



# Ahimsa

Newsletter of the Young Indian Vegetarians

Summer 2005 - Issue No. 48

## Canadian Seal Slaughter

O Human I pity you, your violence will rebound on you as sure as night follows day.



According to government figures 150,000 seals have been killed this year, but the real figure could be more than double.

अहिंसा  
अहिंसा

picture: courtesy of IFAW

Dear Friends

## THE TSUNAMI DISASTER - OUR OCEANS ARE DYING

The tsunami brought death and destruction to thousands of people and the world rightly rallied round to help the victims. The tsunami also posed a long-term question: why are we killing off the eco-systems of the oceans?



Mangrove forests and coral reefs are among the most bio-diverse ecosystems on Earth. They buffer the coastline against corrosion, storm damage and tsunamis. Shrimp, which has become a mainstay of western diet, is one of the causes of the collapse of the eco-systems of the oceans. 99% of shrimp is farmed in developing countries - resulting in the destruction of vast areas of mangrove forests. Shrimp farming causes such severe water pollution (from shrimp faeces, pesticide and antibiotics) that the system chokes on its own waste. The marine aquarium trade in Europe, where 'exotic' fish are kept in people's homes in aquariums, also destroys coral reefs. Live fish are often caught illegally using cyanide or dynamite, both of which stun fish for easy collection. Cyanide and dynamite kill corals. Over 20 million tropical fish including 1471 species are harvested annually for the marine aquarium trade in Europe.

Huge industrial trawlers used to catch ever-dwindling stocks of fish are destroying all marine life from turtles and dolphins to whales. These marine animals die a cruel death, suffocating as they get pulled from the water. Lobsters are boiled alive, justified by the false claim that they do not feel pain. More than 40,000 species, 50 percent of UK's plants and animals depend on healthy seas. The human race reacts with horror when disasters like tsunami happen and ask, 'how can God do this'?

We cannot expect peace for ourselves and carry on unmitigated violence towards other life forms. Human beings must wean themselves off so called, 'sea food'.

Nitin Mehta

## **THE FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS TOOK PLACE SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER.**

**1** On 1st July 2004 I gave a talk at the offices of Brent Hindu Council in Wembley. The event was organised by VHP. I said that through vegetarianism we can introduce people to the Hindu religion and make friends with the host community.

**2** On 9th August I was interviewed on BBC radio Leicester Gujarati programme.

**3** On 5th September we kept a stall at the Hare Krishna temple in Watford during the Janmastmi celebrations. In total 15 individuals agreed to give up meat eating and become vegetarians.

**4** On 21st September I attended a meeting organised by The Food and Drink Federation. The topic of discussion was 'The Vegetarian food market in Europe'.

**5** On 23rd September the NHS organised a conference on 'Faith and the Health Service'. I said that promotion of a vegetarian diet and Yoga ought to be a priority for the NHS if it is ever to improve the health of the nation.

**6** On 2nd October we were invited to the Maha Laxmi Temple in Honor Oak Park. The congregation there are mostly Hindus from Trinidad and Guyana. I said that as practising Hindus we should be vegetarians.

**7** On 12th October I attended a meeting organised by the Food Standards Agency. The proper meaning of the word 'Vegetarian' and food labelling were the two issues discussed. For strict vegetarians it is making more and more sense to say they are Vegan if they want to avoid all animal products. Meanwhile we hope that the word Vegetarian will mean, 'no meat, fish or eggs'.

**8** On 4th November we attended the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Vegan Society.

**9** On 13th November we kept a stall at the Diwali festival organised by the Swaminarayan temple in Neasden. Two individuals agreed to give up meat eating and become vegetarian.

**10** On 19th November we took part in a demonstration outside the Japanese embassy in London to protest against the cruel killing of dolphins. We distributed vegan sandwiches to all the protesters.

**11** On 12th November we held our annual Christmas vegetarian lunch. The vegetarian Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Brenda Kirby, as well as Malcolm Wicks MP (Minister of Energy in the new parliament) were amongst the guests. Tom Morrel chief inspector of Croydon police and colleagues were also present.

**12** On 27th November the National Hindu Students Forum organised a conference and I was invited to give a talk. I said that vegetarianism is one of the greatest gifts of Hinduism to the world. Each one of us should be its proud ambassadors.

**13** On 3rd February 2005 I took part in a debate held by the Cambridge University Hindu students. The topic was, 'Is vegetarianism essential to Hinduism?' A lively debate and discussion took place!

**14** On 23rd February I was invited to give a talk at the Saint Gregory Roman Catholic School in Southborough near Tunbridge Wells. The video 'Food for Life' was also shown.

**15** On 11th March I was invited to give a talk at the Virgo Fidelis Convent senior school, Upper Norwood. Since it was a Catholic school I mentioned that St. Francis of Assisi was a vegetarian.

**16** On 18th April I attended the Ram Navmi celebrations organised by the Caribbean Hindu Society in Brixton. In my talk I said that 'Ahimsa' is the root of Hinduism and as such we should not eat meat.

**17** On 1st May the Jain Association of the UK celebrated Mahaveer Jayanti in Hounslow. I urged everyone to convince a few people to go vegetarian every few months! We should speak the word 'Vegetarian' at least once a day!

**18** On 8th May the Institute of Jainology celebrated Mahaveer Jayanti at India House. The Indian High Commissioner Kamallesh Sharma and his wife graced the occasion with their presence. In my talk I urged Jains to support the many animal rights/welfare societies in the UK.

**19** On 23rd May I gave a talk at the Swaminarayan Hindu School in Neasden. The talk was given to the school assembly. Special thanks to the principal Mr. Savjani for facilitating the talk.

**20** On 26th May I give a talk at the Hindu Centre in Tooting. Around 60 people were present and a delicious lunch was served by the centre afterwards.

**21** On 27th May I gave a talk at the Natural History Museum as part of National Vegetarian Week This was a unique opportunity to talk about vegetarianism to the visitors to the museum. Dr. David Ryde, a long standing vegan, also spoke at the event. I also took vegetarian snacks which proved really popular!

**22** On 28th May we were interviewed on MATV, channel 829. This coincided with National Vegetarian Week.

## **STOP CIRCUS SUFFERING**

This is the title of a video released by Animal Defenders International. The video shows circus animals being kicked, whipped, beaten and punched. Don't ever go to circuses which feature animals! Over 200 local authorities have banned animal circuses from their land. However, such bans can be avoided by circuses renting land from local landowners or football grounds or similar private land.



## **YIV IS GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS**

**1** Navnat Vanik Association for their generous donation of £500 each to YIV and the Jain Animal Sanctuary. Special thanks to President Subashbhai Bakhai and Treasurer Rameshbhai Shah and all the committee members.

**2** The Jain Centre Leicester for donating £1000 to the Jain Animal Sanctuary. Our special thanks to President Kiritbhai Kothari, past President Dr. Ramesh Mehta and all the committee members.

**3** Bhakti Mandal, London for donating £351 to Jain Animal Sanctuary. Our thanks to President Rameshbhai Shah, Secretary Prafulaben Shah and all the members.

**4** The Jain Association of the UK for donating £645 from their Jiv-Daya fund. Special thanks to President Raj Jain and secretary Prem Jain and all committee members.

**5** Shree Jain Sangh, East London for donating £501. May Lord Mahaveer bless President Viryash Shah and all the members.

## **ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTS**



The ecological foot print of a nation is the amount of land needed to supply all the resources it consumes. The UK would need 120 million hectares of land to meet its food demand. However the actual agriculture land area of UK is only 18.6 million hectares. A meat diet is one of the main causes of a large ecological footprint. If the global population increases to 9-10 billion, we would need 2 or 3 extra earth like

planets to sustain western lifestyles.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

- 1** That by 2050 the livestock population will, on present trends, have grown to the point where the plant food it consumes could feed an extra 4 billion people.
- 2** That in UK 165,000 people die of heart disease every year but this figure could be halved if everyone was vegetarian.
- 3** That it takes 900 litres of water to produce 1 kg. of wheat compared with 100,000 litres to produce 1kg. of beef.
- 4** That liquid slurry from livestock oozes into watercourses and waterways and the excess nitrogen and phosphorus levels ruin ground water quality. Worldwide, livestock produce an estimated 13 billion tonnes of waste every year.
- 5** That farmed fish are starved for 7-10 days before slaughter. This is done to empty the gut.
- 6** That biotechnology is used to produce fish known as 'Triploid' in fish farms. This process of chromosome manipulation is done in conjunction with a technique to change the sex of the fish. Tens of millions of trout eggs are produced in this way.
- 7** That genetic engineering of fish using transgenic methods such as putting human or animal growth hormone genes into fish has already begun.
- 8** That the life cycle on a fish farm begins when eggs are stripped from female fish. Female fish are anaesthetised and the eggs are released by a stockman who massages the fishes abdomen.
- 9** That farm animals are mutilated without any pain relieving drugs. Pigs, lambs, calves and cows have their tails cut off, while male piglets, lambs and calves are castrated. Hen's beaks

are cut off and calves are de-horned. These animals suffer immense pain and humiliation. If only they could communicate with humans!

**10** That as meat consumption grows in developing countries they import more and more grain to feed the animals they raise for slaughter. China, which was a net exporter of grain 10 years ago, is now the second largest importer in the world.

**11** That more than 10,000 people are killed every year in the UK by side effects of prescription medicines. This is now the fourth biggest killer in the western world. Little wonder then that 82% of doctors are concerned that testing drugs on animals and the resultant data can be misleading.

**13** That dairy cows produce an average of 57 litres of excreta every day and utilise 18-35 litres of cleaning water.

**14** That in North Carolina, USA there are 7 million pigs which produce four times the waste that the state's 6.5 million people produce.

**15** That according to the American Dietetic Association and Dieticians of Canada, 'vegetarians show lower blood cholesterol, lower blood pressure, lower rate of hypertension, type 2 diabetes and lower prostate and colon cancer'.

**16** That roughly 1 billion people in the world are vegetarian or virtually vegetarian.



## **National Alliance for Animals**

This organisation comes to life at every election and then goes back into hibernation!

This year too we revived the organisation for the general election. We met Ben Bradshaw, animal welfare spokesperson for the Labour party and James Paice the Conservative spokesperson.

We asked them to tell us about their policies on the following: vivisection, hunting, export of live animals and factory farming. Though both parties promised to introduce an animal welfare bill if elected, they were very cautious about promising anything radical.

The Conservative party was also committed to reconsidering the hunting ban if elected, though they promised a free vote on the issue. The Labour party was not going to backtrack on hunting and promised to 'lead' on the animal welfare issue in Brussels when Britain takes over the presidency of the European Union in June 2005.

The views of the two parties were passed on to all concerned – and the Labour victory cannot have disappointed the animal lobby! The National Alliance for Animals reminds the political parties that there are tens of thousands of votes at stake! Special thanks to the League against Cruel Sports for their support in this venture.

An organisation called 'protecting animals in democracy' also did sterling work in the election campaign.

Visit their site: [www.vote4animals.org.uk](http://www.vote4animals.org.uk)

## **BALLOON RELEASES - HARMLESS FUN?**

Mass balloons released in the sky look attractive but they pose a serious threat to many forms of marine life when they land on the sea. The common dolphin, loggerhead turtles, blue shark and other species mistake the balloons for jellyfish and eat them, thus endangering their lives. No more balloon releases!

## **Diwali without Fireworks!**

Firecrackers terrify domestic animals such as cats and dogs and kill insects. They also cause immense noise and environmental pollution. Diwali should be celebrated without firecrackers

## **Dairy Cows and Beef Production**

Dairy cows are impregnated artificially so that they give birth to calves and give milk. Once the calves are born, some are kept to replace their mothers while the weakest are slaughtered almost immediately for pet food. Others are fattened for veal while many are reared intensively for beef. They are confined in a closed area on concrete floors so afflictions such as lameness are common. Routine mutilations include branding, ear tagging, tail docking, castration, spaying and dehorning.

This method of raising cattle is also spreading to India. Pass the soya milk! GO VEGAN!

## **Animal Sentience**

Compassion in World Farming organised a hugely successful conference on animal sentience in March 2005. Hundreds of delegates from many parts of the world attended the conference. There were eminent speakers, many of whom were scientists. The scientific community is beginning to accept that animals have emotions and feel pleasure and pain - an idea that was taken for granted in India tens of thousands of years ago!

Modern science killed off any idea of animal suffering, but CIWF is doing wonderful work in getting that very scientific community to think again!

## **Asiatic Black Bears**

Right across China 7000 Asiatic black bears are factory farmed under the most deplorable conditions. The Animals Asia Foundation is doing great work in rescuing the bears with the ultimate aim of ending this terrible practice. For further info go to [www.animalsasia.org](http://www.animalsasia.org)

## **Avoid...**

Woollen clothes, leather goods (shoes, sofas etc.), silk ties and saris! Avoid meat restaurants even if they serve veggie food! Give your business to vegetarian restaurants!

## **The Slaughter of Fish**

Around 70 million fish are produced and slaughtered in Britain every year. Somehow people seem to think that fish do not feel pain and that it is not as bad as killing other animals. But fish do suffer and feel pain – we humans just need to take more notice.

Here are the various methods by which fish are killed:

**1** By using a club to hit the fish on the head. The gill arches are then cut to bleed the fish.

**2** Carbon dioxide stunning – this is done by placing the fish in a seawater bath saturated with carbon dioxide. Fish can be observed shaking vigorously in pain.

**3** Bleeding without prior stunning - the gill arches are cut with a knife and the fish bleed to death.

**4** Electrocutation - an electric current is passed through water containing fish.

**5** Suffocation - Hauling the fish out of the water or draining the water away and suffocating them. Alternatively they are removed from the water and put into bins containing ice. Fish suffer a long time before dying.

(The above information was collected from a CIWF trust report called, 'In too deep', by Philip Lymbery)

## **My Year as President of the University of Bristol Vegetarian and Vegan Society** **- by Jyoti Mehta**

Holding a stall at Freshers' Fair in October can be considered as being thrown in at the deep end as far as running a society is concerned. After two long days on the Freshers' stall, I was very proud to have recruited 70 members to the VegSoc. From then on, VegSoc hosted regular socials at key vegetarian establishments in Bristol, such as the famous One Stop Thali Café, Blue Juice and Royce Rolls.

Taking our cue from the excellent Vegan Guide to Bristol produced by the Bristol-based vegan company Yaoh, we made it our duty to support businesses and venues that cater well for Bristol's very large vegetarian and vegan population. It was important for me in my year as President to demonstrate the ethical and moral significance of a vegetarian diet. This is why a central feature of our year was to host, in collaboration with Young Jain Students, a lecture entitled 'Save the Planet – With Your Knife and Fork!' The excellent lecture was given by Justin



Kerswell, a campaigner for the Bristol-based group Viva! Justin talked about the environmental and humanitarian benefits of a vegetarian diet. This lecture was widely advertised throughout the university with an eye-catching poster featuring none other than my personal childhood hero – Captain Planet!

The significance of this poster campaign was to highlight VegSoc's status as a campaigning society which concerns itself with wider issues. The lecture was also important in strengthening our relationship with Viva! I believe it is of utmost importance for organisations with common goals and aims to work together. It is also for this reason that VegSoc are proud to support the annual Vegan Fayre in Bristol organised by Yaoh, to be held on Saturday 29th October this year.

A particular highlight of the year for me was the VegSoc stall at a Global Fiesta held in our Union. The aim of the day was to celebrate all the various cultures represented within our university, and VegSoc held a stall advertising vegetarianism as 'A Culture that Transcends Geographical and Historical Barriers'. To entice people to our stall, we offered free vegan chocolate cake. The 300 people who sampled it all left with their negative stereotypes of vegan food challenged!

In addition to this accomplishment, many people who would not otherwise have considered vegetarianism left with leaflets about vegetarian nutrition and other literature.

It has been a fantastic year for VegSoc and I have thoroughly enjoyed being President. For me personally, the highlight of the year was meeting so many interesting, supportive and dedicated people. Their individual stories about how they became vegetarian or vegan are fascinating and I am filled with humility when I hear about the challenges that they overcame.

Check out our website: [www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/Union/VegSoc](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/Union/VegSoc)

### **Young and proud veggies and vegans.**



**Back row:** Kajal, Jyoti,  
Rakhee, Tarjani

**Front row:** Neelam, Sonal

## **Mahaveer Awards**

The first ever Mahaveer Award to an Indian national in India was presented to Dharmaj K. Ranka. Shri Ranka manages a big animal sanctuary in Hyderabad. The award was presented on 27th December 2004. As a UK based group we are proud to present a Mahaveer award to a national of the country in which Lord Mahaveer was born! A Mahaveer Award was also presented to Arthur Ling who was a lifelong vegan and first to market soya milk. The citation on the award was: 'Through Plamil you have played a pivotal role in promoting a vegan lifestyle in the UK. We salute your vision and your compassion.' Arthur was thrilled to receive the award. At the time of receiving it he was gravely ill in hospital. While he was in hospital Lord Mahaveer had pride of place besides him. On 18th January 2005 Arthur passed away. For Lord Mahaveer to

come to him at the end, Arthur was an exceptionally fortunate soul, whose life has been a complete success. Special thanks to Samantha Calvert, Vanessa Clarke and Steven Walsh for all their help in making everything possible.



Jyoti Mehta presenting the Mahaveer Award to Jim Pizer of 'One Stop Thali Restaurant Café' Bristol . Also present is Luke Oliver.

## **Quaker Concern for Animals**

Quaker Concern for Animals is a Christian organisation whose members are vegetarian or vegan. The organisation actively campaigns for animal rights and welfare. I was honoured to be asked to be its patron. According to Marian Hussenbux of QCA, 'we are all united in Ahimsa'.

## **Kentucky Fried Carnage?**

An undercover investigator of Peta filmed a video showing workers at a poultry processing company in USA, 'ripping birds beaks off, spray painting their faces, twisting their heads off, spitting tobacco into their mouths and eyes, and breaking them in half' - all whilst the birds were still alive. The company supplied chickens to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

## **Animals Slaughtered in 2003**

- **45.9 billion chickens**
- **2.3 billion ducks**
- **1.2 billion pigs**
- **857 million rabbits**
- **691 million turkeys**
- **533 million geese**
- **515 million sheep**
- **345 million goats**
- **292 million cows** and **calves** (for beef and veal)
- **65 million** other **rodents** (not including rabbits)
- **63 million pigeons** and other **birds**
- **23 million buffalo**
- **4 million horses**
- **3 million donkeys** and **mules**
- **2 million camels** (and other camelids).
- On top of this, **millions** of **aquatic creatures** are also killed for food.

For more information go to [www.farmedanimal.net](http://www.farmedanimal.net)

## **Iceland Makes History**

Iceland created history when it hosted its first ever fully vegetarian state banquet for visiting Indian President Abdul Kalam who is a vegetarian. May all countries follow this example!



## Letters to the Press

**The Independent** - 1st Sept. 2004 Sir: Your report “Experts call for mass medication to curb Britain’s silent killer” (23 August) seems to take us a step closer to putting the whole population on some kind of drug regime.

We are being turned into a society in which everyone is sick or potentially sick and therefore dependent on drugs. This will mean that people will further relinquish responsibility for looking after themselves, relying on a magic pill to protect them from any health problems. The pharmaceutical industry stands to make a colossal amount of money; however the long term damage to the nation could be phenomenal. Prevention is the best cure and a healthy vegetarian diet, yoga and plenty of exercise would go a long way towards solving the health crisis.

*Nitin Mehta*

**The Independent** - Sir: According to Hindu scriptures, during the time of Rama, over 100,000years ago there was a race of apes that walked on two legs. They interacted with humans and even spoke the same language, and they were vegetarians.

*Nitin Mehta*

(the letter was in response to an archaeological discovery that there were human like apes tens of thousands of years ago)

**The Independent** - April 22nd 2005 Sir “You are what you eat” takes a whole new meaning when a restaurant that serves snail porridge is declared the best in the world. My humble dhal and rice never tested better! I am so, so glad I am a vegetarian.

*Nitin Mehta*

**The Guardian** - June 15th 2005 Why is Julie Bindel - founder of Justice for Women - so violently opposed to the idea of justice for animals (Why I hate vegetarians, June 13)? Some 55bn animals are killed every year in appalling conditions; 80% of the world's water resources are used up in raising and killing these animals, and the resulting environmental and ecological damage to the planet is catastrophic. Almost 60% of the world's grains are fed to animals - grains that could feed the poor and hungry.

The health benefits of a vegetarian and vegan diet are undisputed. Meat, with its high-fat content, is a contributory factor in causing death by cancer and heart disease. An increasing number of people are finding that a vegetarian and vegan diet is the ideal planetfriendly diet suitable for the 21st century. There are almost a billion vegetarians in the world today - and in India people have been vegetarians for thousands of years. Bindel needs to be a bit more humble and respect her vegetarian friends whose numbers are bound to grow, as UK is setting the pace when it comes to moving away from a meat-based diet.

*Nitin Mehta*

## A CAMPAIGN TOUR OF INDIA

On 7th December 2004 I met and received the blessings of Bhaishree at Sayla in Gujarat. Bhaishree has a profound understanding of Jainism and its practical application in the modern world. On 8th December I went to Vadodra and visited an animal sanctuary for sick and disabled animals. The sanctuary is run by Minaben Amin whose compassion is as deep as the ocean. On the same evening a press conference was held and many papers published articles of our activities in the UK. Special thanks to Nitinbhai and Joshnaben Varia for their hospitality. On 11th December a meeting was held by animal rights campaigners in Ahemdabad. On 17th December I reached New Delhi.

Laxminarayan Modi of the Vegetarian Society of India was my host. We met India's Minister for Rural Affairs, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh. Mr. Singh, who is a vegetarian, is keen to promote animal welfare. On 18th December a press conference was held at the Chelmsford Club, followed by a dinner held by the Vegetarian Society of India.

*Nitin at the Sikh holy shrine; the Golden Temple, on the day the Vegetarian Society of Punjab was formed*



On 21st December a meeting was held in Amritsar and the Vegetarian Society of Punjab was formed. I then traveled to Kolkata where I met Sudarshan Dhandharia who is actively promoting vegetarianism in India. On 27th December a meeting was held in Hyderabad under the auspices of Karuna Mandal. The Vegetarian Society of Andhra Pradesh was formed at the meeting. On 31st December I met Pratikbhai of the Srimad Rajchandra organisation and Girishbhai Shah of the Samast Mahajan organisation in Mumbai. Samast Mahajan is an organisation guided by his holiness Chanrashekar Maharaj. We discussed plans for bringing millions of people in India back to vegetarianism!