

INTERNAL COMBUSTION

BOB RUPANI



SEVERAL COWS DON'T COME HOME ANYMORE. THEY ARE OUT IN THE OPEN ENDANGERING ROAD SAFETY

bob@overdrive.co.in



A disclaimer, "Some of what I say here is based on hearsay". Having said this let me also state I have no reason not to believe what I have been told. A few may wonder why this disclaimer. Well, it's because of the times we live in and the presently prevailing atmosphere of 'intolerance' in our country.

While seeking votes in 2014, the BJP promised its goal was development. But soon after coming to power, it was also revealed that on the Modi Sarkar's

agenda were things like controlling what we eat, drink, do, see, speak and maybe even think. Yes, these days almost everything we do is under the scanner, and being outspoken (like I usually am) can get one into trouble because 'freedom of speech' is no longer really free. Hence this disclaimer. Also because I am writing about cows. But why cows? And that too in Overdrive?

Well from what I am hearing, cows are now increasingly becoming a serious road safety hazard. What? Don't believe it? Let me tell you why. As we all know, the Modi Sarkar has banned eating of cows (read beef) in most parts of our country. Actually, in some 24 out of our 29 states in India, we now have various regulations prohibiting either the slaughter or sale of cows. And because they cannot be sold for meat, they are only useful to cattle owners and farmers till they produce milk. So what happens to cows that stop giving milk? Their poor owners can obviously not continue feeding or caring for them. Therefore they are let loose. On our streets and highways, free to roam all over the countryside. These hapless and starving, sick and deserted cows now hang around grazing wherever they can. If they approach anyone's fields or homes, they are chased back out on to the roads.

I am informed this is the scenario prevailing almost all over the country. According to some reports, India has about 125 million cows. Given this, at least half of them presently may not be producing milk. So you suddenly have millions of cows with nobody to care for them. Gau rakshaks (cow protectors) you say. Yes, the Modi Sarkar has also given us this group of people, who I had never heard about before this government came to power. But again from what I gather, the vigilantism of these self appointed saviours of cows is limited to beating up and murdering those they suspect of buying and selling cows or eating their meat. Or even worse, storing it. Remember the 2015 Dadri mob lynching.

Having cow meat is now a recipe for getting killed by 'gau rakshak's. But what about the poor cows? Who is looking after them? Large numbers are being abandoned and that's why we find a lot more of them left to linger on our already crowded and crazy roads. Bikes and bicycles try and weave their

way past, and sometimes end up falling or having an accident with another road user or vehicle. Speeding cars and trucks now have even more moving obstacles to deal with, and given our already legendary lack of driving skills, more mishaps are happening. And once it gets dark and the cows become difficult to spot, things are even worse. And God help you if you hit a cow. Even if it belongs to nobody nearby, hordes of people will appear in an instant throwing abuses and demanding compensation. Fists will fly and blood will be left to dry. Because, Oh, Darling, Yeh Hai India.

Another thing I was told lately is also distressing. This being the summer holiday season, many of us are taking breaks to either go on a vacation or visit our 'native place' or home towns. Planes, trains, buses all are packed to capacity and going full. There is stiff competition, especially amongst inter-city luxury bus operators. Along with comfortable and spacious seats, many also promise 'on time arrival'. To meet the strenuous and ambitious schedules, each bus has a couple of drivers who take turns at the wheel. Surely nothing can be wrong with that, can it? But let's not forget this is our very own 'Mahan Bharat' and anything is possible here. A friend who was on one of these luxury buses recently, described an awful and unbelievable practice. These drivers apparently change positions and seats while the bus is moving! At speeds well over 80 kmph! First the driver behind the wheel stands up keeping his foot pressed on the accelerator and one hand lightly on the steering. Then the other chap who is sitting on the opposite side, jumps over the gear lever and transmission tunnel and makes his way to the driver's seat. While this procedure of changing drivers is happening, the bus moves along at high speed without anyone keeping an eye on the road ahead or a firm grip on any of the controls. If this is not insisting for a catastrophe, I don't know what is. When my friend objected and asked the drivers to stop doing such unsafe things, he was told, "Hi mind your own business. We know what we are doing. And don't you want to get to your destination on time". Yeah sure, they will positively get there. The question is how many other innocent lives will such fools take with them. 