

# Critical Animal Studies *Public Lecture*

## Cow Protectionism and Indian animal advocacy: the fracturing and fusing of social movements

**Dr Yamini Narayanan**

India's intriguing status as the world's largest beef exporter, milk producer, and among the top leather producers – industries that are substantially sustained by the mass slaughter of cattle – implausibly coexists with its legislative prohibitions on cow killing. However cow protectionism politics has rarely received a critical animal studies critique. This presentation argues that the discourse as it is currently framed is fundamentally incompatible with any form of 'protection' for the cow, and is in fact devastating for the animal advocacy movement more broadly in India. Cow protectionism arises out of, and endorses, several compatible *oppressions* that support the commodification of cattle as resources: sectarianism, casteism, patriarchy, and the longest enduring subjugation in planetary history – speciesism. This presentation specifically addresses the casteist and sectarian aspect of cow protectionism, and argues that the discourse has rendered broader animal advocacy in India suspect as an ultra-nationalist right-wing movement by creating a highly divided public on issues of animal protection. To advance the animal protection movement in India, and develop its own space and politics of resistance, this paper identifies the critical need for Indian animal advocacy to form alliances with other social moments. In particular, Indian animal activism needs to strategically align with those groups that ultra-nationalist cow protectionism has tried to actively oppress, such as the Dalit rights movement, and religious minorities.

**Yamini Narayanan**, PhD, FOCAE is a Senior Lecturer in International and Community Development at Deakin University, Melbourne. Her work focuses on the politics and sociologies of human-animal relations in India, and on species-inclusive urban planning. She has just completed a three-year DECRA fellowship, funded by the Australian Research Council where she conducted one of the first studies on the implications of India's cow protection politics and practices – for the cows. Her work has been published in leading forums like *Environment and Planning D, Sustainable Development*, and *Society and Animals*. She was nominated lifelong Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. She is currently writing a book on India's cow protectionism from a critical animal ethics standpoint.

Friday, July 14 @ 6.30pm—7.30pm

Ross House 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne City.



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