

Declaration of The Rights of Elephants

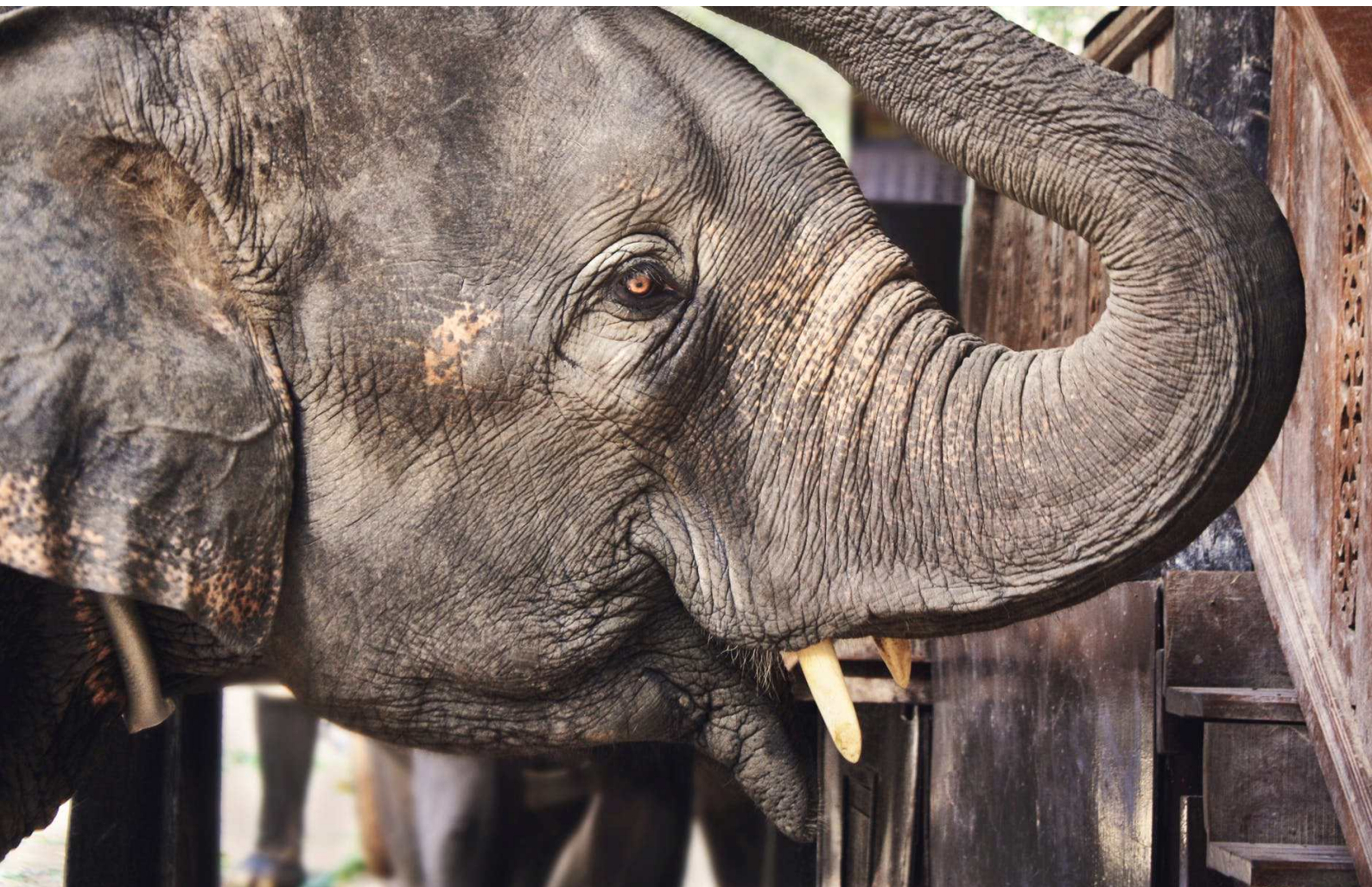
PREAMBLE

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ABOUT FIAPO

FIAPO (Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations) is India's leading animal protection body. As a collective voice for the animal protection community in India, FIAPO unites all animal protection organisations nationwide to exchange ideas, build expertise and take action to strengthen the animal rights movement in the country. FIAPO works with over 160 member organisations, 200 supporter organisations and over 1000 activists in more than 70 cities across India. They are the largest Federation in the country and one of the largest movement-building organisations in the world.



When, in the course of history, it has become clear that human beings are neither the center of the Universe nor the only worthy beings on this planet, it becomes necessary to extend the protection accorded by personhood to living beings other than human beings, thus fostering a peaceful co-existence among all living beings as well as respect for their inherent value and life.

Whereas, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the inalienable rights of all sentient beings is the foundation of a healthy and balanced environment and a world without human-animal conflict;

Whereas, it is necessary for the recognition of the basic rights of animals to ensure they have a dignified life and to avoid their being abused and neglected in the utilization of shared resources and habitats;

Whereas, specifically, the disregard and contempt for rights of elephants have resulted in barbarous and unjustifiable atrocities being committed on them with utter neglect towards their suffering, thus necessitating the enforcement of such rights as the elephants inherently deserve while equally inheriting this world with other living beings and being stakeholders in the future of our planet;

Whereas, human beings massacre free-living elephants for their tusks, skin and body parts, arbitrarily and systematically on a large scale capture and enslave them for commercial or private uses, and destroy, fragment and degrade their natural habitats, resulting in loss of historic migration routes of elephants, loss of their shared knowledge and traditional wisdom integral for their long-term survival, loss of opportunity to mingle with other populations for their species survival and enormous casualties by being hit by trains, poisoning, and electrical lines;

Whereas, those elephants that have been kept captive for use by humans for entertainment in zoos and circuses; for religious rituals or for offering rides to tourists have their well-being severely compromised by being subject to extreme control by means of inflicting extreme abuse to develop fear psychosis in them;

Whereas, such life lacks dignity, and an opportunity for the elephants to enjoy the natural world they were born into;

Whereas, it is important to promote a harmonious and a compassionate relationship between human beings and elephants;

Whereas, it is recognized that elephant societies are heavily dependent on cultural transmission and that elephants have social behaviors and interactions similar to humans such as nurturing young ones, building kinship, altruism, hierarchies, and grief;

Now, therefore,

We, the people, recognise the inherent value that the Elephant has and hereby proclaim this Declaration of the Rights of Elephants:

1. Elephants possess the right to a dignified life

Elephants feel pain and suffering and are masters of their own will. It is recognized that human beings are not the owners of their lives and cannot deprive them of their right to life and freedom. Moreover, life does not mean mere existence but a quality or dignified life and human beings cannot deprive elephants of their dignity.

2. Right to bodily liberty, integrity, and autonomy

Recognition is given to the fact that elephants possess autonomy of acts and thereby are beings of their own will who have the right to liberty and hence must have access to environment where there is freedom to express, without external hindrances, their true personalities and achieve, to the fullest, their natural zest for freedom and growth.

3. Right against commercial exploitation, torture, cruel and degrading treatment

Human beings are not the masters of nature and for a peaceful coexistence, it is imperative to ensure that no elephant is held in slavery or servitude or made to suffer arbitrarily for the personal or collective gains of human beings.

4. Right to the physical and mental well-being

It is essential to also provide an environment which promotes healthy physical and mental well-being for elephants and human beings cannot, for self-interest, harm the environment over which no individualistic claim can be made by one species.

5. Right to interact and socialize with other elephants

Elephants are social beings and hence have the right to interact and socialize, in a natural manner, with others of their own species.


6. Right to equal consideration of interests

In case the above rights might conflict with the rights of other humans or non-humans, the conflicts will have to be resolved based on the principle of the equal consideration of interests.

We, the people, proclaim to undertake, as individuals and as organs of a common society, a step forward in the direction of promoting the interests of animals and to that effect, promote the rights and freedom of elephants by progressive measures.



E-18A, 1st Floor, East of Kailash, New Delhi, 110065

 011-41072945

 mail@fiapo.org

 www.fiapo.org