Deconstructing the Human Gaze

Stray Dogs, Indifferent Governance and Prejudiced Reactions

Rather than implement animal birth control through sterilisation and adhere to the rules of solid waste management, the municipal authority in Bangalore recently launched a programme to kill all stray dogs. This is only an eyewash, meant to placate certain groups and gain political mileage.

KRITHIKA SRINIVASAN, VIJAY K NAGARAJ

Recent history in India has seen a number of cities launch programmes to exterminate stray dogs. Bangalore recently launched a programme to kill stray dogs. This is only an eyewash, meant to placate certain authorities.

Extermination Argument

Let us closely examine the rationale provided for the extermination argument. It is contended that stray dogs are dangerous because they bite, and their bites are dangerous because they transmit rabies. What statistics on bite cases do not tell you is that, contrary to popular belief, every bite does not transmit rabies, or even cause a serious injury. Further, stray dogs rarely attack without provocation, and not every street dog that bites has rabies.

ABC Programme

The passing of the Animal Birth Control Rules in 2001 brought a legal halt to the violent and ineffective practice of killing stray dogs in the name of rabies control. However, the last few years have seen a move to resume killing on the grounds that the animal birth control (ABC) programme has not been successful. What is being overlooked is the fact that the ABC programme has not worked till now, it is because local self-governments have not been active enough providing resources for and implementing the programme.

Sustainable Solution

The only sustainable solution is for the local self-government to launch an intensive ABC campaign that follows scientific norms with regard to the minimum percentage of population that needs to be sterilised in order to prevent population growth, enlisting the support of residents and the poor “caretakers” of the “strays”. The birth control programme must be supplemented with an annual vaccination programme, for which the possibility of oral vaccines is being explored.
by the Bangalore Municipal Corporation, can best be termed as an “eyewash”, meant to placate certain groups and gain political mileage. If the local self-government and citizens’ groups that have been loudly lamenting the stray dog problem really wish to act productively and take concrete steps towards addressing the issue scientifically and effectively, they would be well advised to focus all resources and efforts on carefully designing and consistently implementing the animal birth control and vaccination programmes as well as the MSW Rules.

It would be easy to dismiss this commentary as the ramblings of an “animal lover” – an appellation with the same derogatory overtones as the “nigger lover” from the not too distant past. However, it is important to understand the real danger in advocating the genocide (literally a systematic destruction of a species or a gene pool) of stray dogs. In being party to this genocide, we take one more step towards making our society less humane and are at risk of putting to death the very things that stand to make us supposedly civilised. Every act of killing, even of a species as “insignificant” as that of the stray dog, takes us one step closer to acts of violence towards other human beings. In a world that is already torn apart by senseless violence, a move to turn the full might of the state to killing systematically and in large numbers, defenceless beings whose only crime is that they are an ordinary (read non-exotic) non-human species can only be dangerously regressive.

Email: krithika.srinivasan@tiss.edu
vijay@tiss.edu

Notes
2 The study concludes that the incidence of rabies can be attributed to lack of proper post-exposure immunisation and identifies the “keys to success” in the further reduction of rabies in India as the improved coverage with modern rabies vaccines, canine rabies control, and intensifying public education about the disease.
5 It had been observed over the years that destruction was not having any sustained beneficial effect on the incidence of rabies.