

# Conceptualizing Cruelty-Hate Crimes against Street Dogs in India

Journal of Asian and African Studies

2026, Vol. 61 (3) 2359–2368

© The Author(s) 2025

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/00219096251341585

journals.sagepub.com/home/jas

Praveen Rai 

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, India

## Abstract

The human-stray dog conflict in India is in the global spotlight because of the exponential rise of cruelty and abuse against the canine population inhabiting streets and public spaces. The motivations for hate crimes against non-pet dogs and anti-canine vigilantism are due to the deepening of animal insensitivity and “show off” syndrome of urban citizens. The state ownership of stray dogs and abandoned foreign breeds could be an efficacious public policy to curb human cruelty against them. The protection laws should include compulsory community service in animal shelters, as it will inculcate compassion and companionship among the neo-community of dog haters.

## Keywords

human–animal conflict, human-stray dog conflict, Indian stray dogs, animal cruelty, cruelty against street dogs, dog abuse

## Introduction

The Indian media seems to have forgotten or not heard one of the most inspiring quotes about journalism, “When a dog bites a man it is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news.” A deep scan of journalistic writings reveals anti-animal bias, as stories in media tend to amplify the news of dog bites, but downplay the rising menace of crimes against street dogs (“*street dogs*,” “*community dogs*,” “*unowned dogs*,” and “*free-roaming dogs*” are used as synonyms of “*stray dogs*”). The native dog in India popularly known as “Pariah dog” received its name after the Pariah tribe of Madras Presidency during British rule. It is called “Desi Kutta” (Hindi word for native), “Indi-dog” or, in the words of famous novelist Rudyard Kipling, “Yellow Pariah Dog.” The cave paintings in the Indian subcontinent and archaeological excavations from the Mohenjo-Daro site (2500 BCE) provide evidence that it was one of the oldest canine dog breeds in the world. It finds a place in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, as Yudhisthira, the eldest of the five Pandava brothers, reached the doors of heaven, followed by a loyal dog. Lord Indra invited him to paradise, provided he abandoned the dog. Yudhisthira replied, “Great king of the gods, it is difficult for a noble person to do a dishonorable deed and I do not wish for glory by

---

### Corresponding author:

Praveen Rai, Political Analyst, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 29, Rajpur Road, Delhi 110054, India.

Email: praveenrai@csds.in

abandoning one who is devoted to me” (University of Edinburgh, 2016). The dog revealed his true self as god Dharma, praised him for intelligence, morality, and compassion, and admitted him to heaven.

The soulmatism of humans and dogs has existed since time immemorial, but their congeniality and peaceful coexistence turned conflictive and mutually hostile in 21st-century India. Urbanization led to human–animal conflicts as both species turned against each other with heightened aggression and violence. The population of street dogs increased, and its collateral damage was a surge in dog bites and deaths due to rabies, which led to the diminishment of companionship with humans. Despite legislative-judicial safeguards, several states in India violate animal welfare laws and resort to gruesome mass culling of stray dogs, reminiscent of barbaric methods used by the Britishers in the 19th century for controlling *free-roaming dogs* by shooting, poisoning, or electrocution. Apart from animal insensitivity by the government, atrocious behavior against street dogs and pets in homes by urban citizens, show off and abandonment of foreign breeds by neo-middle class continue to rise in “New India.” It thus becomes pertinent to visit the academic discourse of human–animal conflict to contextualize the reasons for the increase in violence against non-pet dogs and the efficacy of laws in mediation and resolution.

*This article will deep dive into increasing episodes of cruelty and insensitivity toward street dogs in India, motivational aspects for abusing them, reluctance by the state to own and protect them, inherent deficiencies in animal rights laws and judicial inconsistencies, and the way forward to conserve them.* It consists of three parts. The *first* section will delve into animal rights discourse to ascertain the definitions and denotative meaning of animal cruelty and abuse. It will decipher the overall insensitivity toward animals and find out key reasons that led to the astronomical rise of pre-meditated violence and crimes against stray dogs. The *second* section will delineate the global classification of dogs, various types of proprietary rights and ownership conundrums, and the psychosocial human motives for the abuse of dogs. It will elucidate country-specific motivations behind hate crimes against stray dogs and rising trends of anti-canine vigilante violence in India. The *third* section will review the legal provisions for safeguarding street dogs, a lacuna in animal rights architecture, and judicial incoherencies that make it difficult to implement the law and prosecute the offenders. It will statistically enumerate the population estimates of stray dogs, the magnanimity of dog bites, human health hazards, and the rampancy of violence against canines. The *final* section will quantify and map the profile of dog-hating residents, insensitive citizens, and caregivers in the case study location in Noida. It will analyze the patterns of displacement of street dogs from their place of birth and death due to the bursting of firecrackers during festivals and local weddings, and suggest solutions to minimize and mitigate this neo-urban violent syndrome.

## **Animal cruelty and insensitivity toward street dogs**

The primary basis of this article is direct observation and deep engagement with street dogs in a particular sector in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, between 2014 and 2024. The participatory research involved collecting information during various canine caregiving activities: arrangement of food and water, interventions during medical sickness and injuries, coordination for vaccination, sterilization, and overseeing the well-being of community dogs. It hypothesizes the primacy of human beings in man-dog conflicts and ascribes the exponential growth of cruelty against stray canines *due to* a lack of political will and societal insensitivity. The thesis is on a case study of a colony she-dog, Mentu, who bore the brunt of first strike attacks by selective residents between 2020 and 2024. The repetitive acts of unprovoked cruelty against her resulted in multiple fractures (amputation) of her tail, a physical assault in full public view, and being mowed down by a car by the Resident Welfare Association (RWA) president, which led to her premature death. It will delineate

the mental blocks and resistance of RWA in registering complaints of animal rights violations and the superficial help of local animal welfare NGOs in getting justice for community dogs. The archiving of violations of animal rights in Noida will reveal the poor reporting and cognizance by police and animal welfare authorities of serious crimes against stray animals and Indian dogs.

The rising incidence of violence against animals in urban locations and dogs living on the streets is multifarious, but the focus would be on crucial determinants. The cruelty and insensitivity toward stray animals is a worldwide phenomenon, but its growing menace in India requires contextualization in etiological discourse. “Animal cruelty” is socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, distress, and death of an animal (Ascione, 1999). Cruelty to animals is of substantial gravity if it reveals deliberateness, repetitiveness, and proactive behavioral patterns that unnecessarily cause hurt to vertebrate animals and serious injury. (Dadds, 2008; Felthous and Kellert, 1986). The harm is physical or psychological or both and the cruelest acts at the extreme end of the aggression index like burning alive, torture, murder, rape, and assault should be nomenclated as a violent subtype of animal cruelty (Gullone, 2014). In India, section 11 of PCA includes beating, kicking, raping, torturing, abandonment, mutilation, and killing of animals to name a few cruelty to animals. Treating animals cruelly is punishable with a fine of INR 10, which may extend to 50 on the first conviction. Subsequent convictions within three years of a previous offense are punishable with a fine of INR 25 that may extend to 100 or imprisonment for three months or both (Kavuri, 2020). The PCA provides a comprehensive list of acts tantamount to animal cruelty, but the low reporting of crimes, poor conviction rates, and paltry punishment fail to act as deterrence and reduction of abuse cases.

The general apathy toward animals is rooted in societal upbringing, which educates children to stay away from them and use violence in direct confrontation. Most parents encourage their kids to throw stones at indigenous dogs and appreciate it as act of valor and a sign of masculinity. “Animal-insensitivity syndrome” is a medical disorder based on adult rationalization, denial, and ethical blindness rooted in childhood conditioning and desensitization. It leads to acceptance and involvement in animal exploitation and limits the capacity to develop positive feelings for animals and the ability to recognize, anticipate, experience, and consider them as own. This leads to seeing the suffering of others and not extending help (helplessness by proxy), which in turn leads to a disconnect of empathy (bystander apathy). It results in experiencing vicarious pleasure, desensitization to animal suffering, and treating animals as objects devoid of sentience (Fox, 2017). The violence against animals normalizes the savagery of women, as both of them are voiceless, victimizable, silenced, devalued, and objects rather than subjects (Guenther, 2020). *Freely roaming dogs are abandoned domesticates and their “abandonment” is a moral challenge. “Street dogs” in India as their nomenclature suggests are forsaken and the discarding of pets by their owners stems from the same moral bankruptcy and irresponsibility (Patil, 2023).* The objectification of street dogs, non-acceptance as “sentient beings” and insensitivity toward them is a negative fallout of human evolution based on brutal force, which genetically failed to completely transform into nonviolent traits and civility in the Indian subcontinent.

Human beings are motivated by a phylogenetically programmed spontaneously flowing spring of aggression, situated in certain areas of the brain. If it does not find an outlet, it starts accumulating and eventually explodes reaching a critical mass. The “hydraulic mechanism” of aggression seeks stimuli that release aggressive drive, but the higher accumulation of aggressive energy is dangerous. In innate programming based on the evolution of the human species, such a stimulus has to be, where aggression “explodes” without the presence of an adequate stimulus (Lorenz, 1974). The growing frustration–anger among people in Indian cities and towns is due to aspirational failures and economic distress, which leads to unprovoked violence on helpless stray dogs and other species without a stimulus. Mentu, the colony dog in the case study, survived a physical

assault by a spoiled youth of a rich family in 2021, but the formal complaint for redressal and justice was not acceptable to the RWA president on the false pretext of “self-defense.” The reasons for non-action in this animal rights violation episode were due to the “unworthiness” of the dog as compared with the privileged class perpetrator and the greasing of RWA functionaries’ palms with donations and gifts. This ensured the closing of a serious animal rights violation complaint on the frivolous ground of not accepting an amicable human-centric solution (Rai, 2024). *The construction of high-income new middle-class neighborhoods in urban peripheries entails loss of green areas and open space, often leading to the forcible eviction and exclusion of street dogs. The horror stories of dog bites and retaliatory human violence on dogs mostly erupt from many large cities like Gurgaon, Delhi, Noida, Hyderabad, and Nagpur (Nazareth and Mawani, 2023).* The cowardice of the neo-urbanized middle class to confront and fight their powerful exploiters results in atrocities on animals, as it is the easiest way to vent their deep angst and societal betrayal. Urbanicity is a proxy variable and pivotal determinant of cascading animal insensitivity, as growing up in an urban ecosystem creates a poor index of social interaction and distrust for all living beings.

The last decade in India witnessed political, economic, cultural, and technological changes that led to digital advancement, but it ruptured the cognitive and emotional empathy of the citizens, affecting their societal interactivity and balance. The cataclysmic changes negatively affected public institutions such as legislatures, judiciary, and media that are in the grip of a legitimacy crisis. Social media plays a key role in connecting people and resolving issues, but it is also instrumental in creating new conflicts and intensifying the pending ones. The hostile media coverage ensures that the cycles of human beings and community dogs’ confrontations continue and remain a burning public issue (Bhutani and Bansal, 2023). Media, post-independence, remained citizen-centric and animal-friendly, but it has now turned outwardly hostile and churns out toxic and half-baked stories to suit their institutional pro or anti-animal posturing. The exclusion of street dogs and stray animals in “beautification of towns and cities” project reveals the reluctance of the state in taking their ownership, making them vulnerable and on the cusp of extinction.

*The lack of societal compassion and insensitiveness toward stray animals and dogs in particular translates into acts of cruelty or abuse mainly due to lack of ownership and personal protection. Hence, it becomes crucial to delay the ownership conundrum of street dogs in India and the various kinds of motivations that drive the animal haters to commit crimes against them.*

## **Ownership dilemmas and motivations to abuse stray dogs**

The basis of classifying the canine population as pets, strays, feral, and abandoned dogs is human control and ownership. Home dogs are private property owned, controlled, and dependent on care and resources. Their reproduction is contained through sterilization, chemical means, or confinement. Strays are community dogs with partial ownership with no control, receive food, roam around freely, are highly reproductive, with high survival rates. Feral dogs are offspring of stray dogs, uncontrolled, have poor socialization for human interactions, scavenge food, have low reproductive capacity, and dismal survival rates. Dogs abandoned by their owners depend on irregular food provided by caregivers with poor longevity rates (WSPA, 1990). A breakdown of homeless dogs in India shows that around 53 million stray dogs live on the streets while 8 million are in shelters (SPHI India, 2023). The population of private dogs has been estimated at approximately 31 million (Minhas, 2022), but there are no data sets to quantify the abandonment of pet dogs, mostly by millennial, and their status of well-being on roads.

Dogs are personal property, but their private ownership is different as compared with material goods, as they move freely and multiply without large capital infusion, and their owners value them higher than market rates. The high premium of pet dogs is due to ownership, while stray dogs

do not have legal status or any monetary worth. The quality of democratic politics, the efficacy of political institutions, economic development, and cultural progress determine the size of the stray dog population, but only to some extent. Secure property rights are the best predictor of population management and control. Well-established dog ownership, protection of private property, and enforcement of owners' responsibilities will substantially reduce the population of street dogs and even make it like the Netherlands, which has no stray dogs (Guseva, 2013). The main reasons for the increase in the stray dog population in "New India" may be due to bureaucratic mismanagement and the general insensitivity of the people. *However*, the failure of the state in claiming ownership is the most crucial determinant in animal-human conflict becoming a public menace. The increasing abandonment of breed dogs by irresponsible citizens is creating a huge crisis as non-ownership makes them highly vulnerable due to the absence of food-hunting skills, navigating vehicular traffic, and surviving the tropical climate. The relinquishment of pet ownership and abandonment increases the burden of the stray population. *Dogs* without legal ownership, high starvation, and close contact with humans exacerbate the conflicting situation leading to more dog bites and retaliatory violence against them.

The crimes against stray dogs are traceable in nine types of motivations that explain the psychology and relational behavior of human violence. It includes controlling, retaliation, prejudice against a particular breed, statement of aggression, enhancement of self-aggression, shocking people for amusement, retaliation against the person, displacement of aggression, and nonspecific sadism (Kellert and Felthous, 1985). The acts to control the behavior of dogs and retaliation involve beating to stop them from barking and extreme punishment as revenge for perceived wrongs, such as destroying material goods at home. The prejudice against a specific dog breed is due to moral disengagement, as normal people with high moral standards sometimes behave reprehensibly due to the cognitive construction of ethical justification and dehumanization. It reduces the worth of an animal by a false moral and narcissistic justification, as "pests that need elimination" (Bandura, 1999). The expression of aggression induces violent tendencies in an animal while enhancing self-aggressiveness to impress others with the capacity for violence. Both these motivations are statements of aggressive behaviors toward society and animals. The overt human abuses in public places are acts to shock people for "amusement," while hurting the pet dogs of others is tantamount to exacting revenge. Nonspecific sadism is the desire to inflict suffering, injury, or death without any particular provocation or hostile feelings toward an animal. The primary goal of this motivation is to derive pleasure from inflicting suffering, as exercising power and control compensates for feelings of weakness or vulnerability.

The human impulse that is the primary driver of animal cruelty and crimes against stray dogs is "displacement of aggression," the offender being physically abused as a child. The violent acts against animals are a manifestation of violence experienced during their childhood by a parent, sibling, or any adult (Kellert and Felthous, 1985). Persons who witnessed animal cruelty at a young age and observed a friend abuse animals were more likely to hurt or kill animals more frequently (Hensley and Tallichet, 2005). Animal cruelty during childhood is strongly associated with antisocial personality traits disorder (Gleyzer, Felthous and Holzer, 2002). The aggression discourse provides a holistic comprehension of the fabric of abuse and reveals close similarities with the longitudinal studies of animal cruelty. The developmental pathways and predictors of animal abuse vindicate the interpersonal and antisocial behavior of human beings as well as aggression and violence (Gullone, 2011). The motivations for recurring attacks on stray dogs in India are due to a permutation and combination of the above catalysts, but the aggravating reasons are "show off syndrome," "creation of enemy image," "cultural superiority," and "perception of unwantedness." The liberalization of the Indian economy created new burgeoning strata, a rich-middle class that indulged in consumerism and

a culture of show off with scant respect for living beings. This new sub-populace attacks stray dogs to prove their monetary might, buying prowess, and distorted sense of cultural superiority as they procure and abandon foreign dogs on whim and fancy with no respect for law and order. The self-appointed “human protectors” create false propaganda that street dogs are unwanted creatures, spreaders of zoonotic diseases, and spur vigilante violence by committing or instigating brutal attacks on them.

*The primary reasons for cruelty against free-roaming dogs are mostly social and psychological, but its rising graph is due to loopholes in the laws for the protection of animals and contradictory judicial pronouncements in the last decade. Thus, it becomes important to glean through the legal provisions and the verdicts of top courts in efficacious enforcement of animal laws.*

## **Animal rights deficits and judicial inconsistencies**

The *State of Pet Homelessness Index, India* report, based on “State of Pet Homelessness Project: A global data initiative for understanding pet homelessness” estimates the population of stray dogs in India is slightly more than 60 million (highest in the world) and is ranked lowest (2.4 on a 10-point scale) among all the countries. The index provides each country’s situation in terms of pet homelessness, relative to other countries for gauging progress (SPHI India, 2023). India recorded 16 million cases of street dog bites between 2019 and 2022, as per Parliament of India data, and recorded rabies cases with around 20 thousand deaths annually as per the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024). A report *In Their Own Right- Calling for Parity in Law for Animal Victims of Crimes* states that around 5 hundred thousand animals were grievously hurt, maimed, killed, and raped by human beings between 2010 and 2020 (FIAPO Report, 2021). It included more than two thousand gruesome and intentional acts of violence against animals that led to death or irreversible damage. It reports the mass culling of 4000-plus stray dogs by municipal bodies between 2015 and 2020 in some Indian states. A review of the laws and rules for safeguarding stray dogs and judicial pronouncements in cases related to it will provide a legal framework and holistic picture of the rising graph of anti-animalistic menace in urban spaces.

The Britishers understood “animal cruelty” and enacted “Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1890” and offenses under its ambit were punishable under sections 428 and 429 of the Indian Penal Code of 1860. Section 325 (Mischief by killing-maiming animal) of the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023* states that whoever commits mischief by killing, poisoning, maiming, or rendering useless any animal will receive a punishment with an imprisonment of either description for a term that may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In 1976, the protection of animals and their rights was enshrined in the Constitution of India. Article 51A (g) made it a fundamental duty for citizens to show compassion for all living creatures. The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001 (ABC) framed under the PCA Act contains rules relating to stray dogs. The Constitution of India gives precedence to the PCA and ABC rules over state and local laws, such as the Kerala State Municipality Act, 1994, under which Section 438 permits the Secretary to order the “seizure and destruction” of stray dogs in a municipal area. Rule 13 of the ABC rules says that “in case of any conflict between the central and local laws, the provision that is less irksome to the animal shall prevail.” The dog population and disease control are the responsibility of municipal corporations and departments of animal welfare. Most municipalities in India have handled such measures in unsystematic and reactive ways, only when a problem or perceived need arises, be it elections or serious bite incidents reported by the media (Gupta and Gupta, 2019). The statutory protections seem quite impressive on paper, but their execution at ground zero is largely inefficacious due to “stray lives don’t matter” mindset of the lower judiciary and the abject failure of local governance.

The SC and High Courts (HC) have interpreted laws and rules from an animal rights perspective, but some benches of judges and courts have taken contrarian views. The Supreme Court in *Animal Welfare Board of India versus A. Nagaraja* (2014) said “Every species has a right to life and security, subject to the law of the land, which includes depriving its life out of human necessity. So far as animals are concerned, ‘life’ means something more than mere survival or existence or instrumental value for human beings, but to lead a life with some intrinsic worth, honor and dignity.” It held that Article 21 of the Constitution protects the life and liberty of animals besides humans, which means that animals do have the right to life with dignity and the right to get food and shelter (KM, 2023). The Punjab and Haryana High Court in *Karnail Singh versus State of Haryana* (2019) recognized all animals as legal entities and declared the citizens of Haryana as persons in *Loco Parentis* (in place of parent) to the animals. The Delhi High Court in *Maya D. Chablani versus Radha Mittal* (2021) held that no animal should face death due to starvation. It is illegal for an individual, RWA, or estate management to remove or relocate dogs. It puts the duty and obligation on RWAs and municipal corporations to ensure that every community dog in every area has access to food and water in the absence of caregivers or community dog feeders in the said area.

The judgment of the Bombay High Court in *Aniruddha Sharad Gupte versus State of Maharashtra* (2022) contradicts the SC judgment and is inimical to animal welfare. It said no citizen, no resident of Nagpur, and areas surrounding it shall feed or attempt to feed stray dogs in public places. The court declared that if any person is interested in feeding, they should first adopt the stray dog and register it with municipal authorities, or keep them in a dog shelter home. This makes it onerous for ordinary feeders to feed stray dogs. For every breach of the high court’s directions, there shall be a penalty of 200 rupees (KM, 2023). The judicial inconsistencies reveal that pro-anti-animal sentiment is prevalent in the Indian judiciary, which sometimes clouds or affects their judgments. The contradictions in judicial pronouncements and gaps in animal laws embolden the online dog-hating community to commit crimes and create confusion among authorities in enforcing the rule of law and minimizing conflicts.

## **Conclusion and way forward to conserve Pariah dogs**

To conclude, the collation of information gathered from 147 residents of the Noida enclave through semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and content analysis of posts on WhatsApp groups reveals there are ten (10) dog haters who, after sporadic episodes of dog bites exaggerate the threat perception with vociferous demands for removal of community dogs. They receive support from 15 to 20 house owners who feel that street dogs are black spots in the aesthetic beauty of their living landscape and relocation is the best option. Around 20–25 people are animal sensitive and opine that dogs should be regularly given rabies and immunization vaccines for health safety and should peacefully cohabit with people. The remaining 70% of residents are neutral with no opinion about coexistence and sharing of geographical space. Around seven residents donate between INR 200 and 500 per month for the food of the six dogs, with a non-resident caregiver providing the shortfall for feeding them. She arranges daily food and looks after their medical requirements with tacit consent from the RWA and no monetary or human resources support, a clear-cut case of shirking official responsibilities. The stiff opposition from caregivers and help from the Noida police thwarted several attempts by a group of animal-insensitive residents for the permanent removal of the colony dogs. The RWA in cases of animal rights violation remains neutral or muted in response as fear of government officials and a legitimacy crisis restricts them from taking any action that is inimical to the welfare of colony-owned dogs.

The exposure of stray dogs to high-decibel firecrackers during festivals and marriages, despite the ban imposed by the Supreme Court of India in the Delhi-NCR region, causes physical and mental trauma. As a result, thousands of dogs face displacement from their place of birth, travel long distances, and die of injuries, physical exhaustion, and scarcity of food and water. This forced migration and human-induced relocations of Indian dogs due to illegal display of firecrackers is a very serious issue that needs urgent restrictions, but millions of contempt of court happen on a regular basis, with law enforcement agencies acting deaf or turning a blind eye. The main reasons for canine dehumanization and firecracker-based displacement of neighborhood dogs are poor implementation of animal welfare laws, legal illiteracy of enforcement authorities, and the appalling silence of citizens.

The ABC rules enacted in 2023 are stricter with the use of humane methods to capture stray dogs for sterilization, mandatory prerequisites for veterinarians, and installation of CCTV cameras in animal shelters. The rules are resident inclusive and direct proper briefing of residents about the ABC program implemented in their locality (Sachdeva, 2024). Since an efficacious dog population control policy depends upon a coherent strategy and professionalism, it should include all stakeholders with an air of trust and cooperation rather than a politics of blame game. The work of dog handlers, shelter operators, veterinarians, and animal health professionals needs prioritization as a high-value service with loads of professional pride. The dog population control strategy should eliminate unwanted sources of food, registration and identification of animals, provision of animal healthcare, and prevention and control of diseases. The sustainable long-term solution to reduce stray dog populations is comprehensive sterilization, efficient vaccinations, and ensuring unwanted pets do not become stray dogs (Gupta and Gupta, 2019). The need of the hour is dog sensitization and bite prevention programs in school and college curricula, interactions with stray dogs in animal shelters, creating ownership for responsible dog ownership, and animal welfare master classes for the political class of India.

The property rights guarantee exclusiveness of ownership and secure property rights to protect dog owners from damages, hence the public need for registration and licensing, humane canine control practices, and animal shelters to protect canine owners' rights. These regulations could play a key role in the stray dog population management and the reduction of its size in the future (Guseva, 2013). The ownership of stray dogs by the state through local-level bodies and RWAs is the most feasible long-term public policy to curb crimes against them, as it will provide them an umbrella of protection and deter the perpetrators from fear of litigation and incarceration. The laws for breach of canine rights are punitive, but on the contrary, they should be reformatory and include compulsory community service in animal shelters so that they inculcate compassion and companionship among the dog-hating convicts. Mahatma Gandhi said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." The rampant ill treatment of animals in contemporary India reveals that the country needs to walk many more miles before it finds a place in the pantheon of developed countries of the world.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **ORCID iD**

Praveen Rai  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0543-9667>

## References

- Ascione FR (1999) The abuse of animals and human interpersonal violence: Making the connection. In: Ascione FR and Arkow P (Eds.), *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp. 50–61.
- Bandura A (1999) Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3(3): 193–209.
- Bhutani N and Bansal S (2023) India can resolve dog-human conflict like US and Netherlands without killing the canine. *The Print*. Available at: <https://theprint.in/opinion/india-can-resolve-dog-human-conflict-like-us-and-netherlands-without-killing-the-canine/1772686/> (accessed 18 October 2024).
- Dadds MR (2008) Conduct problems and cruelty to animals in children: What is the link? In: Ascione FR (Ed.), *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research, and Application*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp. 111–131.
- Felthous AR and Kellert SR (1986) Violence against animals and people: Is aggression against living creatures generalized? *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry & the Law* 14(1): 55–69.
- FIAPO Report (2021) *In Their Own Right - Calling for Parity in Law for Animal Victims of Crimes*. Report by Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) and All Creatures Great and Small (ACGS). Available at: <https://www.fiapo.org/fiaporg/wp-content/uploads/ CrimesAgainstAnimals/CrimeAgainstStreetAnimals.pdf> (accessed 18 October 2024).
- Fox MW (2017) Animal-Insensitivity Syndrome: Recognition & Prevention. Available at: <https://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/FoxAnimalInsensitivitySyndrome2017.pdf> (accessed 23 October 2024).
- Gleyzer R, Felthous AR and Holzer CE (2002) Animal cruelty and psychiatric disorders. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 30(2): 257–265.
- Guenther KM (2020) *The Lives and Deaths of Shelter Animals*. Stanford University Press.
- Gullone E (2011) Conceptualising animal abuse with an antisocial behaviour framework. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4552201/> (accessed 23 October 2024).
- Gullone E (2014) An evaluative review of theories related to animal cruelty. *Journal of Animal Ethics* 4(1): 37–57.
- Gupta N and Gupta RK (2019) Animal welfare and human health: Rising conflicts over stray dogs in Chandigarh. *South Asia Research* 39(3): 339–352.
- Guseva V (2013) Dog ownership through the eyes of a stray dog: Property rights and the stray dog population. *Semantic Scholar*. Available at: <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:15528429> (accessed 23 October 2024).
- Hensley C and Tallichet SE (2005) Learning to be cruel?: Exploring the onset and frequency of animal cruelty. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 49(1): 37–47.
- Kavuri T (2020) *Overview of animal laws in India*. Animal Legal & Historical Center, Michigan State University College of Law. Available at: <https://www.animallaw.info/article/overview-animal-laws-india#id-5> (accessed 1 November 2024).
- Kellert SR and Felthous AR (1985) Childhood cruelty toward animals among criminals and noncriminals. *Human Relations* 38(12): 1113–1129.
- KM AR (2023) Examining the stray dog menace in India through a multi-perspective approach. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development* 8(12): a661–a668.
- Lorenz K (1974) *On Aggression*. Harper Paperbacks, India.
- Minhas A (2022) India-population of pet dogs 2014–2023. *Statista*. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1061130/india-population-of-pet-dogs/> (accessed 2 November 2024).
- Nazareth K and Mawani V (2023) Reviving tolerance towards street dogs in urban India. *The Bastion*. Available at: <https://thebastion.co.in/politics-and/environment/urban-ecology/reviving-tolerance-towards-street-dogs-in-urban-india/> (accessed 10 February 2025).
- Patil N (2023) Dogs do not belong on streets – The current menace is a result of abandonment and human perfidy. *Down To Earth*. Available at: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/dogs-do-not-belong-on-streets-the-current-menace-is-a-result-of-abandonment-and-human-perfidy-88787> (accessed 10 February 2025).

- Rai P (2024) Mentu (2013–24): Mourning the loss of a dog daughter. *LinkedIn Article*. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mentu-2013-24-mourning-loss-dog-daughter-praveen-rai-v5gac> (accessed 16 November 2024).
- Sachdeva S (2024) Checking stray dog population. *The Tribune*. Available at: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/features/checking-stray-dog-population-489358/> (accessed 16 November 2024).
- SPHI India (2023) *State of Pet Homelessness Index, India. State of Pet Homelessness Project: A global data initiative for understanding pet homelessness*, Mars Petcare. Available at: <https://stateofpethomelessness.com/latest-report/?Country=India> (accessed 16 November 2024).
- University of Edinburgh (2016) King Yudhisthira and his dog. *Story and Religion*. Available at: [www.story-andreligion.div.ed.ac.uk/schools/resources](http://www.story-andreligion.div.ed.ac.uk/schools/resources) (accessed 5 November 2024).
- WHO (2024) *Rabies in India*. World Health Organization. Available at: <https://www.who.int/india/health-topics/rabies> (accessed 16 November 2024).
- WSPA (1990) *Guidelines for Dog Population Management*. World Society for the Protection of Animals. Available at: <https://www.stray-afp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/WHO-WSPA-dog-population-management-19902.pdf> (accessed 18 October 2024).

### Author biography

Praveen Rai is a Political Analyst at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. His key areas of interest include politics, electoral competitions and opinion polling in India.