



FOOD

The Right To A Livable Planet: The Intersection Of Vegan Rights, Human Dignity, And Environmental Justice

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Abstract

Veganism is increasingly recognized as both a consumer and human right, ensuring individuals can adhere to ethical, religious, and health-based dietary choices without discrimination or negligence. A 2025 Bengaluru consumer protection case, where over Rs. 1 lakh was awarded for serving non-vegan food in a vegan order, reinforces accountability for such rights across the food supply chain. Legal protections safeguard consumer dignity and the freedom to manifest dietary beliefs under constitutional provisions. Beyond personal and cultural considerations, veganism is central to combating climate change, as plant-based diets reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation substantially. Therefore, protecting vegan dietary rights aligns ethical consumption with global sustainability goals, marking a critical intersection of justice, health, and planetary welfare.

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Case Overview

The case involved a 37-year-old vegan woman, Nisha G., who ordered a vegan sandwich through the Swiggy platform from the restaurant Paris Panini. Shockingly, the sandwich contained pieces of prawns, a clear violation of her strict vegan diet founded on faith and ahimsa, which forbids harm to any living being. The incident caused her immense emotional distress and spiritual trauma, leading to several cleansing rituals at home.

Legal Findings and Compensation Ordered

The Bengaluru Urban District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission ruled both Swiggy and Paris Panini jointly liable for negligence and deficiency in service. The commission ordered them to pay the complainant a total of Rs. 1,05,146 (plus interest), consisting of:

- Rs. 50,000 as general compensation for causing hurt and trauma,
- Rs. 50,000 as compensation for mental agony and emotional distress,
- Rs. 5,000 towards litigation expenses,
- Plus, a refund of Rs. 146 (cost of the sandwich) with 12% annual interest from the date of the complaint until realization of the entire amount.

The ruling highlighted the serious nature of delivering non-vegetarian food to a vegan or a person with faith- or culture-based dietary restrictions, emphasizing the emotional, religious, and psychological consequences of such negligence.

Faith, Ahimsa, and Consumer Rights

The doctrine of ahimsa, central to many Indian spiritual traditions, inspires veganism as a faith-driven ethical choice. The legal recognition of veganism as a protected dietary right is grounded in constitutional freedoms of religion, conscience, and cultural expression.

This case demonstrates that:

- The law protects dietary choices anchored in religious or ethical beliefs,
- Ethical consumption imposes non-negotiable duty of care on service providers,
- Consumer protection frameworks encompass respect for the dignity and conscience of vegan consumers.

The Environmental Imperative of Veganism

Veganism is widely recognized as an ethical or faith-based lifestyle and as a powerful tool in combating climate change and promoting sustainability. Switching to a vegan diet lowers climate impact sharply. One study found that compared to a Mediterranean omnivorous diet, a vegan one produces 46% less CO₂-equivalent emissions, uses 33% less land, and requires 7% less water. A large-scale UK analysis revealed vegans had just 25% of the dietary impact for land use, 46% for water use, 27% for water pollution and 34% for biodiversity. These numbers underline how embracing plant-based eating can be one of the most effective individual-level actions to reduce environmental damage. Thus, embracing veganism represents a practical and impactful means to mitigate environmental degradation and climate change, serving planetary health goals that extend far beyond individual faith or ethical considerations.

From Ahimsa to Climate Action: Veganism in Modern Rights Frameworks

Protecting the right to vegan dietary choices is intertwined with safeguarding freedoms of conscience and religion under constitutional frameworks. It also contributes to the urgent global climate agenda by encouraging low-impact, sustainable consumption patterns.

The legal protection of vegan consumers is thus pivotal:

- Supporting ethical consumption choices aimed at reducing environmental footprints.
- Reinforcing societal shifts towards sustainable food systems.
- Upholding principles of ahimsa that resonate with deeper human rights and ecological justice.

Conclusion: A Vision for Sustainable Justice

This compensation order of Rs. 1,05,146 (plus interest) for a breach of vegan dietary commitment sends a strong message about the seriousness with which courts uphold faith and ethical rights in consumer transactions.

Veganism is far more than a personal lifestyle; it is a climate-conscious ethical stance that is increasingly recognized and protected within modern legal systems. Its growing legitimacy highlights a deeper truth: if we are to build a sustainable future, our laws must evolve to support choices that safeguard both the planet and personal conviction. Upholding accountability, respecting faith-based and environmental commitments, and empowering individuals to live in alignment with their values are not just legal responsibilities, they are moral imperatives. In a world grappling with ecological crisis, embracing such principles is essential.

For more details, write to us at: contact@indialaw.in

References:

1. [Food and Climate Change: Healthy diets for a healthier planet | United Nations](#)
2. [The climate benefits of veganism and vegetarianism](#)
3. [Vegan diet has just 30% of the environmental impact of a high-meat diet, major study finds](#)
4. [Vegan diet can halve your carbon footprint, study shows](#)

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