

## GAU MATA: The Commodification of Cultural Iconography

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### ABSTRACT

In India, the Cow is more than simply an animal. A cow is entwined with religion, history, culture, and politics in the current setting. The animal is given qualities of kindness, materialism, purity, wealth, prestige, and power in Hindu mythology. As a result, the Cow is known as “Gau Mata” and is venerated, deified, and worshipped as such. For the majority of Hindus, its iconography is an old tradition. On the other hand, if the Cow is killed for its flesh and its byproducts, the bounds of religious symbolism stop at the borders of ethnic minorities. In order to contextualize this duality, this study examines the Cow’s dual selves. The “thing theory” may de-idealize signs and symbols by stripping them of their semiotic meaning and reconfiguring them as the “things” they really are. This would recover their materiality, transform them into objects, and reimagine their cultural creations. Materiality creates new ways of thinking by stripping things of their cultural iconography and reintroducing them to the spatiotemporal reality of objectively deriving meaning from both living and inanimate elements. In order to open up possibilities for reinterpreting the depiction of cultural iconography via literature, the current study makes further applications of the idea that objects may regain their identities from connotation, iconization and meaning. The two short tales that were selected as starting points for the debate show how the authors saw the Cow as having both socio-cultural and religious importance. This essay will thoroughly explore “Cow and Company” by Parashar Kulkarni, a 2016 Commonwealth Short Story Prize winner, and “The Cow of the Barricades” by Raja Rao, both works rich in religious and socio-cultural symbolism that elevate Cow from the animal realm into sacred imagery. When the animals in both tales are devoid of their sacred connotations in order to be translated

into tangible items, it shatters the notion of religion-cultural symbolism. Thus, the postulates of thing theory are justified by the commercialization of cultural imagery. This essay also makes an effort to go beyond the interpretation of these literary works to contemporary issues with the Hindutva Brigade's militancy and their meta-religiousness in protecting "Gau Mata" from butcher shops and the tables of both wealthy and impoverished ethnic minorities. The Cow's status as a "thing," a tangible item, contradicts its iconization and encourages its monetization. In light of the very unsettling threat of ethnic cleansing in India's highly diverse cultural landscape, this essay will analyze the cultural materialism of the Cow and provide a forum for the discussion of commercialism vs materialism. Two literary works were selected to explore thing theory and are also suitable for a critical assessment of current affairs. I'll make an effort to comprehend the current trend of cultural appropriation and the rising importance of violence in the Hindutva goal of "reclaiming" a "pure" culture in India through the recent campaign of "cow protection" by Gau Rakshaks, a self-created group of devotees. A criticism of veganism as a corollary to the process of returning the Cow from iconography to its material attributes serves as another point of start for this essay. This study aims to give a distinct perspective on the "thingification" of the Cow and contribute to the increasing body of knowledge in thing theory.

**Keywords:** Cow, Thing Theory, Commodification

## INTRODUCTION

"Thing" is a word quite commonly used in everyday layman language conversations. It is used for both a vague or real entity, indicating what is sure but not clear. Various connotations are attached to it. For example, if a glass filled with water is there, it is an object, a thing to quench thirst, but if the same glass is given by a mother to her child, it becomes a 'Thing' which, along with water, has motherly love and warmth attached to it. Thing is closely related to concepts like materialism and objecthood since it

relates to the world, something non-human, and the non-subjective. The Cow is a simple animal. Though the Cow is an animate living being, in this paper, it will be used as a commodity and a **thing**. The Cow is a **thing**, not an idea, but it has been ideated in religion. The Cow has lost its materiality. It has thereby lost its kinesthetic property, that of belonging to the animal kingdom in the realm of iconography. In order to grasp reality, various connotations are assigned to the Cow. According to '*The Origin of the Work of Art*' by Heidegger, being is a dynamic process in which a subject and an object are hardly distinguishable from one another. In other words, "Being is used to bridge a gap between an object and a subject. Or rather, in the light of 'being', there has never been a separation between the two".

On similar lines, the distinction between phenomena and noumena can be traced to Plato. The **Cow** has metamorphosed from a *phenomenon* (a simple animal) to a *noumenon* (Gau Mata). The simple animal has been venerated in various cultures of the world. The Cow is revered in most of the major religions of the world.

Similar ideas were believed by people in ancient Egypt, ancient Israel, ancient Greece, ancient Germany and ancient Rome. Because it was holy and linked with the ancient Egyptian goddess Hathor, who symbolized the ideals of feminine love, joy, and motherhood, the Cow was not sacrificed by the ancient Egyptians. However, they sacrificed another animal<sup>i</sup> and hence owing to a contemporary Greek myth of Io, who had a cow formed<sup>ii</sup> "Auðumbla" (also spelt *Auðhumla*, *Auðhumbla*, and *Auðumla*) is a primaeval cow which appeared in the Norse mythology. Cattle are revered in several major global religions, including Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and others. Animals may not be killed for food or for sacrifice in the religion of Jainism. In Zoroastrianism, Zarathustra is instructed to safeguard the Cow by Ahura Mazda, the creator and deity of Zoroastrians.<sup>iii</sup>

The roots of Bill Brown's **Thing Theory** can be traced to Aristotle's 'Hylomorphism'<sup>iv</sup>. This philosophical theory conceives of being as a compound of matter and form. The Cow occupies

matter and space and is an **object**, but when cultural ethos is attached to it, the transformation of the object to a **thing** takes place, the ‘thingness’ of the object cow takes place, and because of its usefulness, the commodification of the Cow takes place. The **Thing Theory** is a critical theory which focuses on human-object interaction. In this paper, I will attempt to apply the **Thing Theory** of Bill Brown, where in the socio-cultural milieu, the Cow has been objectified.

**Kamdhenu:** Kamdhenu is a divine bovine Goddess<sup>v</sup>; she emerged from the cosmic ocean by the demons and the gods to acquire the *Amrita* (elixir of life)<sup>vi</sup>, as is recorded in *The Mahabharata*. Hindus believe in Paganism, everything living or non-living, human or animal, tree or river, is considered the incarnation of God. Some objects from nature which are necessary for the completion of any rituals are Tulsi patr, Bel Patra, Lotus flower, Durva and Cow, Bull, Sawn, Peacock and mouse, to name a few which emphasize the importance of flora and fauna in the Hindu religion. Kamdhenu is a celestial and revered being. She is portrayed in Hindu iconography as a white cow with many gods housed within her body. Hinduism reveres all cows as the earthly manifestation of Kamdhenu. Indologist Madeleine Biardeau claims that Kamadhenu is the collective term for the sacred Cow, which is revered in Hinduism as the source of all wealth.<sup>vii</sup> Kamadhenu was described by Frederick M. Smith as an “enduring and popular image in Indian art”.<sup>viii</sup> Her shoulders are the fire deity Agni and the wind god Vayu, her four legs represent the Himalayas and the scriptural Vedas, and her horns are the triune gods Brahma (point), Shiva (base) and Vishnu (middle); her eyes are the sun and moon gods. This is how Kamadhenu is often portrayed in poster art<sup>ix</sup>. In the image, she also represents the Panch Bhuta (the five classical elements).

Jamadagni is one of the Saptarishis in Hindu mythology. He is the biological father of Parashurama, Vishnu’s sixth manifestation. The Haihaya King Kartavirya Arjun, who was said to have a thousand arms or hands, paid Jamadagni a visit and was

fed by him using the heavenly Cow Kamdhenu. The king offered Jamadagni money in exchange for the animal, but he declined. Then the king snatched the Kamdhenu by force, pleading with Jamadagni to get it back, if at all possible, but only via the use of arms, which Jamadagni was unwilling to do. Knowing this and being furious, Monarch Kartavirya Arjuna was assassinated by Parashurama, who also massacred the whole army of the king to reclaim the Kamdhenu.

The whole myth goes beyond timelines and evolves significance beyond timelines. The relationship between sage and Cow and King and Cow is diverse and fulfils their own ulterior motive. The sage revered the Cow, and he got her blessings, but the greedy king thought the Cow was a Thing which would provide him with all the luxuries which led to his death.

Lord Krishna is sometimes referred to as Govinda, the flute-playing cow-pleaser. Krishna is known to be closest to cows and is always portrayed together. In the spiritual realm, Krishna's original form is that of a cowherd in the farming town of Goloka ("cow planet") Vrindavan, where he maintains an endless number of transcendental *Surabhi* cows. Krishna goes to earth carrying a duplicate of Vrindavan, where he spends his youth playing with his companions in the pastures and caring for the cows and calves. His image highlights the significance of cows to human civilization, the advantages of caring for them on a practical level, and the benefits of an agricultural economy built on mutual collaboration between humans and cows. One of the reasons why people will suffer in the Kalyug (the contemporary age) is because they will become self-centred and will not care for **Gau Mata<sup>x</sup>** and use her as a commodity.

Kamadhenu is referred to twice as *Kamadhuk* in the Bhagavad Gita, a discourse given by the Hindu deity Krishna in the Mahabharata. Krishna mentions Kamadhuk in verse 3.10 when he says that if one does their job, they will get the milk of their desires. When Krishna addresses the origin of the cosmos in verse 10.28, he states that he is Kamadhuk among cows.<sup>xi</sup> Kamadhenu

statues may be seen in certain temples and homes, and they are also worshipped.<sup>xii</sup>

She does not, however, have any temples where she is worshipped as the main deity and has never had a worship cult devoted just to her.<sup>xiii</sup> In Monier-Williams's words: "It is rather the living animal [the cow] which is the perpetual object of adoratio (Placeholder1)n".<sup>xiv</sup> Outside of temples, cows are often fed, and they are routinely honoured on Fridays and on other occasions. Every Cow is seen as an Avatar (earthly incarnation) of the heavenly Kamadhenu by a "*pious Hindu*."<sup>xv</sup>

The importance of Cattle is mentioned in Rig Veda, numerous hymns that refer to 10,000 or more cattle mention cattle as one of the significant animals.<sup>xvi, xvii</sup>

The Sarasvati region had an abundance of milk and clarified butter (ghee), according to Rig Veda 7.95.2 and other verses (such as 8.21.18), suggesting that cattle were herded during that time. The name of Rig Vedas 6.28 is Cows. Cow safety is the subject of Text 3. In contrast to river deities, cows are commonly used as emblems of prosperity in the Rig Veda. For example, in 3.33.1 cd. "Like two bright mother cows who lick their young, Vipas and Sutudri speed down their waters."

- Indian mythology is replete with the symbolic sacramental significance of the sacred Cow that has made a considerable impact on the popular imagination. *Gau* is a common Hindi word for Cow, cognates with Latin *bos*, and English *Cow*, as from PIE language (Proto-Indo-European) it conjugates to become *\*gwous*. A Sanskrit phrase used for cattle is *paśu*, from *\*peku* in PIE. Other words are *uks* ox and *dhenu* cow. *Aghnyav*<sup>xviii (xi15&16)</sup> is the word used for milk cows, "that which may not be slaughtered" in Rig-Veda. The significance of the Cow dates back to Vedic culture. The word 'Gau'<sup>xix</sup> has 16 meanings and connotations in Sanskrit *Mother, Cattle, Star, Sky, A ray of Light, Diamond, Arrow, Cow, The Goddess of Speech, Eye, Earth, Bull, an organ of sense, the hair of the body, the Sun and the moon*<sup>xx</sup>

- In **Vedic** hymns of the Yajurveda period, (gosuktam from atharveveda) the Cow is known to be devoted to the welfare of the world, during which period the Vedic Rishi Monier Williams expressed the wish of milking cow and ploughing the field with the help of a bull. It is noteworthy here that Cow and Bull are the most helpful driving forces in Indian culture, especially during Vedic civilization.

‘आ ब्रह्मन्, ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायतामा रा’<sup>१</sup> त्रे राजन्यः ‘तूर इ’<sup>२</sup> व्योऽतिव्याधि महारथो जायतां, **दोग्ध्री धेनुर्वाढानङ्वान्..... ।**’ यजुर्वेद २२.२२ <sup>गगप</sup>

The only tamed animal present when the Aryans arrived in India was the Cow. Cows were considered as ‘Godhan’-Wealth of the Aryans. Those who possessed this wealth were considered to be rich, and it was also considered a status symbol in the era of Vedic Aryans. Cows were the true communal blessings during the Vedic era. Cows have given humans milk since the Vedic era, which produced yoghurt and butter. The skin of the deceased Cow was used to create garments and shelters. The Cow served society in numerous ways throughout the Vedic era. The **Cow** was revered with devotion. Since ancient times, the cows were looked upon with traits of purity, gentleness, motherhood, and prosperity. As a result, the Cow is venerated, deified, and worshipped as Gau Mata. The Cows were revered as **mothers**; in Indian culture, they were not considered a commodity, providing us with useful by products. Yet, in today’s scenario, the role has been reversed, and Gau Mata is treated as a commodity.

The Cow is a representation of money, power, prosperity, and selflessness in Hinduism—all characteristics of fully materialistic existence. There are a variety of ideas about cattle throughout communities and faiths because of the many advantages that cattle provide. The killing of cattle and the consumption of their flesh may be outlawed in certain areas, particularly in Nepal and the majority of the states of India. Hinduism is predicated on the idea of the Divine’s omnipresence and the existence of a soul in all living things, including cattle.

Therefore, murdering an animal is seen as sinful according to that definition.

The Cow has always been an integral part of the cultural milieu of Hindu families and is also very vital in the socio-economic aspect. In traditional Hindu families, the family members do not eat first but offer the first morsel to the revered Cow. The Cow is worshipped from time immemorial. Any Hindu celebration is incomplete without Gau Mata, Wasubaras before Diwali, Pola (Bulls are revered), Bali- Pratipada, and Gokul Ashtami. Even the cow dung is important and considered auspicious. In rural areas, it is used for layering on the floors and the walls before decorating with rangoli and motifs. So ingrained is the Cow's association with the lives of Hindus that in all the rites and rituals of family life, the Cow almost from conception to cremation, the Cow and its byproducts are connected to ceremony and ritual for both caring and gentle.

India in its natural environment. The majority of India's 700 million people live in villages, which best exemplifies the country's old culture. India's simplicity and tranquillity are sometimes misconstrued as ignorance and complacency. Those who, in the name of development, may simply be acting on the precept that "misery loves company" neglect or mislabel the tranquilly of Indian village life. Perhaps Indians live as they do for a reason: rural India lacks a lot of the characteristics associated with Western "development" (the mental pain that drives us to do the oddest things that make many cities living hells).

In rural areas, every family has a cow; for rural children, Cow's milk provides nutrition, which helps to overcome other deficiencies in the diet. But in urban areas, because of space constraints and the lifestyle, cowsheds are uncommon in metropolitan homes. Once the Cow goes dry, she is left loose as aged cows become burdensome. These street cows are then led to slaughterhouses. The essence of urban life is economic exploitation.

History is witness to the fact that when the religious sentiments were played upon, there were clashes between the



ruling British (colonizer) and Indians (colonized). The 1857 Indian Rebellion against the British East India Company was influenced by the veneration of cows. Hindu and Muslim sepoys in the East India Company's army developed the misconception that the grease on their paper cartridges, which contained a regulated quantity of gunpowder, was made from pig and cow fat. They stood up against the powerful colonizer and refused to take the religious insult meekly.

According to Gandhiji: "The central fact of Hinduism is cow protection."<sup>xxii</sup> He referred to the Cow as "the mother of millions of Indian mankind" and thought she was superior to the earthly mother. Gandhi considered the Cow to be a "poetry of compassion," and he believed that Hinduism gave the world this gift by safeguarding the Cow since doing so also protects all other fragile lives in the world.

This paper will explore the various dimensions of the materiality of the Cow as reflected in the unconventional thoughts. The story "**The Cow of the Barricades**"<sup>xxiii</sup> by Raja Rao paints a picture of M.K. Gandhi's inspirational leadership throughout India's war for freedom. This story has been selected to trace the transformation of the Cow from a mere animal, an object, to a thing of worship for the veneration of an idea.

Borrowing from the Heideggerian concept of '*the thingness of the thing*'. The thing is 'around which properties have assembled'<sup>xxiv</sup>. In the story, sublime qualities are associated with Gauri, which gives Gauri an elevated status.

Heidegger attempts to claim what is established in the universe before we interpret the phenomena in "Being and Time," building on Kant's difference between "things-in-themselves" (noumena) and appearances (phenomena). This is what is "at hand," or what is utilized and worked with, he determines. Since everything in Heidegger's view is a "being," it is up to the readers to choose what kinds of beings are known as uninterpreted or, in Heidegger's words, "pre-thematic." He comes up with the response of "things," or more specifically, "useful things." (Heidegger; 64). Their applicability and capacity for pre-thematic knowledge are

governed by their relevance and references. These two concepts imply that entities are only known when they are mentioned in relation to another object (Heidegger; 78). Through techniques like linguistic clichés, such as “what for” and “where to,” things are “referred to.”

According to Heidegger, the first process by which “things” in the outside world (noumena) become “things” in ourselves is by this attribute of objects being close at hand, or “handiness” (phenomena). However, this process is not entirely ontic (relating just to the outer world); it is ontological and hence mediated. There are helpful, practical things inside of us as “innerworldly” creatures that are interconnected and relevant. They establish themselves as “objective beings” that are “out there” when such references or points of relevance fail. Things become “objectively present” when they can no longer be used, such as when a hammer breaks, and we may then sense them as being completely outside of the universe. In such a condition, we may access its direct existence as a thing before our experience of it (Heidegger; 70). In the story, a simple stray animal was ideated. Then after the bullet hit her was transformed into a statue.

The distinction between object and thing, as defined by Bill Brown, is a prime example of this process of making thingness<sup>xxv</sup> known, of getting beyond ontology and reference.

On Tuesday, the residents of Suryanarayana Street showed Gauri, who used to visit the street every seven days, the utmost respect. Since Gauri was kind and kind, many people revered her as a goddess. She was sacramental. The folks who were anxious to learn where she was provided hope when they saw her. The Cow was unable to identify herself since she was an animal. She often visited her Master, who had prepared her meals, which included straw, grass, rice water, and husk. In the story, the Master is the Mahatma. So, Gauri symbolizing peace went only to the nonviolent, peace-loving Mahatma. Her eating technique and jaw movement gave the impression that she was speaking out in favour of the populace. She was regarded as a wonderful creature by the public, and the Master was aware of her whereabouts. Gauri was

discovered in many locations during various periods. She was adored and revered by everyone. Many different individuals came to her with different requests to be blessed and fulfilled by Gauri. Everyone considered her the incarnation of Kamdhenu. Thus, Every Tuesday, a well-organized caravan of men and women arrived at the Master's hermitage to ask the renowned Cow for her blessings. Gauri, however, would ignore them all and go by them all. This Cow, in this story, was objectified.

The struggle for Indian independence under Mahatma's guidance was through Satyagraha. The Mahatma's warriors and the red men were engaged in furious combat in the meanwhile. The workers constructed several obstacles at various locations and hid behind them. They believed that the workers would easily defeat the red troops and prevent them from overcoming the barriers. However, the Master often visited and pleaded with people not to wander, not to adhere to violence, "*No, there shall be no battle, brothers*". But the workmen said that no one could win the stone-hearted red men by just as they put it, '*It is not with, I love you, I love you*'. As the Master (Gandhi Ji was very mild and followed the path of peacefulness.)

While the whole town was in a state of tension and was covered in barriers, Gauri went along, surrounded by people, some of whom began to worship her and beseech her for deliverance and peace. Gauri was placed atop the barricades, and the whole populace erupted in celebration. When the red warriors first saw Gauri, they were taken aback and believed she was a symbol of Mahatma's triumph. Gauri passed away there and then when the red men's leader shot him. Surprisingly, no one was able to observe a single drop of blood dripping from Gauri's skull. A statue of Gauri was erected by Seth Jamnalal Dwarak Chand near the scene of her shooting. And people started worshipping her, so the Cow was revered during her lifetime and even when she laid her life down.

Children played on her body '*jump over railings, and play between her legs*' reducing the revered Cow to a mere plaything.

The transformation from a thing to an object is seen in the story. She was reduced to a mere statue, a **thing** after the unnecessary killing and massacre of innocent lives by the colonial masters. In Raja Rao's story, there is a transformation of Gauri Cow's myth into a Cow, so Hyperreality<sup>xxvi</sup> may be traced as a situation where what is genuine and what is fiction are flawlessly merged together such that there is no obvious line separating one from the other.

Another inspiring representation of the sacred Cow is in the award-winning short story '**Cow and Company**'.<sup>xxvii</sup> Parashar Kulkarni got the 2016 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. The story is set in Pre Independence era, how advertising a product was gaining a foothold and the effects of it when played with the sentiments of the majority of Hindus. In the story how **Gau Mata** is treated as a '*Thing*'. This short narrative will examine the distinction between object and thing, as explained by Bill Brown. Thing-ness has gained enormous traction in recent years, maybe in response to the expanding popularity of media and mediation. In this pre-independence era story, a new concept of appealing to the masses through media was taken. Thus, the story was selected.

A critique will be attempted on the commercialization of the Cow in the advertisement. The office manager is on the lookout for a cow, for unheard-of reason- for **modelling their product-Chewing gum**. And would put up the caption as "*Go Mata Ko Bhata – The chewing gum the cow mother loves.*"

Somehow, they manage to catch hold of a milk white stray animal and persuade her to climb the stairs, to get into the office and get a photo shoot, in the meanwhile she creates a ruckus which is quite hilarious, makes a mess of the office, as the poor animal is not able to understand what is happening around her, urinates on the red carpet and also made a puddle of dung. "*In the middle of the room, the Cow sat demurely with her legs folded. In her mouth was a brown file.*" When **Gau Mata** completes her modelling assignment, she finds her way out in the open. After a week when the chewing gum company's freshly painted posters were put up, the local people detested and openly rebelled that the white masters had no respect for the values and religious sentiments, one of the

passer byes remarked- *“That foreign product has cow’s intestines. See how shamelessly they advertise. What are you doing about it? Wearing bangles?”* marginalizing the females and having a patriarchal mentality that the hands that wear bangles can’t take any action against misdemeanours.

How revered Gau Mata was used to propagate a product – chewing gum and its aftermath was the company had to close down the employees had to save their skin and flee. *“It’s too late. They are coming for us. They are burning our posters,”* the guard said. As the Cow was used as a thing to gain monetary benefits, the aftermath was the company had to close down as they tried to cash on in the masticating habit of the Cow. The strategist thought that the Cow chews all day long and if she is made the ambassador, the sales of the chewing gum will sky rocket, but their strategy boomeranged as the company directly attacked the religious sentiments, the crowd attacked the company and the company had to close down and escape. *“Within minutes all of the office twelve employees were out and the guard had locked the gates. The managing director’s car took off first. Then bicycles moved in three directions. Some liked the manager walked hurriedly through the back lanes.”* The company tried a paradigm shift the revered **Gau Mata** was treated as a **thing** and the company had to shut down.

### **Economic imbroglio arising out of commoditization of Cow**

This paper will also explore the mindsets of the current groups under the **Gau Rakshaks**, who are spreading unrest instead of providing protection to Gau Mata, The Gau Rakshak Dal (GRD) or Cow protection group Gau Bhakts or Cow –worshippers are spread out in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat. These groups simply terrify anyone dealing with **“Holy Cow”**, they have subtly introduced a new form of violence- which is economic, targeting people dealing with cattle skin, or animal by products. The intention with which they were formed has taken a slight twist they have deteriorated to pure extortion; they are very materialistic in their approach. A new form of terrorism has

cropped up which is Economic, they are playing with religious sentiments with the objective to fill their own pockets. A deeper look gives us an insidious cocktail of business under the wrap of religious issues. The Gau Rakshaks Dal deprive some of India's poor communities – who have been dealing in animal and animal products. The horrendous incidents specially in North India where Gau Rakshaks brutally beat up cow skimmers. Businessmen in Punjab and Haryana narrate how GRD's process is similar to that of an organized extortion group. People refusing to bribe the cow protectors are literally thrown out of business. Even the hides of fallen cows headed for tanneries have to be sieved and monitored through the Gau Rakshaks, in most of the states they work along with the aid of the administrators and each and everyones share is scrupulously chalked out. The Gau Rkshak Dals attack the buffalo, goat and chicken transporters and try to inflict vegetarianism and prevent cattle trade.

Indian culture was characterized by ahimsa, peace, and non-aggression. India has never engaged in military aggression against nations outside of its boundaries. Because of our ethos, Indians continue to patiently accept injustices and misery even these days but the Gau Rakshaks present a completely different scenario, they seem to be prepared for battle as they carry firearms, sticks, iron rods, and equipment to barricade. They even fence their windscreens with iron grills. Genuine folks who transport cows, oxens or buffaloes even with proper documents stop for checks, However, due to severe anti-pollution laws, commercial vehicles are not allowed within city boundaries from sunrise until sunset, hence the majority of trading occurs at night, when the Gau Rakshaks are in full form catch them at toll gates take the bovines and beat the driver. In the late 1990s, commercial dairies in Punjab began utilizing semen from the United States to crossbreed Jersey cows but with the encouragement from the Punjab Government, transporting anything related to cows is very difficult. More than three lakh cows are transported annually from Punjab to Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. Five to Six thousand cows

leave Punjab everyday but only after bribing the new middlemen, the Gau Rakshak Dal.

There is a steep decline in the business of tanneries, as getting the hides is very difficult. Though India has the 20-percent of the world's bovine population. Due to the majority of states' bans on animal slaughter, Indian shoe manufacturers rely heavily on dead animals for cow leather. There is a far greater demand than supply for finished cow leather. Cow leather is imported from Brazil, New Zealand, and other countries to cover the deficit. According to Mr. Puran Dawar President Agra footwear exporters- *“Cow protection is an emotional issue. It is a kind of constraint. But for now, supply of raw leather is consistent with demand.”*

A flourishing businessman in Punjab who would supply buffalo tallow to soap manufacturers, the Gau Rakshaks accused him of ferrying cow not buffalo fat. Now he doesn't run a business only fights Gau Rakshaks tormentors in court.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Hindus worship the cow, of which every part is significant. Every part of the cow is utilized. When Gau Rakshaks folds their hands in front of cows, but they are literally hurting the animal. While cow costs are down, leather prices are increasing. People aren't benefiting from the cow in this case; instead, they are just losing money.

The violence committed against others in the name of protecting cows was also condemned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to Prime Minister Modi, certain criminals acting as **"Gau Rakshaks"** cannot abuse the compassionate nature of Gau seva or the sacred practice of cow worship. He said that these individuals are trying to create division in society in order to further their own interests. Such "anti-social" individuals were operating "shops" under the guise of cow protection, he said, and harsh action needed to be taken against them. He said, "I am furious with people who started their business under the guise of "Gau Raksha" (cow protection). Several "Gau Rakshaks" exists (cow protectors). To conceal their unlawful activities, they defend cows. These Gau Rakshaks need to advise people not to put

plastics on the roadways since most cow deaths result from ingesting plastic bags.

Mohan Bhagwat, the head of the RSS, criticized cow vigilantes, arguing that it was important to differentiate between “Gau-rakshaks” and troublemakers. On Vijaydashmi and the 91st anniversary of the "sangh," Bhagwat was speaking to volunteers at the organization's Nagpur headquarters. According to Bhagwat, legislation pertaining to the preservation of cows are present in several states. He did add, however, that some miscreants create problems in the name of Gauraksha, and that it was important to keep them apart from the "Gausevaks."

Another issue that has emerged is the increase in cow smuggling, which alarms the border patrol agents since it may sometimes pose a major danger to the safety of the people and their possessions.

Cows are transported in relatively bad circumstances from different regions of the nation, either by rail or on foot. Many animal supporters and several ardent Hindus are alarmed by this lack of respect for cows.

The way they are treated is really pathetic and the sacred Cow is treated worse than a thing which fetches some money. Cattle transported reach areas of West Bengal and are smuggled for beef. Bangladesh has started cattle farming to meet its demand for beef. Beef ban and drought especially in Maharashtra, has resulted in farmers selling cattle to traders, who transported those to West Bengal areas along the border with Bangladesh. As per the data available with BSF's South Bengal Frontier Head Quarter, BSF has seized 1,12,887 cattle in 2014. In 2015 BSF seized 1,51,402 cattle and in 2016 up to the month of August, the seizure of cattle was 1,18,711.<sup>xxix</sup>

Cattle come to border areas mostly from central part of India, as Bangladesh is farming cattle, this year Bangladesh was cattle surplus and prices of cattle had come down drastically during Id-ul-Azha. According to S.K Barua, Deputy Inspector General BSF Eastern Command, said that the BSF men were attacked by mobs when they stopped smugglers. There have been cases when



BSF men have been killed brutally by smugglers. ‘When a mob surrounds a couple of BSF men and attack them with knives and sticks, BSF men are left with no option but to use their weapons that are non- lethal ones. However, adopting low risk weapons such as pellet or Pump action guns has emboldened smugglers, who attack BSF men with lethal weapons.’<sup>xxvi</sup> The BSF patrols the 4,096 km of riverine, deep forest, and mountainous terrain that makes up the Indo-Bangla border.

At a border camp in South Bengal, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh addressed the force’s members and praised them for their efforts in preventing the trafficking of animals while also stressing the need for increased effectiveness.

I will also attempt to explore the point of view of the **Vegans**, they are accused of veiled promoters of agricultural products equivalent to dairy. The Vegans are of the opinion how one can justify killing animals for their flesh, eggs or milk. The Vegans- despise any dairy product, milk. Butter cheese etc., I feel to an extent with proper ecological balance the products can be used and it is an individual’s choice to use or avoid the products.

Our country is changing towards becoming a super power but we are still tied down by the age old shackles in the name of staunch religious beliefs, if we are to become a superpower we have to strengthen our economy and maintain a balance , in a genteel and compassionate manner the Cow should be used , it should be a symbiotic relation we should not treat it as a thing and extract as much cash from the Cow and give her tremendous pain, but be humane and expect what she in the normal course, She offers us.

Gau Mata’s urine is also sacred and medicines made from Go-Mutra (Cow urine) to be available in the market soon. As it has antioxidant, bio-enhancement characteristics on anti-cancer and anti-infective nutrients and agents. Go-Vigyan Anusandhan Kendra in Nagpur has received six patents for its research on Cow’s products.<sup>xxx</sup>

### Conclusion

India is a land that fosters multiculturalism and religious hybridity. The sanctity of the Cow is perhaps the foremost religious sentiment of Hindus for whom this sacred animal has far deeper connotations in the Indian culture and ethos.

Cow is most sacred and auspicious creation of God. We have named Cow as the mother of mankind and call her as *Gau Mata*. In her resides all the 33 crore deities of Hindus. It is said, to get the blessings of all the 33 crore deities, at any point of time one should serve the revered Cow. The Cow has been objectified according to several needs. In our culture we have objectified and commoditized the Cow.

When urban house hold keep cows, it is only for milking, because of dearth of space we rarely find cowsheds in urban areas. Once milked the Cow is set to roam. Aged cows become burdensome, then the street cows are led to slaughter houses, as economic exploitation is an essence of urban life. The revered Cow becomes a thing of no value thus taken to slaughter house. The Cow has been objectified and over the period of time the relation of the Cow with humans has changed.

The image of the sacred Cow and how people worship the animal become a repository of traditional values, and when the Cow is shot in the head by a British officer, saving several lives, it becomes a martyr in the cause of the Indian freedom struggle. The Cow becomes symbolic of the amalgamation between carrying on traditions while also adapting to the changing times.

But finally, the revered Gauri was reduced to a mere statue-a thing on which the children played.

In present-day India, when controversies surround Cow, the short story 'Cow and Company' of Parashar has fabricated a serious issue which makes us laugh, set back in 1905. Religious issues are highly sensitive and should not be touched even with a barge pole, period.

We as responsible citizens should ensure human rights and progressive development, rather than wile away our time discussing whether cows should Cow is slaughtered; I feel this

should be left for the politicians to run their shops and give **Gau Mata** her due respect.

The exploiters in the form of Gau Rakshaks in the grab of giving protection to mother cow have become a well-established network where their only aim is to have a percentage to let the truck-loaded cows pass safely. Certain of them further make money by providing essential raw materials for the creation of a variety of goods, including some medications. Everyone is looking to make money, which leads to more economic connections. Debating these individuals' moral or religious beliefs is pointless unless we are ready to reflect on the system as a whole. If we cannot afford to open Pandora's Box, we should shut our eyes and adopt the "live and let live" mentality. We need to look at numerous flaws in the process and strive to provide other methods of living. The *thingness* of the Cow is there in different parts of the world. The *Cowness* of the Cow is to be preserved.

The Vegans are the pure form of vegetarianism; they strongly hold that as the calves do not get their share of milk, they are against all dairy products, but I feel anything in the extreme form is unacceptable.

We are well acquainted with the common names and qualities of objects. In our case

Gau Mata. '**Things**' are that which fall either above or below that scope. If a stray animal is roaming on the streets, we do not *notice* them, as they are mere objects. But on an auspicious day, we go *cow hunting* on these very streets or try to find a cowshed, to offer our prayers. So it is the individuals observation or perception, to treat it like an idol of totem- being a sacred object or a thing. Therefore, the character of objects that is formed by us as the perceivers is the quality of "objecthood" as opposed to Heidegger's "thinginess."

The objecthood of an object or the 'thing'ness of a thing is ingrained in society and is created by its name, usage, and importance. Keep it as a helpful animal. Things are absolutely simply left out there, unmediated, in thingness.

“Thing” is used in this context to address metaphysical issues about its position in the universe. The answer to this basic media challenge may be found in Plato’s allegory of the cave. Let the Cow be a simple animal and the iconography should not be attached to it and let us not give it a larger-than-life image, with due respect to our rich culture. Let us not try to hurt anyone’s religious sentiments.

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