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# COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

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



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**Front Cover:** Honey bee

Photo courtesy *Neeraj Mishra*

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## Editorial

# Masters of illusion

The late P.T. Barnum, owner of an iconic circus, may have had his customers in mind when he famously said, “There’s a sucker born every minute.” Only suckers, after all, may be taken in by the illusion that animals partake in circus fun.

BWC officers visited the “Rambo Circus” last January. There they saw elephants playing cricket, and dogs sitting on stools, jumping through rings and performing other tricks. These hapless animals spend their lives in arduous travel, by train or trailer truck, from venue to venue.

The painful methods needed to train wild animals to do things that are unusual for them include shock devices, beatings, lengthy confinements, and surgical removal of claws or teeth. Bears have their bones broken, or noses burnt, to get them to stand on their hind legs.

Austria, Costa Rica, Finland, India, Singapore and Sweden have banned or restricted the use of animals in entertainment, but there is a perception among circus managements that they need to include some animals for the kids.

Children and animals are a natural fit, but the former are too young to be aware of the cruelties endured by their animal friends to entertain them, unless they have been exposed to Humane

Education Programs such as those organized by BWC. Psychologists say that seeing animals being humiliated, prodded, hit or injured may desensitize children to others' suffering. Many once believed that animals felt nothing — not even pain. Of late, however, scientists have documented surprising levels of intelligence and emotional depth in animals. Researchers have found

Photo courtesy [www.newsimg.bbc.co.uk](http://www.newsimg.bbc.co.uk)



*Australia's Circus Oz shows animal-free acts can be profitable.*

animals using tools, expressing feelings, solving problems and communicating complex ideas.

Unable to afford high rents or upgrade facilities, Indian circuses are finding it difficult to compete with huge movie complexes, vast suburban malls, modern theatres, Internet and television entertainment. Their star began to set around 1989, when BWC submitted a report on Indian circuses to the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The government issued a notification banning the use of panthers, tigers, monkeys and bears.

Many circuses are a part of diversified business interests, and are being supported by the other, viable enterprises in their owners' portfolios. Consequently, Hindi film songs still crackle through old speakers under striped tarpaulins spattered with holes. Through these holes, the sun shines myriad spotlights onto faded red carpets covering mud stages. There, midgets

and clowns perform slapstick comedy as torpid musicians on platforms play to half-full tents.

Yet circuses may become profitable if their managements innovate and become animal-free.

One of the most world-famous post-modern, animal-free circuses is the Canadian *Cirque du Soleil*, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last June. According to its website, "In 2009, *Cirque du Soleil* will present 19 shows simultaneously throughout the world. The company has received . . . prestigious awards . . ." Its

founder, Mr. Guy Laliberte (49), who used to sleep in parks while performing as a fire-eater, jockeyed his drive and ambition to become number 261 in Forbes' ranking of the world's richest. He is to become Canada's first space tourist this September, and is one of the world's few billionaires to have increased his wealth over the past recessionary year.

Vivid and charismatic fire-eaters, masseuses, fortune-tellers, contortionists, sword-swallowers, trapeze artists, tightrope walkers, jugglers, clowns, people on stilts, gymnasts and acrobats can do many exciting things animals can't.

Five years ago, about 400 poor Nepali village children of the flood-afflicted were made false promises and recruited to Indian circuses, notably the "Great Roman Circus," only to become slaves. Some were sex slaves for the owners and managers.

Only about 65 of those children, mostly girls 7-16 years old, may have been rescued from four Indian and Nepali circuses. Industry insiders say circus girls provide local officials sexual entertainment for permission to pitch their tents. Bribes, and hundreds of free passes, are also distributed among policemen, politicians and even thugs, to pre-empt action being taken against the circuses.

Yet going animal-free may at least solve circuses' animal rights issues, a step in the right direction.

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# What price vanity?

By Amruta Ubale

Precious and semi-precious jewellery and accessories constituting bone, teeth, horn (rhino), ivory (elephant, hippopotamus, walrus), claws/nails (tiger, emu), hair (elephant, bear, horse), coral, pearls, mother of pearl, shells, butterflies, insects, shellac, silk, wool, feathers, quills, leather, fur, skin, marine flora and fauna: what have they in common? All represent torture and death. No one waits for the animals to die naturally in order to make these and other objects gratifying human vanity.

Seventy percent of pearls are worn as necklaces and chokers. Marketed by colour, lustre/glow, shape, size/grade, and surface quality, pearls have been promoted along with two other Ps: politics and power.

There is but a one-in-a-million chance of finding a natural pearl/*moti*. It could take as many as 100,000 oysters to produce a single pearl necklace. When a piece of grit embeds itself in the soft tissue of an oyster, it is wrapped in nacre, the pearly internal layer of the shell, to form a natural pearl. A pearl's glow is based on the quantity and quality of the nacre layers.

To simulate this natural accident, man uses a pair of surgical tongs to hold the valves open, makes an incision in the oyster's soft body, and puts grit, called gravel, inside. This gravel is a bit of shell/tissue from a freshly sacrificed oyster.

The pain we feel on getting a splinter under our skins is a mild form of what the oyster suffers. An oyster is liable to die while being incised or later, by falling prey to infectious organisms while secreting the nacre. Even if it survives these steps, it has only a 10 percent chance of emerging unscathed from the pearl's removal, which may be after upto seven years' pain — to produce a single cultured pearl. Only 40 percent of the pearls obtained are marketable, of which 5 percent turn out perfectly spherical, fetching good prices.

Consequently every pearl, cultured or natural, represents thousands of shells being opened up and discarded, resulting in the deaths of many oysters. Irrespective of the type, colour or name given to pearls, all of them have a hidden history of pain and death. Even Spanish Majorca pearls, called "man-made pearls" and some others called "artificial/fake/simulated pearls" use fish scales and/or lustre from cultured pearls in their production.

Hyderabad does not produce a single pearl, though it is considered the world's biggest retail pearl market.

Coral/*moonga/pravaal/vidram/mirjaan/angaarak mani* is used extensively in jewellery, so, in addition to mining it, India imports red coral from Mediterranean countries. As coral reefs grow at an extremely slow rate of 1 to 2.5 cm a year, mining destroys not only the work of centuries in hours but also takes countless lives. Coral reefs sustain colonies of millions

of tiny animals called coral polyps which have soft, sac-like bodies. Even dead coral reefs are home to a multitude of marine creatures. Dugongs for example, massive slow breeding sea mammals, exist in shallow waters with coral reef formations as found around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

*Navratan*, or nine-gem astrologically-based rings, usually feature blue sapphire/*neelam* for Saturn, yellow sapphire/*pukhraj* for Jupiter, ruby/*manik* for the Sun, diamond/*heera* for Venus, emerald/*panna* for Mercury, coral/*moonga* for Mars, pearl/*moti* for the Moon, cat's eye/*lahasunya* for Ketu and hessonite/*gomedh* for Rahu. Since these rings are based on planetary colours, coral can be substituted with red jasper/*lal akik* (it has similar properties though to lesser degrees) and white moonstone/*chandramani* instead of pearl.

The sixth-century Sanskrit encyclopaedia, *Brihat Samhita* by Varahamihira, recommends moonstones as substitutes for pearls.

Unless a nylon thread or metal wire is specifically asked for, pearl, coral, gold and other bead necklaces are strung with silken threads. Leather straps, usually in brown, olive green or black, are sometimes used in place of metal chains for pendants and bracelets. Some wristwatches have leather, silk or velvet straps and mother-of-pearl dials. Eco-friendly jewellery is a new trend, made of just about anything — wood, ceramic, terra cotta, reeds and fibres like those of banana leaves, papier-



Elephant Ivory



Vegetable Ivory



Coral



Red Jasper



Pearl



Moonstone

mâché, leather, handmade paper and recycled fabrics and threads — which could contain silk.

Shellac goes into the making of bangles. One *lakh* is a 100,000 and that many *lakhs* of insects are killed for the production of 333 grams of shellac. It is also used in some jewellery settings, such as for *Kundan* gold jewellery and shellac-filled Kolhapuri gold beads.

Maharashtrian brides wear *nath* and other ornaments like *chandrakor*, *tanmanikhod*, *chinchpeti*, *gajra* which may be set in pearls. Bengalis wear shell/*shank* bangles. Gujarati brides wear ivory bangles called *chudas*. Vegetable ivory is from ivory-nut palms called *Phytelephas*.

Cameo is a method of carving on shells (mussel, cowry, conch, helmet/sardonyx), agate or glass. Original shell cameo (and intaglio) jewellery is typically hand-carved in Italy as portraits and worn as brooches, pendants, rings and bracelets. Imitation cameos are of plastic. Cloisonné is a metal-working technique which involves enamel processes. The basic elements of enamel are boric acid, saltpetre and alkaline. Colours depend on

the minerals added: e.g. grey due to iron, yellow from uranium, green with chromium, white with zinc, blue with bronze and red with gold or iodine. Enamel/*Meenakari* work, as found in Rajasthani jewellery and artefacts, is done on metal, stone and glass. The process involves firing a special decorative paint which contains varnish or resin. The paint and/or varnish and resin may contain animal substances.

Amber used in jewellery is fossilised resin containing trapped insects, but this is a natural phenomenon, unlike the colourful butterflies and exquisitely-formed scorpions, killed just to be converted into jewellery. These delicate insects are encased in materials such as clear plastic or resin, or electroformed like pretty leaves and flowers.

24-karat gold- or silver-dipped jewellery and display items (e.g. *peepul* tree leaves) are made using a process called electroforming, utilising a real/natural leaf or flower. The matrix/mandrel used could also be a seashell, butterfly or insect — a cruel process because the delicate creatures' beauty is frozen alive with a thin metal "skin" over its entire surface. It

is similar to electro-plating in which a base metal is used, such as copper or brass jewellery coated in gold and usually called one-gram gold jewellery.

Though exquisite pieces of jewellery could be free of animal parts, they are sometimes sold in silk-lined leather cases, or in silk pouches. In such circumstances, vegetarians may want to state their objections and ensure that they do not pay for the silk pouch or leather case even when declining to accept it.

Sometimes inappropriate prizes are won, such as pearl jewellery. Being "free" doesn't absolve us even if we decide to give them away. It is better to decline the prize and point out the cruelty involved.

Chamois leather is the soft leather of a small mountain antelope or young sheep, goat, kid or pig. It may also be of dogskin. Being highly water-absorbent it is used for cleaning, rubbing and polishing brassware, silverware and jewellery. The usually-yellow, soft, cotton cloth, commonly available for cleaning cars, is the non-leather alternative.



Amruta Ubale is BWC's education officer.

# Stolen drops of gold

By Roshni D'Silva

*If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live. No more bees, no more pollination... no more men!*

— Albert Einstein

India's production of 55,000 tons of honey a year ranks sixth in the world. A substantial quantity of this honey is obtained by setting fire to beehives. Thousands of bees are smoked out to die. Permits are distributed to honey collectors for a couple of months at a time, in places like the Sundarbans Forest. The honey obtained in this manner is called 100 percent pure or "natural," and marketed as "organic" since it is free from pesticides.

The traditional method of extracting forest, or wild, honey is destructive as it damages the beehive. The smoke and fire pose risks to the humans involved too. Certain organisations in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are, consequently, advising tribal honey-collectors to wear canvas gear, use ladders and cut off large chunks of the beehives instead — which is just as cruel. In fact, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. is training 20,500 tribal gatherers in the collection, processing and marketing of wild honey. Apiary honey is another source. Bihar ranks first in its production.

Upto now, 16 states have been sanctioned Rs 20 crores each under a central project for apiculture. Agricultural Universities are usually chosen to act as nodal agencies for the training and installation of colonies. Besides training, beekeepers are also given loans.

The National Bee Board and the Central Bee Research & Training Institute (CBRTI) under the Khadi & Village Industries Commission, promote bee-keeping. They encourage the planting of certain flowering plants, from which bees may collect pollen and nectar.

## 10,000 trips to flowers

Apiculture in India often encounters epidemics which destroy entire colonies. Bees are farmed in boxes and, though they are not killed for obtaining honey and beeswax/*mom*, honey happens to be the food they save for themselves, not for humans.

In one trip to a flower, a honeybee collects one-hundredth of a drop; for a teaspoon of honey, a bee has to make about ten-thousand trips to flowers.

Even a small colony of bees makes as many as 60,000 trips a day from its hive to the flowers and back, all within a 10-kilometre radius of the hive. Put another way, each worker bee flies approximately three to five miles from its hive during its lifetime. During June through August, worker bees fly 55,000 miles to produce half a kilogram of honey. That's roughly 12 round trips

from Srinagar to Kanyakumari! In order to increase the output of apiary honey, queen bees are often killed and replaced by younger ones; the queens are artificially inseminated and tricked into laying more eggs by adding large wax cells to the hive. The queen lays more eggs to fill the additional space. Worker bees also collect more honey to fill these cells.

## No such thing as *ahimsak* honey

Considered against this backdrop, the view that no cruelty is involved in obtaining honey, and other bee products, is obviously inaccurate. Honey is the bees' food. We steal it from their hives/homes by pulling out dripping honeycomb frames and replacing them with empty ones. They do not produce honey for human consumption, but for their own. Similarly, other bee products like beeswax/*mom* snatched from bee hives were not created for human consumption.

There are myriad uses for honey, ranging from medicinal to food and beauty products. Other bee products are pollen, used as a so-called vegetarian protein diet; bee venom, used in medicines; beeswax/*mom* (commonly referred to as white wax, bleached wax or yellow wax) used in the cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, paint and candle industries; propolis, a resinous mixture similar to beeswax, which bees collect from botanical sources for sealing small gaps in their hives, considered a natural healing agent; queen bee larva powder; and royal jelly, used as a food supplement/ tonic, and in cosmetics.

## Silence of the bees

Beekeepers are reporting a new phenomenon: on going to hives, they are finding no bees in them! Bee colonies are mysteriously vanishing in what is called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Their disappearance is alarming, because bees are responsible for pollination in everything that grows, from crops and vegetables to fruits. In some countries like the U.S.A., hives are rented out for pollination and more revenues are earned this way than by the sales of honey and bee products. Having to move their hives frequently, and over great distances, could be a bee stressor leading to CCD.

Other possible reasons are that bees are finding it difficult to adapt to genetically modified plants, and the use of pesticides. Radiation signals from mobile phones and towers disorient them. They are also harmed by air pollution and global warming.

In Mahabaleshwar, a Maharashtrian hill station, beekeeping has almost come to a standstill. One of the reasons for this is that the phenomenal area under strawberry cultivation, from Panchgani to Mahabaleshwar, requires massive pesticide spraying to control the strawberry mite. This results in the elimination of bees. Sprays for various crops in different places may be killing, not just bees, but also numerous insects — even those not harmful to crops.

Man-made environmental calamities, resulting in catastrophe for bees, may trigger humans' doom as well.

Photo courtesy [www.bettercities.squarespace.com](http://www.bettercities.squarespace.com)



*The disappearance of bees may be caused by the theft of their food, poor diet weakening their immune systems, and consequent disease.*

### Harmful honey

Honey carries harmful *C. botulinum* spores which can even prove fatal to babies' undeveloped immune systems.

Honey produced from particular flowers may trigger honey intoxication symptoms like dizziness, weakness, excessive perspiration, nausea and vomiting.

Although honey is called a natural sweetener, it may be considered a refined sugar because it has the same 97 percent relative sweetness as that of granulated sugar, and contains fructose, glucose and sucrose; and is similar to synthetically-produced inverted sugar syrup.

There are four classes of simple sugars — sucrose, fructose, honey and malts — regarded by most nutritionists as harmful to optimal health after prolonged consumption of amounts above 15 percent of the carbohydrate calories.

Honey causes tooth decay faster than table sugar, as it has the highest calorie content of all sugars with about 65 calories, compared to around 48 calories per tablespoon found in table sugar.



Roshni D'Silva is BWC's field officer.



Fact, not fancy

## Animal-hair brushes

By Nirmal Nishchit

A negligible percentage of non-animal-hair brushes are sold worldwide, as they apparently do not satisfy their users. Hog, pig or boar bristles are the most common, although sable, mongoose, cow, goat and squirrel hair are also utilised in brushes for various applications.

Animal hair brushes, used for boot polishing and for painting walls and artworks, are made from hog bristles. Artists' paint brushes are made of sable, red sable (red haired weasel), sabeline (light coloured ox-hair dyed red), kolinsky (a Chinese mink specie), badger, pig, kevrin (fine mongoose hair), pony, goat and squirrel hair.

### No camels in "Camel"

The "Camel" brand of brushes contains no camel hair but rather hair from goats, sheep, oxen (hair from their ears), horses, ponies, lower grade squirrel hair, or blends of these. Fine artwork brushes use hair from squirrels' tails, for which hundreds of squirrels are killed.

Most brushes in schoolchildren's paintboxes contained Indian sable — though mongoose are protected under wildlife laws — till complained to the Government of India. In 2002, nationwide raids conducted with the help of the Wildlife Trust of India, yielded the hair of at least 50,000 illegally-killed animals.

Hair-grooming (and other) brushes marked "natural" or "pure" contain boar bristles, whereas "synthetic" ones are of stiff plastic or nylon. Wire bristles are stronger than boar or nylon ones; moulded quill, bamboo and wooden bristles are also available. Brushes made of skunk hair with badger hair on the outside rims are considered the best for hair-brushing.

Brushes for applying cosmetics, shaving, brushing clothes, carpets, upholstery and some toothbrushes may contain animal bristles. Toothbrushes, and the commonly-available cheap brushes used for scrubbing or washing clothes, are made of nylon. Pastry/decorator brushes are also usually of nylon.

"Synthetic" or man-made filaments are either of nylon or polyester. They are dyed and baked to render them softer and more absorbent, are available in all sizes, have excellent stiffness, snap and shape retention for maximum control, and the advantage of being cheaper than animal-hair brushes. The most common name of this filament is "Taklon."

### Synthetic brushes better

In addition to the ethical aspects of not using animal-bristle brushes, the advantages of "synthetic" brushes are that they are less prone to damage from solvents, paints and insects, easier to keep clean, shape-retentive, more durable and better suited for painting with acrylics. "Thunderon"

is an acrylic fibre which can eliminate static electricity.

A Mexican port from which the best-known and most widely-used brush fibre from the cactus family is supplied has lent its name, "Tampico," to the fibre. High absorbency renders "Tampico" suitable for scrubbing and washing. The other fibre brush material in use is called "Bassine." It is made from Faw Palm stalks, and mostly used in deck scrubs as well as garage and street brooms.

### Cruelty to pigs

Pigs are commonly reared for their meat and bristles. They are, therefore, found roaming within municipal limits in slum areas, eating out of garbage dumps. "Fresh pork" is easily available from such sources and is also supplied by small piggeries from which the most heart-rending squeals are regularly heard.

Perhaps the cruellest and least-known method of obtaining any product from an animal is that by which bristles are obtained from the pig to make paint brushes. Hog/pig bristles, extracted in a barbaric manner, are supplied to brush manufacturers by slum dwellers. The pig is forcibly held immobile underfoot by one person while its hair is painfully yanked out by another. The pig is, all the while, fully conscious and screaming in pain. The price of plucked pig hair/bristles is double that of bristles which have been cut off.

All kinds of brushes are made of bristles obtained from the



pig, but the most common are those used for painting walls. The Bristle Hair and Brush Manufacturers' Association (Kanpur) informed BWC that *desi* pigs/hogs are domestically reared for meat and bristles throughout India, for which the government makes loans available. Most such pigs are in Uttar Pradesh. The annual yield of bristles is about 250 grams per pig. Bristles are collected by small village *bayaparies* who, when they have a sizeable quantity, sell them to manufacturers at markets/fairs known as *haats*, *bazaars* or *melas*.

White- and black-coloured pig/hog bristle wall-painting brushes are available in the marketplace. Some say the white ones are made from pig/hog bristles obtained from China, but BWC has found that Indian pigs/hogs produce white hair as well, which are sometimes dyed black.

### Fibre brushes preferable

Other white wall-painting brushes are made of non-animal fibres, like a brand called "Him." Nylon bristle brushes used to be ten times more expensive than pig hair/bristle ones, but this is no longer so. More people are demanding non-animal brushes. We believe this is due to an awareness created by BWC.

Rollers and "synthetic" brushes may be expensive compared to pig hair brushes, compelling consumers to make the moral choice between unethical cheapness and a higher but ethical cost of painting tools.

Unscrupulous shopkeepers pass off hog-hair brushes saying they are not made of animal products.

Painters buy them because they are cheap and easily available. Home-owners do not usually check what sort of brushes are being used to paint their walls. So the hog-hair brush business continues to flourish — and so does cruelty to pigs.

## Paints

**A**zo Dyes are artificial colourings synthesized from petroleum. Other dyes may be of animal origin. Chitin from shrimps and crabs could be used as a dyeing assistant. A reddish dye called Tyrian/royal/imperial purple, or imperial dye, is obtained from the bodies of certain molluscs; another purple-blue indigo dye, hyacinth purple/royal blue, is derived from Phoenician sea snails. Dyes from insects like lac, cochineal and kermes are in shades of red. Cochineal is used as crimson lake or pink, and charred ivory as ivory black, in artists' paints. This despite the fact that every plant can produce a dye. For example, red may be obtained from pomegranates and brown from barks.

Some black paints could also contain fatty acid pitch, a by-product of the soap industry. Lamp black (soot from oil lamps), bone black/charcoal (of animal origin), and carbon black (of petroleum/mineral origin) pigments are also available.

Tempera is a painting medium in which the pigment is mixed with eggs; similarly, gouache is a watercolour thickened with gum. Oil pastels contain animal fat, and wax crayons contain beeswax.

Wall paints contain pigments, solvents, resins and additives.

A pigment is a substance such as chlorophyll (from plants) or melanin (found in skin, hair, fur, and feathers) that produces a characteristic colour in plant or animal tissues. White pigment (not *choona*, of shell origin) is Titanium Dioxide and black pigment carbon black. Both are of mineral origin.

Other mineral pigments used to make paints include Ferric Oxide and Cadmium Sulphide for reds, metallic salts for yellows and oranges, and iron blue and chrome yellow for blues and greens. Shellac, of animal origin, pigmented with white Titanium Dioxide, is widely used by painters as a stain sealer, wall-board primer and knot- and sap-sealer on wood.

Solvents are usually mineral or petroleum in origin, whereas resins may be of plant or mineral origin. Calcium Carbonate (of mineral or animal origin) and Aluminium Silicate (of mineral origin) are used as additives/fillers to give paints body.

A reddish-brown ink or pigment called Sepia is prepared from cuttlefish. Quinoline is a yellow dye which necessitates the use of Glycerol in its preparation. Also, fish oils are very important to the paint industry.

Casein (non-veg or lacto-veg) binders are used in water-dispersed paints like distemper. Paints used for road marking may contain shellac. Magnesium stearate, very likely of animal origin, is used as a drier. However, primer is Lead Oxide, of mineral origin.

# The bird with a hundred eyes

By Ashoke Dasgupta

You guessed it! The bird with a hundred eyes is the beautiful peacock, with an eye-like pattern on the quivering, fanned-out plumage of its tail! The Indian blue peacock, called *mayura* in Sanskrit, is spectacular with its pretty, shimmering train of jewel-like coloured

feathers. In comparison, the peahen is just a mottled brown fowl. fine of at least Rs. 10,000.00. Despite this, there are anecdotes of peacock deaths and reports of fewer of them to be seen where they used to be in abundance.

*In China 2,009 peacock feathers were recently used to make a wedding dress with a huge fanned-out circular bridal train.*

Photo courtesy [www.decampment.wordpress.com](http://www.decampment.wordpress.com)

Bhamburda Sanctuary. They consist of fine nylon strings and sacks which have been sprinkled with grain to attract the peacocks, entangling their feet.

## “Protected” but exploited

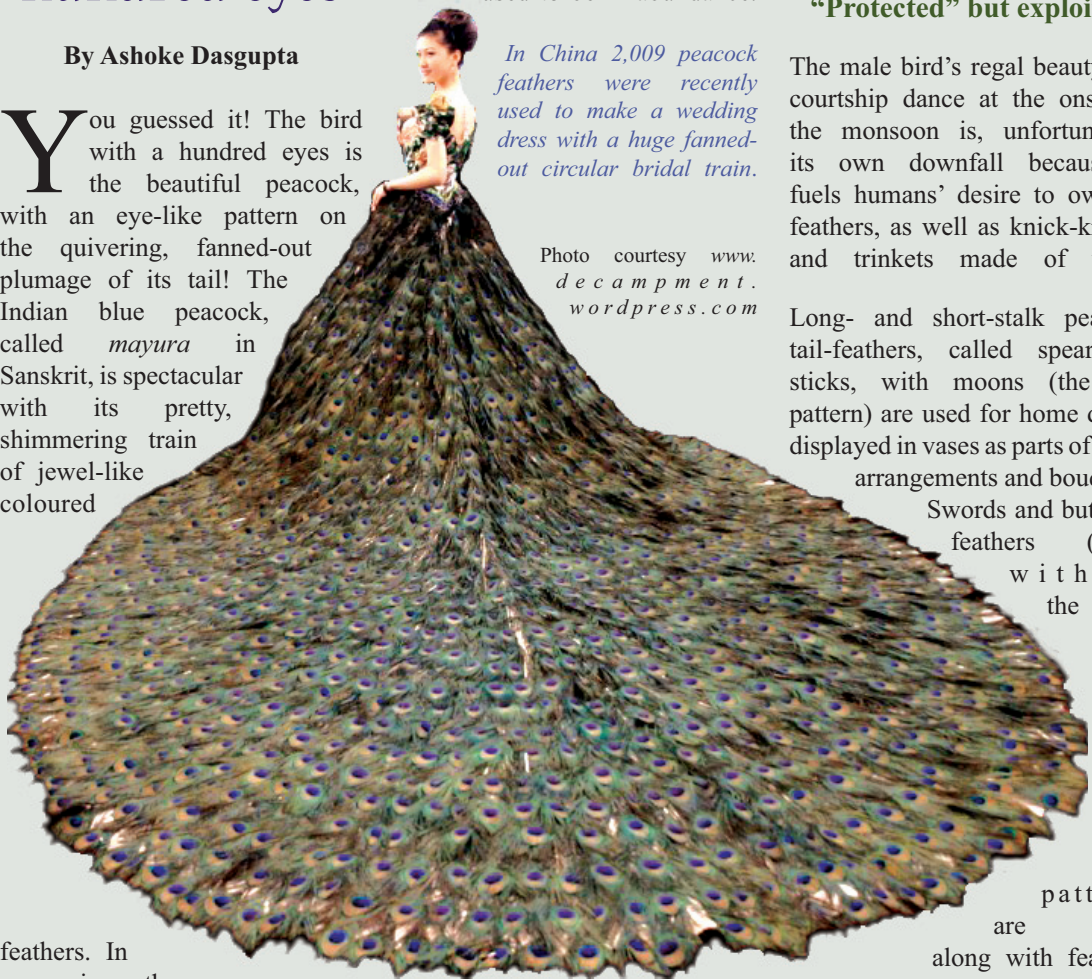
The male bird’s regal beauty and courtship dance at the onset of the monsoon is, unfortunately, its own downfall because it fuels humans’ desire to own its feathers, as well as knick-knacks and trinkets made of them.

Long- and short-stalk peacock tail-feathers, called spears or sticks, with moons (the eye pattern) are used for home décor, displayed in vases as parts of floral arrangements and bouquets.

Swords and butterfly feathers (those without the eye

pattern) are used along with feathers with moons for making brooms/*jhadu*, fans/*mayur pankh*, handicraft items like framed artwork, book-marks, clutches and headbands. The short plumage from the breast and belly is usually added to feathers with moons for making jewellery such as ear-rings and necklaces, used as fringes on attire and trimming on hats. Peacock herl or flue (side fibres of “eyed” feathers, usually

As the peacock features in Hindu mythology, there was a time when no one dared harm the hundreds of peafowl found in villages named after them. But the situation has changed due to poaching — intentional and unintentional. In recent times, peacock traps have been discovered in Maharashtra’s



bleached, burnt and dyed) is one of the most popular materials for fly-tying by fishers. The crest, or corona, and peacock quills (speckled and iridescent blue wing-feathers) are also popular. Peacock feathers are said to be indispensable in *Mayur Chandrika* Ayurveda medicine, *Pavo Cristatus* homeopathic medicine and, in witchcraft; peacock heads are clandestinely used as charms and talismans. Last but not least, the plumes are used for religious purposes.

A peacock normally sheds 150-200 feathers annually. But as demand for peacock plumes grows, naturally-shed long-tail “eyed” feathers do not suffice to meet it, so peacocks are killed.

Mercury-based pesticides sprayed on seeds and crops (particularly by tomato growers) and consumed by peacocks have also resulted in their deaths. Initially termed “mysterious,” then “accidental,” there are no statistics on how many are actually being killed. Finding scores of dead peafowl is becoming a frequent occurrence. The Forest Department has caught people poaching them for their “novelty” meat — about one and half kilograms per bird.

Heat waves and water scarcities claim the lives of hundreds of peacocks. Unfortunately, such “natural” deaths have been taken advantage of by people who have stolen the birds’ carcasses prior to the Forest Department reaching the villages where they had dropped dead. Beauty Without Cruelty has been requesting the

government, for decades, to always incinerate, never bury or dispose of carcasses in any other way, to minimize the chances of miscreants utilizing them in any way; it would also prove counterproductive if carcasses were to be auctioned.

### Inadequate ban

Peacocks are, as we have seen, protected under the wildlife laws. Exports of their tail feathers, and articles made from them, are also banned by India and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. But the gathering and selling, within the country, of what are claimed to be naturally-shed peacock feathers is legal. According to a 2008 study by Traffic India, around 20 million peacock tail feathers are traded annually, and an entire community is involved in this trade at Agra.

The government needs to realize that there is no visual difference between moulted peacock feathers and those which have been plucked out of a peacock which has been killed for them. Illegal trapping and killing is easy and lucrative, with the added advantage of the legality of selling peacock feathers, and articles and trophies made from them. Poachers use bright lights to attract them. They are easily caught, as they can hardly fly.

There must be consistency in ruling for positive results to be attained. BWC will continue to approach the Government of India to ban the gathering, sale, distribution and use of peacock feathers altogether.

## Demand for assorted plumage

As long as there is a demand for plumage to make utility, decorative and adornment items, birds will be farmed and wild birds’ feathers traded. No one waits for birds to shed feathers, or die naturally.

Feathers for fans, showpieces, quills, shuttlecocks, fertilisers, bedding (pillows, quilts, duvets of eiderdown or down — fine feathers plucked off live geese) apparel and accessories (cloaks, coats, dresses, boas, garment padding, clutches) jewellery and ornaments (earrings, necklaces, etc.) headbands, aigrettes, hats, tribal headgear and costumes are usually obtained from peacocks, ostriches, emus, egrets, pheasants, turkeys, chickens, geese, ducks, marabous, storks, and owls.

Cotton, *simbal*/kapok (silk cotton from the tree) and filling materials like Comforel (polyester fibre) are good replacements for feathers and down, and are readily available.

Excellent calligraphy pens are available, so there is no reason to use quills made from the feathers of geese, crows, eagles, owls, hawks and turkeys, or porcupine quills. Porcupine quills are also fashion accessories with strung and threaded jewellery, and parts of some decorations.



Ashoke Dasgupta  
is the editor of  
Compassionate Friend.



## Around the world

### Animals count politically

Animals Count is contesting this year's European Union elections. The party aims to take animal issues to the top of the political agenda by setting policies for animals, encouraging existing political parties to become more animal-friendly, and contesting elections. According to its website, Animals Count is active in England, Wales and Scotland. Its leader, Jasmijn de Boo, was an active member of the successful Dutch political "Party for the Animals," which won two seats in the November 2006 general election, nine seats in the March 2007 provincial elections, and one in the Senate in June 2007 — a world first.

### European meatless meals popular

The Belgian city of Ghent has introduced meatless Thursdays with a dual motivation, according to a press release:

- Any reduction of meat production and consumption, which leads to greenhouse gas emissions, the degradation of soil, water and air, desertification and deforestation, will benefit the environment. Livestock production pumps more greenhouse gas

emissions into the atmosphere than does transportation.

- Also, Ghent wants to be a healthy city. Well-balanced vegetarian meals are not only sustainable but also healthy. Too much meat raises cholesterol levels as well as the risks of diabetes, obesity and some cancers.

Vegetarianism is about animal cruelty for many, but modern times have discovered a more persuasive motivator — self-interest. Concern for global warming and greenhouse gas emissions are causing "flexitarians" to forgo consuming meat for some meals, or even some days. The roast beef of England, and other pillars of British cuisine, are being given a miss by occasional vegetarians who want to help the planet — and themselves.

The UK meat-free market was worth £739m in 2008, a 20 percent increase over the last five years, according to a Mintel study. Food Development Association research shows 86 percent of Britons eat vegetarian meals once or twice a week. Consequently restaurants are improving their vegetarian offerings, though there is concern in some quarters about restaurateurs profiteering on dishes with inexpensive ingredients.

There are those who agree with vegetarian principles, but find themselves addicted to the meats they have been consuming since childhood. Becoming flexitarians will be easier for them than outright vegetarianism, anyway.

### Seal hunt endgame?

Animal rights groups have campaigned for decades against the seal hunt, but Canada's Governor-General Michelle Jean visited it, asking if she may eat some fresh seal meat. Slitting a seal open, she cut its heart out and ate some of it raw, wiping the blood off her lips and fingers. She may have intended this to be a magnificent gesture of support for Aboriginal fishers, but the hunt ended in near-collapse with only a quarter of the 273,000 quota of seals being killed.

Photo courtesy  
*Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.*



*Many seals may be luckier next year.*

That was because of falling pelt prices and the looming European Union ban on seal products, expected to come into effect in October. Some fishers are wondering if this may be the end of the ancient practice. Many of them did not bother taking their boats out for this year's hunt. The market price for a seal pelt is about 12 percent of what it was a few years ago.





By Khurshid Bhathena

Every now and again someone informs Beauty Without Cruelty about the “*Ahimsa silk*” or “*Ahimsa Peace silk*” produced by one Mr. Kusuma Rajaiah, an Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Cooperative Society technical officer. The writer investigated by accompanying Rajaiah to the Sericulture Federation at Dharmavaram to see the cocoons and process used to produce these silks.

At the Sericulture Federation run by the State Government, there are two varieties of cocoons: foreign race (FR) and local race (LR). Moths are allowed to break through these cocoons to mate. On emerging from the resultant cross-bred cocoons, the male and female moths are kept together for three hours, to mate. The females are then segregated and placed in trays to lay eggs. The males are put in a refrigerator, kept semi-frozen, and trotted out repeatedly, to mate. They are eventually thrown into a dustbin to die lingering deaths when their virility diminishes.

The females that have laid eggs are immediately ground in a mixer,

and their crushed bodies checked under a microscope. If disease is detected, the hundreds of eggs they just laid are also destroyed at once. Those eggs which pass this test are sold to farmers who rear them into silkworms that develop into cocoons. The farmers place the eggs that hatch into larvae in bamboo baskets, and feed them mulberry leaves for about four weeks. As they grow, the caterpillars change colour from white to golden-brown, and develop holes on both sides of their mouths. From one hole they exude a thread-like substance called the fibroin (raw silk) and from the other sericin (bonding gum). The two components harden upon contact with air, forming the basic silk filament, which is a combination of the two fibres, held together by the gum. The caterpillar oozes about 1000 yards of fibroin over two to four days, forming a cocoon around its body to protect itself before its transition from caterpillar to chrysalis to moth. To emerge, the chrysalis needs to cut its cocoon open in about 15 days.

For conventional silk production, the chrysalis is boiled alive in its cocoon by the seventh or ninth day so that the filament remains unbroken, and can be reeled continuously. We visited a place where family members were boiling cocoons in huge earthen pots. As soon as the cocoons started to boil, the sericin separated from the fibroin and the filament was reeled on a hand-made wooden machine. This is called “filament” silk, for which the chrysalis is alive and growing in the cocoon when its life is cut

short by being boiled to death. About 50,000 such cocoons are boiled to make one saree.

If, however, the cocoon is allowed to mature into a chrysalis and a moth emerges, the silk produced from the punctured cocoons is called “spun” silk and this is what Rajaiah claims to be *ahimsak*. However the silk is not *ahimsak* because all the moths that emerge are deformed and unable to fly, so they wither and die. Each and every punctured cocoon used for this so-called “*Ahimsa silk*” or “*Ahimsa Peace silk*” represents the tortured death of a moth. It is no different from conventional silk, for which each boiled cocoon also represents the death of one life.

To obtain as little as 100 grams of pure silk, approximately 1,500 chrysalises are boiled and, in the case of punctured cocoons, almost twice as many moths die. In conventional silk the worm within the cocoon is killed, and is part of the silk produced. In so-called “*Ahimsa silk*” although the cocoons used contain no worms, the moths that emerge from them are destroyed.

There is but little difference between boiling a developing life inside a cocoon, crushing fully grown moths to death, or torturing them by storing them in refrigerators and discarding them to die in dustbins.

BWC is compelled to conclude that no silk can be truly *ahimsak* unless it is artificially made of yarns such as polyester.

 Khurshid Bhathena is  
honorary secretary of BWC.

## Readers write

## Good work

I joined BWC four years ago, after a BWC group visited my college at Agra. Before that I had enjoyed being a non-vegetarian but, since the day I saw your group's CD, have never touched non-veg food. I can't! Horrifying images come to mind.

Thanks to you, I am happy to have taken the step not to feast on animals any more. You saved me from those sinful habits. Thanks again, and keep up the good work.

**Mansi Kulshreshtha**

I sincerely thank you for the latest issue of *Compassionate Friend*. As usual, the issues are educational, informative and good resource materials.

Recently, at a spiritual retreat organized by the *Shreemad Rajchandra Ashram* of Dharampur, Gujarat at Edison, New Jersey, USA, I was happy to get several informative publications. They had an exhibition and a video show. Their spreading BWC's message was laudable.

**Prakash Mody**

I am a Canadian living in the Manitoba Prairies, and am impressed by *Compassionate Friend*.

The number of subjects supporting the welfare of

animals, people, the environment, what we eat and how we treat the other living things we share the planet with, is exemplary. Everything from the polar bears in Canada and elephants in Vietnam to trying to change long-standing beliefs and rituals to be more reflective of the 21st century instead of the 12th, to improving the food we eat and how we consume it — what an excellent variety of topics!

Much of the news in this publication that concerns other parts of the world is new to me, and has been most educational. It warms my heart to know that people are concerned about animal welfare everywhere, and keeps me strong to continue doing whatever I can in Canada.

Thank you for this excellent mag, and please keep up the good work!!

**Leslie Yeoman**

## BWC and Jainism

Jainism's and BWC's purposes are one and the same. Though a Jain by religion, I'll always be grateful to BWC because it has provided me the strength, conviction and direction to follow Jainism properly. For instance, I have resolved to discontinue all products that harm living beings and, over the years, have stopped consuming leather goods and sweets decorated with *varkh*. This has brought me peace of mind.

**Rahul Shethiya**

## Tapioca Sago

Tapioca sago, made from tapioca roots, is called tapioca globules in West Bengal, *javvarishi* in Tamil Nadu and *sabudana* or *sabu* in other parts of India. It is produced in the form of pearls/globules in hundreds of small-scale industries situated mainly in Salem, Tamil Nadu. Roasted sago is known as sago common, and boiled sago as nylon sago.

The tapioca is soaked in shallow pools of water. At night thousands of insects are attracted to this water, falling into the tanks — causing the product to lose its vegetarian attribute. Moreover, in the majority of units, children crush the mass by jumping up and down in this dirty, muddy water before processing! Floating impurities are drained after eight hours, and the sediment processed.

Whitening agents like liquid bleaches and sulphuric acid may also be added to *sabudana*. Some manufacturers have been caught using optical brighteners like "2bcon" which are hazardous; others adulterate sago with sand and talcum.

Due to its assumed purity, *sabudana* is, ironically, consumed during periods of religious fasting. It is prepared as *khichadi*, *vada*, *papad*, *chiwda* *khir* (*payasam*) and *fariyali*.

*Kumkum*, applied to the forehead, or used for religious purposes, is sometimes made from the same tapioca/sago powdery starch mixed with coal tar colours of mineral origin.

## BWC News & Views

### Think before clicking on the “Animal Rescue Site”

Beauty Without Cruelty would like to draw the attention of all those who click daily on Animal Rescue at [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com) to ensure “free food and care” for animals, that the money given may be spent on bowls of non-vegetarian food — animals killed to feed other animals. Does it deserve the support of animal rights activists and vegetarians?

The Animal Rescue Site does not know if the money given by them to various organizations is used for vegetarian or non-vegetarian food. They help animal sanctuaries run by the Fund for Animals, and shelters supported by the Petfinder Foundation and North Shore Animal League. BWC e-mailed these three American organizations. The North Shore Animal League America replied that “all of our rescued animals are fed Purina animal products”. The other two did not reply, so it is presumed that they too are feeding killed animals to the animals in their care.

### Killer patang manja

Beauty Without Cruelty has requested the Government to ban the use of sharp, glass-coated kite-strings or *patang manja*, because they kill or maim thousands of birds, like pigeons and kites, throughout the year. *Manja* is usually made of

cotton (the latest nylon ones called “Chinese *manja*” are deadlier) but, when coated with crushed glass, it becomes razor-sharp. Using this *manja*, kites are flown from rooftops with the aim of cutting other kites out of the sky. On being cut down, “rival” kites are seen drifting away in the wind. Innocent birds like pigeons, gliding in the sky, are also seen falling limply to the ground.

The fact is that, however carefully a kite is flown, the *manja* can unwittingly wound birds. They get entangled in it, struggle in panic, and fall to the ground. It cuts their wings, bodies or feet so deeply that it results in profuse bleeding — and often gruesome death if beheaded.

The Mumbai Fire Brigade says the maximum calls they get are to rescue birds entangled in *manja*. The Jain Charity Bird Hospital, New Delhi, also treats thousands of birds injured this way through the year. Wherever kites are flown, at least one bird gets entangled in *manja* daily.

There are reports of pedestrians and people commuting on two-wheelers also being injured, some even killed, by this deadly *manja* when it slashes their necks. Children chasing kites which have been cut down also hurt themselves occasionally.

*Manja* is only used for flying kites in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, where the people defy bans on kite-flying imposed after the injuries and deaths of many humans.

## Rabbit meat is bunny murder

Many have found rabbit farming an old, but not lucrative, business through hard experience. In the late 1970s, Beauty Without Cruelty began investigating Himachal Pradesh rabbit farms, filming rabbits being killed for their meat and fur (usually called Angora “wool” instead of fur) at the Central Sheep & Wool Research Institute at Garsa in Kulu District. Soon after, our chairperson easily managed to convince a prospective rabbit breeder to grow mushrooms instead.

Recently, based on our undercover investigations, an article on rabbit farming appeared in the Summer-Monsoon 2008 issue of *Compassionate Friend*. Then, on 15 June 2009, 24 dead and 23 very sick rabbits, abandoned by a breeder, were found near Taljai Hillock, Pune. BWC wrote to the Pune Municipal Commissioner requesting an immediate ban on the entry, breeding, rearing, killing and selling of live rabbits and their meat. Information on rabbit farming was submitted to the PMC and the State Animal Husbandry Department who, fearing the spread of disease among humans, stepped in to document information about the unorganised breeding of rabbits and other animals.

It may not be possible for BWC to stop rabbit farming altogether, but we are trying to curtail its growth by condemning their breeding for killing, and highlighting the fact that people are being cheated.

From pigs to wall painting brushes...



Can't we have  
Beauty Without Cruelty ?



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