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COMPASSIONATE FRIEND



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In this issue:
Ethics
Turtles
Sports goods
Greyhound racing



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Editorial

Foolish inconsistencies

The human race offers different strokes to different animals. We “love” cats and dogs but kill and eat chickens, cows and pigs. Dogs are, of course, more intelligent than many other species — though Maugham referred to a dog’s “sweet, stupid face” in one of his novels — and enjoy a special relationship with humans. It is estimated that domestic cats kill over a million songbirds in North America every year but people are not logical in dealing with other species, and inconsistent beliefs about animals are a part of the human condition.

Of course human morals should not be imposed on cats, who act instinctively, but what differentiates the creatures we pamper, eat, or lay traps for? There are some who contemplate animal rights while relishing tandoori chicken, as if to illustrate our twisted relationship to the creatures we share this planet with.

The western iconic hero Churchill’s trusted friend and advisor Frederick Alexander Lindemann, later known as Lord Cherwell, was a vegetarian but became anti-vegetarian when it came to feeding wartime Britain. Churchill and Lindemann were



rabid racists like Hitler who, it is said, was also a vegetarian. It may be impossible to live in total consistency with any one position on the issue, unless one chooses to be totally indifferent and amoral when it comes to animals, as Lindemann and Churchill were when it came to coloured people, and Hitler was when it came to Jews as well as coloureds. The government of British India measured food problems by the yardstick of British needs. Consequently concern about the UK's postwar finances motivated their determination to build British domestic stocks by cutting Indian Ocean shipping,

triggering the famines in Bengal which killed some three million Indians. A gigantic potato crop was shipped to the UK in 1942, large quantities of which were fed to the pigs needed to satisfy the British appetite for pork.

Some hunters may oppose the Canadian seal hunt because seal pups are cuddly and cute. Yet the seal hunt is ethically no less acceptable than the hunting of other animals. It may even be more acceptable, to some, than certain forms of hunting. Our irrationality leads us into other inconsistencies in the legal domain as well, where some opine that failure

to look after a fish in a bowl at home should not be considered criminal negligence — but no one should be allowed to torment an octopus. In the animal rights world, of course, fishbowls are as unacceptable as pet or captive octopuses.

Many are jumping on the “save the tiger” bandwagon. Apparently, they care for wildlife only if the animals may become extinct. But they may not mind live calves being fed to big cats, though cows may even be spiritually significant to the professed tiger-savers.

The human ability to rationalize is of a high order, from the vegetarian who wears leather shoes to conform, to kennel club members who proclaim their love for dogs while cropping their ears, docking their tails, and de-barking them. There are “vegetarians” who eat meat sometimes, dog breeders who want to “improve” a breed, and cock-fighters who “love” their roosters. Vegetarian pet-owners feed their pets other animals which have been processed into pet food. Are people slightly crazy? What is the truth? Will we ever know it?

Thinking about animals may change people's habits over time but, till then, we have to tolerate the ethical inconsistencies we observe in ourselves and the people around us.



Greyhound race — run rabbit, run!

By Khurshid Bhatena

Greyhounds – quiet, friendly dogs – have been exploited for human entertainment because of their speed and grace since the days of the ancient Egyptians. With the advent of modern dog racing at the turn of the 19th century, the dogs have been reduced to commodities by greyhound breeders and racetrack proprietors who have made betting the key to greyhound racing. Around the world, greyhound racing and coursing generate large, often illegal, incomes for all involved, despite being one of the most horrific so-called “sports” of our time.

This cruel activity, in the guise of entertainment and sport, is rising in Punjab. Two-to-three-day events, in which 120-150 greyhounds participate, are mainly held in Bhatinda, Muktsar, Jalandhar, Ropar and Ludhiana districts.

People are unable to comprehend why it is cruel for greyhounds to race each other while chasing a (sometimes) mechanical rabbit.

The difference between greyhound coursing and racing is, according to Tony Peters, UK Co-ordinator, Greyhound Action, that coursing is a competition or series of competitions between two greyhounds. A live hare is driven into the coursing field

(or let out of a box) and the greyhounds are released to chase it. There is a judge who awards points to each greyhound according to how well it pursues the hare. The object isn't to kill the hare and, in some coursing events (e.g. in Ireland), the greyhounds are muzzled. The hare is, however, often caught and killed in a horrific fashion, and terrified even if not caught.



This hare, literally running for its life, was torn apart by the hungry greyhound.
Photo: Courtesy www.Life.com

Greyhound racing takes place around an oval track and normally involves six or eight greyhounds. The dogs are put into a row of boxes, called traps, and a mechanical hare is set in motion around the inside or outside of the track. When this passes the traps, the trap-doors are opened and the greyhounds released in pursuit of the mechanical hare. Races, sometimes including hurdles, take place over various distances.

In order to make greyhounds chase a mechanical lure in the form of a stuffed rabbit, the initial training takes place in an open field where half-starved greyhounds are let loose alongside rabbits (“live-lures”) to corner, pounce on, and kill them. The rabbits are usually torn apart by two greyhounds.

Gory training

Having learnt to do this, and remembering the taste of fresh blood, greyhounds graduate to chasing live-lures tied to horizontal poles.

The irony of it is that, aside from the cruel manner in which innocent rabbits are torn apart, the greyhounds lead pathetic lives too.

They are kept constantly hungry, muzzled, and locked in small cages, never let out except to defecate, be trained, or race. Their lives are living hells, and their misery begins the day they are born, to end prematurely when their performances are no longer up to par. They are then discarded, abandoned, or murdered. The life of a greyhound is miserable from birth to death.

Greyhound racing is gambling under the pretense of sport, and feeds the egos of obnoxious people. The dogs are not only starved, but doped as well, to run faster. Their ears are tattooed for identification when they are puppies. Prior to eventual abandonment, their ears are cut off to hide their identities and prevent their owners from being traced.



An abandoned greyhound, ears severed to get rid of its mandatory identification tattoo.



View from the top of its head. Photos: Courtesy RSPCA.

Greyhounds are made to travel long distances in severe weather, regardless of the facts that they are sensitive to heat and lack the ability to sweat. Accidents are common while racing, and the injured are killed. On numerous occasions, they have eventually been sold to laboratories for testing or research.

Lately, due to a growing global awareness of the cruelty of this sport, people abroad have realized the secret plight of these animals, motivating them to stop patronizing greyhound events. Only seven of 50 states in the USA have not banned greyhound racing yet, and there is a continuous ongoing worldwide effort to stop upcoming events and prevent their legalisation.

Many Indians ape the West, even aping practices that are waning there. So India has become an easy target for introducing the surplus greyhounds from abroad, for which there are no takers “back home.” There are already hundreds of greyhounds in Punjab.

Beauty Without Cruelty had, in 1988, waged a campaign to end greyhound events in Punjab, succeeding in bringing about a ban on the use of live hares for greyhound coursing and training. But there was a loophole: there was no mention of rabbits in the ban, enforced by the Forest Department. At the time, BWC tried in vain to get the ban modified to “all the live animals”.

Dumped on Punjab

Greyhound coursing and racing continue in pockets of Punjab, and this cruel sport has acquired prestige among some affluent and NRI Punjabis, who are known for their ostentatious living. They have brought greyhounds in from the USA, Canada, Ireland and Pakistan for breeding and racing. They have been raving that these events should be legalized, and racecourses set up, so that people may bet, just as they do abroad.

Greyhounds have been known to fall sick and yet be pushed to race on landing in India. The possibility of these dogs bringing tick-borne diseases and parasites into India with them cannot be ruled out.

How can the construction of stadiums for greyhound racing be justified when there is a

shortage of land in Punjab, the state’s forests being cut down for development projects? Is it fair to sacrifice so much land to the western aspirations of a childish few whose worldly hopes, entailing rabbit and greyhound suffering, soon vanish like snow upon the desert’s dusty face?

BWC feels that greyhound events should not become legal here under any circumstances and should, therefore, be nipped in the bud. As it is, these cruelties contravene provisions laid down in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

BWC has written to the President of India, the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Agriculture, Union Minister of State for Environment & Forests, Members of Parliament, the Chief Minister of Punjab, and officials of its Animal Husbandry Department.

If gambling involving dogs and rabbits, disguised as entertainment and sport, is not halted in India, you may bet they will all suffer and die – the greyhounds, and the hundreds of rabbits, hares, guinea pigs and cats that may be torn apart by them behind the scenes.



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



Sign the greyhound petition

Help all the animals involved by signing the petition inserted here, which is also available online at www.bwcindia.org/greyhoundpetition.aspx

Turtles hurtle to destruction

By **Kamala Ramchandani-Naharwar**

Every day millions of cold-blooded murders are committed, the world over. Human beings who don't know the meaning of the word "humane" are killing animals on land, sea and air to satisfy their needs.

Take the humble turtle: Once upon a long time ago, there were several million green sea-turtles worldwide. Today, however, there are less than 200,000 nesting females alive! Fiction? No, fact! The fable says the slow and steady tortoise wins the race, but the cruelty of thoughtless humans is overtaking the natural world. In Hindu mythology *kurma*, or the turtle, was held in high esteem as one of Lord Vishnu's *avatars* or incarnations. Turtles are symbols of fertility and protection. But who will protect the turtle from being slaughtered for food, decoration, ornamentation and prestige in today's rapidly-expanding technological world?

Though protected by wildlife laws, the turtle may be a food for some. Widespread poaching, peaking in December and January, has resulted in freshwater turtles becoming endangered because turtle soup, meat and eggs are considered delicacies.

There are seven turtle species, one of them being the Olive Ridley. One of the world's



Olive Ridley turtle hatching into a wild world. *Photo:* Courtesy WWF-Canon Roger LeGuen

largest populations of these turtles is found off the coast of Orissa, at the Gahirmatha and Rushikulya river mouths — two of seven known in the world.

Olive Ridelys are best known for their "arribadas," or mass nesting. The Gahirmatha rookery had a nesting beach running 32 kilometres when it was discovered in 1974-75. According to wildlife officials, researchers and activists, at least 200,000-300,000 turtles used to nest there every February-March. In 1991, over 600,000 turtles nested along the coast of Orissa in a single week. Though they live in the sea, the females nest on the beaches — where human predators capture them and reap a bonanza of turtle eggs. The turtles are turned over onto their backs on the hot sand to immobilise them, and then transported alive to cities, where they are sold clandestinely. The eggs, which are also eaten, are gathered illegally during the nesting periods.

A senior Wildlife Institute of India scientist has warned that Orissa's Gahirmatha marine sanctuary may no longer be

the world's largest Olive Ridley marine turtle rookery, due to erosion.

Olive Ridelys are also found on the Kerala and Konkan coasts but here, too, their numbers are dwindling because of increased poaching.

Skeletons in your closet?

Do you have turtles at home? No? Think again. Tortoise-shell obtained from the carapace (protective shell) of certain tortoises and turtles, is used for frivolous purposes like hair-clips, combs, buttons, sunglasses, compacts, cigarette cases, shaving brushes, handles, doorknobs, decorative items and jewellery (particularly bangles). All these can be, and are, also being made from materials that do not cause animal suffering.

Turtle oil and fat are used in supplements, ointments, cosmetics, creams, lotions and soaps, supposedly promoting skin rejuvenation by tightening muscles. The next time you look in the mirror, let's hope it's been worth it! Nothing is left unused: turtle leather is used to make gloves, purses and footwear; turtle bones are made into tools, art objects, jewellery and fertilisers. Small sea turtles are killed, stuffed and marketed as tourists' souvenirs. Does having a stuffed carcass in your living room sound like fun?

And then there are turtles kept as pets because they are "lucky" according to Feng Shui — though unlucky for the

poor turtle, cooped up in an apartment and treading tiles instead of the good earth, or swimming free in the oceans.

The trapping, killing and selling of Olive Ridley sea turtles attracts up to seven years' imprisonment under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Yet, not a single person from Orissa has been convicted during the last 15 years, during which time over 150,000 turtles have been found dead on the coast. The law is obviously not being enforced.

In 1978, BWC exposed the cruelty involved in 10,000 turtles being poached annually from Digha Beach, West Bengal. But a ban on their consumption was not implemented till years later when, based on first-hand information about illegal trading provided by BWC, raids were carried out in Kolkata and New Delhi in 1990. Eating turtle meat or eggs is illegal, but it seems the law may be broken flagrantly.

Port threats

The already-endangered Olive Ridley is facing yet another challenge to its survival on the Orissa coast, in the form of the construction of a massive deep-water port (a Tata Steel-Larsen & Toubro joint venture) at Dhamra, just 5 kms away from the largest of only three nesting sites for Olive Ridelys in the world.

Increased shipping traffic will deter the turtles from coming in to mate and nest; dredging,

oil spills and chemical leaks will add deadly pollutants to the waters; and artificial lighting will cause the turtles to become disoriented. This is why Greenpeace, and other conservation groups, opposed the project, and went as far as loading an online game called "Turtle vs. Tata" on their website. In spite of all that, trial operations at the Dhamra Port began in September 2010, and it is expected to be functional by 2011.

Thanks to port construction, there was no "arribada" on this part of Orissa's beach in 2008, for the first time. What will happen to the turtles? News channels will carry live pictures of the desolation created by man but, slowly, the turtles will die out. Fifty years later, no one will remember that they had ever existed.

Environment and Forest Minister Jairam Ramesh is on record as saying that Tata's Dhamra Port would have been stopped on account of a legal violation, had its construction not started already. He confirmed that since the port is located close to the Gahirmatha and Bitharkanika Protected Areas, it poses a threat to the environment and to endangered species like the Olive Ridley sea turtles and salt-water crocodiles.

Activists fear for Rushikulya as a nesting hub too, since a new port is coming up at Palur, 5 kms from the beach. South of this beach, about 12 kms away, the Gopalpur Port is dredging a

channel; this too may affect the nesting beaches.

Other threats

A major threat is posed by oil spills such as the one in April 2010 off the Orissa coast, which damaged over 200,000 turtle eggs, and the Gulf of Mexico spill, which killed large numbers of turtles including the rare, endangered Kemp's Ridelys. Oil leaking from a cracked Paradip-Haldia pipeline posed a threat to aquatic life including the Olive Ridley sea turtles this year.

Apart from the unthinking cruelty involved, humans do not realise the impact killing these animals have on our ecosystems. For example, grazing green turtles promote the growth of better sea-grass beds which provide shelter and food for small fish. Hawksbill Turtles feed on sponges and help keep coral reefs healthy. Leatherbacks, feeding on jellyfish which eat larvae, allow fish to mature.

It is imperative that we do all we can to prevent these turtles' extinction by giving them their natural habitats back and leaving them in peace, not pieces. Man is indulging in self-destruction without caring. Think: by eliminating one species, we affect all others – including humans. The responsibility lies with us.



 Kamala Ramchandani-Naharwar is an author, playwright, journalist and BWC member.

Fact, not fancy

Sports goods

By Nirmal Nishchit

This article focuses on animal products used in badminton and cricket, which may be enjoyed with reasonably good non-animal substitute products.

Badminton

The game is played with a racquet and shuttlecock (shortened to shuttle – also called a “bird” or “birdie”). The shuttlecock is a high-drag projectile having an open, conical shape. The cone is formed with sixteen overlapping duck- or goose-feathers (usually taken only from left wings), embedded in a round cork base. The shuttlecock’s shape makes it aerodynamically stable – regardless of its initial orientation, it will turn to fly cork-first and remain in the cork-first position.

Shuttlecocks are made in Jalandhar (Punjab) and Uluberia (West Bengal). A variety of sports goods are manufactured at Jalandhar, but only shuttlecocks are made at Uluberia.

Shuttlecocks imported from China outdid Indian ones in quality as well as price, so some leading Jalandhar manufacturers visited China in 2000 to find that its raw materials were superior and production processes more efficient. They decided to import pre-assembled materials to assemble the shuttlecocks manually in India.

Few are aware of the shuttlecock cottage industry in Uluberia, Howrah District, West Bengal,

which has been there since before independence. The cluster consists of 150 units with an annual output of 7,500,000 shuttlecocks. Sixty-five percent of Indian shuttlecocks are made here without the use of machinery.

There are about eight feather merchants in the cluster, who procure duck feathers smuggled into India regularly from Bangladesh. A bag of about 70,000 feathers costs over ₹50,000.00. However, feather supply is irregular, as the main sources are at border villages. The number of check posts between Barasat (North 24-Parganas) and Balurghat (South Dinajpur) has increased. Feather merchants say they also get duck and hen feathers from Arambagh (Hooghly), but availability is affected by periodic bird flu epidemics, when chickens are culled.

Laborious process

White duck-wing feathers are used for top-quality shuttlecocks, whereas white- and black-wing duck feathers, and sometimes hens’ feathers, are used in poorer-quality shuttlecocks. Goose-wing feathers are also used. The feathers are sorted quality-wise and graded from 1 to 6 (the inferior qualities being grades 4 to 6). They are then washed in detergents for upto an hour, and treated with ultramarine blue or optical whitener. When dry, the feathers are trimmed to 3½ inches in length, and the tops rounded off with scissors. The feathers are inconsistent in size because they are manually cut and finished, resulting in high rejection ratios.

The Uluberia Block Development Offices I and II, and *Panchayat Samitis*, have begun promoting duck farms in collaboration with the Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Government of West Bengal, so that the demand for feathers may be met.

Feathers are not the only components of animal origin in shuttlecocks. For the bases, corks used to be imported from Spain and Portugal. Some still import them, but synthetic (rubberized) corks and adhesives are now available from China. The corks are pressed onto alum-tanned leather, 16 feathers manually fixed into the 16 holes drilled in each cork. After plait-binding the feathers with cotton, a gelatine coat is applied over the knotted thread. A silk or cotton ribbon is fixed where the cork base and feathers join, and a brand sticker or show tape is glued onto the middle of the base. Finally, the shuttlecocks are weighed and, if necessary, their weights adjusted with the help of tiny steel pins. Ten shuttlecocks are packed into a cylindrical box called a “roll.”

Shuttlecocks break easily as their feathers are brittle, so they need frequent replacement during play. Durable plastic or nylon shuttlecocks are available, but tournaments only use those made of duck feathers.

Badminton racquets are no longer made of shellac-polished wood. Nor are they heavy, since they are now made of carbon fibre composites or graphite-reinforced plastics. Likewise, there was a time when catgut was used, but it



You can have as good a game with a plastic shuttlecock. *Photos: Kajal Harpude*

has been replaced with tough nylon string/*taant*. However, the racquet handle grips may be made of leather, and have probably been stuck on with animal glue.

Badminton courts usually feature painted boundary lines but, if chalk is used, it entails Titanium Dioxide of mineral origin. The nets consist of cords, twines, and materials such as cotton, nylon, vinyl, polyethelene and polyester.

Cricket

Meerut is a production and export hub for cricket balls. They are made of top-grade cow- or bull- hide leather. Buffalo leather was tried, but found unsuitable.

Hides with scratches and blemishes are rejected. The chosen leather is cut into 2½ sq. ft. pieces, treated with chemicals to make it flexible, and put in the sun to dry. Men wearing shorts and galoshes stomp the pieces in vats of bright red dye. Dried again, the leather may be rejected at this stage too, if the colour is blotchy.

A manufacturer explains the rejections: “You know how, when people are not well, it

shows on their skin. It’s like that with animals. If they are not taken care of, it shows on their leather.” In other words, only the well-fed, healthy young cows’ or bulls’ hides get selected to make cricket balls.

The next step requires the leather to be squeezed and stretched manually to get rid of stiffness and make it more flexible. A dollop of animal fat rubbed into the leather aids this process, after which it is sun-dried again.

It takes 75 days to make a batch of balls. The core is a grey-brown ball of cork-rubber. Around this, narrow sheets of cork (from trees) and strings of wet wool are wound tightly. The core is then placed in a wooden bowl and pummeled into a sphere with a wooden hammer. This process is repeated five to seven times, making sure that each layer has dried. The core is then hung up for 2½ months.

Meanwhile, the unblemished leather pieces are cut to size and stitched into half-ball covers. These are placed on a round hollow and shaped with the help of a machine called *thappai*.

Finally, the two halves are placed over the dried core, and the gap between the core and cover filled with leather shavings. Using a strong needle and a thick strand of wool coated with animal fat, a slightly raised seam is sewn on with 78-82 stitches. Some cheap balls are wax-finished with beeswax.

In top quality balls, the cover is constructed with four pieces of alum-tanned leather. For Test and First Class cricket matches spread over days, the balls are traditionally dyed red, and used for a minimum of 80 overs. One-day matches use white balls, and at least two new balls are used in each match. Training balls are red, white or pink.

Leather and wool are integral parts of cricket. Wicket-keepers’ gloves are of leather, and cricketers wear woolen pullovers. With the exception of batting pads, leather is usually found in cricket bats, stumps, protective gear and shoes.

When, in 1996, Beauty Without Cruelty carried an article on sports goods in *Compassionate Friend*, the Shankaracharya of Puri called on Hindus not to play cricket with leather balls.

Today, non-leather cricket balls enjoy higher sales than those made of leather, mainly because they are cheaper and slower to wear out. Usually made of Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC) on the outside with Poly Urethane (PU) cores, their performance may not be perfect — but then how many youngsters play world-class cricket?



Non-leather cricket balls enjoying higher sales.

Ahinsa – a basis for ethics

By Ranjit Konkar

A *hinsa* is used by many Indians as a guiding principle, so most are familiar with the concept. There can be no two opinions about the importance of, and need for, adopting the values denoted by the word.

During a course on values and ethics I once took, my teacher posed the question: “What constitutes a matter related to ethics?” Many of us offered as many answers. Mine was that ethical matters pertain to our treatment of others. In this treatment of others lies the relevance of *ahinsa*. Whatever is *hinsak* is, of course, unethical so the unethical is that which involves wrong treatment of others.

All ethics, or *ahinsa*, whether professional, intellectual, sporting, or rules of war such as the Geneva Convention, are about not causing others avoidable, unprovoked harm through being unfair. They are not about personal interest — that is an animal ethic. Eating vegetarian food to save money, or maintain better health, is self-interest. Saving trees is also a matter of self-interest. But going vegetarian because one considers it wrong to kill animals is a statement of ethics, giving rise to *ahinsa*.

Ahinsa is known to us through the scriptures of various Indian religions which consider it the ultimate value. Its invocation

by Gandhiji, who made it the central pillar of his struggle for Indian independence, was of relatively recent coinage.

The term usually comes up in one of two contexts: the human-animal relationship; and relations between humans, especially during conflict resolution. The former preoccupies all who observe man’s barbaric treatment of animals. Gandhiji focused on the latter — how to achieve our political goals without harming the British.

There is, nevertheless, a range of applications of the term apart from its uses for political ends and in describing our relationships with animals. This spectrum occurs in daily decision-making. The majority of us make *ahinsa* a crucial criterion in decision-making, whether we call it by that name or not.

Existential choices

So where does one come across considerations of *ahinsa* in everyday life? Where may one come across it in human or national agendas? Fortunately, acts of overt physical violence are not aspects of everyday life for most of us. But, on a daily basis, all of us are faced by many choices, leading to courses of action ranging from the trivial to the important. How do we decide amongst them?

Secondly, we are often witnesses to events or incidents whose propriety we need to judge. How do we label something proper or improper,

right or wrong? What criteria do we use? Let us consider a few examples.

I open the newspaper and read about a *yagya* being conducted with a *havan* and so on, for some celebrity to get well soon, or for the monsoons to be of an optimal volume. Another day, I read about a visiting Nepali dignitary sacrificing a goat at the Kalighat Temple, Kolkata.

I react to these two situations by thinking that the people conducting the *havan* are wasting their time but do not take moral umbrage since no harm is done to anyone. But an animal sacrifice is a brutal violation of an animal’s right to live, so I consider it immoral.

Likewise with people I see conducting *pujas* in the privacy of their homes, as opposed to people doing the same in public over loudspeakers at ear-splitting volumes, not allowing others to sleep or hear each other speak. Though not a *puja* person, the first situation is one I can dismiss as not being my concern, but the second assaults my privacy so I object to it as a case of *hinsa*.

Grades of *hinsa*: lesser evils

We are often faced with choosing between two forms of harm rather than between causing harm and not causing harm. For example, every conceivable festival in India is accompanied by noise, pollution, processions, and the disruption of public and private life to the maximum

possible extent. Consequently I find all of them objectionable, but there are some festivals involving bloodshed as well. Go to the top of Karla Hills, outside Pune, to see butchery for the Mother Goddess. Think of all the bloodshed at Bakrid. If I had to choose one of them (disruptive celebrations or bloodshed) to live with, which would I choose? No prizes for guessing.

Of course I would choose the inconvenience of noise pollution before the horror of butchery. In fact, the compromise I would offer sacrificers would be to allow them to indulge in lesser evils like disruptive processions, if it would make them forego sacrifices.

A direct example of greater versus lesser evils is that of eating plants versus eating animals. Which ought one to choose, and why?

A common question is, "If we may eat plants, what is wrong with eating animals?" Here the principle of minimum harm applies — do that which causes minimum harm. Today we cannot live on soil, air, and water. We must take life to live. Life exists at various levels. Let us ensure that the level of life is as low on the sentiency scale as possible. Plants feel at a much lower level than animals. Let us eat as low on the food chain as we can.

There are countless such examples in which the common thread is that, if there is something about an act which affects others, puts someone

else to harm or inconvenience, then it immediately becomes subject to the moral code.

Ethics: all about the *doosra*, or "other"

Therefore ethics is based on *ahimsa*. The more an act harms others, or the more it inconveniences others, the more objectionable it is, the more unethical it becomes.

In some cases, the benefit obtained is greater than the harm done. Often there is no harm done. For example, I find myself persuaded to join family *pujas* and rituals which, left to myself, I would not perform. However, they do not harm anybody but my participation makes my wife or mother happy, so I think to myself: what is the harm in doing it, go ahead.

In all these examples, how do I weigh one scenario against another? How do I decide upon a course of action? What criteria do I use to decide on the merit of a certain course of action?

Cost-benefit analysis

In the management world, one undertakes cost-benefit analyses. The costs incurred are weighed against benefits obtained and, if the balance tilts on the benefits' side, the decision is a "go," otherwise a "no-go." The costs and benefits are those that pertain to the person himself. If I get richer by pursuing a course of action, the benefits are positive.

If I have to shell out a lot of money, the cost side of the

balance becomes heavier. With heightened moral development, humans have allowed the moral costs of an action to count in weighing costs and benefits. The remarkable thing about moral costs is that they depend upon the harm done to the opponent, not the actor. In an amoral situation, I would count physical hurt or financial harm caused to me among the costs of the action. If I get injured or cut myself, the costs of the contemplated action may be too high. Thrilling rides and adventure sports are abjured by most for the potential physical harm they may cause. Risky financial speculation is avoided for the financial harm it may cause us.

As opposed to the world of material costs and benefits, that of moral costs and benefits includes a cost that is not possible to measure in financial terms: the cost of causing harm. What did Mahavira and Buddha teach us? That in assessing the merit of an action, we consider not only ourselves, but also the other party we are dealing with. This is the *ahimsak* approach to our treatment of animals.



Dr. Ranjit Konkar is a BWC trustee

This article is based on a presentation he made at the International Vegetarian Union's India - Southwest Asia Congress in Bengaluru last November.

Around the world**Afghan birds disappearing**

Afghan farmers are losing to rodents — not meaning NATO forces, but field mice. Swarms of locusts haven't appeared yet, but will pose a worse problem than the mice when they do. Insecticides and chemical warfare have proved ineffective. Various bird species have been the farmers' allies, protecting crops from locusts and mice in the past, but they are being killed by hunters or trapped for sale in international markets now. Herat province's agricultural officials say smuggling and hunting have decimated the bird populace. This has allowed mice and locusts to flourish. A dozen bird species are endangered, hunting bans being unenforceable. The police have no instructions to arrest bird catchers or exporters. The export business in mynas, hawks and eagles is booming louder than NATO bombardments. Many people in the vicinity of Herat City gather myna chicks from nests

to sell them overseas. The birds are smuggled to Iran, so they are vanishing from western Afghanistan. Middlemen pay villagers ₹30.00 for each captured myna, reselling in Herat for over ₹300.00. Traders get over ₹2,100.00 a bird when they transport them to Iran. Besides their efficiency in exterminating farmland pests, some birds are popular as pets because of their parrot-like mimicry of human voices.

Declining North American caribou populations

The decline of North America's caribou populations brought hundreds of scientists, wildlife managers, and Aboriginal leaders from across Canada and as far away as Greenland, Russia, and Norway to Winnipeg recently to discuss the problem. Biologists estimate that global caribou populations are less than half of what they were 50 years ago. Canada is no exception. A 2009 federal study by a panel of caribou biologists found that 29 of the 57 remaining herds of

boreal caribou in Canada are not self-sustaining and, in some places like northeastern British Columbia, are on the verge of collapse.

Caribou are also an indicator species of overall forest health. The strength of their populations can reflect the health of the surrounding forest environment, on which they depend. The precipitous drop in caribou numbers over the past few decades sends an alarming signal that all is not well in Canada's boreal forest.

LTTE base to turn wildlife sanctuary

The Sri Lankan government has said a former war zone, over 40,000 hectares in Mullaitivu in the north, would be used for wildlife conservation. It was a scene of fighting during the bloody civil war 18 months ago.

A government statement said it would be used to help Sri Lanka's elephant population, which has dwindled over the last century from around 15,000 to just 4,000. The

**International Year of Forests 2011**
declared by The United Nations General Assembly

31 percent of the land on earth is covered by forests, home to 80 percent of our terrestrial biodiversity, which 300 million people share.

**Protection – not exploitation
in the guise of sustainable forest management –
is paramount in safeguarding flora and fauna.**

government says more than 200 animals were killed last year — electrocuted or shot by villagers. Experts say that, as deforestation destroys their natural habitats, the elephants venture further afield in search of food.

For decades, the Mullaitivu jungles were home to key LTTE bases, so the Tigers buried landmines to protect their camps from government troops. An estimated 1.5 million landmines remain in the country's northern region. A wildlife department official said the park would be open to the public only after the mines were removed — most likely this year.

Beauty Without Cruelty hopes they will be removed before the elephants are brought in, and that animals will not be used to test the area for landmines. Rats, dogs, and even children have been used elsewhere to run across fields, identifying where mines are by triggering them.

Dawn of a new China?

Horrendous animal-crushing films have appeared on the Internet. One of them, produced in China, featured a tiny rabbit being crushed to death slowly under a thick piece of glass.

ACTAsia started a campaign to get it banned. The campaign was supported by over forty Chinese and international animal protection groups — including Beauty Without Cruelty. It succeeded, and all the websites that had been showing the



A link has been established between juvenile cruelty to animals and criminal activity in adult life. Photo: Courtesy www.chinasmack.com

awful footage have removed it. The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television ordered radio and TV stations at all municipal and provincial levels to remove all animal abuse and violent images. It also ordered them not to re-post such footage.

This encouraging response from the Chinese authorities is an excellent development for animals. ACTAsia is now working toward the Chinese animal-protection laws needed to stop this kind of abuse permanently.

In a related development, US President Barack Obama signed The Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act of 2010 into law last December. It criminalizes the creation, sale, and marketing of “crush videos” or “crush porn” in the USA. Usually featuring young women crushing small animals such as kittens and rabbits to death with their bare feet or high heels, these may fall into the realm of sexual fetishes. The picture on the right above shows a kitten being crushed, and that on the left, a rabbit.



Photo: Courtesy change-production. s3.amazonaws.com

Readers write

Paan loses taan

I was delighted to receive the last *Compassionate Friend* and the super calendar, and agree that the use of animals in entertainment must be opposed. Sri Krishnan is right in that “paan containing *choona* is non-vegetarian”. I thank him for that article, and have resolved not to take *paan* again after reading about the cruel deaths of innocent shells.

D. Nataraj

Deputy Registrar (Administration)
Andhra University
Vishakhapatnam

Excellent calendar

I have received the Winter *Compassionate Friend*, and the excellent calendar. The editorial about leather was eye-opening. As BWC-India points out, meat and slaughter are two sides of the same coin. I shall make copies of that editorial to send my friends and relatives in the hope that they may stop wearing leather.

Jayanta Gupta

Vegan recipes

Cabbage & Carrot Rice

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 2 cups rice
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic (optional)
- 150 grams grated cabbage
- 150 grams grated carrots
- ½ teaspoon pepper powder
- Salt

Preparation:

Cook rice in water to which a little oil and salt have been added.

Throw away the water so the grains separate. Keep aside. Heat oil.

Add cumin seeds and garlic. Sauté. Add carrots and cabbage. Sauté till tender.

Add a little water if needed and cover with a lid.

Add the rice, pepper and salt. Mix well. Cook on low flame till moisture evaporates.

Tomato Soup

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 6 large tomatoes
- Mint leaves
- 1 tablespoon cornflour
- Sugar, salt & pepper

Preparation:

Put tomatoes into boiling water. Peel skin. Blend in mixer. Boil with mint leaves. Add cornflour dissolved in water. Strain to discard seeds. Add sugar, salt & pepper to taste.

Serve hot with bread croutons

Moong Dal with spinach

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups moong dal
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon ajwain
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic (optional)
- 1 teaspoon ginger paste (optional)
- 2 teaspoons red chilli powder
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 2 teaspoons coriander powder
- 1 chopped tomato
- ½ bunch fresh spinach
- ½ lime, juiced
- Salt

Preparation:

Wash and pressure-cook moong dal.

Keep aside.

Heat oil in a deep pot.

Add cumin and ajwain.

When they crackle, add garlic and ginger, then red chilli, turmeric and coriander powders, followed by the tomato, and sauté.

Add moong dal, along with the water in which it was cooked.

If thick, add some more water.

Add salt, and let the dal simmer.

Add washed and chopped spinach.

Mix well.

Add lime juice.

Cover and let the dal simmer further, stirring occasionally, for a few minutes till the spinach is tender.

Serve with cabbage & carrot rice, pickle and papad.

FYI

Ajinomoto or MSG

Time was when Fish Hydrolysate, a dried-fish-and-seaweed extract with a high concentration of Glutamic Acid, was a widely-used flavour-enhancer in East Asian cuisine.

Then, a Sodium salt replacement called Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG) was patented by the Ajinomoto Corporation in 1909. That's when MSG became famous worldwide, and got the nickname "Ajinomoto."

The Ajinomoto Corporation is a Japanese company that produces umami food seasonings and other products available in over 100 countries. The literal translation of *aji no moto* is "essence of taste." Vetsin and Accent are two other trade names for MSG.

MSG (food additive code E621) is vegan. It is a white crystalline powder or salt, considered harmful if consumed in large quantities, and to children under the age of 12. It used to be made from wheat gluten, but is now produced from molasses by bacterial fermentation.

Meanwhile, Fish Hydrolysate, or ground fish carcasses and remains, are still used for human and animal consumption, and as a fish-based fertiliser.

BWC News & Views

Too little, too late?

In November 2010, caution orders were imposed by the Indian Railways across elephant corridors in North Bengal, and train drivers instructed to blow their whistles continuously, and be extra-vigilant. Also, for the first time, a Dehradun court sentenced a train driver to three years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of ₹10,000.00 for running over three elephants while they were crossing the tracks inside Rajaji National Park — in 1998.

Absolutely avoidable

The attention of the Chief Minister of Orissa was drawn to the fact that as many as 75 elephants had died during this decade and 16 were killed in their own habitat last year, where they should have been protected, due to sagging high-tension overhead wires in forest areas. When one elephant succumbs, others from its herd rush to help, resulting in more than one animal being electrocuted. The fault, BWC believes, lies not in the pachyderms' stars, but as much with the power distribution set-up as with the state's Forest Department.

Join the BWC - India network on Facebook



No longer fishy

When a magazine article stated that the Renaissance Hotel, Mumbai, placed a goldfish bowl on the tables of customers who came to its coffee shop alone, BWC wrote them pointing out, in detail, the suffering and trauma inflicted on the goldfish and requested them to withdraw this gimmick. They replied that, understanding our care and concern, they were "happy to stop this practice with immediate effect."

Value-based education

Since the National Council for Education Research & Training was in the process of formulating new guidelines for education, BWC sent it a comprehensive document titled "Value Based Education" in which the importance of the basic value of reverence for life was stressed.

Spread the word...

Inform veterinarians, kennel club officials and pedigreed dog-owners that the following acts carried out for aesthetic reasons are cruel and illegal under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:

Tail docking, or amputating tails.

Cropping ears, i.e. cutting and stitching ears so they stand up unnaturally.

De-barking: the surgical removal of dogs' vocal chords.

Removing the dewclaw: amputation of the extra, higher toe.

Dadagiri?

In January 2011, *Dadagiri* season 4 on UTV Bindass declared: "The reality show will test not only physical but also mental agility and sharpness of the contestants. Watch the teams perform tasks like holding a crab while they struggle to deposit it on the other end of the pit on one elbow and plucking out goat's eyeballs to fetch a five rupee coin from inside of a goat's intestine!"

The reaction to the barbaric cruelty depicted in the promo and in the first episode, telecast January 15, was of shock and anger. Flooded with complaints, BWC wrote to UTV Bindass and the Government, pointing out that The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 had been violated. BWC also led a strong protest on Facebook and by e-mail. Consequently, "comments" on the *Dadagiri* season 4 website were closed.

UTV responded that it was a "misunderstanding," and stated in a letter to the BWC Chairperson, that "We appreciate your concern and have made sincere cognizance of your feedback... We completely understand that such an act would be barbaric and under no circumstances would allow such an act to take place on our channel."

BWC now hopes that henceforth none of the shows telecast on UTV Bindass will have anything to do with animals – dead or alive. BWC also hopes that our successful protest has been a deterrent to other film-makers and that they will abandon cruelty to animals in their productions.

Published by
Beauty Without Cruelty



The **hinḍa vs. ahinḍa** CD
will prove invaluable to all
who do not want to be responsible for *hinsa*.
Viewers will gain practical knowledge
of animal rights issues.

hinḍa vs. ahinḍa
themes are based on
BWC's motto:
Beauty Without Cruelty
is a way of life
which causes no creature
of land, sea or air
terror, torture or death.

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(numbers 1-50 till end 2010)
is now available
against a donation of ₹100.

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