

POULTRY FARMS OR CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

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Imagine that you are peacefully sleeping in the court yard of your house in your native village. As the new day breaks, the rooster announces its arrival, wakes you up and leads you from the dark world of the night into the light of a new day. Just imagine, how beautiful and pleasant way of waking up ! Mechanisation in every sphere of our life has destroyed our natural way of living and now the younger generation have nothing but the alarm clock or the morning alarm service of telephone to wake them up. Still, in lakhs of Indian Villages, the responsibility of awakening the villagers with coming of the dawn lies on the rooster. He performs this responsibility without the 'morning alarm' bill of even a single paise. HMT might be claiming to be the 'time-keepers' to the Nation. However, the real announcer of the Day break with computer like accuracy is this rooster alone.

However, this morning call of the rooster will soon become a thing of the past, considering the violence let loose by the ungrateful mankind on the cocks and hens under the name of poultry business. Then what we will hear will be the cries of torture of the birds languishing in the concentration camps of the poultry farms.

The hens which are reared for producing more and more eggs and

thus earning more and more profits are called 'layer-hens' whereas the cocks which are to be slaughtered for their meat are called 'Broiler chickens'. The barbaric method of rearing and slaughter of both of these birds might differ, but the degree of barbarism is still the same.

In the past, these hens and cocks used to wander freely in the farms in villages and used to kill the insects and pests which would be harmful to the agriculture crop and thus the balance of nature was maintained. This helped in safeguarding the materialistic self interest of mankind also. However, with the purpose of earning more and more profits out of production of eggs, the modern man locked these birds around the year 1940 and turned them into means of 'commercial production'. In those days the hen used to lay about 2 dozen eggs in a year in natural course. As against this, by tampering with gene of these birds they are now made to lay about 300 eggs in a year. Possibly only a woman would understand the cruelty and torture involved in forcing any female creature to give birth to its offspring, about 12 to 13 times more compared to its natural capacity. For the sake of comparison, if we imagine that a human female capable of giving birth to one child in a year, is made to give birth to 12 children in a year by genetically manipulating her reproduction process, what will be the condition of such woman ? The bird has to undergo a much more torturous process.

Instead of taking strong steps to stop all this barbarism practised in these poultry factories, (it is a shame to describe them as 'farms'), the Government rewards this barbarism by giving rebate of 33% on Income Tax and also provides many other facilities and concessions. What can be more shameful than this state of affairs ! U/S 11 (E) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, which is enacted by the Government of India itself, it is an offence to keep an animal or a bird in a cage where it is unable to move about in reasonably comfortable way. However, today's affluent butchers who run these poultry slaughter houses and spend crores of rupees on advertisements for promoting eggs, keep too many birds in each cage and the IDBI, IFCI, ICICI and SBI give loans worth crores of Rupees for carrying on these activities of committing serious offences.

The cocks and hens are so 'light-sensitive' compared to other birds, that much before the sun-rise, they start their trumpeting even in pre-dawn period. This light sensitiveness of these birds is exploited by keeping them

under artificial light for 18 to 23 hours in a day so that they are made to give more and more eggs. The floor of their cage is also made of wire mesh and hence neither can they sit comfortably nor sleep in their cage. On the other hand, these innocent birds are given all sorts of hormones and anti-biotics to prevent them from falling sick from various diseases which arise due to such artificial breeding, so that the hens give more and more eggs and the broiler chickens become heavier in weight.

Tormented by tortures from all sides, these birds live under tremendous mental tension and start fighting with other birds in the cage. They hurt each other with their beaks. But such infighting cannot be afforded by these butchers, who call themselves farmers or industrialists, because it affects their profits. And hence they have found out a solution to this fighting also. They noticed that these birds hurt each other with their beaks because they have beak. What if they do not have beaks? and so, these butchers now cut off the beaks of the tender birds. This process of cutting off beaks is so cruel that even the scientists say that the pain in cutting off the beaks is similar to the pain of cutting tender skin under our nail.

The logic (or the illogic) behind giving various income tax reliefs and subsidy to this pernicious activity, which is sought to be described as trade, industry or farming, is that it provides employment to people. The day Godse killed Gandhiji, our Government abandoned khadi and village industry. If these are revived again, we can give employment to thousand times more people than those who earn their living from poultry. However, let us keep the employment angle also in mind. The surprising fact is that the new large scale poultry or broiler farms (slaughter houses) which are being set up now, are so highly mechanised that the question of providing additional employment does not arise at all. On the contrary it will snatch away the employment of those small time butchers and farmers who earn their living by slaughtering these birds on small scale. Thus the excuse of providing the employment also proves to be a very weak ground for providing tax rebates and various concessions to these large butchers to set up large mechanised poultry farms.

If a cock or a hen is allowed to live its natural life, they can easily live for 6-7 years. But now a hen is made to lay eggs when it is only 18 to 20 weeks old and after exploiting maximum possible eggs, it is killed. The

broilers which are raised for chicken are killed in about 5 to 7 weeks. If we go through the project report of a large hatchery set up near Ahmednagar, we will come to know how the living creatures are treated like commodities. Like various inputs of raw materials passing on a fast moving conveyor belt in a factory. In this hatchery the live birds pass on the conveyor belt in a position hanging upside down at a speed of 1000 birds per hour. To achieve perfect bleeding they are given a mild electric shock to kill them by 'Halal' (single) cut and their blood also is collected in a tray, because the blood also has to be used. The corpses of these dead birds are then dipped into boiling water and their feathers are removed by a plucking machine. Then their intestines are removed and the meat which is so prepared is supplied to the Five Star Hotels of Bombay or the Flight kitchens of Indian Airlines or the Canteens of large companies.

People serving ice-cream with great joy on occasions like birthdays, marriages and engagements, people who stop the crying of their children by giving them a packet of biscuit or people using bread and shampoo in their day to day life may not be knowing that these and so many such other things may contain eggs.

The poor birds in these concentration camps are waiting for people who can save them by challenging the vested interest lobby engaged in Poultry industry and the government which provides assistance and protection to such activity, to stop this activity, which is inexcusable not only from the religious angle but is also a blot on the rich civilisation of mankind.

An Institution called 'Chickens Lib' (P.O. Box 2, Holmfirth, Huddersfield - HD7 1QT, U.K.) in England has been able to obtain the support of people in fighting against various barbaric practices in the hatcheries. This has happened in a country like Britain which is not averse to meat eating. Then is it not possible to stop such barbaric activity in a country like ours which is full of the feeling of compassion, kindness and mercy towards all living beings?

As long as this barbarism is in its primary stage in our country, we might be able to stop it by preventing the Governmental and non-governmental encouragement to this activity. If the enlightened citizens do not act at this stage, on one hand our text books will be having poetries on birds and on the other hand the entire country will be full of

weils of lakhs and crores of birds awaiting their slaughter in the hatcheries. We should not forget that violence and cruelty is not only contagious, it grows in geometrical proportion. If a person does not hesitate to kill a bird today he will not hesitate to kill a fellow being a family member tomorrow. When that happens, our future generation will blame us for not stopping these horrendous activities in their primary stage itself.

