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My Visit to a Dairy Farm

This article was first published on Internet (Jain-list) in August 1997. Later on more information was added to this article.

Dairy Visit in USA:

I visited a dairy farm located on Route 2 north of Burlington, Vermont (USA) in May of 1995. The dairy owns approximately 150 cows. All of its milk production is used to make ice cream.

Here is the summary of what I saw and learnt:

It was milking time (5:00 PM) and the cows were being milked in 3.5 minutes each by a machine. This is done without regard to how hard it is on the cow. It was extremely difficult to watch the cows' sufferings during the milking. The machine has no feeling. To extract the last drop of milk sometimes traces of blood get mixed with the milk.

Since cows produce the most milk after pregnancy, they are kept pregnant for their entire fertile life through artificial insemination.

Every morning hormones or drugs are injected into the cows. They are also fed a diet geared toward high production of milk. The dairy cow produces about 8 times the amount of milk a cow on the traditional family farm produces.

The gestation period of cow is 9 months same as human does. If a male calf, of no use to the dairy industry, is born, he is shipped to the veal industry within two or three days of birth. The evening I was there, the farm was shipping three baby calves in a truck to a veal factory. The mother cows were crying when their babies were separated from them. I cannot forget the scene and can still hear the cries of the mother cows.

The veal industry is the most cruel meat industry in the world. It produces very tender meat that is considered a delicacy. The baby calves are raised in darkness in a very confining crate, which allows practically no movements. They are fed an iron-deficient diet. This way the meat gets very tender and properly textured. They slaughter the baby calves after six months. There is much literature available about cruelty in the veal industry.

Within two months of delivery, the cows are impregnated again. I did not have the stamina to watch the process of artificial insemination that the farm was showing off.

About four to five times a year, this farm would take the cows outside for a walk. Otherwise, the cows are tied in one place and they have no choice but to defecate where they are confined. It badly stunk when I was there; the farm would wash the confinement areas once or twice a day, and the remaining times the cows would live in their own waste.

The life expectancy of cows is about 15 to 20 years. However, after about 4 to 5 years, their milk production capacity drops significantly so these cows are sent to the slaughterhouse for cheap meat which is used in fast food restaurants, hot dog filler, dog & cat food and a variety of other "foodstuffs". The rest of the body material (by products) turns up in the products like floor wax, pet food, medicines, insulin, gelatin, footwear, upholstery, taco filling, cosmetics, candles, and soaps.

During her fertile life, cow delivers about four babies. Statistically only one female baby is needed to replace the existing cow. Hence all other babies (males or females) are sent to veal industry where they are tortured for six months and then slaughtered for the meat (delicacy meal).

As I learned and observed the cruelty in the dairy industry, I at first found it hard to believe. On a personal level, I feared that it would be impossible for me to give up the dairy products and become vegan (absolutely no animal product). How could I eliminate milk, yogurt, butter, ghee, and cheese from my diet? To become vegan means that I cannot drink tea with milk, eat any Indian sweets, pizza, milk chocolate, ice cream, eggless but dairy-containing cake, and many other items.

At this time I remembered my daughter Shilpa's (who became vegan few months prior to my visit) word, "Dad, cows' milk is for baby cows and not for humans or their babies. No other animal consumes the milk of another species. We do not have the right to consume the milk of other animals for our benefit by exploiting and torturing them. Furthermore milk and its products are not essential for our survival or for healthy life".

However, needless to say, the dairy farm tour made me an instant vegan.

Indian Dairy:

I also visited a dairy farm near Bombay in India in November 1995. I observed similar things except no machine is used to milk the cow. Overall, things were actually worse because there are few enforced regulations. Also during my visits to India in 1997 and 1998, I learned more about Indian dairy operation.

Many dairies in India do not own cows. Milk is supplied to the dairy industry by local cowherds who own the cows. The local cowherds generally own 10 to 40 cows and they do not use machines to milk the cows.

However they keep cows pregnant all the time for continuous supply of milk. Every year each cow delivers a baby. The local cowherds can not absorb all the baby calves that are born every year in their business. Hence they sell the baby calves (70 to 80% of them) to the beef industry where they raised the calves for beef and are slaughtered in three to four years or to an illegal veal industry where they are being slaughtered in six months. In the holy city of Palitana, I found a newly born calf lying dead in a field close to my cousin's home. After investigation I found that the cow delivered a baby calf in the field and the owner left the newly born calf in the field and carried the cow to his place.

Also after four to five deliveries, the milk yield of an adult cow drops significantly and hence the cowherd replaces the old cow with a young one and sells the old cow to a slaughterhouse for cheap meat. Only few cows (5% or less) end up in a cow shelter place called Panjarapole.

In comparison, it seems maximum cruelty lies in the following actions, which are same in India, USA, and the rest of world:

- To keep cows pregnant continually
- Slaughtering their 70% to 80% of babies within six months by Veal industry or within five years by beef industry or let the baby die just after the birth
- Slaughtering the mother cows after five years of their fertile life while their life expectancy is 15 to 20 years.

Organic Milk:

The Organic dairy farm is generally smaller than the huge factory-style farm. It does not use antibiotics, pesticides, and hormones to cows. There are no milk additives added into the milk. However there are no legal regulations that prevent dairy farmers from engaging in similar abuses such as keeping the cows in tie stalls and using electric milking equipment, etc. Only few organic farms treat cows properly during her milk producing life.

Also to ensure steady milk production *the organic dairy farms:*

- Keep cows pregnant all the time through artificial insemination or other means
- Sell baby calves to veal or beef industry, where they are slaughtered in six months or five years.
- Sell the adult cows to the slaughterhouses after four years when the milk production yield drops

Also milk yield of Organic cow is less than 50% of the regular cow. Hence for the same quantity of milk, the organic dairy farms raise more than twice the number of cows. Since all cows are slaughtered after 5 years, hence twice the number of organic cows are being slaughtered for the same quantity of milk consumed.

Hence the Organic milk is not cruelty free milk.

American Slaughterhouse Statistics:

New York Times on May 12, 1996 reported that on an average day the following numbers of animals are slaughtered in American slaughterhouses.

Animals/Birds	Number Killed per day in USA
Cattle	130,000
Calves	7,000
Hogs	360,000
Chickens	24,000,000

(Note - Please let me know if you have any statistics for India.)

Health Issues:

After becoming vegan, I have researched the following health related issues and summarized my findings as follows:

Calcium and Protein Issue:

Most Americans consume two to three times protein from animal source (milk, cheese, and meat) than their daily requirements. Many scientific studies show that the people who consume animal base high protein diet have lots of calcium in their urine but not in the people who use vegetarian diet.

The protein in animal products (such as milk, cheese or meat) is more acidic than the vegetable protein. The body neutralizes extra acid associated with animal protein by drawing calcium from bones. This causes calcium deficiency in the bones causing diseases like osteoporosis for the people who consume dairy or meat products. Also their kidneys have to work harder to remove the waste of calcium that leached from bones to blood. The net result is that the people who consume animal base high protein diet lose the calcium from their bones and their kidneys are more susceptible to fail.

Vegetarians get enough protein from their diet but not in excess. Also the vegetable protein is less acidic than animal protein; hence it does not leach calcium from bones. So the calcium absorbed by consuming dark green vegetables and other vegetarian sources is maintained by the bones at a much healthier rate. The end result is vegetarians who get their calcium from non-animal sources such as dark green vegetables develop stronger bones, not weaker ones. Hence they do not find calcium in their urine. Many scientific evidences indicated that milk is not essential for strong bones.

However one should remember that thinning of the bones occur among older people regardless they consume the milk or not. This problem is more severe among the older people who use more dairy and other animal products. This is due to the protein effect (large amount of protein in diet and calcium is leached out) as indicated above. Postmenopausal women are particularly at risk for osteoporosis. Milk does not seem to protect the bones of older people.

In conclusion vegetarians get enough calcium and protein as long as they eat good variety of plant foods such as dark green vegetables in sufficient quantities to maintain their natural weight. They are less susceptible to osteoporosis, and the failure of their kidneys.

Cholesterol:

Only the liver of animal and human bodies makes cholesterol. Hence externally the cholesterol is found only in animal products such as meat, milk, cheese and other dairy and nonvegetarian food. Pure vegetarian diet (fruits, vegetables, grains, and lentils) has no cholesterol at all.

Cholesterol is a material similar to wax. It makes hormone and other elements for our body. Generally the liver of human being produces cholesterol in sufficient quantities for its body need. However when we consume dairy or meat products, we also consume its cholesterol. This way we will have excess cholesterol. This excess cholesterol in the body is harmful because it gets deposited in our artery. Ultimately artery gets clogged, which results in heart attack.

For pure vegetarians (vegan), their liver makes only needed cholesterol and hence they will not have high cholesterol condition.

Saturated and Unsaturated Fat:

Saturated fat aggravates human liver to produce more cholesterol than normal body requirement. Almost all animal fats, butter (ghee), and some vegetable oils (coconut, palm etc..) are saturated fat. Some vegetarians have high cholesterol is due to high content of saturated fat in their diet. Hence one should totally avoid saturated fat to maintain low cholesterol.

Most vegetable oil is unsaturated fat. Also both saturated and unsaturated fats are the storage media of calories. Hence one should minimize the consumption of unsaturated fat in its diet.

Healthy diet is pure vegetarian food (vegan) without any oil or fried food. A person will not have any cholesterol problem with this diet.

In summary the extra cholesterol (externally consumed using animal and dairy products or generated by our liver due to saturated fat) is accumulated in the blood and deposited in the arteries which causes heart attack.

Vitamin B-12:

Vitamin B-12 is needed for healthy blood and healthy nerve. However human body needs only 2 micro gram of B-12 per day. Vitamin B-12 is not produced by plants or by animals but it is produced by the bacteria in the digestive system of animals and humans.

Humans produce B-12 in their digestive system but some how human body can not absorb B-12 from its digestive system. However the cows can absorb easily B-12 produced by them. Hence there exists lots of vitamin B-12 in meat and dairy products.

If you are a vegan (absolutely no animal products), you may not be able to get enough vitamins B-12. However if you decide to get B-12 from animal products, you will also get whopping dose of cholesterol and fat, which will displace complex carbohydrate and fiber that body needs which are the sources of vegetarian diet.

Hence vegetarians should get B-12 from other than animal products; such as fortified cereal, other fortified products, multiple vitamins, one a day vitamin, and other products from health stores which contain B-12, but not from dairy or meat products.

Milk and Prostate Cancer:

In 1997, the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research concluded that dairy products should be considered a possible contributor to prostate cancer. Also in another research study of April 2000 pointing to a link between dairy and prostate cancer: Harvard's Physicians' Health Study followed 20,885 men for 11 years, finding that having two and one-half dairy servings each day boosted prostate cancer risk by 34 percent, compared to having less than one-half serving daily.

Also dairy (milk, cheese, and ice cream), eggs, meat, and other animal products are linked to other types of cancers. They contain plenty of fat to harbor cancer-causing chemicals and promote cancer-causing hormones in our body. They are low in cancer-fighting antioxidants and have no fiber. Fiber is found only in plant base food and it would normally sweep carcinogens from our digestive tract.

A cancer-prevention diet includes plenty of:

- Vegetables: sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach, asparagus
- Fruits: strawberries, kiwi, melon, bananas, apples
- Whole grains: breads, cereal, oatmeal, pasta, rice
- Legumes: beans, peas, lentils

Whole grains, beans and other legumes, vegetables, and fruits are cancer fighters. Plant foods are low in fat, high in fiber, and loaded with protective cancer-fighting nutrients. **The most healthful diets eliminate meat, dairy products, eggs, and oil (fried foods).**

My Health Data:

I was 55 years old when I became vegan. I had some concern that my health would suffer if I stopped using dairy products. However following is the summary of my health data before and after I became vegan:

	Before becoming Vegan - 1995	After becoming Vegan – 1997	2007
Cholesterol	205	160	140
HDL	34	42	48
Triglyceride	350	175	140

Since becoming a vegan I feel more energetic. I do not have any calcium deficiency. However, one should monitor his/her own body chemistry after becoming vegan. My doctor is very pleased with my results and has not put me on any vitamins or calcium substitutes. My 1998 and onward health result was equally good.

Jain Religious view:

Nonviolence is the highest principle of Jain religion. However for our survival the religion permits certain violence by lay people. Jain scriptures clearly indicate that:

For our survival, the survival of our ascetics, and the survival of our scriptures, temples, libraries, and Upāshrays; limited violence to one sensed (Ekendriya) souls such as vegetables, water, fire, earth, and air are allowed only by Jain lay people (shrāvaks and Shrāvīkās).

Under no circumstances violence to two to five sensed (Trasa) living beings such as animals, birds, insects, and humans are allowed even by the lay people.

Ascetics should be totally nonviolent to all souls including the souls of vegetables, water, fire, air, and earth.

A cow is a five-sensed (Panchendriya) animal that also possesses mind. Cruelty to five-sensed animals is considered the highest sin and gateway to hell in the Jain scriptures.

In today's high tech environment, the beef cows are killed instantly in the production of meat. However, during milk production the dairy cows are not killed instantly but they are tortured badly during the prime of their life, their babies (all but one female calf) are tortured for six months and then slaughtered. Ultimately they are slaughtered within 5 years well before the end of their natural life of 15 to 20 years. The dairy cows and their babies have no chance to escape from this cruelty and death.

In conclusion the cruelty in the milk production is worst than the meat production. By consuming dairy products we are supporting and promoting such cruelty.

Usage of Dairy Products in the Jain Temples:

Both Svetambar and Digambar sects use milk and its products in temple rituals. This is an ancient tradition. In the past (before the birth of a high tech dairy farm) in India, the cows were treated like a part of the family, and after feeding the baby calf, leftover milk was consumed by humans. This may be the reason why milk and its products are not considered violent in the Jain scriptures.

We should reevaluate the usage of milk and its product (ghee for arti, milk and sweets for puja etc.) in the temple rituals under the new technological environment. **The tradition should not be followed blindly. The highest Jain principle of nonviolence should not be compromised under any circumstances.**

With regards to Shvetambar tradition I can definitely say that no scriptures support the usage of milk in the temple rituals.

With regards to Digambar tradition, Mr. Atul Khara, the past president of Jain Center of Dallas TX, indicates that most of the Digambars do not use milk in the rituals. Also no scripture supports the use of milk and its products in rituals. Some Digambars in South India use the milk in their rituals, which is direct influence of Hindu rituals.

Also when we consume dairy products for our personal use we are personally responsible for our actions and the resulting karma or sins. However when we use dairy products in the temples, it is considered that the entire community commits the highest sin.

Milk and other products represent certain religious symbols in the Jain rituals. However, the product we use in the rituals must be of nonviolent source. The intention of our rituals is to inspire us to grow spiritually. The net outcome of the rituals should result in the reduction of our ego, greed, anger, lust, and attachments. Milk and other dairy products derived using such a violent method can not help us to grow spiritually.

In our rituals, we should substitute the regular milk with simple water or Soya milk, ghee (used in deevo) for vegetable oil, sweets for various types of dry nuts, and serve only vegan meal during any religious function. Our youths will appreciate such changes in our rituals.

Note:

This article was first published on Internet (Jain-list) in August 1997. Since then we have received many feed backs from the readers across the world. We have published some of these responses in an article called **What Our Readers Say About ...** at the end of the book "Book of Compassion". We strongly recommend you to read the feedback your opinion to education@jaina.org.

You can find this article in Hindi and Gujarati from Hindi and Gujarati version of "Book of Compassion". The pdf files of these books are available in www.jaineLibrary.org website. You can freely download the entire book from the website.

What Our Readers say about - My Visit to A Dairy Farm Article

Subject: Thank you for opening my eyes

Date: Fri, 5 Sep 1997 12:40:23 -1000

From: "h2oMan" <gurrez@aloha.net>

Your message brought tears to my eyes. Literally. At one time I too felt that there was no way I would give up the burfies, lassies, halwas, and ghee reeking rice dishes etc. After all what was Indian food without the heavenly aroma of satvic ghee? And did not our saints use them? At the same time I knew I was but a liar, and worst, to my own self. Only on making a commitment to a vegan diet and life-style could I find peace. Knowing that cows and other animals suffer as they do on the animal farms, it is not possible to use them or their excretions as guilt free nurture. And now I learn that even in India we are subjecting the cows to the tortures of dairy technology!

You cannot know what inspiration you have given me to hear another Indian take the vegan view on butter, milk, etc. I am saving your post to show others and to use in times I may find myself making excuses.

G.

Date: Thu, 20 Aug 1998 12:11:05 -0700

From: "Baid, Jyoti" <Jyoti_Baid@affymetrix.com>

That was a very complete and well-written article on the dairy industry in USA. Even after having read numerous articles on the subject its left me extremely disturbed.

I've been almost vegan for over 2 years now, since I first heard this horror story. My husband is gradually converting and our son is born with dairy allergy.....

Jyoti Baid

Date: Mon, 29 Sep 1997 09:15:46 +0500

From: Sailu <sl_comdc@sriven.scs.co.in>

Moods are off after I gone through your mail. Actually I have seen your mail two days back. In these two days whenever I take a sip of Tea I am just getting all that matter what you've written. It is really paining to digest the facts.

Sailu.

Date: Tue, 23 Sep 1997 00:32:55 -0400 (EDT)

From: APati@aol.com

Many thanks for sharing your tour of the dairy. My stomach curdled with dismay. I am an imperfect vegan. I heard Howard Lyman's speech and a woman animal life right activist came to me in a dream. My father, from Orissa had a heart attack from a meat-centered diet. He is a semi-veg now, and has returned to the plant-based diet of his ancestral past. Your account was moving and I thank you. I will be sharing it, a lot!

Anita Pati @ AOL.com

Date: 25 Aug 98 11:59:27 -0700

From: RAMARNAT@us.oracle.com>

Your article was very nice. **I don't belong to the Jain community but I am a Tamil vegetarian trying to become a vegan and I am all for non-violence.** We have a bunch of animals (dogs, cats, cows, goats..., rats (?)) at home and we try to be as nice as possible to these creatures. I could make sense out of every word you had written.

Amar

Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 12:13:29 -0700

From: Janak Lalan <jlalan@pacbell.net>

I am thankful to Mr. Pravin Shah for giving such information. I am sure very soon you will realize that you have done very great thing. You are real 'Jain'.

Bina Lalan

Date: Mon, 08 Sep 1997 16:38:50 -0700

From: Deepak Patel <pateld@BayNetworks.COM>

I like your mail very much. I know that it's not a question of liking or disliking, **it's horrible fact.** I am vegi

Deepak Patel - Bay Networks Inc.

Date: Wed, 19 Aug 1998 08:33:28 -0700 (PDT)

From: Frank Riela <friela@conflictnet.org>

Your note affirmed in me all the reasons I have been vegan for several years now. Although disturbing to read these things, it's good to be reminded of why we live a certain way. What I mean is ... being vegan has simply been for me ... the way I eat.

Also, all my blood work continues to be excellent. Low cholesterol, good iron levels, etc. Since I've been vegan my weight is naturally maintained at the right level and I feel healthy, both physically and in spirit.

Frank Riela

Date: Sun, 2 Nov 1997 08:28:43 -0500

From: "Ian R.Duncan"

I greatly appreciated your bringing to the jainlist the subject of the dairy industry, even though it would have caused a lot of anxiety among some readers.

There is of course a flourishing vegan tradition in "the west", including the USA, based on health & moral considerations rather than exclusively religious ones,

<http://hacres.com/html/cannibal.html>

Ian Duncan, Rome, Italy

Date: Thu, 20 Aug 1998 10:48:15 -0400

From: Joanne Stepaniak <joanne@vegsource.org>

I was forwarded your article "My Visit to a Dairy Farm" and would like to thank you for all that you are doing to bring vegan awareness to the Jain community. **Although I am not Jain, I support the philosophy and ethics behind the Jain way of life.**

I am the author of several vegan cookbooks including "The Uncheese Cookbook" and "Vegan Vittles," among others. In my books I reiterate the plight of the dairy cow, as it is such an overlooked and vitally important issue.

It is wonderful that you made the commitment to become vegan when you were "older." You are a beautiful example for all -- young and old -- who might feel it is too difficult to change. I wish you the best with your endeavors. You are doing very valuable and important work.

Joanne Stepaniak - Joanne@vegsource.org

<http://www.vegsource.org/joanne>

Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998 09:36:19 -0400 (EDT)

From: "K. R. Shah" <kshah@math.uwaterloo.ca>

I wanted to add that we recently had a wedding reception for our son Nikhil in Bombay, India where the menu was entirely vegan and no one noticed! We received very many compliments regarding the delicious food items.

Kirti R. shah - Toronto, Canada

Date: Mon, 22 Sep 1997 09:15:53 -0500

From: Mona shah <Monica.M.Shah-1@tc.umn.edu>

I have read your article "my visit to a dairy farm" and liked the personal perspective you gave.

I am already vegan in diet and try to be in other materials as well like clothes etc. **I feel that the biggest thing left to change for me is reducing or eliminating use of animal products in Jain rituals.** My parents and our Jain center still incorporate animal products in these rituals.

Mona Shah

Date: Wed, 02 Sep 1998 12:50:47 EDT

From: "Kingcross Beach" <kingcross@hotmail.com>

Thanks for the e-mail with valuable information. **I am ashamed to realize how ignorant I am.** I will also share this information with my friends.

N. Ravi

Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998 12:25:57 PDT

From: "PARIND SHAH" <parind@hotmail.com>

I read your article on COW'S MILK through e-mail sent by one of my respected uncle here. I came here 1.5 years back, since then I try not to eat KANDMUL and so far I'm successful in doing so most of the times But I do use milk and its products.....I'm terrified by the facts I read. Can you please explain how you avoid milk and its products in every day life?

Parind Shah.

Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998 21:33:14 EDT
From: hkmehta1@juno.com (Haresh Mehta)

My name is Riddhi Mehta and I am 16 years old and I just moved to Boston, MA from Columbia, SC.

I was deeply hurt by the info you gave me, not your opinion, but the story and the manslaughter.

In May of 97', I stopped eating eggs and cheese (because of rennet) because of a lecture that Guru Chitrabhanuji gave in Columbia.

I thank you for informing me on what was oblivious to me.

Riddhi

Date: Tue, 21 Apr 1998 18:25:27 EDT
From: Instyplano <Instyplano@aol.com>

Jai Jinendra! My name is Atul Khara. I am here in Dallas, Texas, past President and current Board Member of the Jain Society of North Texas.

First of all, thanks for the research and detailed article that was published in JivDaya. I am sure the articulate detail you have provided will help many Jains to decide against using dairy products.

One clarification I would like to make is that most of the Digambars do not use milk in the rituals. Also no scriptures supports the use of milk in rituals. Some Digambars in South have started using the milk in their rituals, which is direct influence of Hindu rituals.

Atul.