

In this dissertation, we study the folds and complications of the highly charged public debate in India around beef from two different angles. First, we will frame the anatomy of the discussion in terms of whether economic, ecological or religious arguments are being used and second, whether varied consumption patterns of meat across this country can give us some idea as to whether the legalising of beef consumption can help with diversifying protein consumption while making it more affordable. In order to do so, we will take a look at the Constituent Assembly debates and also analyse field reports on prices and commodities in the animal protein market in Chandigarh-Mohali and Kolkata. The reason for the comparison is that in these two urban regions, we get a very diverse comparison between two very different meat markets. While Haryana was one of the first states to comply with the ban and was at the forefront of framing convergent rules, West Bengal resisted the ban to such an extent that its Chief Minister called it unconstitutional and even threatened to move court against it. Most importantly, she repeatedly called it a staple food and called the ban an infringement on the federal structure and legislating rights of the state assembly. These two states, therefore, allow us to think of two completely different political contexts and also two different food cultures since West Bengal is popularly known as a meat and fish-eating culture. We start by looking at popular newspaper debates and academic debates to frame the cattle slaughter issue in India. We then discuss the Constituent Assembly debates about the article 48 of the directive principles of the Indian Constitution which introduced the legal limitations on cattle slaughter in India. Next, we survey the market and rate comparisons between Chandigarh- Mohali and Kolkata. In the concluding section, we will bring the arguments together and reflect on the importance of the cow slaughter debate.