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COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

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An International Educational Charitable Trust for Animal Rights

In this issue:

Guiding youth

Bonding

Snakes

Otters

Birds



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Scaly-breasted Munia. *Photo courtesy: Neeraj Mishra*

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Editorial

Of human bondage

Human bonding is a mutual, interactive process, different from “liking.” It involves the development of a close, personal relationship, commonly between family members or friends. Characterized by affection and trust, bonding refers to attachment developing between romantic partners, close friends, or parents and children.

Bonding may occur between humans and animals as well, between animals, and even between animals of different species.

In “Across the Bridge,” a 1957 Hollywood production based on Graham Greene’s short story, an unscrupulous financier absconds to Mexico with company funds. He evades the authorities and schemes to murder a man, dispose of his body and assume his identity. He soon learns that the murdered man is an even more notorious fugitive from justice. His victim’s dog Dolores keeps following him, and he keeps kicking it away until he realizes Dolores is his only friend in the world. The financier’s bond to his victim’s dog ultimately leads to his downfall.

A business executive who met with ill-fortune recalls the two weeks he spent on the streets

of New Delhi and Kolkata, grateful for the love stray dogs lavished on him.

In 2001, Oregon's *Mail Tribune* reported the story of a fish named Falstaff and Chino, a 15-inch orange-and-black Koi dog who loved him. The two met in 1998, at Chino's backyard pond. Every day, Chino would pad out to the pond and peer into the water, waiting for Falstaff to appear. Falstaff would swim to the surface, offering what seemed like a finny greeting. Together, the inter-species pals forged a strong bond.

These stories highlight the bonds forged between dogs and other species, while tales like "Black Beauty" and "Lassie" portray the strong bonds children can have with animals. Biological anthropologists have found that dogs demonstrate an ability to read human cues and behaviour, accurately interpreting hand gestures and glances. Though there is a 75 percent overlap between the genetic codes of humans and canines, and dogs are the friendliest of all creatures, anecdotes abound about the bonds that have sprung up between other animals and humans, and between different animal species other than dogs.

Patterns of individual and family life have been undergoing transformation and adults as well as children increasingly move in and out of varied households and relationships over longer lives; amid problems caused by

poverty, the west's struggle for world dominance and financial market turbulence, human-animal bonding has become more meaningful to many. It is a connection between people and animals, domestic or wild; be it a cat as a pet or birds outside one's window. In a world of fragmented family and interpersonal connections, such bonds facilitate new social



Falstaff and Chino see eye-to-eye.
Photo courtesy: Mail Tribune.

contacts and friendships. For many in urban settings, animal companionship fills the yearning for closer connection with nature and other living beings. Many experience a profound, even spiritual, intimacy in this bond, enhanced through touch, non-verbal communication and sensory attunement of feeling states.

Research proves the majority of pet-lovers are not socially

inept or trying to replace human companions, though those who experience social stigma or rejection also value the non-judgemental acceptance of animal company. Most people who connect with animals have large capacities for love, compassion and empathy.

Research into such bonds began in the late 18th century when, in York, England, a retreat was established to provide humane treatment for the mentally ill. By having patients care for farm animals, officials theorized that the combination of animal contact and productive work would facilitate the patients' rehabilitation.

It is not the worst of humanity that interests us in animal stories, but the best; our capacity to care deeply for other, more vulnerable creatures. We are a nurturing, relational species, sensitive to the vulnerable.

While we instinctively want to protect the vulnerable, we also make judgments about who or what is most vulnerable and shift our sympathies in that direction. This is why we are more appalled when a young girl is murdered than when a 25-year-old man gets knifed to death. We are not thrilled with either one, but there is anger against people who commit acts against children, which spills over to animals.

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Guiding the young

By Radha Dobhal

The fresh minds of children and young adults are like sponges, eager to soak up new ideas, and ready to accept anything that piques their curiosity, or is exciting. It is crucial that their parents and teachers, the people who are shaping their future, instill a respect for animals in them.

Hobbies are acquired in this growing period. It is the parents' duty to make sure that hobbies are not only productive, but also that the pastimes children choose don't turn into something violent that might harm other people or animals.

Studies in psychology, sociology and criminology have, for decades, shown that violence against humanity often begins with violence against animals.

Our guidance can influence children towards the acquisition of a range of *ahimsak* hobbies as their interests grow and change. Philately (stamp collection) and numismatics (coin collection) are fine, but acquiring shells could evolve into collecting the remains of live animals as trophies. Leather puppets and bone china figurines are also collectibles whose animal origins are only too easily forgotten.

Giftng a child a catapult might seem a good idea, but

slingshots can be used to hurt small animals and birds. This thoughtlessness desensitizes a child's immature mind to the suffering of other creatures, and should be curbed.

We should never give boys toy pistols or guns, action figures with guns, or war games, or allow such gifts to be given to our children. It is better to refuse a gift politely than to risk damaging an impressionable mind. The giver may be explained the reason for refusal and asked to substitute a more acceptable gift.

Deadly weapons

Unfortunately, shooting associations and air-rifle clubs are known to lure boys by making them feel that target shooting is a manly sport. The sound of guns and rifles being fired upsets animals and birds in close proximity, just as when crackers are exploded. It is unwise for parents who believe in reverence for life to give their children deadly weapons.

A visit to a hill station may have children wanting to sit on camels, ponies or even elephants. Once they know the cruel conditions under which the animals are living, they will be sensitive enough to shun joyrides.

It should be explained to children just why they are not taken to circus shows, or allowed to spend an afternoon at the local zoo for recreation. They need to be told that

animals perform only if they have been subjected to hunger, fear and torture. And the jailed zoo animals are a far cry from the education, research and conservation zoos profess to spread. Likewise, aquariums can be termed prisons in water.

Shoot with cameras

It is far worse to allow kids to keep fish in tanks or birds in cages at home. Seeing wildlife in their natural surroundings is the answer. The long-standing adage "shoot with the camera and not the gun" holds good. If such visits are not feasible, there are TV channels that can make children appreciate animals and birds living in forests.

A number of studies have shown that there are several ways in which some TV shows, however, may be harmful to the mental and physical health of children. Most TV offerings are not educational. Movies like "Anaconda," "Jurassic Park," and "Godzilla" present animals as monsters which must be hunted down and killed. Other movies like "Free Willy," "Homeward Bound – The Incredible Journey," "Hachiko," and "Marley and Me" show unconditional love and attachment between animals and humans. Featuring the loyalty, faithfulness and intelligence of our animal friends, they make children compassionate towards animals – and humans. It makes children want to keep dogs and cats,

which become parts of their families. The bonds between them are beneficial and rewarding to the children.

Some video and computer games portray killing and maiming. The majority of them involving shooting or killing an opponent. They feature



Early bonding. Photo courtesy: Yogesh Khanage.

realistic animation showing beheadings, and splattering blood after a man or animal is shot or wounded. We need to explain to children why they should not derive pleasure from such games.

We are what we eat

Compassion towards animals comes more easily to children in vegetarian families, as they have been brought up in kinder atmospheres. It has been drilled into them that animals are sentient beings who feel pleasure and pain.

Children of non-vegetarian families, on the other hand, are relatively insensitive, the general argument being: "We didn't kill the animal, so it's

OK to eat it." I was aghast when a neighbour took her one-and-a-half-year-old son to watch a goat being sacrificed on *Bakri-id* by her family, her reason being that the child should get used to seeing blood. She was desensitizing him to bloodshed.

Entertainment

Kids love to fly kites, but need to be dissuaded from using *manja*. The fighting kite's string is coated with crushed glass, making it razor sharp to cut opponents' kites down. No matter how carefully a kite is flown, *manja* can severely wound flying birds. They get entangled, struggle in panic, and fall to the ground. The *manja* cuts their wings, bodies, or feet so deeply it results in profuse bleeding, and often gruesome death, if beheaded.

Deriving pleasure in watching animals suffer is sadistic. Children should therefore be stopped from exploding

loud firecrackers which cause fear in dogs, cats and birds. The good news is that environmental concerns have resulted in many school children taking pledges not to explode firecrackers, and their numbers are growing. Also, there are humane alternatives to leather cricket balls and feather shuttlecocks.

On the right path

Since everything children see, hear and read can never be under the complete control of parents and teachers, the children can be taught at an early age to be able to distinguish between what is humane to see, read, hear and do, and what is not.

Former President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam said "A righteous heart leads to a beautiful character. That leads to harmony at home which in turn brings order in the nation. And when there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world. Thus, instilling this one quality of righteousness in children by their parents in a spiritual environment and by their teachers can lead to a peaceful world."

Righteousness and reverence for life go hand in hand. It is essential to explain the *ahimsak* way of life to children so that they do not follow our views blindly but believe in, and want to lead, lives which respect all creation.



Radha Dobhal is BWC's education officer.



The misunderstood snake

By Ashoke Dasgupta

Love of snakes is called ophiophilia; fear of them is ophiophobia or snake-phobia.

A couple of years ago, it was reported that a lady passenger's belt suddenly came alive on arrival at the UK's Glasgow Airport. It turned out to be a harmless, live snake which had been chilled prior to the flight to render it comatose, but regained consciousness in the heat of the terminal.

Items made from reptiles' skins are equally bad, be they from India or abroad, protected or not. Baby reptiles are also captured, stuffed and sold by poachers for prices ranging from ₹15.00 to ₹500.00.

We should not forget the cruelty involved in keeping reptiles at zoos and snake parks. Scientific evidence indicates that reptiles should never be imprisoned or handled by humans (even for a few minutes while taking a photograph, a common occurrence) as it causes them unimaginable harm. Such handling is taken to extremes in cases where people have spent several days in cages full of poisonous and non-poisonous snakes to attract public attention, and even had scorpions crawling all over them. Such meaningless *sarp yagnas* promoting "feats of

valour" have been banned in West Bengal and Kerala.

Law flouted

The snake-handling trend seems to have resurfaced in 2010, with a unique wedding ceremony in the Satoda Jungle in which a couple used snakes as garlands.

Though the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, bans the display of wild animals, this law is violated blatantly year after year. Celebrations involving the worshipping of live snakes



Our low-down friend.
Photo courtesy: Krushna Ghule

at *Nag Panchmi* are overlooked. This year, the festival falls on August 4.

Snakes are trapped in forests and kept in small boxes, plastic jars, sacks, baskets or earthen pots. They are starved, and their fangs brutally pulled out. Their mouths are stitched shut, sometimes with a space for their tongues to stick out.

Spectators are given to believe that snakes dance to music. This is not true, because snakes don't have ears. They sway to the movements of the flutes and spread their hoods as a defence mechanism.

The *haldi*, *kumkum* and *gula* sprinkled on the snakes inevitably get into their eyes, blinding some of them because of the powders' lead content.

Only mammals can produce and drink milk. Snakes, being reptiles, do not normally drink milk but, because they are kept without food and water for days after being caught from the wilds, try to drink it in an attempt to re-hydrate.

Heightened public awareness of these cruelties has resulted in lower numbers of snakes being exploited every year.

Leather made to look reptilian

When the trade in reptile skins was banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, leather industry marketing geniuses came up with calf leather embossed and finished to look like snake, python, crocodile, alligator, and monitor-lizard skins. Traders proudly touted these as alternatives to reptile skins. Probing revealed that the material was calf leather, finished to resemble reptile skin.

This trend resurfaced in 2009 with *Da Milano* snake print, jungle themes and other animal prints featured on leather handbags, footwear, belts and accessories.

These days, snake-skin items like footwear, handbags, wallets, belts and watch-straps may not be seen often, but that does

not mean snakes are no longer skinned illegally in India.

In snake-infested areas like some Tamil Nadu districts, catching and killing snakes for their skins (the most sought-after being the *saral*, or cobra) supplements the incomes of villagers.

The snake-skin is obtained in one piece by nailing a snake's head to a tree, slitting the body from end to end with a knife and then peeling the skin off to preserve it in salt pots until sold to wholesalers. The skinless victim often remains alive for a couple of days.

Snake oil

A by-product of the snake-skin industry is the oil from their livers, extracted for medicinal and polishing purposes.

The Irulas – tribal folk from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh – used to catch snakes with sticks, and were the main suppliers of snake skins. They are also known to eat snakes. When the trade in snake skins was banned, they formed the Irula Snake Catchers' Co-operative and switched to catching snakes for venom-extraction.

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust is the only approved snake-venom-extraction centre in India. Its snake farm has a daily venom extraction show (think marketing gimmick) for the public.

In 2010, The Punjab Wildlife Preservation Department issued

a notice to Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, seeking an explanation for its acquisition of expensive venom from cobras, Russell's vipers and saw-scaled vipers from Pune's Haffekine Institute without informing the state governments as required. Moreover, the research to be carried out had not received clearance.

Phoney western images

One of the images associated with India abroad is that of a land of snake-charmers, though they are a dying breed because the law forbids such roadside shows.

A number of snake-charmers are, however, still to be seen outside hotels like those in Agra which get significant volumes of foreign clientele. The Agra snake charmers hail from the nearby Toola Tiwaria Village. Rain or shine, these *madaris* (snake charmers) attract crowds, open their baskets and play flutes, making the snakes in the baskets dance to their tune.

A 2010 news report stated the Government had banned the snakes used by snake-charmers from Sapera Basti Village, near Badarpur, on the outskirts of Delhi. Consequently the charmers learnt to play new musical instruments like trumpets, and formed 40 musical bands comprising 12-14 members each. These bands hired themselves out to weddings and parties, a more humane vocation.

In April 2011, 42 snakes were injected with micro-chips in Delhi. This was done to ensure that snakes registered with the Forest Department are not replaced.

Tourists are attracted to snake-and-mongoose fights. Such roadside shows are visibly cruel — and illegal. Usually, it takes so long for wildlife and police personnel to arrive that the fight is over and the group has packed up and left by then.

Temporary snake visits

India has about 270 species of snakes (including water, land and burrowing snakes), of which only 60 are venomous.

If the area surrounding your home contains vegetation, snakes may sometimes enter your home uninvited. The resulting panic is no longer as bad as it used to be a few decades ago, when they were put to death in a barbaric manner. (Snakes do not take revenge, but the smell of a dead snake may attract others to the spot, causing imaginative human fears). If a snake crosses your path, it is best to keep out of its way and call an ophiologist, a specialist in handling snakes, immediately. Make sure the captured snake is released in a wild area immediately, and not kept in captivity.



Ashoke Dasgupta is the editor of Compassionate Friend.

Fact, not fancy

Freeing captured birds

By Nirmal Nishchit

On *Samvatsari* Day, observed by Jains, birds are freed in order to attain salvation. (*Samvatsari* falls on the last day of *Paryushan* and is considered a most pious day when forgiveness is asked from family and friends, in case of having hurt them, by saying "*michhami dukkadam*".) Ironically, on the eve of this festival, hundreds of "free" birds are captured from jungles and brought in cages to temples so people may buy and "free" them. Few know that, for every bird sold for release, three have died during trapping and transportation; and upon release, none survive. So, not one gets to be "as free as a bird," but hundreds that were free suffer and die.

The birds thus bought and released from cages are unable to fly immediately or even survive because, away from their natural habitats, they do not know how to fend for themselves. They usually fall exhausted to the ground after initially soaring into the sky. Not perceiving danger, they could even get electrocuted while perching on overhead wires.

Such birds, cruelly and illegally trapped from the jungles in the previous week or so, crammed into baskets and smuggled

into cities, with little or no food and water (suffering from hunger and dehydration), never survive in urban areas devoid of adequate vegetation. They may also be attacked by dogs, cats and boys with catapults.

Deadly freedom

It is not easy to "save" birds from captivity. Dramatically flinging cage doors open and urging terrified and confused birds to fly away does not help them – in fact, it harms them. They need to learn and, gradually, adjust to the vastness of their new natural (not concrete-urban) surroundings, and develop the ability to fend for themselves not only for food, but also against predators.

If born in captivity, it is almost impossible for them to instinctively take care of themselves in the wild. They do not know where to find food and water, what to eat, where to rest, how to build nests, or how to remain safe from the elements and from other creatures. They may trust the types of birds they have been in close contact with and also humans, which could turn out to be drawbacks for their survival. Having lived in captivity, they lack the immunity and ability to cope with rough jungle life and therefore suffer and die soon.

However, if birds are returned to the very same habitat from which they were trapped within days of being caught, there is a good chance of them re-adapting to their natural wild

surroundings. But, if they are fledglings (having been snatched from their nests), or if their wings have been clipped, their survival is doubtful.

If captured adult birds who have lived in cages long are to be released in the wilds, they need to be conditioned in stages by gradually moving them into bigger and bigger aviaries kept in surroundings similar to the wild area in which their own specie live, and where they are proposed to be set free, with their cage doors kept open so they can, if they wish, return to the security of cage, food and shelter. However, if they are from abroad, they are unlikely to survive in our jungles; and, unless internationally protected, it is not illegal to keep them in captivity: therein lies a loophole.

Free to try and fly

Interestingly, Delhi's Jain Bird Hospital (opposite the Red Fort) shifts healthy pigeons to its rooftop daily. These birds have been nursed back to health. They are free to fly away should they want to and, if they do, most of them manage fine because pigeons survive and breed normally in urban areas.

There are people who urge residents to keep bowls of water on building terraces and balconies for birds to drink during the summer months. A noble deed no doubt, but it could backfire if there are cats in the area that may lie in wait to pounce on them.

Some people think they are doing a good deed by buying birds to free them from their caged existence. Unfortunately they are unaware that this humane act may backfire in another way. The same trader may pick up the released bird for resale soon after. Unless born in captivity, small birds sold in pet shops have been



Although protected under wildlife laws, parakeets are the most-trapped. *Photo courtesy: Neeraj Mishra*

clandestinely transported from various Indian states' dense forests, where they were cruelly trapped. Their trapping probably entailed using bird-lime – a thick, adhesive substance smeared on branches and twigs, to which the birds get stuck. Another method of catching birds in the wild is to use a caged female bird as bait to attract males in large numbers. The males are captured in nets. Many birds (including migratory ones) that

get caught in mechanical traps struggle to escape, hurting themselves severely, and are consequently left to die or killed to be eaten. Bird poachers have begun initiating children and teenagers to the practice in the hope that forest officials will not arrest minors.

For more information on how birds are trapped, see <http://www.bwcindia.org/Webforms/LearnAbout/TrappingBirds.html>

Illegal trapping

A 2001 report stated that 8,000 birds were illegally trapped in India every day and about 50,000 traders earned a living from these hapless birds. Who knows the exact figures today? Poaching is flourishing because the country's 118 bird sanctuaries are unable to protect them. It is also flourishing because of the demand for live birds. Forest-captured and captive-born birds (who have lost their instincts) are sold not only for release, but also as "pets," or to be killed for meat, medicine, black magic, bird-fights and taxidermy.

Buying birds to release them merely stimulates demand, funnelling more money into the bird trade. Released birds are doomed to die soon. Though the action is well-meant, the exact opposite of what is intended happens when trapped birds are released: birds that were already free in

the wild are captured, tortured and released in alien surroundings... so they either die, or survive to live in cages again, jailed for life, to go through the same cycle of suffering and death.

Beauty Without Cruelty discourages trading in, or keeping, caged birds irrespective of their origin: wild or captive-born, Indian or foreign. Birds don't deserve life imprisonment even if kept in so-called "comfort." Prevention (not caging) is better than the cure (unplanned release). People should desist from caging birds in the first place. Vegetarians should especially regard this as an extension of the principle of non-violence. Homes vegetarian in spirit never feature birds in cages.



Timeline

1977: BWC asked the Government to ban the export of (literally) painted finches which was done.

1980: BWC strongly backed the Jain community's objections to doves being exported and the Government relented.

1991: BWC's representations resulted in all birds being shifted to the Export Policy's Banned List. Like all Government policies, this policy is reviewed each year, and exceptions have been made since.

Around the world No GM food please – we're animals

Animals know something we don't. Pigs and chickens are refusing genetically modified (GM) food in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Most buffalo in Haryana, India, refuse cottonseed cakes if made from GM cotton plants. Geese migrating through Illinois, USA, only munched the sections of a soybean field that were non-GM. When given a choice, elk, deer, raccoons, and rats avoided GM organisms. And Iowa, USA, squirrels, which devour natural corn regularly, refuse the GM variety.

A farmer bought a bag full of GM corn ears, and another of non-GM ears, leaving them in his garage till winter, in the USA. By springtime, mice had broken into the natural corn bag and finished it; the GM cobs were untouched.

There are eight GM food crops: soy, corn, cotton, canola, sugar beets, Hawaiian papaya, zucchini and yellow squash. The two primary reasons plants are engineered are to allow them to either drink poison, or to produce poison.

Poison drinkers are called herbicide-tolerant. Their DNA is outfitted with bacterial genes that allow them to survive otherwise deadly doses of toxic herbicides. The first five crops on the list above have herbicide-tolerant varieties. The

poison producers are called Bt crops. Inserted genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus Thuringiensis* produce an insect-killing pesticide called Bt-toxin in every cell of the plant. The papaya and squashes have virus genes inserted, to fight off a plant virus. All GM crops are linked to dangerous side-effects.

British study

Research has revealed that toxins implanted into GM food crops to kill pests are also reaching the bloodstreams of women and unborn babies.

A landmark UK study found 93 percent of blood samples taken from pregnant women and 80 percent from umbilical cords tested positive for traces of the toxins.

Millions of acres in North and South America are planted with GM corn containing the toxins, which is fed in vast quantities to farm livestock around the world – including Britain.

However, it is now clear the toxins designed to kill crop pests are reaching humans and babies in the womb – apparently through food.

It is not known what, if any, harm this causes but there is speculation it could lead to allergies, miscarriages, abnormalities or even cancer.

To date, the industry has argued that if these toxins were eaten by animals or humans they would be destroyed in the gut and pass out of the body, causing no harm.

Morrissey wins reprieve for animals

A Belgian music festival that has snared Sister Bliss, Primal Scream and Roger Daltrey reprising "The Who's" rock opera "Tommy", has taken its prized horse-meat sausage off the menu to honour vegetarian Morrissey's first appearance.

Jan Cools, who heads the volunteer organisers behind the 10-day *Lokerse Feesten* in northern Belgium, said they tried for years to land former "The Smiths" frontman Morrissey and "when we got the booking, we decided to offer that day meat-free."

The Smiths' UK chart-topping second album in 1985 was titled "Meat is Murder," providing Morrissey with a platform ever since from which to broadcast his advocacy of vegetarianism and animal rights.

"Morrissey is a big vegetarian, it only seemed right to offer that because we were just so pleased to get him," Cools said.

The 10-day *Lokerse Feesten*, which boasts online about sales of sausage rolls and snails, will order stalls to sell vegetarian food only on August 4.

In 2009, the singer left the stage at California's Coachella Festival saying he could "smell burning flesh."



The otter market

By Khurshid Bhathena

Otters, called *udbilao* and *pani-ka-kutta* in Hindi, are small, semi-aquatic mammals, related to minks, which are also killed for their fur. The three Indian otter species are protected by wildlife laws, but few know that they are poached by the same gangs that trap, kill, transport, smuggle and sell tigers and leopards.

About 25 percent of wild animal furs seized in the north are those of otters. Frequent arrests are made, and otter pelts and iron traps seized, but ten times the number arrested go scot-free. Skins are smuggled out for illegal sale in Tibet and China.

Otter fur is considered high-quality because of its luxurious thickness (650,000 hairs per square inch). It is used to make coats, jackets, scarves and handbags. It is said that the best waterproof otter skins are from India and Pakistan. Their denseness is an insulator for otters, who live in chilly waters.

Survival at stake

Otter pelts are smuggled out of the country, whereas otter genitals, skulls and other body parts are ground up and used as ingredients of traditional medicines in India. Otter oil is sold as a cure for joint pains and pneumonia. About 250 grams of oil can be extracted

from the fat of an otter, fetching a few hundred Rupees. That is why otters do not survive outside protected areas.

However, they are supposed to be found all over the country, from Kashmir to Kerala. Development projects such as dams and aquaculture have harmed them, and the loss of their wetland habitats due to pesticides and industrial pollution is as responsible for their decline in numbers as poaching.



Fifty percent of the world's otter skins originate in India.

Photo courtesy: Neeraj Mishra

Smuggling

Networks of poachers and illegal traders operate in all the protected mangrove areas. After locating otter footprints, poachers set leg-hold traps on riverbanks, disguising them with sand. Otters are also hunted with the help of tribes using hounds, or dogs trained to corner them.

Nepal and Bangladesh are the countries through which smuggled otter pelts travel to reach international fur markets.

In June 2011, BWC wrote to the Union Minister for Home Affairs to help by cracking down on smugglers at the borders.

The traditional Tibetan dress, called *chuba*, has an otter-skin margin as protection from wet weather. The *xianmou jiasi* hat has four fur flaps, and the *cha* is a fur-lined robe worn by men on special occasions. However, after the Dalai Lama's 2006 appeal not to wear endangered furs, or the skins of tigers and leopards, a campaign was launched to destroy such costumes.

Fur and feathers

The traditional headwear of Arunachal Pradesh's Nyishi Tribe is embellished with a hornbill beak and feather – illegal, yet sported even by Parliamentarians! It was reported that when President Pratibha Patil visited the North-east in 2009, she wore a cap made from the fur of a rare flying squirrel.

Let's hope the demand for otter fur – indeed, all furs – drops to nil because only then will poachers voluntarily give up killing wild animals. Let's also hope the nomadic Bagiri Tribe of Haryana, expert otter-hunters who go all over the country to find them, will stop trapping them and, instead, continue to only worship them.



Khurshid Bhathena is a BWC trustee, and its honorary secretary.



What BWC means to me

By Sonal Sheth

In 1977, I attended the 24th. World Vegetarian Congress, where I saw the film “What Price Beauty?” and got to know of Beauty Without Cruelty-India. Impressed with the concept of *ahinsa* promoted by the organization, I became a member. At the time, I was in my final year at college. I enjoyed reading *Compassionate Friend*, and began collecting the issues.

When Nalini Mehta, the then Vice President of BWC, realized I was interested in the cause, she requested me to help in a voluntary capacity. I therefore began spreading awareness in 1980.

In 1982 Nalini Mehta, Diana Ratnagar (the Chairperson) and others visited Rajkot, my home town, to conduct programmes. Later that year, I got married and shifted to Kolhapur, where I continue spreading the message of *ahinsa* to this day.

In 1995, I screened the BWC video for the first time during a presentation at the Jain *Mahila* Conference in Ahmednagar. After that, many Jain *Mahila* organisations invited me to make similar

presentations. I also spoke at Jain temples and *shibirs* (religious camps for children) at the request of, and in the presence of, Jain *munijis*.

I studied BWC literature, gathered information on various topics, and learnt how animals were killed for producing items used by us. I translated facts into Hindi and made informative charts on silk, wool, paints, pearls, honey, sports, milk, and meat, for use in my presentations.



The writer and her audience. Photo courtesy: Rahul Bage

As most people are unaware of animal-origin products, in 2008 with the blessings, support and guidance of our Gurudev, I laminated the charts so that they would last. Gurudev took one set with him to Gujarat. I kept another set, and gave a third to the Jain Religious Study Group in Mumbai.

Till date, I have given BWC presentations at Kolhapur, Latur, Sangli, Karad, Jalna, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Mumbai (Andheri, Santacruz, and Ville Parle), Shahapur, Thane, Deolali, Bijapur, Belgaum, Bagalkot, Baroda,

Borsad, Anand, Ahmedabad, Surat and Ludhiana.

In my opinion, Jain religious gatherings are the ideal forums for introducing BWC, because Jains believe in *ahinsa paramo dharmah*.

I am happy the outcomes of the functions I have lectured at have been rewarding to all.

At the *Mahila* gatherings, 500 to 700 women have been present who have vowed, in the presence of their *Muniji*, not to use silk, leather, and other products of animal origin.

Most children have adopted a cruelty-free way of life at *shibirs*, on seeing BWC films and posters which reveal how products are derived from animals, how cruelly

they are treated, and so on.

A number of people became BWC members and pledged not to use numerous products of animal origin.

BWC has helped me live an *ahinsak* life, and I have taken it upon myself to impart facts to my family, friends and others. My life has changed, and I have given up many animal-derived items. Best of all, I have achieved satisfaction in my voluntary work for BWC, which I will continue.



Sonal Sheth is BWC's lecturer.



Prize-winning elocutions

Beauty Without Cruelty

By Riddhi Jain

*Class V-A, Good Shepherd
Matriculation Higher
Secondary School, Chennai*

My topic is Beauty Without Cruelty, an unusual one.

Modern-day beauty is cruel. Everyday make-up consists of lipstick, nail polish, eye shadow, creams, moisturizers, perfumes, shampoos, etc. Most of these products are animal-based and are either barbarically tested on animals, or animals are brutally killed in the process of making such cosmetics. Should animals pay the cost of our so-called beauty with their lives? If you are beautiful, do you need these cosmetics? And if you aren't, will they make you beautiful?

The heartless world of cosmetics cannot feel the pain of animals. It is blind and deaf to their cries. But should the consumers be insensitive too? Definitely not, my friends!

Just to raise the awareness among you, there are products available in the market which are made in organic ways with ingredients such as fruits, flowers, pulps, etc. Look out for, and use, only those marked with the veg symbol.

Apart from cosmetics, there are accessories such as jackets, handbags, belts, footwear and

wallets, for which animals like crocodiles, snakes, cows, sheep, deer, goats, tigers and many others have their skins brutally pulled off their bodies, just because we are fascinated by their texture, warmth and colour when fashioned into certain products.

Similarly, millions of silkworms are boiled in hot water just to produce a small piece of silk fabric. Options like Rexene, foam and synthetic materials can substitute for leather products, just as polyester, cotton, nylon and linen are some of the alternatives to pure silk.

Now tell me my friends: isn't it high time we acted responsibly to conserve our ecosystem? Do we really need beauty at the cost of speechless animals?

I am sure I was able to convey my idea of being a compassionate friend towards animals! Even a small step taken in this direction, would prove a giant leap for mankind, and our beloved animal world.

Animal rights and students

By Amrin Kareem

*Class VIII, Al Ameen Public
School, Ernakulam*

An animal's right to live free of suffering should be just as important as a person's.

It is common nowadays to see kids throwing stones at dogs, or suffocating fish to death by

catching them in nets. They enjoy the sight of dogs whining or fish dying. This is because they have a misconception in their minds that animals have been created for human beings to torture. This attitude must be changed because animals feel pain and emotions just like us humans.

Humans are the supreme beings on this planet, and we are the highest on the evolutionary scale, but that does not give us the right to wrong the animals. Some of the wrong or immoral acts that I strongly oppose are animal experimentation, entertainment involving animals, hunting and, finally, habitat destruction. Animal experimentation is as evil as the entertainment business involving animals.

Animals in circuses are, perhaps, the cruelest entertainment of all because of the way they are treated. Some animals are beaten to perform better; they are chained to iron poles so they can't run away. Other entertainments involving animals are also immoral such as bull fighting, greyhound racing and cock fights, because they are unnecessary and cause animal bloodshed.

We should promote veganism/vegetarianism. I would like to conclude by quoting a Sufi saint: "Don't let your stomachs turn into graveyards for animals."

Together, we can make this world a better place for all living beings.



Vegan recipes

FYI

Red Mushroom Curry

(Serves two)

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 8 dry red chilies
- ½ bulb garlic (optional)
- 1 coconut
- 200 grams mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon tamarind
- Salt



Preparation:

1. Heat oil and sauté paste of ground cumin, chilies and garlic.
2. Add coconut milk. (Shred coconut, steep in hot water, and strain to extract 1½ to 2 cups coconut milk.)
3. Add whole, steamed mushrooms.
4. Add tamarind water. (Steep tamarind in half-cup hot water and strain.)
5. Add salt and let simmer till mushrooms are fully cooked.

Serve with *khichri* and *papad*.

Green Brinjal Curry

(Serves two)

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ bunch fresh coriander leaves
- 4 green chilies
- ½ bulb garlic
- 6 medium-sized brinjals
- 1 coconut
- Salt



Preparation:

1. Heat oil and fry onion till golden brown.
2. Add ground coriander, chilies and garlic paste.
3. Add brinjals that have been sliced round and shallow-fried.
4. Add coconut milk. (Shred coconut, steep in hot water, strain to extract 1½ to 2 cups coconut milk.)
5. Add salt and let simmer for a while.

Serve with boiled rice and *papad*.

Monitor lizards

Monitor lizards are killed for their skins, meat, and other products. Their fat, extracted by boiling, is used by rural folk in the hope of curing ailments. Although illegal, monitor lizard skin has been found being used to make fashionable accessories. *Ghumots*, earthenware pots covered with monitor lizard skins, are used as drums in Goa.

The Forest Department seized immobilised monitor lizards, with their tails wound around their necks, after a newspaper reported *ghorpad* meat being sold for ₹200.00 to ₹400.00. Last year, as many as 40 monitor lizards were discovered with a man who used to poach them at Dausa (Rajasthan). His objective was to sell them in New Delhi for as much as ₹2,000.00 each for their skin, nails, meat and oil.



Sanda oil is touted as an aphrodisiac, and good for massages.

Oil from lizards whose backs were broken so they could not escape, used to be extracted on roadsides, with gullible men watching while waiting to buy the oil.

Go to www.bwcindia.org/Webforms/Recipes/VeganFood.html for an assortment of Beauty Without Cruelty's tested and tasted, healthy and delicious vegan recipes.

BWC news & views

Animal Welfare Board of India at it again

TV ads promoting Flipkart, an on-line bookstore, showed a live mouse turning within a wheel, and being pressed as if it were a computer mouse. BWC wrote to the organization saying the concept does not impart a good message as far as respect for creatures goes, and requested them to withdraw the ads.

Their attempt to assure BWC stated “no harm had been caused to any animals during the making of the film. The mice were trained and handled by professional mouse wranglers who provide this service.” They also sent the NOC from the AWBI. BWC fails to understand how the AWBI can clear films shot in South Africa — or anywhere outside India. They couldn't have been present during the filming, leave alone witnessed the mice being trained. The ads stopped being telecast after BWC wrote the Ministry for Environment & Forests saying illegal permission had been granted by the AWBI.

Another story: in the film “Beg, Borrow, Steal, Woof” the dog-actor (whose tail was docked) looked exhausted, was panting continuously and had his tongue hanging out. BWC wrote to UTV (of *Dadagiri* dispute) that simply

stating across the screen “no animals were harmed during filming of the show” cannot absolve them of the cruelty inflicted on the dog. Their reply stated “We have the necessary approval from the AWBI for the dog used in the shoot.” Again, the AWBI has failed to safeguard animals.

करुणा-मित्र

Long-standing BWC members may remember *Karuna-Mitra*, BWC's Hindi magazine. It was discontinued due to a lack of sufficient takers from among our members. Now, in response to a bigger demand for Hindi literature, BWC has re-started *Karuna-Mitra* as a four-page newsletter. Our life member, Bharat Kapadia, is the editor.

Karuna-Mitra is being despatched together with this issue of *Compassionate Friend* to reach just before *Paryushan* in August. Everyone will receive both the quarterlies.

Spread the word...

On coming to know that more deer were suffering and dying after unsuspectingly consuming plastic, BWC wrote the Ministry of Environment & Forests, emphasising the importance of making Forest Departments ensure that no plastic is thrown in areas where wildlife reside. Animals, birds, and even fish mistake it for food with tragic effects.

BWC would also like to draw the attention of readers who may unthinkingly be throwing plastic away as garbage. It proves fatal for animals, such as cows and dogs, who consume it. Carry bags are not the only culprits; cling film, small plastic bags, aluminium foil and metal staples, used to keep foods fresh, are bigger culprits.

Civet cats

The Union Minister for Environment & Forests and Central Zoo Authority were requested by BWC not to grant permission to the Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park to breed protected civet cats to extract their glandular secretions. In fact, suggested BWC, there ought to be a drive to stop the current use of civet or *Punugu* oil in temples.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the National Research Institute for *Panchakarma* in Thrissur District, Kerala (which falls under the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and *Siddha*), had tried to breed civet cats in captivity so that civet could be extracted for use in Ayurvedic medicines. The cats were kept in small cages having rough wooden sticks in the centre on which they were forced to rub their pouches. The breeding project failed because the cats, and their replacements, died.



Michhami Dukkadam

At the end of *Paryushan*, an important Jain festival, it is customary to say, “*Michhami Dukkadam*,” requesting forgiveness from all living beings that may have been harmed during the past year.

On this occasion, a donation to Beauty Without Cruelty will help disseminate knowledge and guidance to prevent people from unknowingly harming creatures of the land, sea and air.



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