


# COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

JOURNAL OF BEAUTY WITHOUT CRUELTY INDIA

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VEGETARIAN  
LIFESTYLE**

A way of life  
which causes no creature  
of land sea or air,  
terror, torture or death.



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# Beauty Without Cruelty - India

An Educational Charitable Trust for Animal Rights  
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# Beauty Without Cruelty



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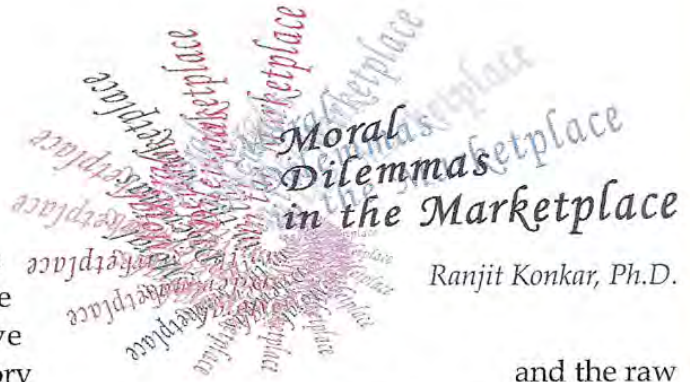
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## Moral Dilemmas in the Marketplace

Ranjit Konkar, Ph.D.

The 'end' product, packaged in as attractive a manner as possible to lure consumers into buying, is what we commonly see in the market. The history and the raw materials involved in its making are hidden from us. We have no direct say in the choice of materials, methods and conditions that have gone into its making. All these are decided by the manufacturer.

Therefore, when making a choice, it is helpful to consider the issues mentioned below:

The issue of necessity: luxury or need?

The question of necessity is of paramount importance. If suffering is knowingly inflicted or supported by us to fulfil a luxury or a comfort without which we may well do, then our culpability is especially high. For example, the brush used for painting walls is made of hog hair bristles from the pig, obtained by pulling them out of a live, conscious pig held down immobile under the foot of the person plucking the hair. As there are no wall paint brushes available in India that are not produced in the manner described above, what does one do? The answer to that question depends on how necessary people consider it to paint their houses. Some may decide that the visual gratification obtained from looking at a well-painted wall is not worth the moral price they must pay for it in terms of the suffering to the pig on their account. Those who decide otherwise may have valid reasons for doing so, but they must bear the implications of using the paint brush upon their conscience. Some may compromise on the finish by getting only rollers used in place of brushes. Yet others may go through the trouble and expense of obtaining non-animal bristle wall painting brushes from abroad. The strength of one's feelings are often put to test on these occasions.

The issue of by-products: who was the cause?

The 'by-product' argument is illustrated by the case of the leather user who lies in between the completely aware meat-eater and the completely unaware user of hog-hair brushes. People who use leather are well aware that it is the skin of animals, but they do not ask themselves if the animal died a natural death or was slaughtered. The answer is that commercially available leather is always from animals that are killed. This includes the *Kora Kendra* leather goods which claim to have been made from only non-slaughtered



animals (yes, non-slaughtered, but killed in some other way). The fact is that their leather is obtained from animals killed in research laboratories, put to sleep by veterinarians, or starved to death as in the case of male dairy calves. Even knowing this, people tend to consider leather as a by-product of the killing, thus absolving themselves of the blame for the act of killing. According to them, it is the persons who buy the meat that are responsible for the killing, not the wearers of the skin. The skin is just thrown away, they claim, to be picked up by the leather manufacturer, who thereby does a great service by not 'wasting' any part of the animal, which is dead 'anyway'. They again are unaware, or more likely choose to disregard the fact, that the skin is not just 'picked up', it is bought against cash *as much as the meat is*. The only difference, and probably the one that enables the leather-user to distance himself from the guilt of the crime, is the long chain of workers that come between the butcher and the shoe-seller. This chain not only hides the source of the leather from the user, it actually provides the leather-user a justification for using leather like the employment it generates. If people had to buy the skin directly from the butcher to make their own shoes, they would realise while standing next to the meat-buyer, just how identically culpable to the meat eaters they are for the killing.

The issue of quantity; how much is OK?

What quantity of a substance qualifies its user to feel responsible for its use? Is the person who eats a biscuit that contains a minute amount of lecithin obtained from eggs as culpable for supporting unethical practices in egg-production as a person who eats an omelette? Does a leather patch on cotton jeans matter as much as leather shoes? The answer to both these is yes — the biscuit-eater and the leather-patch-wearer are as culpable as the omelette-eater and the leather-shoe-wearer. Both derive their substances from the same source. One just buys lesser of it than the other. Therefore, the only logically consistent stand is that which avoids the use of animal products in whatever quantity they might be present. The person who feels very strongly about the immorality of causing pain to animals usually avoids the use of both, the egg-lecithin as well as the leather-patch jeans. Those who ignore these simply make ethical compromises even if the leather patch is removed and thrown away — it would be no different from a vegetarian removing meat from a dish and eating the gravy.

The issue of 'secondary' involvement: how far back does one look?

Does one's computer become an ethically unacceptable product because it contains steel or plastic which may have utilised some animal ingredients in their manufacture? Is the maker of the computer culpable or are the manufacturers of the steel components and plastic materials? Above all, is the buyer of the computer culpable? (There is no steel available that does not use animal ingredients in its manufacture.) How far up the chain of production should one have to look to detect the chain of intent? In other words, is the computer about animal substances? Or are the steel and plastic about animal substances?



If they are, then does the guilt carry over by association to the computer because it uses these materials? Is the use of the offending material incidental or critical to the manufacture or operation of the computer? In the chain of production, intermediate producers often do not even know the source of the article used by them. For example, from the time petroleum is drilled to its final conversion into plastic as in use, there are innumerable steps involved. Who is to keep track of all these steps? Further, each step itself chains back to different origins. This makes it an immensely formidable task to determine the history of each and every product. In the interests of sanity, there seems no option but to use one's subjective decision in such cases.

The issue of priorities: the lesser of two evils

Instead of paints that need the hog-bristle brush, one may decide to whitewash the walls. If one is living in coastal regions, even this option might throw up an unexpected animal ingredient: sea shells. *Chooona* made in coastal regions contains shells. The use of these shells mean death for the marine lives that are occupying them. If the house has to be painted, then one has to rank one's concerns regarding the suffering caused to the pig versus the suffering caused to the sea creatures and make a conscious choice with full possession of the facts.

The issue of practicability

It may be considered unnecessary to paint one's house walls as there is nothing unthinkable or impossible about living in an unpainted house. But unlike painted walls, there are certain products that cannot pass the test of non-necessity at the current stage of man's civilisation. An example is steel. Even though the production of steel involves the use of certain products of animal slaughter, it is impossible to give up the use of steel in our lives.

The issue of economics: affordability of alternatives

Unfortunately, the strictest of all vegetarians would not be able to face the test of affordability without compromising somewhere. If an ethical alternative exists but costs a certain number of times more than the product that is sought to be avoided, then this could frequently influence the decision strongly. People may simply not have the money to pay for the alternative. In such cases, the inevitable step is to reconsider the need. Consumers must keep in mind that in most matters alternatives do exist to specific products or to lifestyles that engender such products.

**Beauty Without Cruelty** hopes that *A Vegetarian Lifestyle* will guide people in making meaningful decisions.



It is not uncommon for people to purchase items unthinkingly. They are picked up because they have some utility value or simply because they look good and are attractive. For example colourful peacock feathers made into hand fans are popular among foreign tourists who believe that the feathers were shed naturally: yes, they are shed naturally, but certainly not *all* that go into making the hundreds of fans and other decorative items sold in India and also exported. Furry squirrel, fox or other animals' tails are often seen hanging on the rear view mirrors of vehicles which is nothing but a frivolous purchase costing a life. Sometimes an animal substance is only a part of the finished product. To cite three examples: a wooden statue of Buddha with bone for teeth; upholstery material containing a mixture of cotton and silk; a marble vase with a shellac embossed design.

Below is a list of such finished items. Alongside the possible animal substance in the product is stated.

Ash trays	— shell
Bed sheets, pillow cases, bedspreads	— silk, wool
Blankets	— wool, fur
Brushes	— animal bristles/hair
Candles	— beeswax, tallow
Carpets	— wool, silk
Chandeliers	— shells
China vases, figurines, flower pots	— bone, shells
Coasters	— bone, shells
Cocktail party picks	— shells
Crockery (bone china, fine china, china)	— bone
Curios, ornamental/fancy, and utility items	— silk, shells, pearls, coral, wool, leather, china, bone, horn, ivory, butterflies, insects, feathers, fur, animal tails/nails/hair/heads etc.
Curtains	— silk, wool



Doilies	— bone beads, pearls, shells
Fans and brooms	— peacock feathers
Figurines, carvings, inlay work including furniture, decorative door handles & knobs	— ivory, bone, horn, shells, pearls, coral, china
Knife and cutlery handles	— bone, horn, shells
Lamps and lampshades	— wool, silk, shells, fur
Mirror/picture frames	— horn, bone, shells
Natural sponge	— living organism taken from the sea
Non-static dusters	— ostrich feathers
Paint on walls, doors etc.	— paint containing animal substances, hog bristle brushes for painting
Polished flooring	— beeswax, shellac
Quilts, duvets, pillows	— eiderdown/down (feathers), silk, wool
Sealing wax	— lac, beeswax
Sofa sets and chairs	— leather, wool, silk
Suitcases, mobile wardrobe	— leather, silk
Tapestry, upholstery	— wool, silk, leather
Trays	— bone, shells
Trimmings	— silk, shells, wool, leather, feathers, fur
Trophies	— mounted wild animal heads
Wall hangings	— wool, silk, leather, fur, feathers, butterflies, insects
Wind-chimes	— shells
Wooden furniture and fixtures	— polish containing shellac

Consumers must remember that quite often imitation or non-animal origin products are known by the same name as some animal origin products, e.g. bristles (animal and nylon), wool (sheep and acrylic fibre).



# Ostrich farming at Shirur aborted

Karnataka is not the only State with plans to farm ostriches in India. The Maharashtra Ostrich Farms was also established.

With the help of a Belgian company this organisation hoped to be able to set up an ostrich farm at Andalgaon, Shirur District, about 65 km from Pune. At first, strong objections were sent to the Government but all **Beauty Without Cruelty** got was an acknowledgement that the matter was being looked into!

Time seemed to be running out... Realising that once such establishments are actually set up it is next to impossible to get them to close down, **BWC** together with the *SPCA Shirur* and *SPCA Ahmednagar* sprang into action. Animal activists first visited South Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, the constituency from which the Union Minister of Environment and Forests was elected and explained to the people that it was within the power of their elected candidate to stop such animal exploitation. They were shocked and immediately signed an appeal requesting that he use his good offices to put a halt to all ostrich farming in the country.

Immediately after that, a gathering of local persons was organised in July 1998 at Andalgaon. Animal activists explained the

hazards to them and convinced them that it was not advisable to have an ostrich farm springing up in their village. Then about 500 villagers together personally appealed to the persons who planned to undertake the venture. Thanks to the sincere efforts of our **BWC** member, Mr Ramesh Shelar and his group comprising of members of the *Shirur* and *Ahmednagar SPCAs*, the plan to start the ostrich farm in this area was thus immediately aborted.

This pleasing victory has not made **BWC** complacent. Although a positive awareness has been created at Shirur so that the local people will never permit such a venture to materialise, the Maharashtra Ostrich Farms could very well shift their headquarters else where. The best solution no doubt, lies in getting an all India Government ban on ostrich and emu farming

and **BWC's** efforts in this direction have not been abandoned. Infact **BWC** is quite hopeful of positive results now that the subject of Animal Welfare has been shifted from the Ministry of Environment & Forests to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, currently run by the famous animal activist Ms Maneka Gandhi who holds the post of Minister of State.





# Trade in Antlers banned



**Beauty Without Cruelty** is pleased to inform readers that in August 1998 the Director General of Foreign Trade prohibited the export of manufactured articles and shavings of shed antlers of deer. However, State Governments have been requested to individually ban the internal trade.

Since 1992 **BWC** had been trying its best to convince the Ministry of Environment & Forests (Government of India) to impose a total ban on trade in so-called shed antlers.

The All India Shed Antlers Manufacturers and Exporters Association has admitted that the antlers are currently collected from the jungles of Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. They also claim that they have been collecting only shed antlers. However, **BWC** feels it is next to impossible to obtain shed antlers in large quantities bringing in crores of rupees.

Shed antlers unless picked up soon are gnawed at by porcupines causing unseemly marks on them. Even if and when they were shed had they not fallen into rain water and rotted, escaped the porcupine, and didn't get maggot infested, the natural process of decay itself caused the antlers to become quite useless well within a short period of two months after shedding.

Antlers of two species of deer, Cheetal (*Axis axis*) and Sambhar (*Cervus unicolor*) were mainly utilised by traders for display as trophies or for converting into items such as cutlery handles. However, antlers of Swamp deer (*C. duvauceli*) and Hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), broken into pieces beyond recognition were exported as 'shed antler waste' (shavings) to Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. Some were converted into cutlery handles and buttons.

Over the years **Beauty Without Cruelty** has been pointing out that only if the antlers are in their complete form can they be ascertained as having been naturally shed. But, export consignments often contained unshed antlers of killed deer. This was because it was difficult to obtain shed antlers in large quantities, especially as at the behest of **BWC**, in 1996 the Central Zoo Authority of India directed all zoos to destroy instead of auctioning shed antlers as it was giving an opportunity to unscrupulous persons to launder illegally procured stocks. (This order also included the destruction of all zoo carcasses.)





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