or spiritual teachers, guided its adherents towards compassion and self-restraint; among them, Mahavira, the last Tirthankara, upheld the most rigorous code of conduct for nonviolence.

Jainism believes that causing injury to any being accumulates negative karma, binding one to the cycle of rebirth. It teaches that animals, like humans, possess souls and should be free from harm or exploitation.

Emphasis on compassion and respect for all forms of life, as well as the sanctity of existence, is central to the practice of ahimsa in Jainism. This philosophy promotes a strict vegetarian lifestyle among most Jains and calls for the careful avoidance of causing harm, even to the smallest creatures. However, animal farming deviates from Jainism's core principle of nonviolence.

¹⁷⁰ Plantshift, 20/05/14. Veganism in the Jain Community: Then and Now. <https://plantshift.com/blog/the-vegan-movement-in-the-jain-community>.

¹⁷¹ <https://animalequality.org/blog/2022/03/08/our-global-mission-to-expose-dairys-hidden-cruelty/> ²¹⁵ [Feeling the Heat: Factory Farming and Climate Change | ASPCA](#)

CHAPTER

3

Legal framework and animal welfare

Animal protection has been a fundamental aspect of India's cultural and religious heritage, with principles of compassion and nonviolence towards all living beings. These values have not only shaped spiritual practices but are also reflected in India's legal framework, which seeks to prevent cruelty and promote ethical treatment of animals.

Under the Constitution of India, various Articles have been incorporated to protect and preserve the rights of animals in India. For instance:

- Part III of the Indian Constitution enshrines **Fundamental Rights**, wherein **Article 21 guarantees the right to life, and the word 'life' refers not only to humans but also to all forms of life, meaning that animals have the right to live with dignity and equality**. The Supreme Court, in **Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja & Ors**¹⁷² (**Jallikattu Case**), extended the rights guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution to all living beings. The Supreme Court, in the said Jalikattu case, emphasised each animal's right to live with intrinsic worth, honour and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Part IV of the Constitution states **the Directive Principles of State Policy**, under which Article 48 directs the organisation of agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and for the preservation of breeds and prohibition on the unreasonable slaughtering of cows and calves and other milch and draught animals.¹⁷³ Moreover, Article 48A directs protecting and improving the environment and safeguarding forests and wildlife. It states that the state shall try to protect and safeguard the environment, the forest, and the wildlife.¹⁷⁴
- Part IVA of the Constitution declares the **Fundamental Duties** of every citizen of India, which imposes an obligation on the citizens through Article 51A (g) to protect and improve the natural environment, including wildlife and to remain compassionate towards animals.¹⁷⁵

Other Statutory Laws and Rules

Like many countries, India has a range of laws designed to protect animals. **India's Constitution, while not explicitly focused on animal rights, does emphasise the humane treatment of**

¹⁷² 7 (2014) 7 SCC 547

¹⁷³ The Constitution of India, Article 48

¹⁷⁴ The Constitution of India, Article 48

¹⁷⁵ The Constitution of India, Article 51 A (g)

animals.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (hereinafter referred to as the 'PCA Act') has been enacted to prevent unnecessary pain or suffering on animals and lays down responsibilities of the persons in charge of the animals to take all reasonable measures to ensure their well-being.¹⁷⁶ It allows the Animal Welfare Board of India to set up rules under the PCA Act to ensure that the welfare standards are met.¹⁷⁷

The **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** was enacted to protect and preserve wildlife animals and prevent the illegal trade and smuggling of wild animals. It also protects the endangered species of the planet. Section 9 of the Act prohibits hunting animals, as mentioned in Schedules I, II, III, and IV. It is important to note that this is not the sole Act enacted for the protection of wildlife; other wildlife protection legislation includes **The Wildlife (Transactions and Taxidermy) Rules, 1973; The Wildlife (Stock Declaration) Central Rules, 1973; The Wildlife (Protection) Licensing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 1983; The Wild Life (Protection) Rules, 1995.**¹⁷⁸

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Care and Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Rules, 2017, outline provisions for the custody and care of animals seized under the PCA Act, 1960, during ongoing litigation. These rules cover the cost of care, handling abandoned animals, and voluntary relinquishment. Rule 9 requires that any adoption follow state cattle protection laws, prohibiting religious sacrifice and restricting out-of-state sales without permission.¹⁷⁹

Cow slaughter has long been a contentious issue in India, both before and after independence, due to the cow's revered status among Hindus. Therefore, some states have enacted strict anti-cow slaughter laws. For example, in Gujarat, amendments have made cow slaughter punishable by life imprisonment, showcasing the profound influence of religion on these laws.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 was a significant step towards protecting animals. However, it has not kept pace with changing times. Violations under this act are classified as non-cognisable, bailable offences, meaning offenders typically escape with only a fine. The fine, set between Rs 50 and Rs 100, has not been updated in nearly six decades. In the context of (PCA)1960, the penalties are not severe enough to deter an offender, as evidenced by abysmal conviction rates.¹⁸⁰ Wildlife Crime Control Bureau's wildlife inspector, A. Madhivannan, said in 2019 that **the rate of conviction for crimes related to wildlife is as low as 2%**.

Animal Sacrifice and Its Influence on Legislation

Animal sacrifice has historically been, and continues to be, a significant aspect of certain religions like Hinduism and Islam. Muslims engage in animal slaughter as part of their religious traditions, following specific guidelines outlined in the Quran and Hadith. While animals are not solely for human use, they are considered subordinate to humans and may be used in specific religious contexts.¹⁸¹ The issue of animal sacrifice has been addressed by the courts, including several cases that reached the Supreme

¹⁷⁶ Section 3, PCA Act

¹⁷⁷ Section 4, PCA Act.

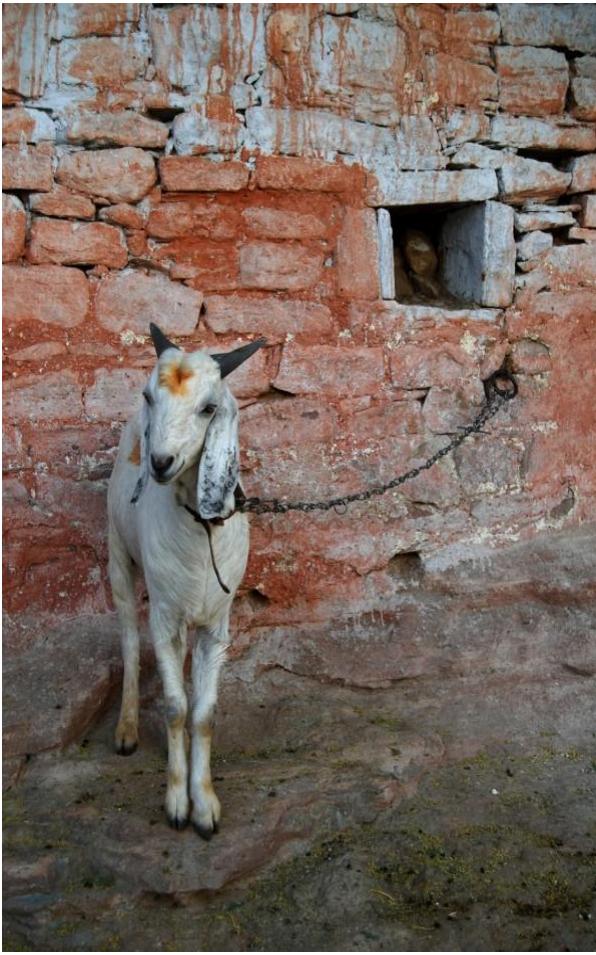
¹⁷⁸ <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/articles/wlife.htm>

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Notification, New Delhi, May 23, 2017

¹⁸⁰ Cruelty to animals: Low conviction numbers, meagre fines to blame | Hindustan Times ; Why some can get away with throwing dogs from roofs | Explained News, The Indian Express

¹⁸¹ Paul Waldau, "Religion and Animals" in Peter Singer (ed.), In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave (WileyBlackwell, 2006)

Court.



In Hinduism, the concept of "Bali" involves animal sacrifices to please the gods. This practice is observed during various festivals in India and Nepal, with a significant Hindu population. Gadhima is a Hindu festival known as the world's largest animal sacrifice event in Bariyapur, Nepal, near the Indian border. In 2009, over 250,000 animals were sacrificed during the festival, which takes place every five years to honour Gadhima, the Hindu goddess of power.¹⁸² In 2014, after widespread reports of cattle being illegally smuggled from India into Nepal to be slaughtered during the festival, India's Ministry of Home Affairs directed its border patrol troops to stop people transporting cattle to the festival and prevent them from crossing the border. This directive was bolstered later when the Supreme Court, in response to a petition filed by animal rights groups, ordered the Indian government to ensure that no animals were exported to Nepal from India without a license.¹⁸³

There are other festivals, like the one involving throwing sheep from hills during the procession of the deity Mailaralingeshwar at Yadgir in north Karnataka. The

tradition in Yadgir consists of a belief among the shepherd community that sacrificing a sheep by hurling it from great heights at the deity would protect their entire flock. It is practised despite a ban on the tradition four years ago.¹⁸⁴ A landmark judgment of the Himachal Pradesh High Court dealing with animal sacrifice has been discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter.

Animal sacrifices in India are regulated by various laws, including the local **Municipal Corporation Acts, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960, the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, and the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) 2023**. Additionally, the Prohibition of Bird and Animal Sacrifice Act bans these practices in states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondicherry, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. In August 2003, invoking the **Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1950**, the Tamil Nadu government banned animal and bird sacrifice in temples throughout the state.¹⁸⁵ However, whether it was implemented correctly remains a question.

Municipal laws also prohibit animal slaughter within the corporation areas unless done in licensed slaughterhouses. Since temples and streets are unlicensed, animal sacrifices there are illegal.

Animal sacrifice in the country involves a variety of species, including goats, buffaloes, chickens, camels, deer, and owls. This practice – depending on the community performing it –

¹⁸² Olivia Lang, "Hindu sacrifice of 250,000 animals begins", available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/24/hindu-sacrifice-gadhima-festival-nepal>

¹⁸³ Atish Patel, "Smuggling a Sacrifice: Hindu Ritual Animal Slaughter Hit by Border Rules" available at: <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2014/12/02/smuggling-a-sacrifice-hindu-ritual-animal-slaughter-hit-by-newborder-rules>

¹⁸⁴ Ravikumar Naraboli, "Sheep hurled from hill at Yadgir temple ritual" The Hindu, Jan. 16, 2017.

¹⁸⁵ M.S.S. Pandian, "Dilemmas of Public Reason: Secularism and Religious Violence in Contemporary India" 40(22) Econ Polit Wkly 2313 (2005)

includes beheading, slitting animals' throats, attacking them with sharp instruments, tearing them apart, and other often cruel means. The use of wild animals for religious sacrifice violates the provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2022**, which protects most indigenous wild species from hunting and capture.¹⁸⁶

However, PETA India has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting that **Section 28** of The PCA Act, 1960 – which allows any animal to be killed in any manner for religious purposes – be deleted. The central government is currently amending the Act, and in April 2021, PETA **submitted its recommendations** – including a ban on animal sacrifice – to the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI). The exemption given for animal sacrifice goes against the very purpose of the PCA Act, as it causes unnecessary pain and suffering to animals.

PETA India has also sent out another round of letters to the Directors General of Police of all state governments and Union Territories, and the AWBI have issued another **advisory** to states, urging them to take precautionary measures to stop illegal practices in the transport and killing of animals in the lead-up to Eid al-Adha.

Captive Elephants, Religion, and Legislation



Elephants have long been associated with religious beliefs and practices, and were considered a status symbol of a wealthy owner.¹⁸⁷ As per Hindu mythology, elephants took birth from celestial waters and thus are closely associated with rain/water because of this belief.¹⁸⁸ The issue of captive elephants lies at the interface of animal welfare laws, wildlife laws and freedom of religion in India. In certain parts of India, they are held captive in temples for religious purposes.

The Dussehra celebrations in Mysore in Karnataka, involving the display of elephants, are internationally renowned. At the same time, there have constantly been allegations that injured elephants are paraded during the famous Thrissur Pooram festival in Kerala. The Supreme Court, in an order issued on August 18, 2015, specifically authorised the Kerala State Forest Department to seize all elephants paraded without any valid ownership certificate issued by the Kerala Chief Wildlife Warden before October 18, 2003; however, this has not been put into practice. Seventy-eight incidents

have occurred where elephants being paraded at religious festivals have run amok and caused damage to life and property.¹⁸⁹ Twenty-six acts have been enumerated which are tantamount to cruelty to elephants and are prohibited.¹⁹⁰ The Guidelines for Care and Management of Captive

¹⁸⁶ [Help Amend the Law to End Animal Sacrifice | PETA India](#)

¹⁸⁷ Fanindra R. Kharel Misra, "The challenge of managing domesticated Asian elephants in Nepal" in Iljas Baker and Masakazu Kashio (eds.), *Giants on our Hands: Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Domesticated Asian Elephant* 103 (FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2002).

¹⁸⁸ Project Elephant, Ministry of Environment & Forests, available at: <http://www.moef.nic.in/division/introduction-4>

¹⁸⁹ Staff Reporter, "Panic spreads as elephants run amok" *The Hindu*, Apr. 03, 2017

¹⁹⁰ Guidelines for Care and Management of Captive Elephants, Ministry of Environment & Forests – Project Elephant, No 9-5/2003-PE, available at: <http://moef.nic.in/pe/2.pdf>

Elephants, under Ministry of Environment & Forests, prohibit marching an elephant over tarred roads or otherwise, during the hottest period of the day and for a long duration at a stretch without rest for religious or any other purpose and making the elephant to stand in the scorching sun for long duration, or put the ceremonial gears or decoration for unreasonably long duration, or burst crackers from or near the elephants for ceremonial purpose.¹⁹¹

The Karnataka Government prohibits the sale, offering and donation of captive elephants to temples, mutts and religious institutions. The report also acknowledges that elephants are social animals, and many elephants in temples and religious institutions in Karnataka live solitarily and do not get the opportunity to interact with other elephants, causing psychological disorders.¹⁹²

On March 1, 2008, in concurrence with the Revenue and Home departments, the Forest and Wildlife Department of the Government of Kerala issued instructions for preventing cruelty to the elephants kept in captivity.¹⁹³ Instruction 2.3 of another circular¹⁹⁴ issued by the Revenue Department of the Government of Kerala provides that during the time of procession, elephants shall have chains tied to their legs. The Additional Chief Secretary of the Revenue (Devaswom) Department of Kerala issued directives restricting the use of elephants at temple festivals, limiting them to existing traditional Pooram festivals and prohibiting new festivals from including elephants.¹⁹⁵

Case Studies of Legal Intervention Concerning Animal Sacrifice

- a) In **Ramesh Sharma v. State of Himachal Pradesh (2014)**, the Himachal Pradesh High Court banned animal sacrifices in places of public religious worship. The court ruled that no person shall sacrifice any animal in any place of public religious worship or assist in such sacrifices.¹⁹⁶
- b) In the case of **Mohd Hanif Qureshi and others v. State of Bihar**, the petitioners worked as butchers, a practice that had been part of their norms for generations; their source of income was through cattle slaughter. However, the Hindu religion, being in the majority, forbids them to practice the slaughter of cows, which is considered sacred in the Hindu religion. Therefore, in 1958, the petitioner claimed that the laws of the state for animals infringed on his fundamental right by not allowing cattle slaughter. The Supreme Court, which consisted of Justice S.K. Das and Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar, held that there is some exception in the slaughter of cows, as it states that buffalo above the age of 13 can be used for slaughter after showing a certificate from a particular authority. However, the court denied the petitioner's argument, which had stated that the sacrifice of a cow is necessary in the name of religious practice. The court also held that Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution of India, which guarantees the freedom of trade and occupation, may have limitations imposed in the interest of the public.¹⁹⁷
- c) In 2019, the **High Court of Tripura banned religious sacrifice in all temples situated**

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Report of the Karnataka Elephant Task Force, Submitted to the High Court of Karnataka, September, 2012, available at: <http://envfor.nic.in/assets/wl-01112012.pdf>

¹⁹³ Vide Circular No. 19689/E2/2007/F&WLD, available at: <http://forest.kerala.gov.in/images/ce/ce8.pdf> (last visited on October 28, 2016).

¹⁹⁴ Circular No. 27401/G2/07/RD, dated June 06, 2007

¹⁹⁵ No. – 35346\Dev 2\08\RD, dated June 23, 2008

¹⁹⁶ [India: High Court of Himachal Pradesh Bans All Religious Forms of Animal Sacrifice in the State | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

¹⁹⁷ [Mohd. Hanif Qureshi & Others vs The State Of Bihar\(And Connected ... on 23 April, 1958 \(indiankanoon.org\)](#)

in Tripura.¹⁹⁸ Justice Karol opined that the state has to bring necessary reforms in society.¹⁹⁹ He also stated that instead of practising such traditions, the state should enforce laws banning the slaughtering of animals in temples as it is against public order, morality and health, which forms a reasonable restriction under Article 25 (1).²⁰⁰

Gaps in Animal Protection Laws and Regulations

The current legal framework often treats animals as property rather than recognising them as sentient beings with inherent rights. This limits their legal protections and can effectively undermine efforts to enforce animal welfare laws. The existing legislation often focuses on specific forms of animal abuse, such as animal fighting or neglect. Some contend that the current legal framework considers animals as holders of legally significant interests who are fundamentally valued, yet these rights are, at best, tenuous and unsatisfactory.²⁰¹

Implementing the various laws for animal protection and welfare can be challenging and complex, particularly when they intersect with religious practices. While the BNS provisions related to animals are not as extensive as those in the other laws, they still offer crucial legal protections against violence or animal harm. However, **the use of animals for religious sacrifices, entertainment, and other activities that involve cruelty raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing laws.** It would be important for such practices to be explicitly prohibited and punishable under the law. Additionally, thorough investigations by the Animal Welfare Board, government agencies, courts, and NGOs are essential to ensure accountability in these matters. Such steps will reflect the principle of coexisting peacefully with animals.²⁰²

Laws such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Wildlife Protection Act, along with other key legislations, lay the groundwork for ensuring the humane treatment of animals while accommodating religious and cultural practices involving animals. The intersection of these laws with religious customs in India creates distinct challenges and complexities. Although the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act offers a broad framework for animal protection, its application in matters involving religious practices demands careful interpretation and thoughtful enforcement. **Balancing respect for religious beliefs with the need to prevent cruelty to animals is a complex issue that necessitates a nuanced approach by lawmakers, enforcers, and the judiciary.**

¹⁹⁸ Tripura HC bans animal sacrifice in all Tripura temples' (India Today, 28 September 2019)

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/tripura-hc-bans-animal-sacrifice-in-all-tripura-temples-1604085-2019-09-28>

¹⁹⁹ Dhananjay Mahapatra, 'Tripura HC bans state-sponsored goat sacrifice at Tripureswari temple', (Times Of India 28 September 28 2019)

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ [Towards a Theory of Legal Animal Rights: Simple and Fundamental Rights | Oxford Journal of Legal Studies | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

²⁰² 41 Animal Welfare Laws: A Critical Analysis (lexsyndicate.com)

CHAPTER

4

Interfaith perspective on animal welfare

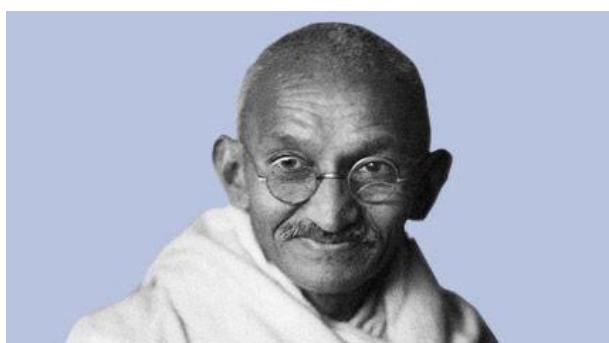
Credit: vivekananda.live



Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), speaking in Jaffna in 1897, said: "In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul but in the manifestation. **Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle, he is the same as I am, he is my brother, and he has the same soul as I have.** This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants — all these are our bodies".²⁰³

On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo explained: "Life is life – whether in a cat, or dog or man. There is no difference between a cat or a man. The idea of difference is a human conception for man's own advantage."²⁰⁴

Credit: firstpost.com



Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) is often considered one of the greatest teachers of the essence of Hinduism, with the term Ahimsa closely associated with him due to his firm commitment to the principle of nonviolence. He applied this principle to every facet of his life, including politics, campaigning, and his interactions with animals, grounding it firmly in the teachings of Hinduism's sacred

²⁰³ Swami Vivekananda, 1896. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 3. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram

²⁰⁴ Supreme Master TV, 20/09/20. Sri Aurobindo (vegetarian): Integral Yoga for Divine Awakening. <https://tinyurl.com/3bk6b4wp>

texts. Gandhi's theory is wonderfully summed up by Nibedita Priyadarshini Jena: Mahatma Gandhi's profound theory of Ahimsa takes into account both human beings and animals. His fundamental thought on protecting animals is the outcome of a cluster of theories, including the nonviolence of Jainism, the teachings of the *Gitā*, *Sāṅkhya*, Christianity, and Tolstoy.

He suggests that nonviolence does not merely imply non-hurting in thought and deed but that it entails an extension of love and compassion ... Gandhi demands protection of their lives (rights) and enhancement of their welfare.²⁰⁵ In his autobiography, Gandhi spends much time on the issue of food. He wrote: "To my mind, the life of a lamb is not less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body. I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from man's cruelty."²⁰⁶

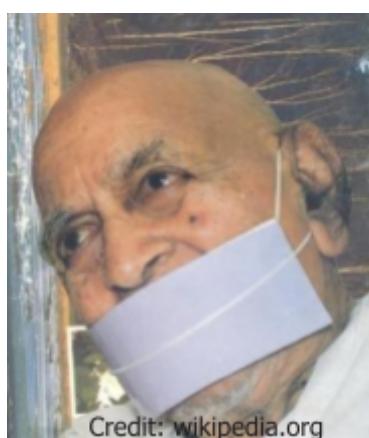


The **Dalai Lama** says, "Killing animals for sport, for pleasure, for adventure, and hides and furs is a phenomenon which is at once disgusting and distressing. There is no justification in indulging in such acts of brutality." ... He also observes, "Life is as dear to a mute creature as it is to man. Just as one wants happiness and fears pain, just as one wants to live and not die, so do other creatures."

Buddhist teacher **Thích Nhất Hạnh** says that compassion is an energy that empowers us. "Compassion is very mighty and powerful" He also declares in the first of his Five Mindfulness Trainings: "Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking and in my way of life."²⁰⁷



Credit: lionsroar.com



Credit: wikipedia.org

Acharya Tulsi (20 October 1914 – 23 June 1997) was a prominent Jain religious leader, and was the founder of the Anuvrata movement and the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun, and the author of over one hundred books. He stated, "The essence of Jainism is nonviolence, and not just towards humans, but towards all living beings."

²⁰⁵ Nibedita Priyadarshini Jena, 2018. Gandhi's perspective on non-violence and animals: Ethical theory and moral practice. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 13:3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2018.1425216>.

²⁰⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, 1949. *Gandhi: An Autobiography*. London: Jonathan Cape. First published 1927

²⁰⁷ T.N. Hanh, 2005. *Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Pres

CHAPTER

5

Insights from Religious Leaders on Ethical Animal Values and Environmental Concerns in India

This chapter presents the insights of prominent spiritual leaders from Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Sikhism, as shared in conversations with Samayu. Their voices reflect a shared concern: humanity has drifted from its ethical and spiritual duties, causing suffering to animals and harm to nature. Each tradition, in its unique way, calls for compassion, balance, and responsibility to restore harmony between humans, animals, and the environment.

Interaction with Late Swami Raghavanand Ji Maharaj, Ram Rai Udasin Aashram, New Delhi

A Hindu spiritual guru, Swami Raghavanand Ji Maharaj, emphasised that human beings have deviated from their spiritual and natural responsibilities, prioritising material wealth over the ethical and spiritual principles taught by ancient texts. According to Guruji, life today has become consumption-focused, disregarding divine respect and the natural world. This misalignment, driven by factory farming and environmental degradation, disrupts the delicate balance of nature, causing issues like pollution, droughts, and extreme weather. Guruji advocates a return to traditional teachings and values, such as those found in Gurukul education, where spiritual and practical knowledge coexist. He stresses that understanding scriptures and nature's laws, and respecting all living beings can guide humanity towards harmony. He also emphasises the principle "Dharma Rakshati Rakshitah" (धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः), which denotes that Dharma protects those who protect it. This principle reminds us to safeguard natural resources such as the environment, water, and trees, which will, in turn, sustain humanity.

Acharya Shri Shruti Sagar Ji Muniraj, Kund Kund Bharti, New Delhi

Acharya Shri Shrutsagar Ji Muniraj, born on June 1, 1969, embraced monkhood in 1988 and was initiated as Acharya in 2014, guided by Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji. From Kund Kund Bharti, New Delhi, he inspires through Jain principles that prohibit violence, emphasising that every living being deserves a stress-free life, free from fear, harm, and exploitation. According to him, in Jain scriptures, killing, binding, piercing, or overloading any living being is strictly prohibited. Taking the life of any being without necessity is considered violence. "Every living being has the right to live a stress-free life. Animals should not be subjected to a life of suffering for commercial purposes. In principle, this

should be stopped. As long as animals are alive, they should be free from fear and stress! According to Jainism, there are 10 types of life forces (pranas), including the five sensory life forces, mental strength, spiritual strength, physical strength, lifespan, and breathing. Any being possessing these 10 life forces should not be harmed, and based on these 10 life forces, we can determine what is living and what is non-living. We believe in the principle of "live and let live." This principle is also reflected in our eating habits, where we practice restraint and moderation. Today, India's eating habits are not changing but deteriorating. While the world adopts vegetarianism and veganism, India needs to raise awareness about its food habits, Acharya opines.

Ven. P Seewalee Thero, Chief Monk & General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society of India

According to Ven. P Seewalee Thero, Chief monk & General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society of India, Buddhism begins and ends with the principle of Ahimsa, as reflected in the first of the Five Precepts: "I take the precept to abstain from destroying living beings." The Buddha emphasised compassion as the foundation of nonviolence, teaching in the *Dhammapada* that all beings fear pain and value life, so one should neither harm nor cause harm. An actual noble person (Ariya) is defined not by harming but by harmlessness, while those who destroy life, whether bird, animal, fish, or insect, are deemed outcasts, as explained in the *Vasala Sutta*. Practices like the *Vassa-Vass* (Rainy Retreat) further highlight this compassion, as monks limit travel during the rainy season to avoid harming tiny living beings active on the ground.

Mr. Matthew A. King, Christian Animal Rights Association, USA

According to Matthew A. King, the Bible's teachings clearly show that God's original design was a compassionate, plant-based way of life where humans were called to exercise stewardship, not exploitation, over animals. While meat was later permitted as a concession, factory farming with its cruelty and neglect directly contradicts Christian principles of kindness, justice, and respect for creation. The symbolism of animals in Scripture, where God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are likened to creatures such as the eagle, lamb, and dove, reveals their inherent dignity and divine purpose. King believes that to restore this vision, churches and religious organisations can play a key role by preaching more about God's care for animals, holding blessings and meat-free events, and teaching children and congregations compassion towards animals. King's framework of "New Earth Abolition" emphasises equality, servanthood, and peaceful coexistence with animals, reflecting both the Edenic past and the promised New Earth. Ultimately, he believes that changing hardened human hearts, encouraging vegan or alternative diets, and teaching biblical values in schools and places of worship are essential steps to bridge the gap between ancient compassion and today's industrialised practices.

Dharam Prachar Vibhag, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee.

According to Dharma Parchar Vibhag, Delhi Sikh gurdwara management committee, Sikhism emphasises compassion, kindness, and nonviolence towards all living beings, including animals. It condemns unnecessary cruelty and exploitation but allows the use of animals for survival with care and responsibility. The faith teaches that mercy is the highest virtue, guiding humans to live with

moral values and humanity. Sikhism also acknowledges both physical and spiritual death, stressing that good deeds in this life help one attain true spiritual living.

Conclusion

The interviews conducted with various religious leaders unveil an understanding that transcends individual beliefs, resonating with a universal theme of compassion, nonviolence, and a harmonious relationship with the natural world. Regardless of their distinct practices and traditions, these faith leaders converge on the essential principle that safeguarding all forms of life, human, animal, and the environment, is fundamental to a spiritually enriched existence. Their diverse yet unified perspectives serve as a beacon of hope, illuminating pathways towards a more compassionate and sustainable future for generations to come.

Conclusion on Animals and Religions in India

In India, religious teachings across faiths have traditionally emphasised the humane treatment of animals. Ancient scriptures from Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, and Christianity promote compassion, respect, and a sense of coexistence with all living beings. These faiths historically viewed animals not as mere resources but as sentient beings with intrinsic value. The principles of nonviolence in Hinduism and Jainism, along with the broader values of compassion in Buddhism and Sikhism, have shaped ancient practices calling for harmony with animals. In Islam, kindness towards animals is emphasised in the Qur'an and the Hadith. There are Islamic teachings of ethical treatment of animals, with the Prophet Muhammad known for instructing followers to treat animals with mercy. Similarly, Christianity's Bible contains passages that call for kindness and care towards animals, emphasising stewardship of God's creation.

Despite the dominating presence of compassion-driven principles, animals endure immense pain as part of religious practices, such as animal sacrifice, capturing elephants in temples, and so on. Such acts are not only a legal failure but also a departure from the values of compassion, respect, and stewardship.

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our profound gratitude to the esteemed reviewer for their meticulous review and thoughtful critique of this report. Their scholarly insights, rigorous analysis, and detailed feedback have been instrumental in refining the content and strengthening the overall quality of the report. We are deeply appreciative of their time, expertise, and commitment to excellence.

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4	Buddhism	Ven. P. Seewalee Thero	General Secretary, Maha Bodhi Society of India, Kolkata
5	Islam	Mufti Mohd Adil Al-Maturidi Al-Azhari	Faculty of Philosophy Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt
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