

Jallikattu protests

1) Introduction

- Jallikattu is referred as bull taming event typically practiced in Tamil Nadu as a part of Pongal celebrations on Mattu Pongal day
- It is renowned as an ancient 'sport', believed to have been practised some 2500 years ago.
- It is controversial because the sport often results in major injuries and even deaths.

2) Arguments in favour of Jallikattu

- Jallikattu is a key event of Mattu Pongal, essential to preserving the indigenous bull species
- A way of life in rural, pastoral Tamil Nadu, and is indeed a celebrated feature of Tamil identity cherished in Sangam literary
- It provides financial support to the rural poor whose livelihood depends on it.
- Its innumerable references could be found in Dravidian Literature and the indigenous population of Tamilnadu has held this event for years.

3) Arguments against Jallikattu

- Animal Welfare Board of India and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) says bulls are subject to cruelty, are physically and mentally tortured for human pleasure
- The sport is directly in contravention of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- It is being played in only some of the territories so not the representation of Tamilian culture as a whole.
- It has been distorted from its earlier Form where only one person per bull was involved but now a hoard of people chase a single bull.
- There are other possible ways to preserve the native breed.
- Tradition can't be an excuse for allowing inhuman practices to flourish.
- Causing pain to animals simply to entertain humans goes against the directive principles that call upon us to protect wildlife.
- The safety of participants and spectators is also put at tremendous risk.

4) Effects of nullifying SC order

- To nullify the effect of the Supreme Court judgment through the ordinance route carries a serious risk of judicial reproach.
- It will give wrong message to people and it will undermine the powers of SC and the rule of law.
- The centre would go against the basic structure of the constitution by disregarding the separation of powers
- Government would be undermining the Right to life of animals and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 which prohibits cruelty to animals for the sake of entertainment.

5) Impact on native breeds

- If Jallikattu is banned, livestock keepers will be forced to abandon the raising of native livestock
- Lose self-sufficiency in milk production as well as promotion of organic farming.
- By importing foreign breeds, multinational commercial companies will dominate the dairy industry in India.
- India has already lost many cattle breeds and it can't afford to lose any more.
- When a ban on Jallikattu is in place, the bulls will only be sought by beef traders.

6) Implications

- **Positive**

- a) It represents the solidarity and value consensus among Tamilians which has the power to bring them together
- b) Power to influence legislation in the favour of general interest and in this way it keeps check against government hegemony.
- c) It has brought down the differences among people based on caste, religion, poverty and brought them together to the common cause.

- **Negative**

- a) It can set bad precedent by nullifying the SC jurisdiction
- b) It can initiate similar identity based protest in other parts of country for e.g. Kambala (buffalo race) in Karnataka and Dhirio (bull fight) in Goa
- c) The demand has neglected the Rights of animals and their protection.
- d) It will create a false thinking in the people that, they can protest and force government to make legislation. Thus violating Rule of Law
- e) Protest and break down of law shows inability of state government to safe guard property and their fear of ethnic movement.

7) Ethical aspect

- Gandhiji said, "The level of civilization can be judged by the way animals are treated."
- A bull taming sport which gives the opportunities of social gatherings and social integration, uplifts the idea of "unity in diversity"
- However, Torture of animals can't be justified in an era where man is expected to live in harmony with nature.
- A feudal tradition, that glamourises masculinity, cannot be allowed in a modern and progressive nation that has been at the forefront in reforming orthodox practices.
- "Tradition" is never a sufficient justification for cruelty, and a cruel tradition should never be allowed to define a culture.
- Sati system which was once a part of tradition was banned because of inhuman practice.

8) International experience

- The tradition of bullfighting in Spain is cited to legitimise the conduct of Jallikattu and present it as a viable tourist attraction.
- Spanish state of Catalonia banned the sport in 2012 after a prolonged 'culture versus rights' debate.
- In 2002, Germany took animal rights to a new level by giving animals constitutional protection.

9) Way Forward

- The proper course for the Centre and the State government is to persuade the Supreme Court that a Jallikattu that does not involve cruelty to animals and that guarantees the safety of spectators and participants.
- The proposed middle path of permitting jallikattu but tightly regulating it is potentially feasible
- Under the Convention on Biological Diversity and heritage status practices worldwide, it is customary that these ancient traditional practices are left as they are but with rules to organise and regulate them.
- Follow the famous Spanish bullfighting example where measures taken to avoid lethal damage
- Create awareness regarding apathy faced by animals. Sports personalities, film stars, eminent jurists can come forward