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# COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

Journal of Beauty Without Cruelty - India  
An International Educational Charitable Trust for Animal Rights



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**Pesticides**

**Lac Bangles**

**Penguins  
in Prison**

**Mongoose Hair Brushes**



# Beauty Without Cruelty - India

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### Beauty Without Cruelty

is a way of life which causes  
no creature of land, sea or air  
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Front Cover: Mongoose • Photo courtesy: Subhash Ranjan at treknature.com

## From my Desk... Anomalies

**T**hese days many people inform Beauty Without Cruelty that they have either stopped consuming milk products or are almost vegan. Although BWC does not encourage milk consumption, including cheese with or without animal rennet, we are drawing the attention of readers to non-vegetarian cheeses being sold here.

India does not allow the import of animal rennet, but the import of cheese made from it has somehow never stopped and is legally sold by big department stores. With animal rennet listed as an ingredient and marked with a brown non-veg symbol, the chance of this cheese containing calf rennet is as



Rennet is the chymosin enzyme sourced from the inner mucosa of the abomasum (fourth stomach) of a new-born, slaughtered calf. Whey, an ingredient of foreign chocolates, may also contain animal rennet since it is sold as a by-product by the cheese industry. Photo courtesy: fooducate.com

good as 100%. For many years BWC has been writing about this anomaly to the Government of India.

Worse still, in April 2016 BWC discovered that bottles of liquid animal rennet derived from veal (calves) manufactured in USA were illegally available from the on-line seller Amazon - India. BWC wrote to them and now it seems they are selling only vegetable rennet.

Meanwhile BWC was very surprised to hear that the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change let off Amazon with a mere apology for selling a range of products in India that violated our Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The products included traps, snares, hunting manuals, as well as trophies of wildlife and marine species.

Another anomaly BWC has been pointing out to the Government is that leathers, hides and skins that are a result of cow slaughter are being imported as finished goods or for assembly here. Such handbags, footwear, upholstery for vehicles and furniture, are sold in shops and on-line under ambiguous names such as bovine hides,

kip skin, parchment, vellum, rainforest leather, nubuck, Clemence leather, Togo leather, Italian leather, and slink leather which is derived from unborn calves for which pregnant cows are killed.

Our request for a ban on import of cheese containing animal rennet and leathers derived from the cow family (protected from slaughter in a majority of states) is obviously based on animal rights, not religion. For BWC each and every life matters: whether domesticated and sacred, or wild and endangered.

Diana Ratnagar  
Chairperson

## STOP PRESS

### Another BWC Achievement

**T**he Food Safety and Standards Authority of India via a Notification declared that Silver Leaf or *Chandi-ka-warq* "shall not be manufactured using any material of animal origin at any stage" after 1 August 2016.

*Varkh/Silver leaf/Chandi-ka-warq/Tabaq* or edible foil used as decoration on *mithai, paan, supari, chyavanprash, mukhwaas*, fruit like apples often eaten with skins, found floating in bottles of *kesar* syrup and in some Ayurvedic formulations is currently made by most manufacturers by placing small thin metal strips between ox-gut skin or *jhilli/epidermis* of sheep/goat measuring 7 x 9 inches, bound together into a booklet/*auzaar* up to 360 pages and put into a loose calf-leather/sheep suede pouch/*thadaalkhol*. The leather and epidermis (20-25 'pages' of the booklet/*auzaar* are cut from one sheep/goat epidermis) being malleable stand intense manual hammering by the *varkhsaaz/tabaggaar/pannigaar* for up to 8 hours till such time as the 1 inch silver/metal strips kept in between become extremely thin, thus producing the required foil which is carefully transferred between special papers for marketing.

# Mongoose Hair Brushes

*To confuse consumers and circumvent the law, mongoose hair is often labelled Indian sable, badger, kolinsky, pony, Kevin or natural hair says Khurshid Bhatena*

**O**n mentioning a mongoose, better known as *nevalaa* in India, one can't help but immediately think of a snake and mongoose fight.

Since they are natural enemies, they have in the past been brought together and enticed to fight each other, with the cobra being picked up just before it's too late for it to survive. Such fights have been illegal ever since snake charmers' street shows were prohibited.

## Adequate Protection

Six mongoose species are found in India and they are not allowed to be exploited or kept as pets (there was a time when pet mongooses were kept to guard people and their dwellings against snakes). They are protected when living, and when dead their body parts can not be used without attracting the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. All species of genus *Herpestes* (mongoose) are listed in Schedule II Part II of this Act. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) gives



Indian grey mongoose. Photo courtesy: © Patrice Correia | Dreamstime.com

them added protection under Appendix II with a zero quota for commercial trade.

Farmers consider wild mongooses as their friends because they eliminate pests in their fields. Small animals such as snakes, rats, lizards, frogs, birds and their eggs, and scorpions too form a substantial part of these carnivores' diet.

## Modus Operandi

Despite efforts of several leading wildlife organisations and government raids, mongooses continue to be shot, snared or noosed, and beaten to death for their hair. The animals are found all over in the country which probably makes it more difficult to catch the hunter-poachers. Not only is their hair (which gets converted into artists, shaving and makeup brushes) but also finished brushes made from it, are smuggled out via Nepal and Bangladesh to the Middle East, Europe and USA.

It is shameful that India is the largest, albeit illegal, exporter of mongoose hair brushes for artists. There are many units in India, including manufacturers of famous brands that clandestinely produce thousands of brushes to meet the global demand. Abroad they are sold with the claim that every aspect of the brush is hand-made and inspected to ensure proper shape and working qualities. And, to confuse consumers and circumvent the law, mongoose hair is often

labelled Indian sable, badger, kolinsky, pony, Kevin or natural hair. Such labelled brushes are also available in our stationery stores. Mongoose hair for artists' paint brushes is favoured internationally because it is said to be strong, resilient and makes long-wearing, medium- to professional-quality brushes found to be suitable for oil and acrylic painting. Sellers can easily pass them off as the more expensive sable, kolinsky or badger hair brushes. Some times the brushes are mongoose with badger hair used as filler.

### More Vigilance Required

Beginning 1990 Beauty Without Cruelty repeatedly complained to the Union Ministry of Environment & Forests that most brushes in paint boxes used by school children were made of mongoose hair although they were labelled Indian sable. We gave them a sample to prove that the brush was indeed made of mongoose hair.

In 2002 after the mongoose was upgraded under the Wildlife Act, almost simultaneous nationwide raids with the help of the Wildlife Trust of India yielded hair of at least 50,000 illegally killed mongooses.

Fourteen years later, trade in mongoose hair for artists' brushes continues to flourish without buyers being aware of what they are using or how the hair was obtained. Large and broad brushes used to write graffiti on walls can also be of mongoose hair – and they contain at least ten times more hair than the other paint brushes. Somehow artists are under the false impression that synthetic brushes are no good.

Undercover investigations prove mongooses continue to be mercilessly hunted down and battered to death for their hair in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Bihar.

About 40 grams of hair is plucked (pulled out with fingers) from the just killed, warm bodies of mongooses. Usually no more than about 50% or 20 grams turns out to be of paint brush quality. Thus, 50 mongooses lose their lives for a kilogram of useable hair.

The species is being pushed towards extinction due to its coat. Its coarse hair is in shades of grey and brown, is moderately long, and looks streaked or grizzled because each individual hair is typically banded in black and cream colours.

In 2015 Traffic India launched a campaign on social media to save the mongoose. They enlightened consumers with pictures on how to identify mongoose hair brushes, saying the hair is stiff and in shades of grey, brown and dark brown.

In March of the same year forest officials seized from a wholesale dealer in Kochi (Kerala) around 14,000 brushes made of mongoose hair. These brushes found in different sizes had been manufactured in Uttar Pradesh.

### All Animals Matter

BWC believes no animal hair brushes, not only those that contain mongoose hair, should be purchased. Animal or natural hair brushes utilise hair derived from pigs to ponies, to human hair.

If imprecisely labelled, or not labelled at all, do not despair. By looking at and feeling the texture of the hair, it is easy to make out whether the hair is that of an animal or synthetic. Wildlife enthusiasts should not forget that mongoose hair is almost always dubiously labelled as some other animal. So if in doubt, it is best not to buy.



*Khurshid Bhatena is a  
Trustee and Hon Secretary  
of BWC-India*

# Hair Brushes

The name of the animal whose hair or bristles the manufacturer claims to have used for the brush is listed in the first column. But, the brush could have been made from the hair of another species as stated alongside in the second column.

Labelled	Can contain hair or bristles of	Labelled	Can contain hair or bristles of
Badger	Mongoose	Indian Sable	Mongoose
Boar	Hog Pig	Monkey	
Camel	Ox (Hair from ears) Pony Bear Sheep Goat Squirrel	Ostrich	(Feathers)
		Pony	Mongoose Squirrel Cow
Cat	(Whiskers too)	Pig	Boar Hog
China/ Chungking Bristles	Hog Boar Pig	Rabbit	
Civet cat		Raccoon	
Cow		Rat	(Whiskers too)
Deer		Sabeline	Ox (Dyed Hair)
Dog		Sable	Kolinsky/Chinese Mink Red Sable Brown Sable Weasel Mongoose
Ermine	Red sable	Sheep	
Fitch	Weasel	Skunk	
Goat	(Eyelashes too)	Squirrel	Canadian/ Golden Squirrel Kazan Squirrel Blue Squirrel Taleutky Squirrel (Whiskers too)
Hog	Boar Pig	Tiger	
Horse		Weasel	Fitch
Mongoose	Kevin	Wolf	Sable Weasel
Natural and white bristles	Boar Hog Pig		

# The Brahmani and the Mongoose

**D**ev Sharma was a Brahmin who used to live with his wife in a certain town. One day, his wife gave birth to a son and they were very happy.

On the very same day, a female mongoose gave birth to a baby mongoose very near his house. As destiny would have it, the mother mongoose died soon after the birth.

When they observed this, they took pity on him and the Brahmin's wife adopted the little mongoose and started looking after him as her own son.

She served her own breast milk to both her own son and the little mongoose, bathed them together and put oil on them together. She was a fond mother for both of them. Both her son and the mongoose were very fond of each other, and spent all the time together.

However, she was not a fool and knowing that the mongoose was an animal in reality, she always kept a guard, "He is a mongoose and will soon develop the animal instincts that he has inherited from his species. Some day, he may harm my own son. I shall always keep a watch on him."

One day, she had to fetch some water. So, she put her son to bed, and while going outside with the pitcher, asked her husband to keep a watch. She said, "I am going to the well to fetch some water. Please look after our son and make sure the mongoose does not hurt him by mistake."

The Brahmin was careless. Without informing his wife, he got prepared and went to beg for alms leaving the little mongoose and their son alone by themselves.

As it happened, during the very time they were alone, a poisonous snake entered the house through a hold and started approaching the Brahmin's son. When the mongoose saw this, he attacked his natural enemy to defend the child, who was like a brother to him. Although he was small and the snake was strong, he fought with all his might and bit the snake into pieces and eventually killed the snake. His mouth and claws were all smeared with the snake's blood.

The little mongoose was very proud of itself; and waited outside the house for the Brahmin's wife. He was eager to show his mother how brave he was.

Knowing her husband's carelessness, the Brahmin's wife was tensed and was returning in a hurry when she saw the little mongoose coming towards her. She noticed that he was covered in blood, and without thinking, jumped to the conclusion that the mongoose must have attacked her son.

Angered and frustrated, she threw the heavy pitcher - full of water, that she was carrying on the little mongoose. The little mongoose was severely wounded.

She ran inside, and she was amazed to see her son safely sleeping in his cradle. She then saw the snake near the cradle that had been torn into shreds.

At once she realized what had happened. She was heart-broken with the thought of having hurt the little mongoose, who was like a son to her.

Not knowing who to blame, when her husband returned home, she explained, and they were both very sorry for the suffering of their second son.

The wise indeed say: Think hard and do not do anything in haste.

**From the Pancharatna**

# Fact, not Fancy Pesticides

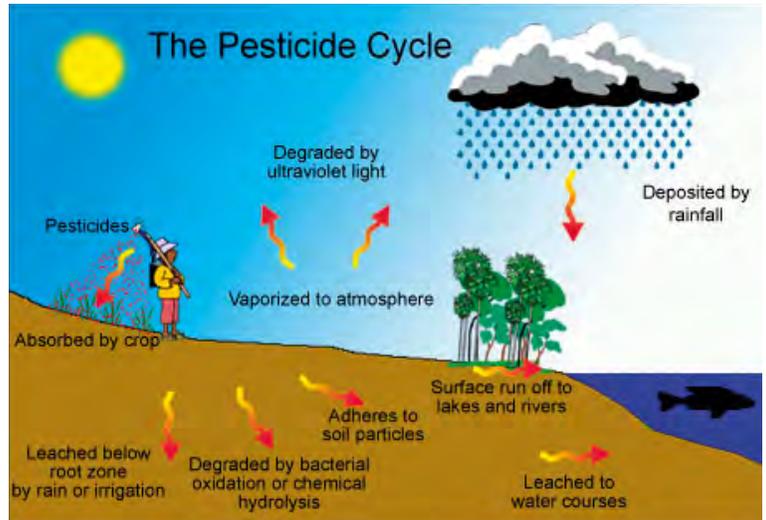
*It is certainly not safe to breathe pesticides, yet people are eating them at every meal, says Nirmal Nischit*

**A** pest is an unwanted life that is perceived, for what ever reason, to be detrimental to humans, and therefore be eliminated – if not eliminated, then controlled, reduced in number, or at the least repelled. Thus pesticides are substances used to ‘manage’ creatures. Known as crop protection products, pesticides are, in their broadest sense, synonymous with insecticides.

Pesticides contain organic and inorganic compounds. That is to say, their ingredients can be of animal, vegetable or mineral, and chemical origin. They are produced as liquids, sprays, granules, dusts and powders. And, they are all lethal to human and non-human lives.

### **Killing Backfires**

India is the largest producer of pesticides in Asia but ranks twelfth for their use. Every one has heard of the disastrous effects of DDT (Dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane). It persists in the soil for over a decade. BHC (Benzene Hexachloride)



The pesticide cycle. *Illustration courtesy: emaze.com*

is worse because it remains longer. They both damage our reproductive systems. Other variations and types of pesticides are not very much better.

Pesticides not only degrade the soil but can unintentionally pollute wells and all other sources of water because they easily percolate through soil and get carried to water bodies as runoff; and, air pollution results because they drift outside the intended area when sprayed.

### **Agricultural Pesticides**

- Insecticides
- Herbicides
- Fungicides
- Nematicides
- Molluscicides
- Rodenticides
- Miticides
- Bactericides

### **Targets**

- Insects
- Weeds
- Fungi and Mould
- Nematodes
- Snails
- Rodents
- Mites and Ticks
- Bacteria

Hand sanitizers prevent the growth of bacteria with chemicals such a triclosans and parabens linked to dangerous health problems. Both alcohol and alcohol-free sanitizers are toxic due to the fragrant chemicals rubbed on skin. In short, they are harmful for the human immune

system. Even anti-bacterial soap may do more harm than good.

Pesticides are harmful to all life, not only the species targeted to be done away with. Also let us not forget that water consumption and waste generated during manufacture of pesticides is toxic and pollutant.

There is a train called the Punjab Cancer Express that runs from Bathinda to Bikaner. The cancer-affected who travel on it are small farmers and every day 30 to 35 new cases are seen at Faridkot Medical College. Why? The farmers live in a disturbing cesspool of toxicity, a result of excessive and unregulated use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. They use 923 grams of pesticides per hectare, way above the national average of 570 grams per hectare. Worse, they use the empty pesticide cans to store water and food.

### **Pollinators**

In February 2016, the first global assessment of the threat to creatures, including some 20,000 species of wild bees that pollinate the world's plants was released in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, a group affiliated with the United Nations. The report said farming exposed these insects to pesticides, and bees were under attack from parasites and pathogens as well. Chemicals such as neonicotinoids were to blame, and even if pesticides levels were not lethal on individual insects, concentrations in the hives had long-term effects on bee colonies.

### **Non-agricultural Pesticides**

Humans do not like to live with flies, ants, rodents, cockroaches, fungi, mosquitoes, bugs, etc. and go all out to find substances, ways and means to destroy them.

Such non-agricultural pesticides also kill insects but different ones to those found in fields, like cockroaches in homes; whereas some other pesticides are used to fumigate buildings and ships. In the public health domain, pesticides are utilised to control the spread of diseases like malaria, dengue and cholera.

Repellents claim not to kill as in the case of mosquito repellent mats, vaporisers, coils, as also creams applied on human skin. But these inhalants are quite harmful, often resulting in severe allergies. Herbal repellents made

from natural oils with their manufacturers having a licence issued by the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Homoeopathy) are available, but are not necessarily safer with regard to human respiratory problems.

The wood, paint, carpet, and paper industries utilise pesticides to protect their products. For example, wood guard when applied on wood stops white-ant attacks, and naphthalene/moth-balls stop wool from being infested with moths and their larvae. But, few know that naphthalene balls are probably one of the most deadly pesticides.

### **Harmful to Everyone**

According to The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic pollutants, nine of the twelve most dangerous and persistent chemicals are pesticides.

Plants: first and foremost, not only weeds but other plants can get destroyed in fields where pesticides are used. Moreover, the pesticides get absorbed by plants and thus the edible produce like grains, vegetables and fruits easily get pesticide ridden.

**Water life:** it is common for fish and other small creatures living in water to die due to toxic herbicides and fungicides that land up in the water they live in.

**Bees:** insecticides may not directly kill honey bees, but they damage their nervous systems resulting in entire colonies of bees dying all over the world. They are natural pollinators and without them agricultural productivity will drastically drop.

**Birds:** the number of insect-eating birds has come down because their food has been eliminated through the use of insecticides.

**Animals:** if wild animals enter pesticide treated fields they can easily get poisoned. Domestic animals, including livestock, can be adversely affected too.

**Humans:** particular pesticides target particular species, but getting exposed to them results in adverse effects upon all species, including humans. No wonder pesticides need be kept away from food or livestock feeds and be secured firmly to prevent spillage during transport.

In 2011, the World Health Organisation estimated

that every year 3 million people suffer unintentional or accidental pesticide poisoning, of which 2.20 million die. Children are at greater risk from exposure because they are smaller in size and since their organs are growing they are more susceptible. Pesticide poisoning can occur due to simply breathing common bug killers. People have been found dead in closed rooms a day after pest control treatment was carried out.

It is certainly not safe to breathe pesticides, yet people are eating them at every meal. For instance, fruit like strawberries and grapes are sprayed and even if washed thoroughly with a mild mixture of white vinegar and water, or hydrogen peroxide and water, all the pesticide that they have absorbed can not be removed. No scrubbing is possible. Even those items that can be, and have been scrubbed, continue to contain pesticides. Genetically Modified foods, like corn and soy, are worse because they are engineered to produce pesticides themselves.

Ten important reasons why people should try their best to stay away from pesticides and pesticide ridden foods are:

- Increase in Allergies and Asthma
- Obesity
- Infertility and Sterility
- Endocrine, Reproductive and Birth Defects
- Cancer
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Diabetes
- Lower IQ and Autism
- Neurological Disorders such as Parkinson's Disease
- Damage to Liver and Kidneys



Caution! Risk!!  
Photo courtesy: globalhealingcenter.com

### Some Alternative Natural Substances

- Neem
- Citrus Oil
- Salt
- Eucalyptus Oil
- Mineral Oil
- Onion & Garlic
- Cayenne Pepper
- Tobacco
- Soap Suds

## Penguins in Prison

*BWC requests readers to never visit the Byculla penguin prison because it endorses and encourages their imprisonment.*



Humboldt penguins in the wild. Photo courtesy: Frank\_am\_Main at flicker.com

**B**y the time you read this, eight Humboldt penguins from the COEX Aquarium in Seoul, South Korea, will have arrived and begun their three-month quarantine at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan and Zoo in Byculla, Mumbai.

South America is the homeland of Humboldt penguins. Off the coasts of Peru and Chile they swim just below the surface of the water at speeds of 30 kilometres an hour. While feeding on small fish and krill, they joyously dive down 500 feet. No prizes for guessing how they will accomplish this activity in a 250 square foot quarantine, or in a 1550 square foot exhibit area at the zoo in Mumbai.

In the wild, these penguins live in large colonies and it's important for them to communicate among themselves socially. They are monogamous, so how will five females and three males adapt to life in captivity without stress?

They are said to be clever enough to rarely reproduce in zoos – let's hope so! In the wild they lay their eggs along cliffs, in nests among piles of *guano* or accumulated droppings of sea birds. Since they are given salt-free water in captivity they make their supraorbital glands (that enable them to drink salt water) dormant.

Humboldt penguins have always kept away from humans, so why can't humans keep away from them and let them live undisturbed to preen themselves in their own natural

habitat? (As protection against the elements, they gather oil from their preening glands and apply it to their feathers and flipper edges.) Over-fishing has already harmed the specie's survival.

### Do NOT visit

Beauty Without Cruelty requests readers to never visit the Byculla penguin prison because it endorses and encourages their imprisonment.

Besides, it's a colossal waste of around ₹50 crore spent on constructing a fancy climate-controlled prison enclosure comprising of pools, feeding areas, artificial habitat, water pumps and rectangular and circular tanks. The place will have a seating capacity for over 150 people who will to BWC's disgust sit back and view the unfortunate penguin prisoners through acrylic glass.

The pathetic penguins will probably meet the same fate as hundreds of creatures before them who suffered and died in this zoo during recent years.

# Lakhs of Lives

*Lac is the only resin that comes from an animal says Nadya*

**L**ac is a thick waxy substance excreted during development and reproduction by female scale insects indigenous to the forests of India. The process of creating lac begins with the harvesting of sticklac which is 68% resin.

Tree twigs covered in the lac bug's secretions are collected and trimmed. The lac is scraped off the sticks and put in a tub of water. There it is either stomped upon or pounded with a pestle. This 'cleans' the lac and forces it to release its natural bright red colour.

The seedlac or powder that is created is dried and converted into shellac, which is a substance commonly found in cloth dye and varnishes as well as jewellery.

(In fact it is found in many other unimaginable items. You will find further information on [www.bwcindia.org/Web/Awareness/LearnAbout/Shellac.html](http://www.bwcindia.org/Web/Awareness/LearnAbout/Shellac.html).)

Lac is the only resin that comes from an animal.



A lac-bug. Photo courtesy: inland360.com



Female scale insects make small tubes of lac on tree branches in which they live sucking out the sap. The lac is a protection from predators and elements, but not from people who scrape off and crush the resin, insects and larvae included, to derive shellac. Photo courtesy: Jeffrey W. Lotz, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bugwood.org



Different varieties of shellac flakes. Photo courtesy: Nuberger13 at wikipedia.org

## Bug-based Jewellery

Lac extends to all jewellery pieces – necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings etc. but the most common incarnation of lac jewellery is bangles, which are very popular in Rajasthan and Bihar.

To make a lac bangle, first a cube of lac must be melted down over a *chula* or stove. As it melts, the lac is smoothed over the head of a large rolling pin-like tool.

Colours can be mixed in by melting a few cubes of lac simultaneously and smoothing them over opposite sides of the tool. Twisting the colours around the tool's head while rolling, allows the jewellery-maker to create a variety of patterns.

The lac is rolled off the tool in a skinny strand, twisted around a mould to size it. Then it is crimped to a wire base to make a bangle.



Craftsman making a lac bangle. *Photo courtesy: Balavenise.*



Lac bangles. *Photo courtesy: thebigfatindianwedding.com*

The resinous lac could also be melted, rolled and flattened into predetermined shapes. As it cools, craftsmen work creating inlay patterns. Embellishments are applied. The lac is curled around a wire base, pressing small beads or mirrors into the rapidly-cooling resin to make chunky bangles.

Goldsmiths sometimes use lac to fill the hollow centres of jewellery pieces to maintain their shape. (Kolhapuri gold beads are filled with lac. *Polki* and *Kundan* jewellery are set in shellac.)

## Dangerous

The actual process of making lac bangles and jewellery, though, is incredibly dangerous and can give the makers breathing problems, skin allergies, and deep burns among other things. Still, lac is a tradition in the rural parts of India where married women wear lac bangles. Originally from Rajasthan, today centres are in Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.



*Nadya writes for the wedding The Big Fat Indian Wedding on which she has shared vegan mithai recipes.*

## FYI Fish

### Fugu

Pufferfish is a deadly delicacy of Japan because it can be lethally poisonous if prepared incorrectly. So much so that chefs undergo extensive training in preparing it and have to themselves taste the fish before serving.

### Ikizukuri

This is another Japanese delicacy where the fish is served live in order to prove how fresh it is. The fish is tortured to death on the plate. It endures great suffering with amputation after amputation – bits are cut off and eaten.

### Yin Yang

Generally carp is deep fried for no more than a few seconds. Its skin is scalded but served alive. Although Taiwanese, it is prohibited in Taiwan and also in Australia and Germany.

### Fish Maws

Swim, gas or air bladders of fish such as the Sturgeon, Cat fish, Drum fish, Threadfin, Cod and Totoaba are all fish maws. Bladders of such bony fish are filled with gas, and their purpose is to control the fishes' underwater buoyancy and stability.

The bladders are extracted from the killed fish, processed and dried in various shapes for particular uses. One such product is isinglass, a collagen utilised in the making of drinks and foods. In fact, isinglass (and fish maw) is considered one of the traditional fishery by-products along with fish meal, and fish body & liver oils.

In drinks, isinglass is used in the clarification or fining process of beer and wine production. Non-animal alternatives do exist although they are not frequently used. In foods, isinglass could be utilised as a form of gelatine.

For restoration of artwork, isinglass glue obtained from the Russian Sturgeon is considered far superior to rabbit skin glue because it is said to be of a high quality, blood and rust free.

The fourth and quite recent application of isinglass is to heal ulcerous and persistent lesions. It has been tried for healing wounds that have not responded for months to conventional treatment.

Coming back to food, fish maw soup is a Chinese delicacy just like bird nest and shark fin soups. In 2013 American smugglers were caught with 529 dried bladders of the Mexican endangered Totoaba. Consignments of fish maw derived from Mexican waters to China is said to be harming other marine lives too like the vaquita which are tiny porpoises.

Dried fish bladders are sold in Malaysian shopping malls. One can even buy these organs online. India exports dried fish maws of Eel/*Vilanku/Vam*, Jew fish/*Kathalai/Ghol*, Thread fish/*Kala/Dara*,

Giant crocker/*Panna/Kote/Kooth*, Cat fish/*Kelru/Petara/Singala, Becti/Giarto* perch/*Waigeu* sea perch, and Lizard fish to Hong Kong and other countries.



# Vegan Recipe

## Brinjal



**B**rinjal, Eggplant or Aubergine, called *Baingan* in Hindi, is of Indian and Chinese origin, a species of nightshade, related to the tomato and potato, brinjal is actually a fruit used as a vegetable in cooking.

Brinjals are found in different sizes, shapes and colours but are mostly purple. Rich in Vitamins A, B1, C, D and calcium, their consumption helps keep diabetes in check, aids weight loss, prevents cancer, is good for our brain and skin, stabilises blood pressure and lowers cholesterol. However, those who have low iron levels should avoid them. It is not common knowledge that brinjals contain nicotine and therefore help those trying to quit smoking.

### Brinjals in Coconut Milk *(serves 2)*

#### Ingredients

- 4 medium sized purple brinjals
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- Salt to taste
- 4 tbsps oil
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 slit green chilli
- ½ inch ginger, sliced thin
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 400 ml coconut milk
- ½ cup coriander, chopped

#### Preparation

- Cut brinjals in rings and apply salt, turmeric and chilli powders. Stand for a while and then shallow fry. Keep aside.
- Fry onion, green chilli and ginger. Add pinch of turmeric and chilli powders, salt and vinegar.
- Add coconut milk. Cook on low flame till it thickens.
- Add fried brinjals. Mix.
- Garnish with coriander.
- Serve with rice.

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