

VEGAN ADVOCACY IN INDIA

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

2

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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The study comprises a *Literature Review*, a *Content Analysis of Social Media*, and a *Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP)* on dietary practices with a focus on veganism. The study was conducted between October 2020 and May 2023.

This *Content Analysis of Social Media* distils key highlights from the rich and growing vegan advocacy landscape in India. I thank Neha Gupta for her painstaking and nuanced analysis, and Ajay Ravi Verma and Shirin Mehrotra for helping shape the final report. Swati Poddar and Vasavi Tadka collected the data.

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I dedicate this project to the thousands of animal rights activists in India, foot soldiers and leaders alike. Undeterred by challenges of time and resources, even sometimes in the face of hostility and intimidation by industry behemoths, they continue to pound the streets (and the Internet) to visibilize the genocide of animals, and speak truth to power.

May we realize our vision for a gentler and kinder world, one in which all sentient beings enjoy lives of freedom, equality and dignity.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AE	-	Animal Equality
AR	-	Animal Rights
AWO	-	Animal Welfare Organizations
CH	-	Climate Healers
CTA	-	Call to Action
DIY	-	Do It Yourself
FIAPO	-	Federation of Indian Animals Protection Organizations
FSSAI	-	Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
HSI	-	Human Society International
MDV	-	Million Dollar Vegan
NFHS	-	National Family Health Survey
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NSS	-	National Social Service
OIE	-	Office International des Epizooties
PETA	-	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PFA	-	People for Animals
SF	-	Sadhana Forest
SHARAN	-	Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature
SLT	-	Social Learning Theory
SVS	-	Satvik Vegan Society
TTM	-	Transtheoretical Model
UFCI	-	United for Compassion International
UK	-	United Kingdom
USA	-	United States of America
VIM	-	Vegan India Movement
WHO	-	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Content Analysis of Social Media* in India is the second phase of a larger, three-phase exploratory study titled *Vegan Advocacy in India*. The overall goal of the study is to provide advocates of veganism in India with the necessary data and insights to enhance the design of their advocacy campaigns for greater impact.

Towards this end, the first phase of the study—the *Literature Review (LR)*—outlines the “state of knowledge” with regard to socio-cultural and psychological factors that impact dietary choices and behaviors globally and with specific reference to India. The second phase—*A Content Analysis of Social Media*—aims to provide an understanding of how veganism is being framed, positioned and promoted within the complex socio-cultural and political framework defining India. The third phase of the study is a *Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP)* of dietary practices with a focus on veganism in five large metros of India. A reading of all three reports is encouraged to gain a fuller understanding of the study in its entirety.

The specific objectives of this media content analysis are to:

1. Outline the key advocates for veganism in India, the viewership and reach of their vegan advocacy and campaigning efforts;
2. Examine their campaigning strategies to promote veganism in light of theoretical frameworks and models, and identify their strengths and limitations;
3. Provide recommendations to strengthen vegan advocacy and campaigning in India.

The study started by identifying key advocates (organizations and individuals) for veganism in India, who were identified inductively based on their visibility and presence as well as the diversity of advocacy strategies employed. Next, over 500 pieces of social media content posted by these 23 advocates between January 2018 and January 2021 were examined. This yielded 24 campaign case studies selected based on specific criteria such as viewership, diversity of approaches, recurrent themes etc. It is worth noting that while the study is focused on veganism, it includes two case studies on vegetarianism, given its long history in India. Therefore, in some instances the term “veg*n” is used to refer to veganism and/or vegetarianism.

The study identified some quantitative metrics on campaign reach and access only to help contextualize the qualitative findings; these are not in any way indicative of campaign impact. It must be noted that subsequent to the data collection (between January and May 2021), some content links have either been changed or removed by the concerned advocates.

METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ANALYSIS

Based on the overall goal of the analysis and the nature of the content, a few key **theoretical frameworks and models** were identified for the study.

Frame Analysis of the content and related images, metaphors, actors, and messages was used to identify **five** key “frames” that contextualize vegan advocacy in India. These are:

1. **Animal Rights (AR) and Welfare:** includes ideas of ahimsa, non-violence, and compassion.
2. **Health:** includes harms of animal-derived foods, fitness, nutritive value, and disease-alleviation potential of vegan diets, veganism as a preventive to pandemics.

3. **Environmental Sustainability:** includes resource utilization, climate change, holistic, low carbon footprint lifestyle mindful of animal and human communities.
4. **Religion/Spirituality:** historically, religious/spiritual leaders representing Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism especially have advocated for vegetarianism; with some recent examples of those advocating veganism.
5. **Vegan Adoption:** content supporting the transition to veganism through information on vegan alternatives to animal-derived products, substitution recipes to veganize popular non-vegan dishes, ways to prevent possible nutritional deficiencies, as well as product advertising by vegan brands.

Critical Discourse Analysis was deployed to study media content on three levels:

- **Text** – the issues, themes, narrative structure, language, tone, metaphors.
- **Discursive Practice** – the intent of the text/message, audience targeted, media used, and the production, distribution and consumption of the text.
- **Social Discourse** – examines how the message addresses the socio-cultural context of attitudes and practices around diet in India.

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) or Stages of Change Model was applied to identify the specific stage(s) of behavior change that are addressed through a campaign – pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance.

In addition, **Rhetorical Analysis** was used as a supportive model to examine the primary persuasive technique (ethos, logos and pathos) underpinning the argument for veganism, while **Social Learning Theory (SLT)**, more commonly referred to as “social modeling” was used where relevant to understand the role of celebrities, public figures and other influencers in modeling ideal attitudes and behaviors for veganism.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is worth noting that the analysis was restricted to social media, and that most of the recommendations outlined below are supported by empirical evidence outlined in the *LR*.

1. **Overall, the reach of most vegan campaigns is low, with a few exceptions.** Almost 70% of the vegan advocacy content had “very low” (500 or 100 views and likes) to “low” viewership (500–3000 views and likes); with a little less than 14% enjoying “high” or “very high” viewership (30k to 1mn+ views and likes). Notable exceptions include Arvind Kannan and Robin Singh who have a large Facebook following of 200,000 and 1.2 million respectively.

Vegan advocacy needs to go well beyond narrow echo chambers and engage new and diverse audiences if it is to have impact. The analysis suggests that content with higher viewership used an effective combination of longer but concise and detailed arguments and emotive cues – for example, contemporary formats (such as investigative journalism, logos-based arguments, and story-telling that increase perceived credibility) used by advocates such as PETA, Kannan and Singh. It is recommended that greater investment be made in strategic marketing and “boosting” of content, coordinated and strategic use of tactics such as common or related hashtags, greater use of videos which platforms like Facebook and Instagram promote to new and algorithmically-determined audiences.

2. **Animal rights was the primary “frame” for vegan advocacy**, with 9/24 campaigns studied, followed by environmental sustainability (5/24), religion/spirituality and “vegan adoption” (4/24 each) and health (2). While this is partly the result of the study’s sampling methodology, it is indicative of broad trends that perhaps partly explain why vegan advocacy has reached limited audiences. For example, some evidence cited by the

LR suggests that health and environment frames outrank animal rights as a motivator among omnivores for veganism (note, however, that studies with veg*n respondents identify animal rights as a primary motivator, as cited in the *LR*). Vegan campaigners must amplify their use of other frames, actively build alliances with related domains such as health, environment and holistic living, and thereby diversify the profile of veganism as a broader issue “owned” by a wider range of advocates rather than animal rights groups alone.

3. **Vegan advocacy mostly focusses on early stages of behavior change** such as pre-contemplation and contemplation – i.e., increasing awareness and conscientizing to the violence intrinsic to animal-derived foods. Far fewer campaigns focused on the actual “how to” of veganism, or the latter phases of preparation, action, and maintenance.

Given the increasing availability of vegan alternatives in the Indian market, as well as DIY recipes on the net, it is recommended that advocacy expand to include the latter stages of behavior change so that audiences understand not just the “why” of veganism but the “how to” as well. This will also serve to address a key barrier for vegan adoption identified by the *LR*, which is a lack of knowledge on vegan cooking and material substitution, as well as concerns about potential nutritional deficiencies such as B12 and Vitamin D.

4. **Demolishing the Grand Narrative surrounding milk in India** defined a bulk (17/24) of the campaigns. Historically-constructed narratives of the cow as a nurturing mother figure happily relinquishing her milk, an elixir transformed into a nationalist symbol, have held sway over India in such a totalizing manner that alternative interpretations have been rendered near-impossible. In fact, dairy is to India what meat is to the west—“natural, normal, necessary and nice”—commonly referred to as the “4 Ns.” While continuing to anthropomorphize the cow, campaigners expose the dark underbelly of dairy – artificial insemination, forced pregnancies, the separation of calf from mother – and visibilize the mostly unknown link between dairy and beef in India. Dairy-focused advocacy is highly relevant in India, given that dairy is all-pervasive, consumed across religions, castes and classes in the country. It is also crucial for deflecting the conflation of veganism with upper-caste majoritarian ideology of vegetarianism. India has the highest cattle population in the world, is the leading producer of milk, and third highest exporter of beef globally.
5. **There’s a notable effort to Indianize vegan advocacy** through cultural symbols, vernacular and contextual cues that may hold resonance. For example, “Satyagraha 2.0” by the Vegan India Movement (VIM) fashions itself after India’s legendary freedom movement marked by non-violence; PETA’s “Save the Boy Child” draws from the long-running, high-visibility “Save the Girl Child” campaign of the Government of India. Activists leverage the existing cultural empathy for cows to spotlight the otherwise hidden violence of dairy. These strategies root veganism within its unique Indian context, rather than being mere reproduction of a western sensibility.
6. The analysis found a **strategic use of rhetorical strategies such as anthropomorphism and cognitive dissonance** which find empirical evidence in the *LR*. In some cases, multiple strategies have been used within the same campaign to create more composite messaging. For example, PETA’s “Drinking Liquid Beef?” public billboard, and the “Dairy is Beef” video by United for Compassion International (UFCI) integrate moral shock and cognitive dissonance through the strategic juxtaposition of milk (celebrated as an elixir of life gifted by the cow as mother figure) and much tabooed beef, making them, in fact, synonymous based on the realities in India. However, it is urged that vegan advocates be judicious in their use of such strategies, especially moral shock, since their effectiveness may vary across different socio-cultural contexts, as evidenced in the *LR*.

7. **None of the campaigns address the issue of religion and caste in India when it comes to vegan promotion;** instead, they appeal to, and build on, a mostly upper-caste Hindu sensibility (for example, equating milk with beef). These are powder keg issues, germane to food politics in India, but perhaps more appropriately discussed through panel discussions and webinar formats. However, there were notable **examples of minority community voices to tackle traditional religious practices and promote change from within.** UFCI's webinars, for example, feature young Muslim vegans who share their struggles, resistance as well as support received from family and friends, along with tips for transitioning to a vegan diet. These "insider" stories, which integrate sensitivity to, and reinterpretations of, religious texts and traditions, broaden the appeal of veganism and can tackle the misperception that it is an extension of Hindu majoritarian ideology of vegetarianism.
8. **Vegan advocacy in India has a predominantly young face,** whether it is VIM's pan-India animal rights marches, UFCI's webinars, or brave Young Turks such as Kannan demolishing the pro-dairy stance of leading spiritual icons like Jaggi Vasudev. Evidence from the *LR* corroborates concern for animals and ethics as key motivators for veg*nism among younger age groups, and among those already vegan or vegetarian. It is recommended that advocates expand their reach to wider age groups by building on the few examples using the health frame, referenced by the *LR* as being the most cited motivator for the older 41–60 age group. In addition, spiritual leaders need to be mobilized to expand their longstanding focus from vegetarianism to veganism, thus leveraging their increasing number of followers across all age groups.
9. **Social modeling was a common strategy** given the country's fascination with film and sports (cricket in particular). The focus on glamorous stars from the world of films, television, cricket and sports was complemented with experts from the fields of health, nutrition and fitness, as well as vegan chefs and on-ground influencers who provide ongoing tips and support for adopting and maintaining vegan practice. These "mixed ensembles" help diversify the profile and reach of veganism, while referencing international vegan celebrities lend a sense of scale and global community. Some vegan activists such as Kannan and Singh emerged as influencers in their own right, while longstanding animal rights icons such as MP Maneka Gandhi continue their influence, especially on policy matters, and in foregrounding the ethical imperatives for veganism.

Using social modeling must, however, be tempered with caution; while celebrities may provide greater visibility and recall for vegan campaigns, they may also imbue it with an undue sense of glamor, elitism and consumerism. Additionally, in a couple of cases some celebrities promoted as vegans later featured in commercial advertising endorsing animal-derived products, completely undermining the credibility of the vegan cause. Care needs to be exercised to choose vegan celebrities who are known for their engagement with broader social issues, and to not project vegetarian stars as vegan icons. Vegan advocacy would also benefit from the inclusion of more male figures from the field of sports and nutrition so it is not seen as a mere beauty and weight-loss fad among women.
10. **The analysis found some notable examples to deconstruct veganism into a simple, mindful and minimalistic philosophy** rather than an elitist, consumerist-driven lifestyle. For example, Gandhi discourages the excessive focus on vegan products, consumption and consumerism, advocating instead for a veganism that is mindful of carbon footprint; the Satvik Vegan Society distances itself from the excessive commercialization of veganism and emphasizes instead locally-sourced, nutritious and sustainable vegan food. These useful cautionary notes from within the vegan movement need to be further amplified.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the online vegan advocacy landscape in India, the different advocates, strategies and messages being deployed. In the process it reveals some good practices, and offers recommendations for strengthening vegan advocacy informed by findings from the *LR*. However, it must be noted that many of the studies featured in the *LR* are from the west, and their relevance for India is uncertain, given the country's vastly differing and complex socio-cultural context surrounding dietary choices.

This analysis and the quantitative metrics cited for specific campaigns are in no way indicative of campaign impact, which requires a different methodology altogether.

It is strongly recommended that groups engaged in vegan advocacy invest greater time and resources to designing 360° campaigns that integrate formative audience research as well as campaign impact assessment studies to gain a far greater understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of differing strategies for various audience segments. This analysis and its insights provide the ground for these next steps.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The media is the prime shaper of “the world outside and the pictures in our heads,” wrote Walter Lippmann way back in 1922. A century later we live in a world in which media exerts its influence every passing second, inexorably – through cell phones, television and social media platforms too innumerable to mention. Never before has the media been so omnipresent and omnipotent, determining what is important and what is not, and defining not just *what* we think about, but *how* we think about it (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

A study of the media, and of social media in particular, then, is fundamental to understanding any issue. This report, *A Content Analysis of Social Media*, is the second part of a larger, three-phase exploratory study *Vegan Advocacy in India*. The overall goal of the study is to provide advocates of veganism in India with the necessary data and insights to enhance the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts.

Towards this end, the first phase of the study—the *Literature Review (LR)*—outlines the “state of knowledge” with regard to socio-cultural and psychological factors that impact dietary patterns globally and in India. This, the second part of the study, conducts a social media analysis of vegan advocacy in order to provide an understanding of how veganism is being framed, positioned and promoted within India’s complex socio-cultural and political framework. It is followed by the third phase of the study—*A Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP)* in five large metros of India¹—which provides on-ground data and insights that can guide the design of more strategic, evidence-based campaigns for veganism in India.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the key advocates (organizations and individuals) for veganism in India, the viewership and reach of their online vegan advocacy and campaigning efforts;
2. Examine their campaigning strategies to promote veganism in the light of theoretical frameworks and models for behavior change communication,² and identify their strengths and limitations;
3. Provide recommendations to strengthen and accelerate vegan campaigning in India.

Why the focus on veganism? Recent years have witnessed a rapid escalation in the production and consumption of animal-derived products in India, as evidenced by several studies. For example, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 (2021) of the Government of India indicates that there has been a 5 percentage points decline in the number of men who had never tasted meat since NFHS 4 (2017). Production of animal-derived products has risen significantly to meet this rising demand: between 2007 and 2017 alone, production of milk increased by 63%, and chicken (the most popular meat in the country) by 114%. In addition to the deleterious impacts of this animal agriculture on millions of animals, this portends badly for environmental sustainability and climate change, while also being harmful for the health of human beings.

¹ Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai

² Drawing from the evidence gathered through the Literature Review, the first phase of the overall study.

A number of groups, especially those representing animal rights (AR), have been conducting vegan advocacy campaigns for several years, but little is known about the impact or audiences reached. Greater understanding is needed on how these vegan advocacy efforts are being framed and positioned – the barriers, drivers and triggers they employ; the key frames for their messaging; and specific phases of behavior change they target. This study tries to fill this gap, providing examples and drawing from evidence in the *LR*.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

The study is focused on a complex and multi-layered domain involving change, which can occur at many levels: social norms, individual behaviors, policy, legislation and enforcement, to name just a few. It is a domain defined by differing terminologies such as “lobbying”, “advocacy”, “social and behavior change communication”, and “campaigning”.

Broadly, the study refers to “**advocacy**” and “**campaigning**” as a series of planned, incremental and ongoing efforts to use data and evidence to convince and persuade key target audiences of the legitimacy of an issue and to take specific action (s) to redress it (Chandler, 2010). For the purpose of this study, we use the terms somewhat interchangeably, focusing specifically on the social and behavior change needed on the part of the general public rather than action required by policymakers (which constitutes policy advocacy). We look at specific timed efforts with start and end dates, with clearly-defined messages across different media collaterals, and a clear Call to Action (CTA).

The study uses the term “**veganism**” to refer to the philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals (The Vegan Society). For the purpose of this study, the focus is limited to dietary veganism.

The study uses the term “**veg*nism**” or “**veg*n**” in some instances to denote both vegetarianism and veganism. While the focus of the study is on veganism, India has a long history of vegetarianism especially within a religious/spiritual context, hence it includes a few examples featuring spiritual leaders who advocate vegetarianism as well as veganism. We also use the term to refer to those studies cited in the *LR* which may have involved vegetarian and/or vegan respondents.

It is important to note that the term “**vegetarian**” carries a very different meaning in India vis-à-vis the West. India’s vegetarianism is mostly associated with predetermined religion and caste norms, and is driven by religious notions of “purity” among Hindu cultural elites. While some generalized compassion for animals can be traced in various religious traditions, vegetarianism in India does not in any way presume an anti-speciesist or animal rights ethic (unlike oftentimes in the west). Its association with upper-caste Hindu morality has meant that being vegetarian in India has connotations of being traditional and conservative, in sharp contrast to its justice-driven meaning in advocacy in the west. Meat-eating in India often carries a subversive symbolism among meat-eaters who resent the prejudice they face, as well as among “...politically conscious Indians...who want to distance themselves from caste hierarchies and traditions” (Srinivasan & Rao, 2015). It is also important to note that meat consumption in India is much lower in quantity and frequency than in other parts of the world, with vegetables and pulses forming a significant proportion of the diet for omnivores as well.

The term “carnism” is used to refer to the tacit belief or ideology that conditions people to eat some animals (Joy, 2010) or animal-derived products such as the meat of various animals as well as dairy, eggs, and honey. It is, essentially, the opposite of veganism.

THE DATA AND SAMPLING PLAN

The study began by identifying those engaged in vegan advocacy in India (such as AR campaigners) as well as those contributing to such efforts more peripherally or tangentially (such as environmentalists and spiritual leaders). A total of 23 advocates were identified inductively based on their visibility and presence in India as well as the diversity of strategies employed for veg*n advocacy.

The online data includes over 500 social media content posted between January 2018 and January 2021. In one–two instances where the content was particularly noteworthy but just a little beyond the time margins, the analysis was extended to include them. Data collection was conducted between January and May 2021.

One prominent campaign or theme for each vegan advocate was selected as a case study while also summarizing some other significant work by them and their overall advocacy style. For each advocate, the particular social media platform to be analyzed was picked based on a mix of viewership criteria (platforms with higher viewership) and relevance of material. Notable offline campaigns (such as billboards) which were shared online were also included in the study. In the case of one organization—the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organizations (FIAPO)—two case studies were included since they feature two different frames, adding up to a total of 24 case studies.

Campaigns or themes selected for the case studies included one or more of the following criteria:

- Significant audience viewership and engagement;³
- A recurrent theme for vegan advocacy in India across multiple advocates;⁴
- A persuasive use of rhetorical styles relevant to the Indian context;⁵
- Accompanied by a significant offline face, such as billboards, street protests and marches, or institutional outreach.⁶

In totality, the case studies are representative of vegan advocacy in general as well as of the focus on specific animals and animal-derived products such as dairy, meat or eggs. Aquaculture and fish were not included in the analysis due to limited content on this topic.

METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ANALYSIS

In order to analyze vegan campaigning efforts, a few key theoretical frameworks and models were identified that work synergistically to fulfill the objectives of the study.

Frame Analysis defining vegan advocacy. Drawn from multi-disciplinary social sciences and communications studies, frame analysis offers a research method to analyze, organize and interpret phenomena through specific filters, with a view to making some aspects of our multidimensional realities more salient than others. Frame analysis looks at images,

³ Social media engagement measures the public shares, likes and comments for social media posts.

⁴ E.g., advocacy based on pandemic concerns, see chapter II A 1 (PETA), II A 3 (People for Animals), II C 1 (SHARAN), II C 2 (Million Dollar Vegan).

⁵ E.g., Roadside billboards by PETA (II A 1) “Drinking Liquid Beef?” that highlight the link between dairy and beef.

⁶ E.g., FIAPO’s Don’t Get Milked campaign (II A 2) which combines offline and online advocacy.

stereotypes, metaphors, actors, messages, and more to make meaning. Upon a preliminary examination of the content, five key frames emerged for vegan advocacy in India:

1. **Animal Rights and Welfare:** includes ideas of *ahimsa*, non-violence, compassion;
2. **Health:** covering the harmful impact of animal-derived foods, fitness, nutritive value and disease-alleviation potential of vegan diets, veganism as a preventive to pandemics;
3. **Environmental Sustainability:** addressing climate change, holistic, low-carbon footprint lifestyle that is respectful towards animal and human communities;
4. **Religion and Spirituality:** historically, religious and spiritual leaders representing Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism especially have valorized vegetarianism; the study includes one such case study and another advocating veganism;
5. **Vegan Adoption:** content supporting the adoption and transition to veganism, material substitution to veganize popular non-vegan dishes; ways to overcome possible nutritional deficiencies, as well as product advertising by vegan brands.

Certain campaigns, while defined primarily by one frame, may be complemented by additional secondary or multiple frames. The analysis integrates these supporting frames for a more nuanced understanding. It must be noted that the sampling is biased towards the AR frame, since the study is designed specifically to equip AR groups with the necessary data and insights to strengthen their vegan advocacy and campaigning.

KEY FRAMEWORKS USED FOR THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2010). Studies media content on three levels:

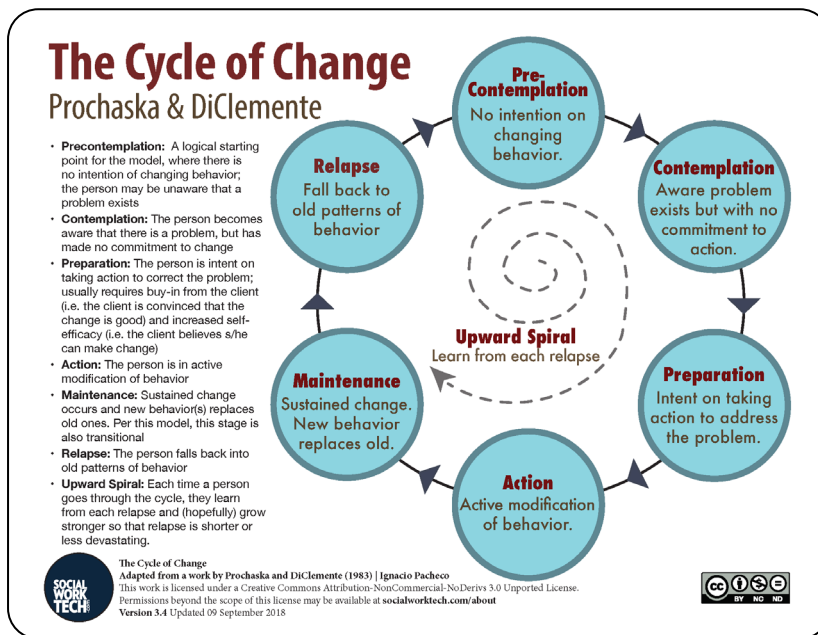
- **Text** – the issues, themes, narrative structure, language, tone, metaphors.
- **Discursive Practice** – the intent of the text/message, audience targeted, media used, and the production, distribution and consumption of the text.
- **Social Discourse** – which examines how the message addresses the socio-cultural context of attitudes and practices around diet in India.

For each case study, we combine the above points under "Key Messaging Strategies" highlighting the target audience, tonality, appeals and triggers deployed, barriers to veganism being tackled, the kind of animal-derived products being spotlighted (dairy, meat and eggs), and Call to Action (CTA).

Transtheoretical Model (TTM) (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983). Also known as the Stages of Change model, this maps how people may change a "problem behavior" (in this case, the consumption of animal-derived products) and adopt ideal behaviors (in this case veganism). The model operates on the assumption that people do not change behaviors quickly and decisively at one go but rather in incremental steps, on a continued and cyclical basis.

The TTM posits that a person moves through six stages of change – pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination.⁷ As one progresses through the stages of change, different cognitive, affective, and evaluative processes are applied. Some of these processes include consciousness-raising, self-reevaluation, environmental reevaluation, social liberation, self-liberation, and counter-conditioning.

⁷ The last stage is not being part of the original model and is rarely applied especially when studying health-related behaviors.



The Cycle of Change

"contemplation." Content providing a solution to the emotional and cognitive quandary confronting audiences when they discover the realities of factory-farming and look for a way out—such as a link to a vegan starter kit, a pledge to go vegan, or a petition to enforce welfare standards for factory farms—can be seen as the "preparation" phase of the cycle; while content providing vegan transition support through vegan recipes and a timed "challenge" is classified as "action." Additional continued support to prevent relapse and strengthen vegan practice (for example, through community networks, sharing of recipes for material substitution, and vegan potluck events) is called the "maintenance" phase of the cycle. It must be noted, that some campaigns focused only on specific phases, while others traversed multiple phases in the behavior change cycle.

The analysis also drew from two supporting models:

Rhetorical Analysis to analyze how different appeals are used to construct the argument and persuade the audience: ethos (credibility of the communicator), pathos (emotions) and/or logos (logic and reasoning) reasons. The analysis helps us understand the primary persuasive technique that defines each case study while also situating the messaging in the socio-cultural context of India.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) also commonly referred to as "social modeling" to understand the role of this strategy in promoting vegan advocacy in India. Social modeling emphasizes the importance of observation and modeling in how and why people learn, beyond the limitations of their immediate environments. The media play a fundamental role in such social learning by featuring celebrities and public figures who shape social norms and model ideal behaviors for the public to follow. This study looks at celebrities including film and television actors, sports persons, AR activists, health and nutrition experts, religious/spiritual leaders, as well as influencers.⁸ These entities may vary in the range and power of their influence in terms of target audiences and key appeals.

⁸ We use the term "influencers" to refer to those who have a more limited circle of influence than high-profile media celebrities, but are more on-ground and representative of their communities. They are able to influence many others, especially through social media, on a number of issues especially purchasing of products and services due to their perceived expertise and authority.

Applying Stages of Change Model to Vegan Advocacy

Recognizing that these phases of behavior change cycle are not water-tight silos, the analysis broadly identifies the phase (s) of behavior change being targeted—for example, content that presents completely unknown or little-known information for the first time (such as newborn male calves being starved to death), is classified as "pre-contemplation" and

MEASURING VIEWERSHIP TO PROVIDE CONTEXT

In order to provide a broad context and background within which this content circulates we looked at basic metrics (following, “views” and “likes”) for the content, and organized them within categories such as “high” and “low” based on percentile criteria. It is worth noting that the available data is only indicative and not definitive, and that these metrics do not necessarily reflect campaign impact (controversial posts may attract high views, but not generate impact).

Table 1: Criteria for Categorizing Viewership Levels⁹

	Criterion for Videos (Views)	Criterion for Posts (Likes/Reactions)
Very Low	<500	<100
Low	500–3k	100–300
Medium	3k–30k	300–1k
High	>30k	1k+
Very High	1mn+	N/A

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to only social media (and offline media that is reflected online) content focused on promoting behavior change, hence offline campaigns, news media coverage and offline policy advocacy with government and other institutional stakeholders are outside the purview of this study.
- The study focuses on diet-based veganism and does not include other non-edible animal-derived products such as silk, leather or cosmetics which are also excluded by veganism.
- Impact assessment of vegan campaigning is outside the purview of this study. Some broad, easily-accessible data such as social media platform following, viewership of specific posts, engagement and comments, are included only to provide background context to the qualitative analysis. However, such data come with caveats—high views can indicate an effective campaign, or a controversial one—and is not a default indication of impact. Also, the study of consumption metrics and tools used to analyze strategy such as virality, "gaming the algorithm", traffic, engagement, and click through rate (CTR) etc., are beyond the scope of this study.

⁹ The Table uses the letter "k" which is commonly used on social media to represent a thousand

CHAPTER II: CASE STUDIES OF VEGAN ADVOCACY

II A. ANIMAL RIGHTS AND WELFARE FRAME

This section looks at the heart of vegan advocacy, drawing primarily from an AR framework. For these advocates—individual activists and NGOs—dietary veganism is rooted in ethical veganism, and other advocacy frames such as health, environment or religion are only secondary.

1. PETA – STRATEGIC INVERSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Active in India since 2000, PETA is perhaps the most visible face of vegan advocacy globally. The organization has earned itself a unique place thanks to its in-your-face, provocative and controversial campaigning – a signature style of its founder Ingrid Newkirk. In India, the perception of PETA as a foreign entity promoting western, anti-Hindu propaganda attracts significant skepticism on social and news media.

Advocacy Approach

- Multi-channel advertising using billboards, college/institutional outreach, street-based advocacy and celebrity endorsements. Significant social media outreach, leveraging the high number of followers on their [Facebook](#) page (1.49 million, highest following among the vegan stakeholders in this study).
- Key campaign frames are AR complemented in some cases by environmental and health frames.
- Takes on controversial issues like publicly criticizing the dairy behemoth Amul when they took a pot-shot at actor Joaquin Phoenix for his Oscar speech promoting veganism; or promoting vegan mid-day meals in government schools, a highly controversial move given India's socio-economic context.¹⁰
- Effectively advocated with some states to replace cruel methods of killing male baby chicks in egg farms with better practices such as in-ovo sexing technology¹¹.
- Capitalizes on topical issues and current events; for example, during the pandemic, spotlighted the link between wet markets and zoonotic diseases, and called for their shutdown through high-visibility full-page ads in leading national dailies.

CAMPAIGN: SAVE THE BOY CHILD

Duration – 2018–2020 | **Media Used** – Video posted on the campaign [micro site](#) (and [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) (medium views – 20–22k), Instagram posts (high likes – 5863 and 3317). | **Message** – Male calves and chicks are killed/abandoned because they have no financial value to the dairy and poultry industries respectively. | **CTA** – “Try Vegan”.

¹⁰ The government's mid-day meal scheme provides meals for below-poverty line school children. It is mired in controversy over what should/should not be served. Right to food and child rights activists have historically advocated for the provision of milk and eggs in these meals. In February 2020, PETA urged education ministries of all states to ensure that mid-day meals consist only of "[healthy, humane, plant-based foods](#)."

¹¹ In poultry farming, in-ovo sexing is a chick sexing method carried out while chicks are still in ovo (Latin for "inside the egg").



Instagram Posts from PETA

PETA's "Save the Boy Child" is an inversion of the long-running, high-visibility (Save the Girl Child) campaign.¹² PETA's campaign focuses on the violence against male calves and male chicks in the dairy and egg/poultry industries respectively. The videos and social media posts show graphic visuals of animal violence and how they are killed since they are not economically beneficial.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Drawing parallels between human rights and animal rights by anthropomorphizing male calves and chicks.** The campaign anthropomorphizes male calves and chicks. While most images are of graphic footage of violence and death, some also touch upon the separation of male calves from their mothers. The name of the campaign draws sharp parallels of gender-based discrimination and violence between human and non-human babies.
- **Graphic imagery and shock value.** Both the video and social media posts depict real-life imagery of male calves and chicks being ruthlessly killed, in a hard-hitting documentary or news report style to send out the message that milk and eggs are not benign. The text on the images—"Cause of Death: Born Male"—draws attention to the injustice resulting from an accident of birth.
- **Subversion of common cultural tropes.** The name of the campaign "Save The Boy Child" is a take on the popular nationwide campaign (Save The Girl Child), grabbing more attention.
- **Animal rights framing with an abolitionist position.** The campaign avoids the common welfarist position found in egg-related advocacy which often calls for more "humane" methods of freeing hens from battery cages.¹³ It focuses on vegan adoption as the only way forward.

¹² Started by the government and implemented by a wide range of stakeholders including NGOs as well as private sector, this campaign has occupied center stage in the public consciousness addressing a range of discrimination faced by girls and women.

¹³ See chapters II A 4 (Animal Equality) and II A 5 HSI/India) for similar case studies.

Behavior Change Focus

- The video and text support the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages by raising awareness about systemic violence in the dairy and egg industries. There's also an attempt to address preparation and action phases of behavior change by providing a link to a Vegan Starter Kit, which can be ordered from the campaign micro site.

Limitations

- Some posts only provide a link to the campaign micro site, while others to a more specific action such as "Try plant-based milks". The actionable links to sign a pledge or try the Vegan Starter Kit can be seen only if one makes the proactive effort to scroll down to the bottom of the page.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY PETA

Animal Rights

- **Taking on dairy giant Amul** – In February 2020, Hollywood actor Joaquin Phoenix made a strong appeal for veganism and denounced violence in the dairy industry in his Academy Award speech. India's leading dairy brand Amul trivialized and poked fun at Phoenix for his stance in its well-known topical advertisement¹⁴ featuring the Amul Girl, who is seen smearing butter on Phoenix's face, while he is called a "Joaqer". PETA and other vegan groups responded sharply on social media and the controversy was covered in major news dailies. Vegan advocates used the controversial moment to defend both Phoenix and re-address Indian audiences, making calls to "Ditch Dairy" and adopt plant-based milk.
- A seven-city **billboard campaign poses the question "Drinking Liquid Beef?"**, followed by a factual statement – "Cattle used for milk are often killed for beef". A bottle of milk is shown with a red dot suggesting that milk is non-vegetarian food. The ad aims to create a cognitive dissonance among the mainstream lacto-vegetarian public by juxtaposing milk (benign and sacred) with beef (taboo-ed). <https://www.petaindia.com/blog/brown-dot-for-dairy-new-billboards-sweep-the-nation-for-world-vegan-month/>
- **Ending cruel ways of killing chicks** – Invoking both global WHO guidelines and India's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA act, 1960), PETA conducted sustained advocacy (mostly offline) with central and state governments to end cruel ways of killing male and other unwanted chicks in egg and poultry farms. PETA reports that it approached 26 states, of which 14 issued directions to stop cruel killings of chicks and adopted methods prescribed by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE). Four of these states committed to shifting to in-ovo sexing technology when it's commercially available.

Environmental Sustainability

- **Go Vegan** – Billboards on major roadways and on buses called people to "Go Vegan" in order to help conserve water. PETA conducted various interactive street-level outreach with a climate change focus coinciding with important calendar dates such as International Day of Forests Week, World Oceans Day, Children's Day etc.

¹⁴ Amul has been running this topical since the 1990s.

Health

- **Pandemic-related advocacy** – In 2020, PETA used multiple high outreach strategies to advocate for the shutdown of live-animal markets as they could trigger zoonotic diseases. It advocated with governments, put out petitions and shared a [video](#) on social media titled, “Inside India’s Wet Markets”. A full-page advertisement was placed in nationwide editions of The Times of India titled “India: It’s Time to Move Away from Meat” to spotlight disease-prone spaces and how meat was bad for health. PETA undertook video *exposés* of animal markets, hatcheries and slaughterhouses from various cities. Despite being a timely, opportunistic campaign, it may risk triggering skepticism since the jury is still out on the link between wet markets and origins of Covid-19.

2. FIAPO – COMBINING ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Federation of Indian Animals Protection Organizations (FIAPO), an apex protection network established in 2010, has been advocating animal rights and protection through various multi-channel campaigns, investigative reports on factory-farming practices and related policy advocacy. In addition, they also focus on capacity-building for the animal rights movement through periodic boot camps, and host the well-attended bi-annual conference “India for Animals” that mobilizes the AR community.

Advocacy Approach

- Multi-channel advertising using outdoor ads, print ads, social media posts and videos. FIAPO has a stronger presence on [Facebook](#) with 238K+ followers and [YouTube](#) with 240K+ subscribers.
- Focus on animal rights framing along with some messaging around environment and vegan adoption.
- Comprehensive messaging complemented by offline investigative research that feeds into policy advocacy.

CAMPAIGN: DON'T GET MILKED (DGM)

Duration – 2018 – mid-2019 | **Media Used** – Public billboards (primary media being analyzed for this case study), wall murals, [Facebook](#) post (high likes – 15k), dedicated campaign website. | **Message** – Don’t be fooled (milked); see the violence in the dairy industry; veganism is the way to reject violence towards animals. | **CTA** – “Ditch Dairy, Go Vegan”.

The campaign used a series of 11 billboards installed at public places including metro stations, malls, bus shelters and campuses in Delhi and Gurgaon. The billboards were complemented by videos on social media platforms and a dedicated micro site for the campaign. It was further supported by an online vegan diet challenge and an on-ground restaurant collaboration to create a vegan-friendly food hub at Epicuria mall in south Delhi defined by marketing and promotion activities/materials.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Outdoor public media** such as billboards force the collective public to see and contend with the grim realities presented (as opposed to fliers, social media, brochures which are more private viewing).
- **The duped citizen-consumer.** The title of the campaign—“Don’t Get Milked”—refers to the audience being fooled thus making it more personal.
- **Incriminating the dairy industry for beef and leather.** The text across all the billboards has animal rights and cruelty framing. The rights of the calf (over the mother cow’s milk), is the key focus here, but some of the text also draw a direct link between the dairy industry and the beef and leather industry.¹⁵ The campaign also creates a hook by adding facts and a question-answer format (see image on next page). Varied tonality is used across billboards ranging from sarcasm to cryptic messaging to pique curiosity and garner interest.
- **Visibilizing the victim.** The text also spotlights the sufferings of the calf who is denied mother’s milk, separated from the mother, and if male, is eventually left to die or slaughtered. While there’s general awareness about what cows have to endure in the dairy industry, this line of messaging centerstages the violence inflicted on the calf by the dairy industry.
- **Anthropomorphizing cows and their familial relationships.** The use of “mothers” and “babies”, and “his” pronoun for the calf (instead of “its”) anthropomorphize the mother-calf and their relationship.
- **Use of tailored language to appeal to a diverse set of audience.** Different styles of language ranging from aspirational Americanized slang (Don’t Get Milked) to everyday conversational Hinglish (“*Doodh kam, jhooth zyada*” meaning less milk, more lies), in order to be both intelligible and persuasive to different audience segments.



One of the DGM campaign billboards

Behavior Change Focus

- The campaign seeks to disrupt the culturally-entrenched practice of cow milk consumption by creating more awareness about animal rights abuses that are common practice in the Indian dairy industry.

Limitations

- Phrases like “Ditch Dairy” and “Don’t Get Milked” may be intelligible and even aspirational for upper-class urban youth familiar with American slang, but might limit the reach of the message to other demographic segments.

¹⁵ Unlike the west, where cattle are bred exclusively for the beef industry, India’s beef comes predominantly from spent cattle bred for the dairy industry.

Text Used on Other Billboards of the DGM Campaign

1. This mother will spend as much time with her calf, as you will, waiting for your train. Milk is not cruelty-free.

2. What reduces the lifespan of cows from 26 years to 8? Milk. Constant abuse of dairy animals decreases their life span to almost 1/3rd



DGM campaign billboard

3. The dairy industry doesn't hide its

secrets. It buries them. Male calves in the dairy industry are killed within 3 months.

4. Dairy is a cut-throat business. Literally. The dairy industry discards "used up" animals to the beef industry. Milk is not cruelty-free.

5. *Doodh kam, jhooth zyada* (less milk, more lies) The dark side of dairy. *Bewakoof mat bano* (don't be fooled). Don't get milked.

6. Milk. Probably the best thing that happened to leather.

7. Cows don't GIVE their milk, we STEAL it.

Other Elements of the DGM Campaign



Billboard of the 21-Day Compassion Challenge featuring Mallika Sherawat

21-day Compassion Challenge¹⁶ plus celebrity vegan sex symbol Mallika Sherawat

The DGM billboard campaign is supported by an online "challenge" providing a guided regimen through a dedicated [website](#); the participants receive plant-based and vegan recipes and meal plans for 21 days that they can try at home. The challenge takes a multi-frame approach of healthy living, environment and animal rights. Billboards featured actress Mallika Sherawat, who has been vegan for 15 years, inviting people to participate in the challenge. Sherawat's

choice was, to some degree, in keeping with an approach started by PETA where well-known sex symbols are on-boarded to create awareness. However, FIAPPO chose to instead highlight her long-term commitment to veganism and underplayed her sexual appeal. The effectiveness of such an approach is unclear, given that Sherawat was past her peak popularity during the time of this campaign, although a [post](#) on Facebook received 15k views. The campaign included on-ground outreach and partnerships with popular restaurants in Delhi's Epicuria mall to create the first vegan-friendly food zone.

¹⁶ 21-Day Challenge is named so because research suggests that it takes 21 days to break a habit and form new ones. Similar 18-day/22-day challenges are a common feature for vegan campaigning and fall under the "vegan adoption" frame. Such campaigning extends the behavior change focus from pre-contemplation and contemplation, through to preparation, action and maintenance.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY FIAPO

Environmental Sustainability

- **Eat the Plant, Not the Planet** – Launched in 2020 the campaign used the hashtag #EatThePlantChallenge to promote a plant-based diet, building upon the 21-Day Compassion Challenge. FIAPO collaborated with actress Mallika Sherawat and rapper Baba Sehgal to raise awareness. Refer chapter II B 5 for the case study.

Health

- **Women's health** – Fitness Coach Roshni Sanghvi conducted a [webinar](#) on how vegan diets can effectively reverse polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).
- **#OneHealth and #PlantFactor** – As part of this campaign over 100 doctors submitted a petition to the government to shut down wet animal markets and promote plant-based diets.

Animal Rights

- **Dairy Investigation Reports 2020** – FIAPO conducted investigations and reported on the condition in dairies, chicken slaughter and aquaculture. The reports were shared for offline advocacy with state and central governments and via social media platforms for the audience.

3. PEOPLE FOR ANIMALS – MAKING CONSUMERS ACCOUNTABLE

People For Animals (PFA) is an Indian NGO founded in 1992 by politician, animal rights activist and environmentalist Maneka Gandhi – a member of the Lok Sabha and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and one of the earliest icons for animal rights in India. Gandhi has been regularly writing about the issue for various mainstream publications since the 1980s. PFA does not post regularly on social media, and its viewership tends to be low, sometimes medium, but it has a reputation for effective ground-level work – rescue of stray animals, fighting illegal and cruel treatment of animals and advocating for policy change. With its favorable entry into government bodies, PFA has become a spearhead for animal rights, and for nudging dietary preferences in India towards plant-based foods.

Advocacy Approach

- Animal rights, vegan adoption and health are the key frames for advocacy along with environment framing.
- PFA's advocacy is aligned with majoritarian cultural and religious beliefs around vegetarianism, cow protection and the principle of non-violence to all sentient beings (ahimsa).
- Till recently, PFA's activism for cows/buffaloes focused on opposing cow-slaughter and leather, cruel conditions of transportation of cows, and advocacy for *gaushalas* (cow shelters). However, their recent posts and videos take a more explicit vegan stance through criticism of dairy brand Amul.
- Being vegan herself, Gandhi openly criticizes the more commercialized aspects of veganism that focus merely on consumption, while urging increased attention to environment sustainability and reducing carbon footprints.

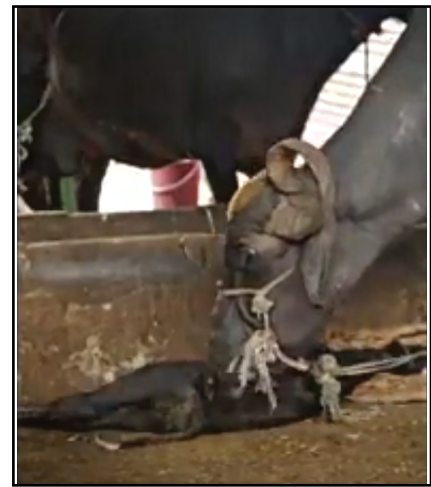
CAMPAIGN: DAIRY IS MURDER – YOU BUY, THEY DIE

Date – July 2020 | **Media Used** – [Facebook video](#) (low views – 2700) |
Message – Directly implicating the consumer for the sufferings of the cows and calves | **CTA** – “Live Gently”; “Dairy is Murder”.

PFA’s Uttarakhand branch created a short film with strong graphic and emotive content: a calf being pulled away from its mother while drinking milk; a buffalo being inseminated roughly by hand; cow carcasses; and mother cows nudging their dead calves. These are juxtaposed with the images of “healthy milk,” “yummy cheese,” “dashing leather,” and “delicious ice-cream,” questioning the viewers for their choices that lead to the violence against farm animals.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Provocative and horror-inducing visuals.** Relies on anthropocentric empathy and moral shock as triggers for change. The visuals of violence against animals invokes pathos for the calves who are forcibly separated from their mothers in the most brutal ways. It also equates the suffering of human mothers with cows/buffaloes, drawing upon the culture of empathy for bovines in India.
- **Creates cognitive dissonance by subverting positive associations with dairy products.** Dairy is perceived as culturally sanctioned, benign and physically nourishing. The film tries to break the typical associations of pleasure and indulgence associated with ice cream, cheese and fancy leather items, by juxtaposing them with visuals of violence meted out to cows and buffaloes.
- **Putting the onus for change on the consumer.** The video directly implicates the consumer for the violence in the dairy industry and urges them to “Think again.”
- **Abolitionist CTA.** The video does not take a welfarist stand and instead puts forth veganism as the only option to end the violence in the dairy industry.



Screenshot of campaign's Facebook video

Behavior Change Focus

- The video tries to bring a cognitive shift in how the viewer perceives dairy, supporting pre-contemplation and contemplation stages. The level of horror and demand for personal action may also trigger preparation for change.

Limitations

- While there’s a clear CTA to go vegan, no further information, such as a link to vegan recipes or a list of vegan brands, is shared to help the audience begin their vegan journey.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY PFA

Animal Rights/Welfare

- **Mother’s love is taste of India** – In another film titled “The harsh reality of the cruelty of the dairy industry! Her milk is not your right!”, PFA presents a critique of dairy brand Amul’s iconic jingle from the 1990s – “Amul, the Taste of India”. The brand has presented dairy products as integral to the Indian consumer’s life. PFA’s film does parody of the jingle

saying “Mother’s Love is Taste of India”. As the jingle runs in the background, viewers are shown images of cows and calves facing routine violence in the dairy industry.

- **Ban on dog-meat in Nagaland** – In July 2020, PFA successfully campaigned with the government of Nagaland to ban the commercial import and trading of dogs as well as the sale of dog meat. This is an important move for the protection and rights of dogs and received positive response from animal activists as well as the larger community of dog lovers in India. However, PFA’s selective banning of a diet that is linked with indigenous practices in the marginalized north-east region has been criticized by a small progressive segment as reinforcing majoritarian food cultures and prejudices rather than a universal vegan stance.

Environmental Sustainability

- In an article in the southern daily *Mathrubhumi*, Gandhi wrote about the environmental impacts of meat production – increasing greenhouse gases, water and food shortage for humans, increased healthcare costs due to the disease caused by meat and wet meat markets. She makes a case for policies that tax production and consumption of meat in order to discourage it.

Health

- Social media posts connecting epidemics with meat production and consumption.

Vegan Adoption

- Advocated, together with other vegan groups such as the Ahimsa Trust and Mercy for Animals to encourage the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to declare a logo for vegan foods, which was formally introduced in September 2021
- PFA also collaborated with the Ahimsa Trust and MFA for sustained campaigning with FSSAI to give greater credence to plant-based foods. FSSAI included this as part of its “#EatRightIndia” campaign¹⁷. While this successful advocacy with the government marks a significant achievement, much remains to be done given that the government only endorses plant-based or plant-rich foods, and not veganism per se, and also continues to back dairy and egg promotion nationally.
- “Social modeling” approaches by using celebrities/public figures who have turned vegan or vegetarian such as actor Shahid Kapoor, footballer Sunil Chhetri, cricketer Virat Kohli.

4. ANIMAL EQUALITY – ROOTING FOR CAGE-FREE HENS

Animal Equality’s (AE) primary advocacy in recent years has been towards ending the use of battery cages in India. It has investigated practices and conditions in egg farms, and organized petition drives among the general public, with the primary focus of achieving shifts in related policy. AE has also been promoting veganism through collaborations with celebrities and social media influencers. In 2014 AE’s advocacy resulted in the Indian government changing the status of *foie gras* import from “free” to “prohibited”.

¹⁷ In a [Tweet](#) in July 2020, FSSAI stated that “Following a plant-rich diet is associated with various health benefits” and broadly shared how “plant-based and plant-rich foods have health and environmental benefits” (see articles [here](#) and [here](#)). As part of its #EatRightIndia program FSSAI also shared posters on Twitter in October 2020 on how plant-based foods can provide iron, magnesium, calcium, protein or vitamin B (see this [tweet](#) and this [article](#)).

Advocacy Approach

- Focus on generating empathy and compassion towards animals through anthropomorphism and messages of animal equality.
- AE's CTAs are not abolitionist and instead suggest specific actions from the public (such as signing petitions) to improve the condition of hens in battery cages.
- Multi-channeled advertising using public posters, films, social media posts – AE has a stronger presence on [Facebook](#) (32K+ followers) compared to [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Collaboration with nano-influencers to present veganism as a trendy option.
- Offering multiple forms of support for the adoption of veganism (sharing vegan recipes, tips and personal stories through their “Love Veg” initiative).

CAMPAIGN: ENDING BATTERY-CAGES IN EGG FARMS

Duration – 2016–2019 | **Media Used** – [YouTube](#) video (low views – 1466), video advertisement played in cinema halls in Mumbai, public posters in metro stations in Mumbai | **Message** – Hens live tortured lives in battery cages at egg farms. | **CTA** – “Give a missed call on [phone number] to tell food companies to stop caging of hens”.



Public poster in metro stations

This is not a timed campaign, but shows continued advocacy from 2016–2019. AE conducted investigations in poultry farms in high egg-producing states in 2016–17 and in February 2019. The findings and a list of recommendations were then presented to the government.

To create awareness amongst the general public, AE released a 30-second video in the cinema halls in Mumbai along with posters at metro stations.¹⁸ The video is also available on [YouTube](#) with a link to the [petition](#) page which takes the viewers to a [longer video](#) that counters the speciesist mindset by showing hens as sentient beings. The ad opens with footage of hens roaming free, being petted by humans; it also talks about their cognitive abilities referring to hens as “social birds” and “maternal” – anthropomorphizing them through references to their capacity for love, filial bonds, and intelligence. The film then shifts to the pathos-filled footage of hens caged at the farms, highlighting the unhealthy conditions they live in leading to disease and death.

¹⁸ Further data on when exactly and for how long this video-ad and the posters were displayed is unavailable, hence unable to gauge the strength or scale of the campaign.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Anthropomorphizing violence against hens.** The 30-second video opens with the text “Imagine you have to spend your entire life in a cage” followed by an alternating succession of provocative imagery of women and hens being trapped inside a cage, trampling over each other and gasping for breath.
- **Animal welfare framing, to reduce cruelty but not an abolitionist “go vegan” stance.** The CTA asks for a smaller and more defined commitment from the viewer cementing behavior change at a very small level.
- **Conflating violence against animals with health risks.** Both the video and the poster use the phrase “crammed, trampled and diseased”. The word “diseased” adds a layer of health-related trigger referring to the health risks of eating caged chicken or eggs produced by caged hens.
- **Relating women’s rights with animal rights.** The campaign relates the torture of hens to gender-based violence, a strategy common in western vegan advocacy but to date used sparingly in India. Importantly, the campaign addresses a common and particular absence of empathy for chicken and hens, which occupy the bottom-most rung even in the farmed animals hierarchy.

Behavior Change Focus

- The campaign takes a visible aspect of the poultry industry in India—battery caged-hens—and attempts to trigger empathy as a first step of pre-contemplation and contemplation phases of behavior change. It attempts to cover preparatory and action phases as well, though perhaps not in a comprehensive manner. The longer video could also be a possible nudge towards conscientious (more humane) omnivorism.

Limitations

- The CTA is limited to a phone number and link to petition via the YouTube video which may not foster high trust. A comment on the YouTube video from two years ago also suggests that the number couldn’t be reached. While the comment couldn’t be verified, there’s a high possibility of the audience losing interest if the number is busy, out of network or out of reach.

No links to the website or social media channels are provided in the video in cinema halls or the public posters making it difficult for the audience to access the longer, more impactful film. The health aspect related to eating diseased hens/eggs laid by diseased hens is mentioned in passing, a powerful trigger that perhaps could have been leveraged more.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY AE

Vegan Adoption

- **“Love Veg” initiative** – This global campaign with country level-adaptations was linked to a dedicated website that provided guidance on how to transition to a plant-based diet, use meat and dairy alternatives, along with recipes and tips. Bollywood actress Ayesha Takia Azmi, who has been vegan for seven years, was the key endorser.¹⁹ AE posted six videos on their YouTube channel, where Takia Azmi explained veganism, its benefits, how to transition to it while also sharing her personal journey to veganism.

¹⁹ See [Ayesha Takia Azmi introduces “Love Veg”](#).

- **Public tastings** – AE conducted public food tastings, an advocacy approach also used by other advocates such as Vegan First. These are fun ways to expose people to vegan food and then discuss and share leaflets on veganism.

Health

- **Endorsements from celebrities and influencers** – Through 2017 to 2020, AE engaged various celebrities and public figures²⁰ to speak against confinement of hens through short video-appeals on Instagram under hashtag #ThoughtfulThursday.²¹ The celebrities and influencers equated the caging of hens with pandemic-induced confinement of humans.

Animal Rights

- **Compassionate Eid** – On 30th July 2020, AE ran a Tweetathon from 5 pm to 8 pm using hashtag #CelebrateCompassionateEid to advocate for an Eid without slaughter.
- **Countering speciesism** – Several posts on AE’s Facebook page promote anti-speciesist awareness. They anthropomorphize animals and draw attention to their intelligence, or the maternal nature, and their desire to lead normal lives, free of abuse. A post shows a hen sheltering her young, another says “Goats can identify which plants are beneficial and harmful for them and they will remember to avoid it in the future,” thus highlighting their intelligence.

5. HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL/INDIA – ENDING INTENSIVE CONFINEMENT

Humane Society International/India (HSI/India) conducts advocacy in India to advance the welfare of all animals (street, farmed, companion and those used in labs) through advocacy, education, policy reforms and on-ground interventions; in addition, it promotes plant-based alternatives. They have been consistently advocating for ending the “intensive confinement” of egg-laying hens in battery cages.

Advocacy Approach

- Instead of an absolutist “go vegan” approach, focuses on an incremental, welfarist strategy of the 3Rs – replacement, reduction and refinement leading to the trial and uptake of plant-based alternatives. Social media content uses the terms “plant-based” rather than the more politically charged “vegan”.²²
- Greater focus on offline policy advocacy and partnerships with governments, institutions such as schools and colleges, culinary institutes, the National Social Service (NSS) and social welfare departments, and mentoring leadership among vegan entrepreneurs. Prioritizes raising consciousness about animal welfare laws among youth.
- Partnerships with other AWOs in India, building their capacity and involvement in farmed animal protection.

²⁰ [Neha Mahajan](#), [Feryna Wazheir](#), [Shweta Savla](#), [Anushka Manchanda](#), [Rupali Ganguly](#)

²¹ Some of the other hashtags were [#nomorecages](#), [#lockdowndiaries](#), and [#activismfromhome](#)

²² HSI/India’s stance with regards to using “vegan” has changed since the time of data collection.

CAMPAIGN: ENDING THE USE OF BATTERY CAGES

Duration – April 2019 | **Media Used** – Facebook post of the street-side demonstrations (very low likes – <100) | **Message** – See the suffering hens face living in tiny cages all their lives. | **CTA** – Reduce or avoid egg consumption, sign the petition against battery cages, avoid brands that use battery cages.



Screenshot of the Facebook post of street-side demonstration

Animal rights groups have been campaigning to end the practice of confining hens in battery cages in India for more than a decade. In 2013 the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) directed the poultry industry to phase out battery cages by 2017, but this is yet to be enforced with any rigor. HSI/India sustains this effort through street-based demonstrations, advocacy with governments and corporate institutions public petitions and social media. While much of this work occurs via offline advocacy, here we discuss highlights from their social media content.

In April 2019, HSI/India activists along with PFA Uttarakhand held a street-side demonstration in New Delhi where they locked themselves in cages holding placards that talked about hens being kept in cramped-up spaces all their lives; they urged the government and the public to take notice. The campaign received wide coverage in leading dailies like The Times Of India.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Linking caged hens with zoonotic diseases.** During the pandemic, HSI/India revisited this street-protest in a post now combining an animal rights and health-based appeal. It compared the caging of hens with the feeling of being caged due to the Covid-19 induced lock down generating anthropomorphic empathy. The hashtag #IndiaFightsCOVID19 linked the specific issue of battery-cages to the pandemic, giving it a wider appeal as a collective movement to address a national health crisis. HSI/India's warnings that intensive animal agriculture could spark further pandemics also received media coverage.
- **The natural urges of hens require free movement.** Apart from describing the suffering of hens, social media posts also provide viewers with a positive counter-reference



Screenshot of Instagram posts

– the “natural” conditions in which a healthy and free hen thrives. These posts highlight the natural behavior and subjective experiences of hens in order to generate empathy among viewers, and also employ logos to counter speciesist tendencies while anthropomorphizing hens. For example, one post says that “90 minutes before laying an egg a hen locates to a remote, private place to build a nest”. Another describes how hens are naturally disposed to taking dust-baths in order to maintain their feathers, remove parasites and excess oils from their body, and talks about how they have families and communities.

Behavior Change Focus

- The content mostly focuses on pre-contemplation and contemplation phases of behavior change by providing information that is otherwise mostly unknown to the general public. It sets the stage for preparation through CTAs – some of them open ended (such as demanding cage-free options from their retailers) or more time- and space- bound (by signing a petition), or by buying cage-free brands (though these brands are not specifically named or listed). There is no significant focus on preparation, action, maintenance phases of behavior change.

Limitations

- The posts call upon readers to “reduce consumption of chicken or eggs, or replace them with plant-based foods, to avoid products from poultry facilities with abusive practices,” or to “demand cage-free options” from their retailers and brands – somewhat open-ended actions with no set time or support for the same. This can lead to an all-too-easy shift to newly-branded cage-free eggs rather than an abandoning and rejection of carnism altogether.

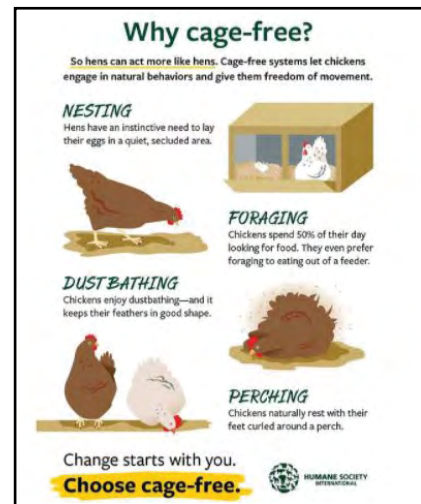
OTHER ADVOCACY BY HSI/INDIA

Animal Rights/Welfare

- University outreach on animal welfare laws as well as the impact of animal agriculture on the environment. HSI/India attended 21 college fests in 15 cities in 2020 and also engaged with their social work departments to integrate animal welfare issues into their training programs. They partnered with 120 cells of the NSS to bring animal rights and welfare ideas in the realm of mainstream social reform, conducting plant-based culinary workshops at 20 Institutes of Hotel Managements (IHM) across the country, building awareness and capacity of student chefs to prepare vegan cuisine.

Vegan Adoption

- A “Future of Protein” summit held on November 11–12, 2019 in Delhi jointly organized by HSI/India, The Good Food Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.
- HSI/India is actively involved in developing “clean” meat with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, in partnership with the Good Food Institute.
- Humane Entrepreneurship Program, a mentorship program to help scale up vegan startups in India



Screenshots of Instagram posts

6. THE VEGAN INDIA MOVEMENT – LEVERAGING GANDHIGIRI²³ – GROUND UP!

The Vegan India Movement (VIM), which began in January 2018, is a pan-India network of activists to promote veganism. With links in 76 cities, including tier one, two and three cities, it serves as a platform for various vegan groups and individual activists across the country to come together.²⁴ VIM's signature contribution (in our data period) is the annual pan-India Animal Rights March/India (ARMI) and Satyagraha 2.0,²⁵ a non-violent street march to protest against the violence meted out to animals.

Advocacy Approach

- Youth-driven activism using creative ways to reach out to the audience, such as wearing Guy Fawkes face masks, singing songs, drawing murals on city walls etc.
- Leveraging Indian symbols and language as a core strategy, such as the Satyagraha 2.0 campaign, fasting.
- Large-scale offline mobilization of vegan activists for specific theme-based events that are documented and then shared via social media. Campaigning takes the vegan message to the streets and public spaces through protest marches, distributing leaflets, showing video footage of dairies and poultry farms.
- Takes vegan activism beyond the metros to smaller cities and towns using various local and regional languages. This approach reduces the perceived elitism of vegan advocacy.
- Maintains strong animal rights and anti-speciesist framing.
- Supports work of other vegan groups and brings together activists in a region under one umbrella.

CAMPAIGN: SATYAGRAHA 2.0 – INDIA FASTING FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Date – 2019 | **Media Used** – YouTube video of the (South zone) march (medium views – 14k), Instagram and Facebook posts with hashtags #indiafastsforanimalrights #satyagrahaforanimals (very low likes – <100) |
Message – Animals must be given freedom and rights, just as Indian citizens who won their rights as a result of India's freedom movement. |
CTA – “Join us in Solidarity – India Fasting for Animal Rights”.

Satyagraha 2.0 was a pan-India campaign, where over 500 activists across 10+ cities gathered to raise awareness for animal liberation through peaceful protest marches and a 12-hour public fast. Participants protested “in remembrance of trillions of animals who are mentally, physically, and sexually abused and killed for humans for the purposes of food, clothing, entertainment, etc., to make people understand the suffering of hunger and discomfort we are inflicting on animals, and to urge people to go vegan”. The public street-level event was also promoted on social media. Several activists posted on their own social media pages on why

²³ Reference to adopting Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent tactics of dissent.

²⁴ Groups like the Bangalore Brigade of Animal Liberation, Mumbai Animal Protection League, Delhi Vegans for Animal Liberation, UFCI, FIAPO, PFA and other such big and small vegan groups come together in its regular public and social media campaigns.

²⁵ Satyagraha (holding firmly to truth), the term coined by Mahatma Gandhi, is a particular form of non-violent civil resistance.

they are fasting for animals, thus increasing the reach.

Key Messaging Strategies

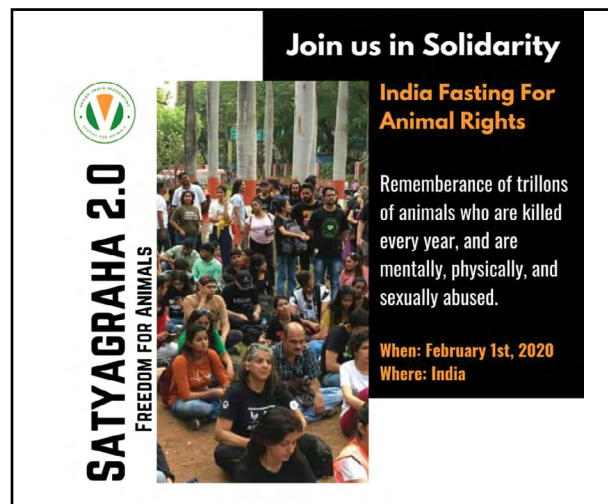
- Anchoring the movement in culture-specific messaging.** Referencing and employing modes of protest that have high familiarity, and symbolic power in the Indian cultural context – Satyagraha, ahimsa (non-violence), fasting. The name of the campaign—Satyagraha 2.0—puts animal rights on the same pedestal as human rights, drawing parallels to other forms of historic oppressions and human rights movements; a placard says “No to racism, casteism and speciesism”. Some of the other placards have messages demanding change in specific laws and demanding personhood for animals while also generating anthropomorphic empathy with messages like “I am a mom, not meat” (with a farmed animal’s image), “You can do without chicken wings, I can’t” (with an image of a chicken).
- Highlighting collective action and solidarity.** With messages like “Let’s be the generation that ends animal exploitation”, the campaign created a sense of urgency, momentum and responsibility for the issue of animal rights, while also positioning it as a youth-led revolutionary movement. It facilitates social modeling by creating the perception of a group of socially conscious and thus aspirational people that one might want to join. Similarly, public walks and fasting fosters a sense of community among participants and followers and infuses serious activism with an air of celebratory solidarity.
- Extending the meaning of ahimsa.** The protest tries to expand the idea of ahimsa to include animals, and the vegan movement. The link with ahimsa also gives a particular Indian vocabulary to veganism.
- Self-education and individual advocacy.** Invoke the audience to educate themselves and face the larger truth of animal exploitation, to consider animals as deserving of rights. The explicit CTA here is to go vegan.

Behavior Change Focus

- Satyagraha 2.0’s ethos-based appeal impacts the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages of behavior change. A key strength of their work and this particular event is that it is offline, hence reaching out to the general public rather than talking to the same set of converts in the echo chambers of social media.

Limitations

- The campaign lacks a clear CTA in terms of creating a singular pledge (in their offline as well as online campaigning) for the same collective moment; something that could have been further publicized and promoted through social media.



Screenshot of Facebook post announcing the date for Satyagraha 2.0

OTHER ADVOCACY BY VIM

Animal Rights/Welfare

- Animal Rights March India (ARMI) 2019** On 10th November 2019, commemorating World Vegan Day, animal rights activists and organizations stepped out in four big cities of the North, South, West and East zones of the country for the Animal Rights March India (#ARMI).²⁶ Activists marched through busy streets with placards, chanted animal rights slogans



Screenshot of press coverage of ARMI

and distributing resource cards on veganism to bystanders. Additionally, a petition demanding that the government “declare animals as legal persons, i.e., give them right to live, freedom & safety,” was launched, and activists called upon people to participate through social media, speaking out in Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati and English, thus democratizing the movement and reaching out to various parts of India.

- The Wall of Justice campaign** – On April 29, 2018 VIM mobilized activists to step out and paint messages of Animal Liberation on the walls in over 34 cities. Each #wallofjustice painting had its own unique expression; messages were often in a mix of English and local languages.²⁷ The focus was on animal liberation, ending speciesism, treating all animals the same. Some added the call to “Go Vegan”, to save the environment and the planet. They drew images of fruits and vegetables, painted names of films that can be watched on the subject.
- “I Am Me, Not Meat” tweetathon** – In a billboard put up by PETA in the weeks preceding Eid, we see a picture of a goat with the text “I Am Me, Not Meat. See the individual. Go vegan”. After being widely circulated on social media, some Muslim clerics pushed for its removal. VIM conducted a tweetathon on 8th July, 2020 with the hashtag #IAMMeNotMeat, protesting the “curbing of freedom to speak up for animal rights”. **The tweet trended at number 12 on Twitter for five hours straight.**

VIM criticized dairy-brand Amul when it tried to get advocacy films like *Unholy Cattle of India* and others taken down from YouTube and Facebook. Amul took legal action against these posts; while some of them were taken down, cases against a few are still ongoing

Vegan Adoption

- Masks Against Speciesism** – Between 21st to 28th June in 2020, during Covid lockdowns in India, vegan activists promoted veganism online. Each person wrote a chosen slogan on a mask, wore it and shared a self-portrait on their Instagram and Facebook pages. Small and simple slogans such as “Dairy is murder”, “Meat is murder”, “Save animals,

²⁶ See Facebook posts from participating organizations [here](#).

²⁷ Paintings were drawn in 26 big and small cities from many parts of the country, such as Nagpur, Kalimpong, Bhagalpur, Udaipur etc.

go vegan”, “My body is a garden not a graveyard”, “Leave pandemics off your plate. Go vegan”, “Animals are not food, slaves and objects”, “Milk is murder. Go vegan”, “Vegan. The new normal”, and others were shared. The campaign used a potent moment to share its message since the pandemic was linked with health concerns about live-animal markets. However, animal rights was the key frame in this campaign, with pandemic-related health issues as a secondary frame.

7. ARVIND ANIMAL ACTIVIST – YOUNG TURK FOR VEGAN INDIA

A Young Turk for Vegan India. Arvind Kannan is among the most visible and widely followed advocates for veganism in India. Inspired to go vegan in 2014 after listening to Gary Yourofsky,²⁸ Kannan’s signature style is to participate in intense debates and tackle common doubts and barriers expressed by Indian audiences towards veganism. Also known as “Arvind Animal Activist”, he is regularly invited to speak in webinars by other vegan groups and also gives talks in schools/colleges. His posts receive very high viewership²⁹ and engagement (comparable to carnist brands like KFC), and a number of people have been influenced to adopt or try veganism after listening to him.³⁰ Kannan makes videos in English, Tamil and recently also in Hindi.

Advocacy Approach

- Strong animal rights frame—encapsulating violence inflicted on a range of farm animals as well as fish, bees, and silkworms—supported in some cases by health and nutrition as a secondary frame (to demonstrate that vegan diets can be disease alleviating and wholly nutritious).
- Confrontational style of activism, often taking on/responding to public figures via Facebook and YouTube videos. While such activism creates controversy, it also takes veganism to new and large audiences.
- Deploys rhetoric of logos and ethos through logical and scientific argument, using irony, humor, sarcasm, role playing/acting, graphics and visuals to get his message across.
- Tackles vegan stigma (the familial pressure and disapproval young vegans face) and common questions, such as “is protein from veg*n sources enough?” and “will animals overpopulate if we stop eating meat?”
- Abolitionist CTA, suggesting veganism as the only option.

THEME: IS MILKING COWS CRUEL? – VEGAN RESPONDS TO SADHGURU

Date – April 2020 | **Media Used** – [Facebook](#) (very high views – 240k+) and [YouTube](#) (medium views – 10.4k) video | **Message** – Debunks the claims made by Jaggi Vasudev aka Sadhguru that milking a cow and consumption of dairy is not cruel. | **CTA** – “To learn more about veganism, check out the following videos” (links to his previous videos); “Join Facebook group India Vegan Revolution to have conversations with fellow vegans in India”.

²⁸ Gary Yourofsky is an American animal rights activist and lecturer. He has had a major influence on contemporary veganism.

²⁹ In our data his videos have views second only to content by Peepal Farm’s Robin Singh.

³⁰ On 31st December 2020, Kannan shared a [post](#) in which he shared comments from 219 people who claimed that they were influenced by his video activism.

This case study is an interesting example of the kind of polemical debates that the vegan movement has to engage with in India. In an 8.33-minute-long video, Kannan takes on the views of Vasudev, a well-known spiritual figure. In one of his public talks, Vasudev was asked by a woman audience member what he thought about the torture cows go through due to milking and the impact on their reproductive systems. Vasudev responds saying that milking and putting bovines to work is less cruel, because their only other fate is slaughter.³¹ In the video Kannan edits bits from Vasudev's original video with his responses and counter arguments, which are backed by visuals from the dairy farms.



Screenshots of Kannan's video response to Vasudev

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Kannan counters the socio-cultural conditioning that portrays dairy as benign and religiously/spiritually sanctioned;** he makes a case for veganism rooting it in a robust scientific reasoning and logos-based rhetorical style. He does it by directly challenging Vasudev, who is almost always patriarchal and patronizing when talking to his audience, especially on animal rights and veganism. Kannan's logos-driven style is likely to appeal to rationalist audiences who are willing to question Vasudev's rhetoric.
- **Challenging the status quo.** Vasudev's ideas represents largely majoritarian views. By dismantling his rhetorical strategies, Kannan demonstrates sharp acumen and tools to counter the dominant narrative endorsed by revered public figures.
 - Kannan calls out Vasudev's patronizing and sarcastic tone, calling it the "straw-man's fallacy"³² which shows his understanding of such rhetorical strategies.
 - Vasudev is known to use elliptical and light-hearted rhetoric which his audiences adore. Kannan stands up to his spiritual, age-based authority and defends not only the woman's right to question this practice, but also demonstrates how Vasudev cleverly undermines the legitimacy of the question itself.
- **Addressing a larger systemic issue.** Vasudev argues as if milking cows saves their lives. Kannan explains that sending male calves and old cows/buffaloes from dairies to slaughterhouses is a standard procedure mandated by the government. He refers to the lives of cows at dairy farms as slavery and adds that those cows would not exist if not for the demand for dairy. There's an appeal to the youth that can upturn this system of inequity and violence.
- **Counters utilitarianism.** Vasudev claims that very few people are in that rare state of compassion that they will care for aged or unwanted animals at their own cost. Arvind counters this narrative by presenting animal rights as logical view, "I do not need to

³¹ "We think it's better to milk them or to put them to work rather than slaughter them", says Vasudev, reflecting a holier-than-thou vegetarianism that selectively looks down on animal slaughter.

³² Wherein the person avoids the opponent's actual argument and instead argues against an inaccurate caricature of it.

have compassion to recognize that it is fundamentally wrong to hurt, abuse, and exploit animals”, he says.

- **Provocative imagery and language.** Visuals of cows being tied down, branded with hot iron, artificially impregnated, forcefully separated from their calves is clubbed with pathos-based terms like “milk slaves”, “murder”, “abuse”, “exploitation”, and “rape”. This human rights-based approach to the language generates anthropomorphic empathy.

Behavior Change Focus

- Kannan’s videos contain sharp provocations and supporting data that facilitate pre-contemplation and contemplation. While not applicable to this particular video, his body of work includes videos that tackle specific barriers to veganism such as vegan stigma, concerns about nutritional deficiencies, and tackling questions like “Will animals take over the world if we all go vegan?” At the end of his video Kannan directs his audience to videos where he talks about ways to follow a vegan lifestyle, allowing for effective preparation, action, and maintenance phases of the behavior change cycle.

Limitations

- The strong tone that Kannan employs may sometimes come across as belligerent and acrimonious, which can cause dissonance amongst an audience that is avowedly rationalist. Of course, we can surmise that this may have little or no impact on Vasudev’s followers.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY KANNAN

Vegan Adoption

- **Go Vegan Show** – In 2019, Sankara TV (a popular Tamil Nadu-based spiritual TV channel) ran a 15-episode series with Arvind called the “Go Vegan Show”. In the series Kannan talks about dairy, chicken and egg industries, the cruelty behind silk and honey, on compassion and religion, health and disease.

Animal Rights/Welfare

- **Responses to other public figures.** Apart from Vasudev, Kannan has also responded to other public figures, such as Indian Islamic televangelist Dr. Zakir Naik who argues that eating meat is natural and necessary, Tamil politician Senthamizhan Seeman who claims eating beef as his right, as well as Robin Singh, the founder of Peepal Farm who takes a softer stance on veganism.
- **Mainstreaming speciesism as a social justice issue.** Seminars at schools and colleges talking about animal rights and speciesism, drawing parallels with racism, casteism and sexism and how socialization, social norms and habits serve to establish and maintain carnist food habits. These talks are also reposted on Facebook.

8. PLANT-POWERED DARSHANA – WALKING THE TALK

Pune-based Darshana Mazumdar is a chef by training and an animal rights/vegan activist while also being associated with some animal rights NGOs. Inspired by the film *Earthlings*,³³ she turned to veganism at the age of 50 after a lifetime of being a hardcore meat eater. Mazumdar has been an active vegan advocate since 2015 and has worked with various activist organizations. She does not have a high social media following but is a consistent advocate, especially in her home city Pune.

³³ Darshana recounts her journey [here](#).

Advocacy Approach

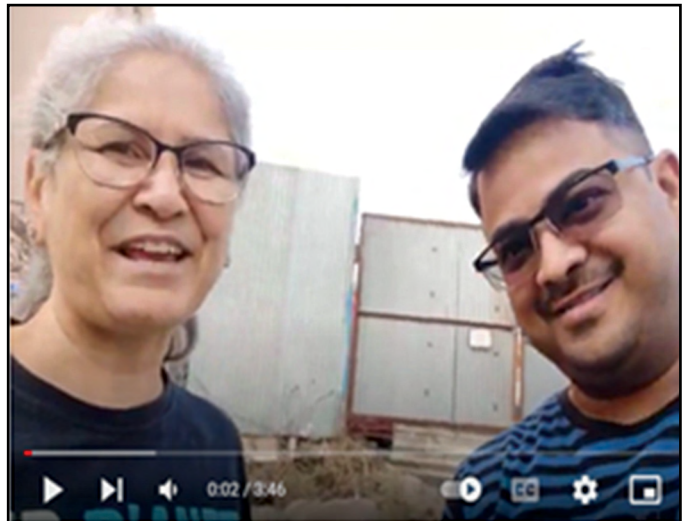
- A signature style of street-side conversations where Mazumdar has one-on-one dialogues with people in her neighborhood; these are documented and then disseminated via social media channels.
- Animal rights framing drawing parallels with sexism, casteism, slavery and speciesism.
- Talks to a diverse demographic in English, Hindi and Marathi. Maximum engagement is with youth (students and working professionals), along with working class people and the older generation. Modulates her discussion based on the dietary preferences and religion of who she is speaking to.
- Uses logic and science to strengthen her arguments.
- Abolitionist CTA to go vegan.

CAMPAIGN: MORNING WALK TALKS WITH PLANT-POWERED DARSHANA

Date – June 2018 | **Media Used** – [YouTube](#) video (very low views – <100) |
Message – The dairy industry inflicts various kinds of violence on cows. |
CTA – “Go vegan”; “Spread awareness among friends and family”;
 “Join the city’s weekend awareness programs”.

In her signature style of street-side advocacy, Mazumdar speaks with random people in her neighborhood—the conversations are often pre-planned—having one-on-one conversation raising awareness and addressing different barriers to veganism as the titles of her videos suggest – “I’m against animal cruelty but I can’t stop eating animals,” “Would you intentionally hurt an animal?,” “Morning walk talk with a compassionate non-vegetarian dog-lover,” “Do Jains understand the cruelty in dairy” or “He wouldn’t mind eating the flesh of any animal even that of a dog!”

Here we analyze one such conversation titled “Leafleting in your own neighborhood: Will she go vegan?”, where Mazumdar talks to a young woman who seems to be on her way to work or college. We learn from the discussion that this is Mazumdar’s fourth meeting with the woman and that she has stopped eating chicken and eggs after their initial discussions. The conversation in the video focuses on the dairy industry.



Screenshot from Mazumdar’s street-side interview videos

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Leveraging cognitive dissonance for veganism.** Mazumdar’s vegan advocacy demonstrates a sound use of tried-and-tested strategies known to work both within and outside the world of veganism; for example, avoiding individual blame and spotlighting the powerful role of social norms in influencing individual behaviors; spotlighting the

dissonance between one's avowed values (such as compassion) and practices; drawing parallels between speciesism and other social justice movements such as feminism, racism etc.

- **Challenges the justification of cow's milk as "natural" and "necessary".**

Uses scientific reasoning and facts to address common barriers to veganism such as "cow's milk is important for bones". Talks about the unnatural and violent ways in which cows are artificially impregnated, milked and made to retain milk in their udders for long hours.

Behavior Change Focus

- Because Mazumdar engages with people on a one-on-one basis, sometimes over multiple interactions, she is able to effectively guide people through the entire trajectory of behavior change. This is true even for the viewers on social media who experience it vicariously.

Limitations

- There's a certain scriptedness to Mazumdar's conversations, which may make it look like a monologue. There are a lot of arguments introduced one after the other that may seem like an information overload, or in some cases even badgering.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY MAZUMDAR

Animal Rights/Welfare

- In an Instagram video titled "Meet a Conscientious Traumatized Muslim", Mazumdar speaks to a young Muslim boy who stopped eating mutton and beef when he was 9–10 years old—owing to the bond he had formed with a goat that was later sacrificed on Bakr-Eid—but continues to eat chicken as he lives with his family. Mazumdar addresses this barrier of familial pressure and urges the boy to stick to his core values. She praises him for speaking and goes on to say that "A lot of Muslim children have to turn off their hearts in order to be part of that system" – a statement that may inadvertently fuel existing prejudice against Muslims.
- **Jerome Flynn's dairy visit** – Actor Jerome Flynn of Game of Thrones fame, who is also a passionate vegan, visited a local dairy with Mazumdar and other activists to observe the conditions, and connect with buffaloes and goats.
- **Advocacy outside a traditional sweet shop in Pune** – YouTube video of a protest cum awareness campaign held outside Chitale Bandhu, a popular sweet shop in Pune known for its milk-based sweets; they also own a dairy farm. The video was posted on Mother's Day with a message that "Dairy Destroys Motherhood". It is a unique local version of the kind of visible vegan activism usually done with a brand like KFC.

Bites from the video: While talking to her audience, Mazumdar explains that when you drink cow's/buffalo's milk, "You are stealing the milk of the calf" or that "Every time you are consuming milk you are saying, it's ok to have beef". She also addresses the compassionate side of her audience saying, "You are a lovely, compassionate, kind person. Your conscience says it's a wrong thing to do, still why do we do this"? Society tells you, it's ok to drink cow's milk, but not dog's milk. So, we are conditioned. You as an individual would not choose to do such horrible things and yet we follow society blindly."

- **Video about the khaalbaccha³⁴ practice** – A short [video](#) shot in Hindi that shows dairy workers on site, talking—bit sheepishly and wary of the camera—about the purpose of khaalbaccha.

Vegan Adoption

- **Seminars at hotel management institute** – Mazumdar conducts seminars at hotel management institutes on whole foods and plant-based nutrition. She regularly promotes local vegan initiatives and activism, keeping her followers motivated.

9. VEGAN OUTREACH – BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF VEGAN CAMPAIGNERS

Founded in 1993, Vegan Outreach is an animal rights organization working for a future “when sentient animals are no longer exploited as commodities”. It operates in Australia, India and Spain. Their [Instagram](#) page has a larger following (21k+)—however, small with limited scope when compared to massive organizations like PETA—and the [India](#) section of the website links to their “10 Weeks to Vegan” program.

Advocacy Approach

- Sustained advocacy mainly through outreach in colleges and corporate institutions, using virtual reality videos to create awareness about animal rights and veganism.
- Focusing on small but actionable changes such as the Green Tuesday initiative to encourage private institutions to make small changes in their cafeteria menus to reduce their carbon footprint. The text on their brochure also calls upon the audience to “Save hundreds of lives by making small changes”.
- Using group dynamics and affiliations to affect change at a broader level.
- Although driven by an animal rights imperative, uses frames of environmental sustainability and vegan adoption for its advocacy. This aligns with its consumer-oriented, gradualist appeal for veganism.

CAMPAIGN: COLLEGE OUTREACH VIA VIRTUAL REALITY AND BROCHURES

Duration – 2018 – 2019 | **Media Used** – Virtual reality, brochures, [Instagram](#) video (low views – 1523) | **Message** – Transition to more compassionate diet. | **CTA** – “Be The Change”; “Participate in 10 weeks to Vegan program”.

During 2018–19, as part of an “[Adopt A College](#)” initiative Vegan Outreach volunteers raised consciousness among college students about the violence behind the food system and the benefits of veganism. This includes 13 colleges in five cities in [Gujarat](#) and 19 colleges in Delhi, among others. They share some of its successful outreaches along with cover pic of the brochure through Instagram posts.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Use of technology and the idea of “spectacle” to create excitement.** The use of virtual reality to acquaint the audience with the realities of the dairy, egg and meat industries, positions the ideas of animal rights and veganism as scientific, innovative and futuristic.

³⁴ *Khaalbaccha* is an accepted but violent practice in which a dead male calf’s body is stuffed with hay. It is then used as a prop to place near the lactating cow to make her believe that her child is near and thereby release her milk. This very standard practice in dairies is not common knowledge.

- **Focusing on the positive payoff of being a vegan and a campaigner for veganism.** Vegan Outreach leverages regional identities and affiliations (“Thank You, Gujarat!” college outreach) to create a positive aspirational image around veganism, and makes the audience feel like they’re part of a larger movement. Also inspires and empowers changemakers from within the target groups.
- **Using a “challenge” format.** The “10 Weeks to Vegan” program follows the format of popular social media trends, making it an exciting and fun endeavor.



Screenshot of Instagram posts

BEHAVIOR CHANGE FOCUS

- The initiative effectively combines pre-contemplation and contemplation phases with vegan adoption and maintenance. The outreach addresses barriers to awareness, by showing youth socially-unacknowledged realities behind their diets, and fostering some consciousness and fledgling vocabularies of animal rights among them.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY VEGAN OUTREACH

Environmental Sustainability

- **Green Tuesday Initiative** – Vegan Outreach convinced 27 educational institutions and corporate offices to reduce their carbon footprint by limiting the amount of meat and dairy served in their cafeteria or mess; for example, Gautam Buddha University in North India reduced the annual use of their dairy products by 66%; Tech Mahindra’s Hitech city declared it would cut down meat consumption by 20%; and BITS Pilani’s Goa Campus decided to reduce egg and meat consumption by 15%.³⁵ A significant achievement was when the Hyderabad Trekking Club went vegan too³⁶

³⁵ The DY Patil University School of Hospitality and Tourism Studies chose to serve vegan food on Fridays. Hindustan College reduced the use of dairy by 50%, and Lovely Professional University by 14% for six months by adding non-dairy beverages to their cafeteria.

³⁶ Mercy for Animals attempted similar impact in some big private schools as part of its Conscious Eating Program. See their [blog post](#).

II B. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FRAME

This section discusses cases wherein veganism is presented as a part of a larger vision for environmental sustainability, addressing climate change and adopting a holistic lifestyle which is at once compassionate towards nature, animals and human communities. An indirect health-appeal also emerges, from the larger sense of well-being and natural balance, of which the vegan diet is a part.

1. PEEPAL FARM – REDUCING THE “SUFFERING FOOTPRINT”

Peepal Farm was founded in 2014 by [Robin Singh](#), an ex-software professional, along with Shivani Bhalla and Joellen Anderson. The organization rescues and shelters stray animals (over 2000 rescues as of early 2020) and operates a no-till [organic farm](#) near Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. Veganism is part of a larger vision at Peepal Farm. Singh, who is the public face of the organization, has coined the term "suffering footprint" to highlight the basic ideology behind their initiatives, that include all the suffering caused by human beings in the course of their lives – to animals, fellow humans and the environment. They advocate a sustainable and minimalist way of living with responsible, minimal consumption, and also sell vegan products made from produce grown on their farm. Singh has one of the highest social media followings (113k on [Instagram](#), 15k on [Facebook](#)) among the stakeholders in our sample, matched only by activist Kannan’s popularity (both Singh and Kannan receive viewership and engagement that is comparable to the social media following of large carnist brands like KFC).

Advocacy Approach

- Promotes veganism as part of a holistic vision, which includes animal rescue and shelter, sustainable living, and minimizing the “suffering footprint” caused by consumption.
- Led by personal messages crafted by Singh, which are then disseminated through social media channels. His signature story-telling style involves 5–10 minute videos which connect the dots, for e.g., between the cow on the street eating plastic and our consumption of milk. The aim is to draw-in the viewer to engage with the issue, motivate them to get involved in the process of healing and repairing. “#DoingGoodFeelsGreat” is a common hashtag used across all content.
- Most of Singh’s videos are in Hinglish or in English with Hindi subtitles, increasing his reach and “Indianizing” the content.
- Draws on anthropocentric empathy through personalized stories of rescued animals. Exhorting Indian audience to change the way they perceive and treat animals.
- Takes a welfarist position rather than abolitionist calls to “go vegan” or “ditch dairy”. Singh’s appeal to the audience is to “at least go veganish” and reduce the consumption of dairy products, a stance often criticized by other vegan activists. In an [Instagram](#) video (shared outside of our data period) Singh has also openly criticized PETA taking on Amul.
- Leveraging majoritarian cultural values and sentiments around cows and positioning vegan advocacy as part of a long history of cow protection in India.

THEME: HOW TO SAVE INDIA FROM THIS SICKNESS?

Date – September 2020 | **Media Used** – Facebook video (very high – 2.1mn)
 | **Message** – Dairies use animals for profit and then abandon them. | **CTA** – “Join the 'clean milk' movement”; “Ask local dairies how they treat cows (once they're past their milking age) and male calves who don't add value to the dairy economy”;
 “Extend the campaign on social media by posting similar videos”.

In September 2020, Peepal Farm posted a video on their Facebook page focusing on a recently-rescued injured stray cow. The video is part of the ongoing animal rescue work by the organization under the rubric of their key ideology – suffering footprints.

In the video addressing the viewers directly, Singh introduces a cow and talks about how she was abandoned, her injuries (the camera focusing on her infected udders). He also tells the audience about the cow's two-year-old “daughter” who has also been abandoned (the team was still trying to rescue the calf when the video was shot). Singh also calls out the “societal illness” that perceives cows as mere milk-producing machines and a source of livelihood and is completely oblivious to their suffering. However, rather than incriminating the dairy industry or the audience, Singh frames it as a shared social responsibility. In the end of the video, he appeals to his audience to make similar videos and share on their personal social media pages. He also calls them to join the “clean milk” movement by questioning their local dairies about the source of their milk.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Ethos-based appeal.** Packaged within a context of personal understanding, responsibility and engagement with the world around us. Singh's very personal story-telling style and tonality gives him an insider position rather than that of a finger-wagging conscience keeper. He gently takes the viewer through his own story of transitioning from the software industry in his ethos-driven quest to lead a more “meaningful life”, one where he actively engages with the world around him, and tries to resolve the dilemmas he confronts. This could carry a strong appeal for youth and middle-aged urban audiences while also lending him credibility and grounding.
- **Empathy through anthropomorphic comparison.** A story-telling format that leads the viewers through the journey of the cow's rescue and recovery. Generates anthropomorphic empathy by naming the cow and also talking about her daughter with whom she'll soon be reunited. There's a positive pathos in the way Singh talks about the recovery of the rescued cow, “The surgery that'll make her sterile will also liberate her from the violence.”
- **Collective responsibility.** His gently persuasive rhetorical style moves seamlessly from pathos to informed and constructive criticism about Indian society, without antagonizing the audience. The messaging asks viewers to reflect on, and take responsibility for, the



Screenshot of Singh's video posted on Peepal Farm's Facebook page

sheer objectification of animals in the country and their total neglect and abandonment once they are no longer of economic use. This can go a long way in softening common dissonances and barriers among Indians towards veganism.

- **Welfarist rather than abolitionist stance.** Peepal Farm uses the commonly relatable image of cows/buffaloes and calves left abandoned on the streets to raise awareness about the cause of their abandonment. In the video, Singh focuses on the inherent violence of the dairy industry against bovines rather than promoting a vegan lifestyle. CTA in the video is not to stop consuming dairy, but to make the dairy industry responsible for better treatment of animals. He prompts his audience to ask their local milk suppliers and dairies about the way they treat cows. He also appeals to his audiences to make similar videos and share on personal social media handles.

Behavior Change Focus

- Singh makes a personal and heartfelt appeal that encourages deep reflection, pre-contemplation and contemplation.

Limitations

- The “clean milk” movement can provide an easy escape to viewers. Rather than change their own diet, they may find satisfaction in making dairy companies the scapegoat. In one of the other [videos](#), Singh explicitly asks his followers to minimize their consumption of milk, but that point is not made in this video. It is possible that his advocacy may slip into a generalized motivational content space that people watch for their daily, feel-good social media consumption. There’s also less focus on behavior change and no clear CTA.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY PEEPAL FARM

Animal Rights/Welfare

- In a Facebook video titled “[Is it just cow’s utility that makes her holy?](#)” Singh urges viewers to reduce their milk consumption while explaining the structural problem within the dairy industry. He also calls out the hypocrisy of considering cows holy in such a scenario.
- Another Facebook [video](#) shows how meat shops treat chickens like mere objects that are weighed on a scale before sale, treated almost like a packet of chips and then slaughtered. The activists buy a live chicken and help it recover at the farm. It provides positive visuals of chickens roaming freely, receiving shelter just like cows, pigs, goats and horses.
- In one innovative mobile advocacy intervention, Peepal Farm leverages cultural symbols to dissuade people from hitting stray cows. An image declaring that the cow belongs to Lord Krishna is painted on a gunny bag, then wrapped around a cow to prevent people from hurting it. This effort received some [media coverage](#).

Vegan Adoption

- Regularly shares recipes for vegan butter, peanut milk and other plant-based alternatives to milk on Facebook page. In one video Singh is shown cooking Good Dot's plant-based vegan meat.
- Peepal Farm makes and sells vegan products such as butters (cashew, peanut or seed), cruelty-free perfume, lip balms, vegan snacks on their [website](#).

2. SADHANA FOREST – AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH

Sadhana Forest (SF) is an international non-profit organization that aims to address the climate change crisis through a holistic approach that combines sustainable, low-carbon footprint living, ecological transformation, wasteland reclamation, and veganism. Run primarily by an Israeli couple, SF has a presence in Kenya, Haiti and India (in Auroville where they have facilitated the ecological revival of a 70-acre arid land into a forest area). The family leads a low carbon-producing, sustainable lifestyle in a campus within the forested area.³⁷ SF sees human communities and natural systems as co-dependents. Their forest regeneration has increased groundwater levels helping nearby village communities.

SF hosts more than 1,000 visitors a year who live at the forest in harmony with nature. The guests contribute towards running the center (*seva*),³⁸ while also learning about natural and unprocessed vegan food. Activities involve caring for rescued cows on campus, practicing yoga and meditation, spending time in the forest, cleaning and cooking, composting, managing solar panels, community interactions like dance, song, walks or storytelling etc. While most followers of SF are from western countries, it appeals to a niche audience in India — mostly upper and upper-middle class — who are interested in sustainability, spirituality and alternatives modes of education.³⁹

Advocacy Approach

- Promoting veganism through potlucks, film screenings and a sanctuary for rescued cows. Veganism remains an integral part of campus' lifestyle shared with the visitors hosted from across the world and among the local village communities.⁴⁰
- Gentle, "show by example" advocacy style and logos-based approach – vegan diets become part of a process to address climate change, restore the balance between nature, animals and human communities, source food locally, and live a healthy lifestyle.
- The overall tonality is of living in harmony with nature, beauty, music, the sound of birds, a community of like-minded people, conservation, joyfulness, children's involvement and a hope for a better future. Some fear triggers for future climate crises are also deployed.
- Limited, somewhat niche target audience.

³⁷ Since 2010 SF has expanded similar foresting, land and water regeneration activity in Haiti and more recently in Kenya. In 2010, it won the third place in the [Humanitarian Water and Food Award](#) (WAF) in Denmark.

³⁸ *Seva*, i.e., "selfless service", a term common in religious and social service contexts in India.

³⁹ E.g., students from "Poorna Learning Centre," an alternative school in Bengaluru city stayed at Sadhana Forest during our study period.

⁴⁰ It seems that beyond our data period SF is doing more explicit vegan activities. On YouTube they recently shared vegan weddings that were hosted on their campus.

THEME: VEGAN MEALS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Duration – All through data period | **Media Used** – Instagram posts (low to medium – 261, 326, 237) | **Message** – Veganism is aligned with reforestation, sustainability, locally sourced food and compassion for all life-forms. | **CTA** – “Become a Sustaining Member and support our work with monthly donations”.

Given the absence of any defined campaign, we study SF’s social media posts through which they talk about their regular vegan meals, potlucks and film screenings relating veganism with sustainability. Vegan adoption advocacy is not the primary mandate at SF and is a part of their larger process of sustainability. Only some of their Instagram posts explicitly advocate veganism.

One post describes the environmental impact of animal agriculture; another presents vegan meals as healthy and compassionate; third relates communal vegan meals with the positivity of togetherness, community and forest revival. The vegan cow sanctuary adds animal rights and compassion framing.



Screenshot of SF’s Instagram posts

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Linking livestock farming to water use and greenhouse gases.** SF’s posts take a logos-based approach to messaging by showing data and facts. A creative menu display at SF’s community dining space compares the amount of water required to produce vegetables, cheese, butter and meat, with plant-based foods requiring the least. The text on the menu also says that “Animal industry causes more greenhouse gas emissions than combined transport worldwide.”
- **Linking healthy vegan meals with compassion and reforestation.** A post with an image of a typical vegan meal serving declares that “A resolution to eat healthily, consciously and compassionately pairs well with our vegan meals at Sadhana Forest! Come by for a meal with our foresting family and you can experience the delicious food that fuels our reforestation drive!”

- **Creating a sense of collective goodness.** SF’s Instagram posts invite followers to an interactive visit to the campus with an idea of the “joy of sharing”. There are posts with images from the weekly vegan cooking events and potlucks. A different post that marks 16 years of planting indigenous trees at Auroville talks about “cheery sevas”, and “forests and friendships”. The tactile experience of the whole process is a strong appeal factor – being in the forest, eating and cooking vegan food, connecting with cows. Overall, a positive satisfaction of supporting ecology, choosing compassion and the sense of community act as key. It associates vegan meals with togetherness, offsetting stigma or isolation about being vegan.



Screenshot of SF’s Instagram posts

- **Anti-speciesist approach.** SF is home to a cow sanctuary called “Vegan Goshala” where the visitors can take a tour and spend time with rescued cows. In its social media posts SF talks about “living on this planet socially”, “showing compassion towards all life forms”, and “treating all creatures as a beautiful part of the beautiful planet”.

Behavior Change Focus

- Unlike most other advocates in this study, SF has no specific campaign or substantive online advocacy content; instead, it presents an idealized model for sustainable living that integrates veganism and respect for all living forms. In that sense its online content provides food for thought, addresses pre-contemplation and contemplation phases of the behavior change cycle, while an actual visit to SF (which is encouraged) and the experience that follows would help with preparation and action phases. SF gives a sustainable *raison-d’etre* to adopt and maintain behavior shift to veganism as part of an effort to save the planet and create personal and community well-being – both ethically and personally rewarding.

Limitations

- SF’s online vegan advocacy is quite limited, and their audiences (including those who visit their center) seem mostly western. Their approach of “show by example” may draw visitors who’re curious about them and their overall model and approach, but it is unclear how many of them are persuaded to make changes to their lifestyles thereafter, given the challenges in the outside world.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY SADHANA FOREST

Environmental Sustainability

- In an [Instagram video](#) SF talks about the urgency to address climate change through reforestation and sustainable living. It also shares several posts describing its processes of water and soil conservation (e.g. the [compost toilets](#) used on the premises, small [check dams](#) to minimize soil erosion, [dishwashing](#) with coconut husks and ash).
- SF gives much value to children’s voices as they represent the future of sustainability and climate change movements. Founder Yorit Rozin wrote an [illustrated book for children](#) in June 2020 titled *I Live in A Hut*. The [animated version of the book](#) shows a little girl on the campus feeding rescued animals, eating vegan food, helping with food composting etc. Rozin’s son Lukas expresses with the simple clarity of his age, how [food should be locally sourced](#). He describes the Earth as “a creature, as life”.

3. SATVIK VEGAN SOCIETY – REFORMING HUMANS

Satvik Vegan Society (SVS) began as “Indian Vegan Society” in 2004. One of the earliest vegan organizations in India, it was founded by Shankar Narayan, who was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi’s ideals of ahimsa and his exposure to the early vegetarian and vegan societies in England and similar efforts in India during the 19th century.⁴¹ In a unique mix of vegan and spiritual ethics, Narayan posits his own brand of “satvik⁴² veganism”, which he calls a “human reform movement rather than an animal rights movement”. SVS does not have a social media presence except for its [website](#) and a few videos on YouTube. The vegan festivals hosted by SVS

⁴¹ Narayan quit drinking milk in 1989 after reading Mahatma Gandhi’s autobiography. In 1993 he started the Indian Vegetarian Association (now defunct) when he felt that vegetarians generally faced derision. By 2001 he turned completely vegan after connecting with the UK-based Vegan Society and the International Vegetarian Union.

⁴² This Sanskrit term means “purity” and “goodness”.

at its three-acre vegan forest receive news coverage in leading dailies in the southern states. Their limited visibility is partly the result of Narayan's wish to refrain from campaign-style vegan advocacy. In recent years he has participated in various webinars/online discussions to promote veganism for health and spirituality.

Advocacy Approach

- Satvik approach towards veganism that aligns with Indian values of vegetarianism, ahimsa and spirituality.
- Presents veganism as a form of holistic, non-violent living. Narayan advocates living a simple life of least harm to the environment, humans and animals, and promotes the importance of inner peace and well-being.⁴³
- Narayan is not in favor of “corporate style targets” for recruiting others to veganism and instead chooses gentle persuasion and a “show by example” approach. Outreach mainly through face-to-face conversations, brochures, webinars and an annual vegan festival.

THEME: COMPARISON OF “VEGANISM” AND “SATVIK VEGANISM”

Duration – All through data period | **Media Used** – Website | **Message** – Satvik veganism is better than veganism because it helps establish equilibrium on Earth.
| **CTA** – “Reach us today!” (for more information on satvik veganism).

We do not have a specific campaign to discuss for this stakeholder. The few brochures that Narayan has been using are reprints of brochures published in 2007 by the UK Vegan Society. So instead, we discuss his detailed position on satvik veganism explained on his website, which serves as an insider critique of mainstream vegan activism in India.

<u>Veganism:</u>	<u>Satvik Veganism:</u>
Values: Practice of ahimsa with respect to animals.	Values: Practice of ahimsa (non-violence) with respect to animals, humans and all those who sense pain and want to live. It includes the self and the environment too. In addition, the practice of other values like sathya (truth), asthaya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya, Aparigraha (simple living), etc. in the path of yogic traditions is desired.
Journey Vs Destination: Veganism is a destination, people feel accomplished in achieving it.	Journey Vs Destination: Veganism is a journey, not a destination. On everyday and from everyone we keep learning new things enriching the earth and our lives. Stopping to eat animals is just a beginning.
Animal Rights Movement: Many vegans equate Vegan Movement to Animal Rights Movement.	Human Reform Movement: As it deals with humans, Veganism is a Human Reform Movement while helping animals get their rights.

Screenshot from website of the Satvik Vegan Society

Key Messaging Strategies

- **A non-confrontational activism.** Narayan believes that rather than focusing energies on attacking carnist brands, consuming new vegan products and recruiting new vegan converts, vegans ought to focus on toning down their desires, pacify ambition and

⁴³ Again, stitching together veganism with the famous Gandhian adage, “There is enough in the world for every man’s need, but not for every man’s greed”. Also has similarities with Peepal Farm’s concept of “suffering footprint”.

materialism and choose simple living. He believes that this holistic change will reduce environmental foot-print and also contribute to peace and compassion in the world.

- **Dislike for aggressive activism and commercial vegan products.** Narayan finds mainstream vegan activism to be opposed to ideals of ahimsa. He distances himself from plant-based meats or nutritional supplements, and promotes eating locally sourced, natural and simple satvik diet.
- **A deeply vegan stance.** Despite the gentleness of the approach, Narayan's stance is not half-baked. He is against all use and abuse of animals, even the keeping of pets. He also opposes child labor and other forms of exploitation in the world.
- **Spiritual rather than rights-based approach.** SVS' position is a blend of environmental, health-based and spiritual frames.

Behavior Change Focus

- The approach gently pushes all stages of behavior change but will only appeal to people with a similar bent of mind.

Limitations

- Narayan's approach has close resonance with an upper-caste Hindu ethos. It also involves a puritanical distancing from "vices" such as sexual desire, smoking and consumption of alcohol. All this would distance modern-minded Indians and alienate minority communities.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY SVS

Vegan Adoption

- **Annual vegan festival** – Being conducted since 2004, the [Satvik Vegan Festival](#) brings together vegans and interested non-vegans from India and abroad for a retreat in nature. The festival uses gentle advocacy with yoga sessions, meditation, speeches, music, nature walks and locally prepared vegan food. Narayan also invites local politicians, industrialists, school principals, religious figures and other such influencers as guests who can garner more support for the movement.⁴⁴ Narayan often hosts the festival at his *Sthitaprajna* vegan forest. In 2007 and 2021 SVS also hosted the International Vegan Festival⁴⁵ which received coverage in national news dailies and vegan forums in India.⁴⁶
- **Advocacy with the government** – Narayan was one of the key members of the [Task Force](#) constituted by FSSAI in September 2020 to look into guidelines for labeling of vegan foods in the country. The Task Force successfully advocated for a vegan logo to mark vegan products in the country, thus empowering consumers to make informed choices.
- **Online activism** – In recent years Narayan has teamed up with other vegan advocates for offline policy advocacy as well as to promote veganism online, particularly within the frames of health and spirituality. The SVS website offers free space for people to advertise their vegan products, links to local vegan snack brands, classical music instruments made without leather etc.

⁴⁴ See one such YouTube [video of a Satvik Vegan Festival](#).

⁴⁵ [Festival](#) organized by the International Vegetarian Union.

⁴⁶ For e.g., see this [news report](#) and a [report on Vegan First's website](#).

4. CLIMATE HEALERS – COMPASSION TOURS

Climate Healers (CH) is based out of Phoenix, USA and headed by its Founder-Executive Director Dr. Sailesh Rao. An engineer by training and an environmental advocate by passion, Rao is also the executive producer of several noteworthy documentaries such as *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* and *What the Health*. CH's vision is for a future in which humanity will live by principles of non-violence and veganism, and the climate change crisis would have been averted. It sees animal agriculture and a high-consumption economy as the cause behind climate change, rise in pandemics, poor health, and unequal access to quality food among marginalized communities. CH advocates for systemic shifts in governance, industry and ecology to address this and has set a global target—Vegan World 2026—as the time when the whole world would adopt veganism and save the planet.

Advocacy Approach

- Advocates veganism as key to tackling climate change. This includes promoting compassion for all forms of life, ecological interconnectedness, health and food security for all humans. It also invites support from various religious leaders.
- Fashions a spiritual-style, globalized veganism, a romance for indigenous cultures and foods, and popular interpretations of ahimsa, which can speak to multiple nationalities.
- Advocates veganism with a health frame to counter commercial fast food, poor health and the rise of pandemics. Its Food Healers initiative brings healthy, affordable vegan meals to marginalized communities.
- Use of data and evidence as part of their argument about climate change, imbalances in ecology, or the impact of animal agriculture. Webinars, blogs, position papers, film screenings, talks at educational and other private institutions are the main tools for advocacy. Social media seems less of a focus.

CAMPAIGN: INSTITUTIONAL OUTREACH TO PROMOTE VEGANISM

Duration – All through data period | **Media Used** – [Facebook](#) post of film screenings, lectures and discussions at educational and other public institutions (low likes – 137) | **Message** – The role of veganism in curbing climate change. | **CTA** – Go vegan.

CH conducted a series of outreach events called “Compassion Tour”, among schools, colleges and other public institutions during late-2019, raising consciousness about the violence of modern lifestyles and factory farming, climate change, the need for compassion for all life and the role of veganism. As part of the tour CH delivered lectures and screened the film *A Prayer for Compassion*⁴⁷ across 14 cities in India. The film presents a globalized spiritual appeal to extend compassion to all beings, and was followed by discussions with its director Thomas Wade Jackson and co-producer Rao. Actor Jerome Flynn joined parts of the tour. The screenings were hosted by local animal rights and vegan organizations based in these cities.⁴⁸ They reached both big and small towns, taking the message of veganism to a wider audience.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Read about the film [here](#).

⁴⁸ Vegan organizations such as SHARAN, Ahimsa Trust, Save Movement, EarthStory, Sadhana Forest and other local vegan groups facilitated these state-level outreaches by CH.

⁴⁹ Institutions such as IIM Ahmedabad, the Community Science Center in Vadodara; Sarvajanic College of Engineering and Technology in Surat, the Hall of Culture at Nehru Centre, The Institute of Menezes Braganza in Goa, The Vidya Valley School, BITS Hyderabad, IIT Madras, to name just a few.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Presenting veganism as the way forward.** CH associates veganism with a global vision of change, helping the audience see a larger picture linking compassion for animals, ecology and diet. This presents veganism as something larger than just moral vegetarianism in India. It also fosters more openness towards veganism. Its appeal lies in making veganism part of a hopeful and new way of living for the future, a collective movement, supported by evidence.
- **Ethos-based messaging.** CH's lead member in India, Pareen Sachdeva, conducted interactive sessions with 1500+ youth in schools and colleges, educating them about veganism as an ethical necessity and its impact in reversing climate change.



Screenshot of Facebook post

Behavior Change Focus

- CH's advocacy is focused primary on pre-contemplation and contemplation, offering a holistic perspective packed with research and data to facilitate deep reflection and engagement.

Limitations

- CH's outreach in India is relatively recent and focused mostly on youth and institutions. On social media it mostly shares its global content, mostly images from events and tours but not enough informational content to persuade or convince. The information shared is also very technical and research oriented, and may appeal to a certain profile of audience—one that is willing and interested enough to absorb such information—rather than the general public.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY CLIMATE HEALERS

Environmental Sustainability

- **Data-based presentations** – A series of 10 videos under the topic “How not to go extinct”, using presentations, graphs, and trends on climate change, animal agriculture, global health, and pandemics. The webinars are available for anyone who wants to take a deep dive into the issues. These videos can be long and technical, and despite strong logos and ethos appeal, receive very low views.⁵⁰
- To further its vision of a “Vegan World by 2026” Climate Healers hosted a virtual Vegan Convergence of the Peoples (V-COP), a global event modeled on the UN climate conferences in January 2022. Rao also hosted 13 weekly webinars (Nov–Dec 2020) on Facebook with vegan activists working in various parts of the world.

Religious/Spiritual

- CH often invokes religious/spirituality frames in its advocacy. One of the videos on the website titled “Hindu Symbols and Veganism” draws on symbolism of Hindu gods, mythic stories, festivals and rituals and elicits meanings that could support a vegan position. While there is a definite bent towards Hinduism in its content, such invocations are more in the vein of a loose, globalized spirituality to promote compassion and non-

⁵⁰ Also see position papers by CH for e.g., Rao, Sailesh. *Animal Agriculture is the Leading Cause of Climate Change*. Vol 32–33. *Journal of Ecological Society*. Pune, India. 2020–2021.

violence. Rao also invites religious speakers from other faiths to participate in such events. There is a spiritual tonality in its advocacy that can inspire those on the same frequency, but may alienate others.

- In one webinar Dr. Rao hosts Dolly Vyas-Ahuja,⁵¹ an Indian-origin US-based vegan activist who argues why “Dairy is not Ahimsa”. She explains how despite India being a land of ahimsa and cow-worship, bovines in dairies continue to face violence. She describes this as a “betrayal of motherhood and the female body” invoking spiritual feminism. She equates the cow, mother earth and female bodies in general, making connections between the female, feminine and divine. She shares how she is working to convince some Hindu and Jain temples in the US to adopt dairy-free temple rituals. Her talk addresses a US-based audience, but can appeal to Indian and Indian diasporic viewers too.



Screenshot of Facebook post

Health

- A few videos feature discussions with activists from the Food Healers Project which brings vegan meals to marginalized communities in the US and South Africa. Food Healers aims to revive indigenous food, shift a culture of unhealthy, cheap fast-food consumption especially among marginalized communities, and demonstrate that healthy vegan food can also be affordable. The discussion highlights veganism as a global concern for food security and health for human communities as well as for animals.
- CH wants to bring deeper change to a global economic system which may produce food in high quantities, but still cannot fight malnourishment and diet-induced illnesses, nor the suffering of animals. CH presents healthy immune-boosting vegan food as the answer to repeated pandemics and vaccines. This talk also includes a brief input from the Indian NGO SHARAN, whose activism has a similar alignment, of reversing diseases through vegan diets.⁵²

5. FIAPO – PLANTING THE PLANET

Apart from its DGM campaign⁵³ which has a clear animal rights framing, FIAPO also ran a campaign titled “Eat the Plant, Not the Planet”, in November 2020. The campaign advocates a vegan diet for the well-being of the planet, and survival and health of humans. As the Covid-19 pandemic was underway at this time, its appeal to “Give the Planet a Break” by trying the 21-day challenge acquired even more immediate relevance and appeal.

⁵¹ Vyas-Ahuja is making a film titled *The Land of Ahimsa*, discussing dairy in the context of veganism in India.

⁵² See India-based activist Preen Sachdeva’s talk on “Veganism: What? Why? How?”, using a Q&A style format.

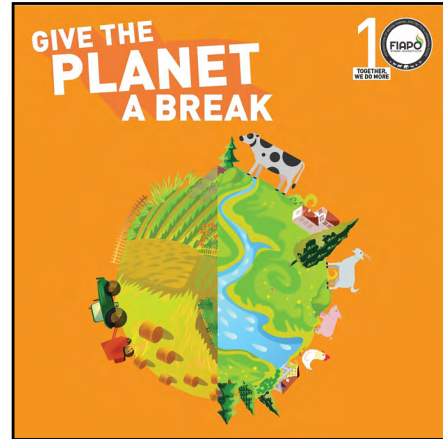
⁵³ See chapter II A 2 – FIAPO.

CAMPAIGN: EAT THE PLANT, NOT THE PLANET

Date – December 2020 | **Media Used** – [Music video on Facebook](#) (low views – 880) | **Message** – Follow a plant-based diet to save the planet. | **CTA** – “Eat the Plant, Not the Planet;” “Plant khao, planet nahi;” “Eat the plant challenge.”

Coming close on the heels of the DGM campaign, “Eat the Plant, Not the Planet” retains FIAPO’s [21-Day Challenge](#) and features endorsements from various celebrities (filmstar [Anushka Sharma](#), actress [Aparna Bajpai](#), and actor, musician and stand-up comic [Adaar Malik](#)). Unlike DGM which has a broad-based public outreach, “Eat the Plant..” is entirely driven by social media and targets youth. The focus is on diet—promoting consumption of all kinds of colorful and healthy plant-based foods—a call to youth to make a difference for the planet.

The main element of the campaign is a [music video](#) featuring young urban influencers (not celebrities) singing in support of a diet that is good for all sentient beings and the planet. The lyrics are a mix of Hindi and English and talk about foods like *chholey* (chickpeas), pomegranates, *badaam* (almonds) and *paalak* (spinach), using animation and quirky rap. FIAPO also collaborated with rapper Baba Sehgal to create another [music video](#), where he uses his signature style of rap to talk about the nutritional and environmental aspects of eating plant-based foods.



Poster for the Campaign

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Presents veganism in a youthful and attractive way.** The video especially the anthem has a vibrant and trendy feel with youthful appeal. The song and animation present a vegan diet as aspirational yet accessible.
- **Good for the planet, good for consumers.** The lyrics of the song use logos-based messaging that focuses on the sustainability and nutritional aspects of vegan diet.
- **Futuristic appeal.** The music video features urban youth, signaling that the future lies upon the choices made by the younger generation.



Screenshot from the music video

Behavior Change Focus

- Addresses all stages of behavior change especially preparation and action through the 21-day challenge.

Limitation

- While the youthful, glamorous tonality is a unique strength of this campaign, at times the lightness can seem almost childish, using cartoon images and over-simplistic language. The choice of rap artist Baba Sehgal as a protagonist in the second video may not be the best, given that his popularity was at its highest in the 1990s and may hold little traction with the youth of today, and the video itself may come across as caricature hampering the seriousness of the cause.

II C. HEALTH FRAME

Health-based appeals to trigger behavior change were deployed by a majority of advocates as seen in the sections on animal rights-based and sustainability-based advocacy. Here we discuss three case studies wherein health is the primary advocacy frame.

Given that our sampling period coincides with the time of Covid-19, a number of animal rights organizations used the opportunity to spotlight how factory farms conduct mass culling of infected animals, and together with live-animal markets trigger diseases and epidemics. PETA and FIAPO both advocated to shut down live-animal markets and submitted petitions to the central government, while PETA also released a full-page ad in leading national dailies focused on the link between live markets and epidemics. Celebrities mobilized by AE asked their followers to compare their recent experiences of being trapped during lock down and quarantines with the lifetime confinement of animals. Blending religious and animal rights frames, PFA and the Sadhu Vaswani Mission argued that the Covid-19 Pandemic is a “karmic lesson” to humanity for the exploitation of animals for centuries. Dr. Nandita Shah of SHARAN argued that if mankind wishes to avoid a lifestyle dependent on vaccines and medicines, it must stop keeping animals cramped in small spaces.

1. SHARAN – PLANT-BASED FOOD AS MEDICINE

Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature (SHARAN) is an NGO that offers guided vegan health programs to clients to restore their health and alleviate common lifestyle diseases. Founded in 2005 by Dr. Nandita Shah⁵⁴ it has a team of experts – doctors, nutritionists, counselors. Their flagship program is a 21-day Diabetes Reversal Program, but their programs also address weight concerns, hypertension, PCOS, thyroid imbalances, auto-immune conditions, depression etc. SHARAN operates from Auroville in Tamil Nadu, where it also maintains an organic farm. SHARAN also manages an app called “Fit Tak” and a [newsletter](#). Its outreach comes from longstanding networks with the vegan movement in India.

Advocacy Approach

- SHARAN’s key advocacy frame is health, communicated chiefly through its diet programs. Vegan adoption is the secondary frame addressed through sharing vegan recipes, tips and nutritional information. Some of the advocacy is rooted in animal rights and ecological concerns. On its website SHARAN advocates veganism for improved health, choosing compassion because “animals are like us,” “making a greener choice,” and “ending world hunger.” It also shares information about the harmful effects of milk and the suffering of cattle in India.
- Positions veganism as empowerment – to overcome chronic lifestyle diseases and long-term health improvement. Positive, feel-good style of approach towards plant-based diets and veganism. Its signature hashtags are #BuildingACultureofHealth #EmpoweringThroughHealth.
- SHARAN’s outreach tilts more towards older audiences, especially women, as well as people struggling with lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes etc.

⁵⁴ Dr. Shah is a registered medical doctor specialized in homeopathy and has been vegan since 1985. She received the *Nari Shakti* award in 2016 in India for SHARAN’s work in fighting diseases (read more [here](#)).

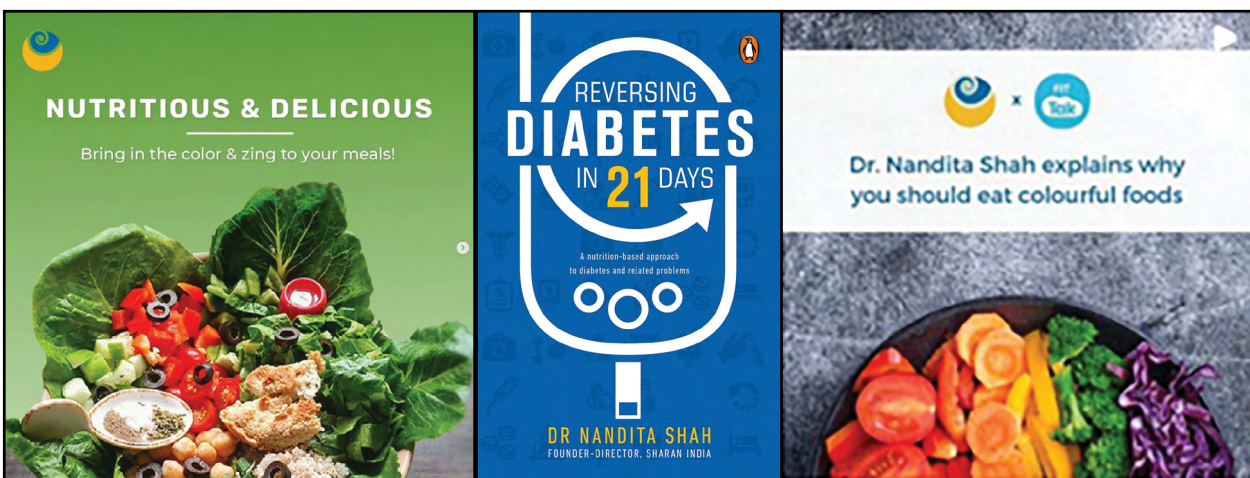
CAMPAIGN: DIABETES REVERSAL PROGRAM

Duration – All through data period | **Media Used** – Videos of offline health retreats, or online programs on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) (low views – 991 and 2100)

| **Message** – Experience how a shift to vegan diet helps to overcome disease and dependence on medicines, and also helps animals and the environment. |

CTA – “Follow a guided vegan diet program for 21 days”.

SHARAN’s signature outreach is its 21-Day Diabetes Reversal program that educates and guides clients on how to adopt and maintain a vegan diet. Since the pandemic this health retreat is also offered in an online mode. These programs share a common approach with similar efforts in other countries.⁵⁵ SHARAN also conducts other health programs such as a more general 21-Day Health Retreat, a Hypertension Reversal, Weight release etc., and shorter online events such as the 7-Day Salad Challenge and the 3-Day Raw Challenge!



Screenshots of Instagram and Facebook posts

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Simple, intuitive approach to diet.** SHARAN’s posts promote eating colorful food including a whole range of vegetables, greens and fruits. It takes a holistic and simplified approach to health with the belief that an overall dietary change can solve numerous health problems.
- **Online health programs provide actionable solutions.** In the [21-Day Online Diabetes Reversal Program](#), participants learn to make one new lifestyle change every day and put it to practice to lead a healthier life. Testimonials from some of the participants suggest considerable health benefits.
- **Sense of community and familial togetherness.** SHARAN presents the process of preparing and eating vegan foods as “fun” and “creative” with colorful meals; a healthy choice for oneself and one’s family; something that enables them to be “more active and happy.” A call for a [7-Day Salad Challenge](#) says that “A family who eats salads together, stays healthy together.” Images show fresh salads being prepared and families climbing hills and playing sports together. Provides guided support and a community space which help overcome doubts and isolation during the process.

⁵⁵ Dr. Shah has also been associated with Dr. Neal Bernard, a pioneer in using vegan diets to reverse Type-2 diabetes, and founding president of the US based Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

- **Social recognition as motivation and reward.** Women who were winners of the 3-Day Raw Challenge! were featured on SHARAN's Instagram page. The video has catchy club music and the three winners look confident and dressed in style. These small celebrations provide a sense of achievement and motivation to participants.
- **An altruistic appeal.** Being part of a lifestyle that helps animals and the environment while also addressing more personal concerns such as weight loss and fitness, and the need for community support to be vegan.

Behavior Change Focus

- SHARAN's advocacy promotes strong preparation and action, while also supporting long term maintenance of the shift to veganism. Clients personally experience health benefits, are guided into a vegan diet and lifestyle, feel connected to a community of vegans and are exposed to vegan ethics – enabling a significant lifestyle change.

Limitations

- While SHARAN's diet programs have long term credibility and Shah has won awards, the program's visibility seems limited to social media followers and word of mouth. SHARAN's high focus on salads and raw foods is perhaps not easy to maintain in the long term.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY SHARAN

Health

- SHARAN taps into the fears around Covid-19 and promotes veganism “for a future without pandemics”. In a seven-minute talk shared on Instagram, Shah argues that the long-term way to fight pandemics is to improve our health and immunity and avoid confining and crowding animals in meat markets. SHARAN believes a vegan lifestyle enables a “switch to trust” in the healing powers of our bodies and of nature, rather than living in dependence on medicines and with a fear of disease and pandemics. Shah stresses the five-point focus of SHARAN – plant-based foods, organic foods, whole-foods, use of supplements for Vitamin B12 and D, and healthy, positive lifestyle. A related post says “Here is your vaccine” and shows a colorful image of several vegetables.
- SHARAN often shares posts on the nutritional value of plant-based foods and busts common misconceptions around veganism such as the lack of proteins or calcium in plant-based diets, that nuts have high cholesterol etc. SHARAN insists that superfoods need not be exotic or expensive but rather local, seasonal and preferably organic. It presents veganism as non-elitist and also links it with ecological sustainability.

Vegan Adoption

- A number of posts by SHARAN focus on the mother or wife in a family as the key driver for adoption of vegan diets. Video talks give a platform to share their stories. In a 56-minute presentation a member of SHARAN who is also a mother, discusses how to raise healthy children on a vegan diet and positive parenting styles. In another short video in Hindi, a nutrition consultant discusses the harmful effects of dairy, and how giving up meat and dairy cured her husband's auto-immune disease and improved her family's overall health.

2. MILLION DOLLAR VEGAN – TAKING PANDEMICS OFF THE MENU

During the Covid-19 pandemic Million Dollar Vegan launched a global food solidarity campaign to “Take Pandemics Off the Menu” and donated vegan meals to those most impacted by the virus. In 2022 the organization rebranded itself as Generation Vegan – a non-profit dedicated to educating people about the environmental, ethical, personal, and public health benefits of adopting a plant-based lifestyle.

Advocacy Approach

- Promotes food justice and community health through veganism. Animal rights and sustainability act as secondary frames.
- Majority of MDV’s social media posts for India are taken from its global content, translated almost verbatim to Hindi.
- MDV does a lot of online activism, inviting other vegans to speak out against the clout of the dairy and meat industries. Its #NotMilkChallenge is an example.

CAMPAIGN: TAKE PANDEMICS OFF THE MENU

Duration – All through data period | **Media Used** – Instagram video (low views – 1521) | **Message** – Relating the pandemic with animal farming and slaughtering – “Killing animals is killing us too”. | **CTA** – Choose a vegan diet to avoid future pandemics, and for better public health.

During our data period MDV conducted two key campaigns in India – “Take Pandemics Off the Menu” and “Not Milk”, both being reflections of its global advocacy. Its global website also depicts a similar focus on “pandemics”, “food aid” and “health” combined with its guided 30-Day (vegan) Challenge.

In India it included distribution of vegan meals⁵⁶ in Mumbai’s Dharavi area during the lock down. MDV collaborated with the vegan brand One Good and Earth Café (a vegan café in Mumbai) for the preparation and supply of meal packets, and also had the support of actress Rakul Preet Singh. Further initiatives involved a mid-day meal snack distribution in a government school in Pune, and social media postings on how animal agriculture has exploited animals and fueled pandemics throughout history. Here we analyze the videos and posts that cover MDV’s food donation drive shared on their Instagram page.



Screenshot from Instagram posts of meal donation

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Making vegan food accessible.** MDV takes vegan meals beyond upper class privilege to the common people based on the belief that — as one organizer states — healthy food should be accessible to all people around the world.
- **Connecting animal farming with public health.** Using the case of the pandemic, the campaign highlights that animal rights, global health concerns, world hunger as well as environmental issues are deeply connected. A social media post (in both English and

⁵⁶ The global initiative targeted to supply at least 1mn meals by 2022 to essential workers and under served communities across the world.

Hindi) states that “Eating animals causes pandemics,” listing down all recent epidemics. Another post quotes vegan activist and medical doctor Rupa Shah saying, “Diseases come for us to learn a lesson.” The campaign uses fear of the future as a trigger and shows audiences how through a personal action they can respond to a global crisis.

- **Linking veganism with human rights and food security.** In most campaigns in India veganism is associated with animal rights, but MDV foreground its long-term implications for a healthier human population and fighting world hunger.
- **Logos-based approach towards veganism.** Extending the animal-markets message to include broader issues of sustainability. Instead of targeting meat-eaters it shifts the narrative from moralizing views like “pure” or “impure” foods, “violent” or “non-violent foods”, or seeing the pandemic as a karmic punishment for eating animals to a universal ethics of veganism.



Screenshot of Instagram posts of the campaign

Behavior Change Focus

- Supports pre-contemplation and contemplation stages of behavior change by showing the audience links between animal rights, sustainability, personal and global health.⁵⁷ However, the campaign is not intended for behavior change as much as to change perception regarding vegan food (as being elitist and inaccessible).

Limitations

- The campaign can be seen as an opportunistic use of fear-based tactics, given that the origins of Covid-19 remain a matter of scientific debate. It can also perpetuate class-based prejudice; live-animal markets are typically patronized by the less privileged, hence becomes easy-to-target.⁵⁸

OTHER ADVOCACY BY MDV

Vegan Adoption

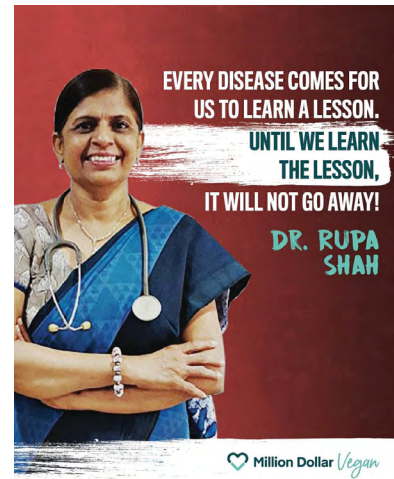
- **Mid-day meal distribution** – In another initiative to mainstream vegan foods as nutritious and affordable for all, MDV distributed vegan mid-day meals among 1000 students of a municipal school in Pune. The snacks were made from traditional Indian vegan food sources like millets or *chiwda* (flattened rice). A member of the legislature and some political leaders were also present at the event. This initiative did not have a pandemic focus.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The “Health Belief model” for behavior change suggests that “perceived susceptibility to a disease,” “perceived severity;” and “perceived benefits of actions taken to avoid the disease;” are all instrumental in bringing desirable behavior shifts. This messaging has the potential to promote these perceptions. While the links between pandemics and live-animal markets remain scientifically debated, when presented as a holistic picture of animal suffering, antibiotic resistance and disease, nature’s balance, and the long-term health and nutrition of communities, the argument can be convincing.

⁵⁸ Read a relevant article in [The Guardian, on live animal markets in New York](#). It discusses how food safety cannot ignore issues of food justice, in terms of access to culinary cultures for various communities.

⁵⁹ Other animal rights groups have also advocated for plant-based midday meals in government schools (e.g., PETA, PFA). There are some concerns about the socio-political implications of such advocacy, because in the recent decade right-wing forces have tried to dictate what can or can’t be eaten in public institutions, affecting the access of poor or minority groups to their usual dairy, eggs and meat diets.

- **#NotMilkChallenge to counter dairy companies** – MDV promoted the [#NotMilkChallenge](#) both internationally and in India to counter the longstanding “Got Milk?” advertising campaign in the USA. It invited vegans to post selfies and [videos](#) drinking their favorite plant-based milk and use the hashtag to hijack the “#GotMilkChallenge.” A related post of this campaign explains to a western audience the violent practice of [khaalbaccha](#) followed in India.



Screenshot of Instagram posts of the campaign

Animal Rights/Welfare

- At a global advocacy event on Women’s Day MDV highlighted the links between women’s rights and the rights of female animals. It shared images of western and Indian vegan celebrities and activists and asked followers to tag their favorite inspirational vegan women. Adopting an anti-speciesist, anthropomorphic strategy, a post titled “How to handle a chicken” highlights the maternal and intelligent nature of chickens. It presents them akin to companion animals such as cats and dogs that can be stroked, tickled and hugged.

Environmental Sustainability

- **A pro-farmer critique of factory farms** – A [two-minute video](#) presents a rare pro-small farmer position sharing the story of a veterinarian in India who is trying to revive local-level animal farming, and reverse the trend of factory-farming. The vet says that the high consumption of meat in the country is the result of factory-farming, and “vegetarianism and less meat eating is the answer”. He also brings up the recent farmer protests in Delhi and says modern farming in India is at a crossroads, thus making an important connection between veganism and its concern about the welfare of India’s dairy farmers.

II D. RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL FRAME

Historically, religious/spiritual leaders in India have advocated vegetarianism primarily in the context of spiritual well-being and kindness towards animals. However, the violence linked with the dairy industry is rarely addressed – and dairy remains sacrosanct for the most part given its association with Hindu mythology. Yet, recent exposure to vegan and animal rights concepts has elicited responses from some of these influencers, ranging from confusion, derision and attack,⁶⁰ or even acceptance and active promotion. Existing cultural concepts of ahimsa, compassion, satvik food⁶¹ and karma have been leveraged for vegan advocacy. As some of our case studies below show, increasing awareness of animal rights is leading to some convergence (including internal dialogues within the community to address practices that are violent to animals) of these concepts with animal rights, environmental sustainability and climate change.

1. UFCI – INITIATING CHANGE FROM WITHIN

UFCI (<https://www.facebook.com/ufcactivism>) is an activist collective started by Shweta Savla in 2018. Still a young entity, it often collaborates with other organizations and networks

⁶⁰ As shown in the case study of Kannan’s video featuring Vasudev.

⁶¹ Satvik diet is a typically upper-caste Hindu/Jain diet preference – meat and egg-free; often without onion, garlic, and heavy spices; believed to be pure and promoting spiritual progress.

like VIM, PETA, and FIAPO. It engages in both online and ground-level activism, primarily in Mumbai. UFCI's advocacy frame generally has an animal rights focus, although the case study we share here has a religion/spirituality framing.

Advocacy Approach

- Innovative advocacy in public spaces that carry strong youth appeal, such as food pop-ups in vegan cafes, potlucks, supporting vegan/zero-waste treks, film-screenings, community dance or flash mob etc.
- Webinars with young vegans/environmental activists to guide and inspire
- Many of its video posts are in easy and approachable Hindi, facilitating wider reach.
- Series of YouTube videos detailing the impact of the dairy industry on animals, the environment, and human health.

THEME: WEBINARS ON "VEGANISM AND ISLAM" WITH MUSLIM VEGAN INFLUENCERS

Date – July 2020 | **Media Used** – Live chats on Facebook and Instagram⁶² (very low views – <100); recorded panel discussions posted on Facebook (medium views – 8.6k) | **Message** – Veganism can align with Islamic values and diet traditions. Animal sacrifice is not essential for celebrating Eid. | **CTA** – Celebrate A Compassionate Eid.

UFCI held a series of interviews and a panel discussion with six young Muslim vegan activists from various cities in India as part of an Eid Special series.⁶³ The discussions were live-streamed on Facebook/Instagram and the two-hour recording was also shared online. In these talks the young activists share how they became aware of the violence in meat/dairy industries, their personal journeys to veganism, challenges including responses from family and friends, and how veganism is aligned with Islamic values. It is worth noting here that other advocacy groups have also called for a #CompassionateEid every year, advocating against animal sacrifice and promoting vegan alternatives.⁶⁴

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Social modeling to promote veganism.** As change-makers from different backgrounds, the narratives of young vegans serve as inspiration and guidance to others, addressing many typical barriers to adopting veganism that Muslim families and youth will find relatable. Some of the speakers became vegan even while they lived with their parents. Their stories show how vegan youth can successfully navigate social pressure and familial concerns. Their personal experience also counters a possible stereotype



Screenshot announcing the live session

⁶² See more – [Sameer Merchant, Mohd. Shaquib.](#)

⁶³ UFCI does online webinars with other vegan enthusiasts too – such as an ad-designer who quit her job and now works for vegan beauty and dairy brands coming up in India; a young lawyer concerned about animal rights; a veterinarian animal rescuer etc. See [this](#) video promotion as an example.

⁶⁴ Also notable are – Vegan First's short film on "[How to Celebrate Bakra-Eid with a Goat.](#)" AE's tweetathon for a Compassionate Eid; VIM's tweetathon titled "I am me, not meat" against goat killing. Also, GoodDot's promotion of vegan versions of special dishes cooked on Islamic festivals.

that Muslim families will restrict their children from going vegan and also discuss how they fought vegan stigma. There is an overall sense of self-efficacy⁶⁵ in the messaging, showing viewers how they can adapt their diets to be vegan, convince their families and fight vegan stigma.

- **Ethos-based appeal against animal sacrifice.** These webinars also give voice and validity to an early discomfort that many Muslim children feel vis-a-vis meat eating and animal sacrifice, which is often ignored by their families. Some of the activists recall their early shock and distress as children when a goat was sacrificed at home on Eid. In a short clip [activist Altab Hossain](#) from West Bengal lauds how today's children speak more openly about this discomfort with the sacrifice. They recall how they stopped eating goat meat as children but continued eating other meat. After exposure to veganism and concepts like speciesism they slowly gave up other carnist foods too.⁶⁶
- **Logos-based appeal instead of moral shock or guilt.** The youth did not impose their views and acknowledged the doubts and concerns of their friends and family. They also insist that their stance for compassion for animals meant giving up both meat and dairy, clearly demarcating their vegan position from a moral vegetarianism which has often alienated minority groups in India.⁶⁷
- **Linking vegan diets with health.** They also share their experience of improved health, and weight loss after turning vegan, which helped assuage their families' concerns. Other points of discussion include veganism's positive impact on climate change, how to ensure adequate nutrition and preventing potential deficiencies, and plant-based replacements for traditional foods such as *biryani*, *kheer* and *paneer*.
- **Invokes religious compassion and a different interpretation.** For example, the significance of sacrifice on Eid entails giving up something dear to oneself (donating money, clothes, food etc.)⁶⁸ rather than killing an animal. The speakers back their statements with quotations from the Holy Quran, and criticize the commercialized trend of buying goats for sacrifice on the occasion of Eid. In a Facebook post [activist Rubaina Ali Khan](#) calls out to other Muslims to celebrate a compassionate Eid keeping "animals off your plate". Khan cites from the Quran to show a heritage of compassion in Islam that aligns with veganism She links meat with the "trauma" of the animal ("lived its life in a tiny cage", "hasn't seen daylight") using both animal rights and health appeals. The messaging presents meat-abstinence as an ethical choice of compassion, not as moral vegetarianism, preempting distrust of veganism.
- **Challenging established traditions.** A chance to follow one's inner voice rather than continuing age-old and orthodox practices.⁶⁹ Through a dialogue with the members of the same community, UFCI sends out the message of change from within.



Screenshot of Instagram post

⁶⁵ The felt ability to make a positive behavior change.

⁶⁶ See chapter II A 8 (Plant Powered Darshana) for another such discussion with a Muslim youth.

⁶⁷ Also show that the cultural claim of compassionate diets is not limited to traditionally vegetarian communities.

⁶⁸ This is a strong counter-narrative to the Eid sacrifice in Islam that has been expressed by others too. One key voice is late actor Irrfan Khan, often quoted by vegan groups.

⁶⁹ This is quite similar to Mazumdar's appeal to youth to "listen to their hearts".

Behavior Change Focus

- Addresses pre-contemplation and contemplation stages with some focus on the preparation stage of behavior change.

Limitations

- The talks extend from 20 minutes to an hour and will most likely only draw the attention of aspiring or recent vegans who are already motivated to explore. The selective advocacy focus on a minority faith in India may appear out of line with the universal mandates of veganism and may risk fueling a stereotype given the political climate of the country.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY UFCI

Animal Rights

- UFCI often speaks out strongly against the dairy industry. In 2017 Savla detailed the impact of dairy on bovines, environmental and human health, and also spoke about why “Ahimsa Milk” is not free of violence through a set of YouTube videos in Hindi – “[Dairy is Beef](#)”, “[Dairy Leads to Bad Health](#)”.
- Just like activist Kannan’s widely viewed video,⁷⁰ UFCI also made [a video](#) (in Hindi) countering Jaggi Vasudev’s contention that dairy is less cruel than animal slaughter.
- Posted a [meme on Facebook](#) criticizing dairy-brand Amul after it mocked actor Joaquin Phoenix for his vegan stance.

Vegan Adoption

- **Promotion of vegan foods through innovative strategies** – A [vegan potluck](#) and screening of *The Game Changers* with 70 attendees;⁷¹ a [flash mob](#) in a mall to spotlight animal suffering; a post showing reactions of non-vegans who [tried out mock meat](#) for the first time.
- **Collaboration with other vegan groups** – UFCI promoted public treks by vegan activist-mountaineer Kuntal Joisher to promote veganism and zero-waste trekking, joined VIM to campaign against [testing on animals](#) and joined PETA to [raise awareness for climate change](#). It also promoted a [screening of the film](#) *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*, and interaction with director Keegan Kuhn at a theater in Mumbai in 2019.

Summary of the live session with Rozan Desai – A young engineering student describes how his family slowly adjusted to his decision to go vegan. They did not understand his stance, and also worried that he was not getting enough nutrition, yet they did not curtail his decision and slowly adapted to cooking practices to suit his dietary choices. Desai recalls how tofu became the preferred option to cottage-cheese in the house and his sister started exploring veganism too. Some of his siblings and friends made fun of him ridiculing his food as mere “ghaas phoos” (grass and leaves), stated that meat is normal and necessary, that animal sacrifice is religiously prescribed, and that even plants feel pain etc.

2. BRAHMAKUMARIS – SATVIK AND SPIRITUAL

Brahmakumaris (BKs) is a woman-only religious/spiritual organization (recognizable by their signature white sarees) that began in the 1930s in India. In recent years their popularity

⁷⁰ See chapter II A 7 – Arvind Animal Activist.

⁷¹ 30 out of 70 people at the potluck were vegans.

and follower-base has widened to include a sizable youth segment. Some of their branches in western countries now support veganism, but this is not true for India yet. BK's vegetarianism is related to the spiritual view that only when we eat satvik food, will we experience the inner purity that will allow us to connect with our divine nature. BK Shivani (also known as Sister Shivani) is one of the most prominent faces of the organization with a wide following especially among youth, and also has a significant viewership on television and YouTube.

Advocacy Approach

- BK Shivani advocates “satvik vegetarianism” in her regular spiritual dialogues, in a mix of English and Hindi. Her arguments are framed around holistic health and spiritual well-being, with some invocations of empathy for animal suffering. Meat and eggs are described as harmful to physical and spiritual health as they carry the vibrations of pain, fear and violence that animals face in factories and slaughterhouses. Dairy products are, however, considered healthy and satvik.
- Making an environmental appeal, she recently criticized animal agriculture for its excessive use of land, water and crops and making animals suffer needlessly.
- Speaks about the suffering of hens in egg-farms, countering beliefs that eggs may be considered vegetarian.
- The dialogues are a noteworthy example of how animal rights and environmental concerns are slowly integrated with spiritual values of ahimsa and satvik diets.
- BKs' advocacy is perhaps more oriented towards middle-aged/older population with spiritual inclination. However, there's been efforts to expand membership to include young people especially by Shivani, who is the face of the group.

THEME: VEGETARIANISM FOR PEACE AND HAPPINESS

Date – 2018 | **Media Used** – [YouTube](#) video in Hindi with English subtitles (high views – 69.5k) | **Message** – Meat and eggs are unhealthy because they carry the negative energy and trauma of animals that are kept captive, in fear, and slaughtered. | **CTA** – Stop consuming meat and eggs.

In a dialogue with a senior disciple of the group—veteran Bollywood actor Suresh Oberoi—BK Shivani talks about the importance of vegetarianism and the pain and suffering inflicted on animals slaughtered for meat. Oberoi himself comes from a meat and egg-eating Hindu family, and has changed his diet under the influence of the BKs. These dialogues are recorded and aired—in entirety or as snippets—on religious channels on television and social media. We analyze one such dialogue, which describes a vegetarian diet as “Satvik ann se shant mann” (pure food for a calm mind).

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Signature style of dialogue.** A conversation rather than a monologue where BK Shivani speaks to a member of the organization, who brings in their own ideas and experiences. The gentle conversation can come across as engaging because audiences can empathize with the BK members as they clarify their own concepts and confusions regarding the connection between satvik vegetarianism and spirituality.

- **Linking meat-eating with negative emotions and trauma of the animal.** Pathos-based argument for meat abstinence because meat has a negative "tamsik"⁷² energy (due to the pain and suffering of the animal) the effects of which bring aggression, fear, anger and poor health to one who consumes it. The BKs ultimately link this trauma (of the animal) with the poor spiritual and physical health of the humans who consume it.



Screenshot of the YouTube video featuring veteran actor Suresh Oberoi interviewing Sister BK Shivani

- **Countering popular belief that eggs are vegetarian.** The specific references to the conditions of slaughterhouses and egg-farms bring vegan and spiritual ethics in close agreement and convergence. Oberoi's recently-acquired knowledge about egg farms signals a growing public awareness about animal rights, while also aligning that with the effect of meat on the human body, mind and spirit.
- **Linking traditional wisdom with science.** Message that aligns with the majoritarian upper-caste Hindu views that consider ancient texts (mainly Vedas and Puranas) to be scientific.
- **Presenting dairy as satvik food.** States that cow milk is lighter and more satvik than buffalo milk, reflecting a similar mindset in India,⁷³ that also considers dairy to be benign and cow milk a necessity for humans.
- **Linking food and food production with spirituality.** Shivani goes on to say that the surrounding environment, pollutants and pesticides today have lowered the "energy" of vegetarian food as well. She talks about the "beautiful results" of yogic *kheti* (agriculture) wherein they grow organic food and also sit and meditate among the crops in the field daily.
- **Tonality of a well-meaning matriarch.** BK Shivani talks in a calm, soft manner akin to a matriarch sharing her wisdom and learnings with the rest of the family. This may appeal to a certain Indian sensibility where family elders are put on a pedestal.

Behavior Change Focus

- The video raises consciousness about the plight of the animals in the meat and egg industry, addressing pre-contemplation and contemplation stages.

Limitations

- Perpetuates casteist ideas associated with meat-eating and purity, defending them as scientific and well-meant. Diets typical to only upper-caste Hindu and Jain households are referred to as "our culture", creating a homogenized idea of India's food habits.

From the YouTube video – Oberoi states that he grew up thinking that eggs are not "non-veg" because they have no "blood or life," eating them is acceptable even for a vegetarian. But he has recently learnt about the conditions in which hens are kept. They are cramped and can't move, they keep standing all day, are put in bright lights to create the illusion of perpetual daylight. BK Shivani agrees and states that "It is important to know what is the process the thing you are eating has gone through and what is its vibration."

⁷² Foods that according to Ayurveda are sedative, static and harmful to both mind and body.

⁷³ The relative preference of cow milk draws from the perceived heaviness of buffalo milk and Hindu cultural beliefs that cow-milk is holy and pure.

Pathos of suffering and empathy is invoked, but there is no demand to free animals from torture or confinement. The CTA is only about personal salvation and cleansing oneself – not external action (as is the case with many religious/spiritual traditions). Further, the focus is only on vegetarianism – abuse involved in dairy is completely effaced.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY THE BKS

Environmental Sustainability

- In a [30-second clip](#) from a longer talk BK Shivani comes closest to vegan advocacy. She highlights the negative impact of animal agriculture on the environment and animals, saying, “Animals are raised simply so that tomorrow they will become somebody’s food”; she further says, “Today this has become such a big business just in order to fulfill our tastes and so much water, crop and land is being used for it. All this we can save, simply if we shift our diet.”⁷⁴

Vegan Adoption

- The BKS have been associated with the UN to promote sustainability and vegetarianism. In recent years vegan activists in the west have begun to reach out to the BKS urging them to shift from promoting lacto-vegetarianism to veganism.

3. SADHU VASWANI MISSION – ONE MEATLESS DAY AT A TIME

The [Sadhu Vaswani Mission](#) (referred to as “the Mission”) was started in 1929 as a non-sectarian charitable organization dedicated to the service of society. The Mission advocates peace and non-violence and believes “in the unity of all faiths.” Its followers consist mostly of middle to older age groups, although it also mobilizes a huge number of volunteers for social service of different kinds, and runs schools where they host regular sessions about animal rights and veganism.⁷⁵ The Mission has branches across India and internationally too. In the veg*n advocacy space, the Mission advocates for the rights of animals to a life free of pain and suffering, ahimsa, compassion, and satvik diets.

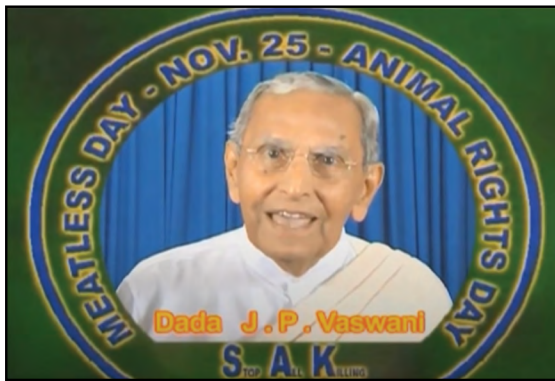
Advocacy Approach

- Advocates with anthropomorphic empathy, referring to animals as “brothers and sisters;” proposes formation of a “Charter of Rights” to safeguard animals.
- Maintains a tightrope between vegetarianism and veganism with an emphasis against meat-eating. They neither criticize nor promote dairy products, and never directly advocate veganism; and yet their social media posts repost content by animal rights groups advocating against dairy.⁷⁶ Environmental sustainability, health and vegan adoption are used as secondary frames.
- Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s concepts of ahimsa as well as his selective stance against cow-slaughter and leather.
- Anti-speciesist stance talking about cows/calves, goats as well as hens and chickens.

⁷⁴ Religious influencers such as BK Shivani and the Mission reveal a strategy wherein they never directly criticize dairy and never openly advocate veganism, but have begun to speak out on many of their sub-issues, such as plant-based foods, shunning animal agriculture.

⁷⁵ Mazumdar gave talks on animal rights and veganism at schools run by the mission.

⁷⁶ In their “One Day Veg Pledge” series on Facebook and Twitter, the Mission often shares posts by animal rights groups such as AE (e.g. see [here](#) and [here](#)), MDV (See [here](#)), FIAPO, Vegan First and others. Some posts even promote GoodDot’s mock meat (See [here](#)).



Screenshots of YouTube video

CAMPAIGN: MEATLESS DAY – NOV 25TH

Date – November 2017 | **Media Used** – YouTube video (very high views – 6.66mn)
 | **Message** – Love animals like you love your family and “Stop All Killing”. |
CTA – Observe November 25th as “Meatless Day” & “Animal Rights Day” and sign the pledge.

The Mission has been observing November 25th—the birth anniversary of its founder Sadhu Vaswani—as “Meatless Day” since 1986, both in India and internationally. This is part of their larger “Stop All Killing” campaign which promotes “compassion, non-violence and reverence for all life.” Even though only one day of the year is marked as Meatless Day, the campaign is used as a hook for regular social media posts throughout the year. Here we analyze a YouTube video that appeals to the audience to observe Meatless Day. The video begins with a message from the late Dada Vaswani —the disciple of Sadhu Vaswani and the Mission’s spiritual leader—and is followed by similar appeals from PM Narendra Modi and Bollywood actor Amir Khan.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Uses culturally-significant ideology.** The Gandhian philosophy of ahimsa is at the core of the Mission’s messaging.
- **Calls for meat-avoidance and not veganism.** Even though the Mission advocates animals’ right to life, it does not address domestication of animals and their abuse for milk. This is typical to the Mission’s style which vacillates between vegetarian and vegan advocacy.
- **Anthropomorphic messaging.** Dada Vaswani’s statement “We love our children, so do animals,” makes an appeal to the audience to regard animals on par with themselves, with the same capacity for love and filial bonds as humans.
- **Strong influencer support and political backing.** With the endorsement from the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and film actor Amir Khan, the campaign gains credibility and high viewership, well beyond the immediate follower base of the Mission. Khan recently turned vegetarian and is an influential Muslim personality, with added credibility due to his popular TV show *Satyamev Jayate* which discussed various issues of social inequality and justice. The PM’s backing may work as a stronger appeal for those who support the current ruling party.

Behavior Change Focus

- The simple and straightforward CTA (to observe a meatless day) addresses pre-contemplation and contemplation stages along with some focus on preparation and action, in a more “reductionist” manner.

Limitations

- Represents majoritarian views around vegetarianism while not addressing the violence within the dairy industry. The observation of a “Meatless Day” may also become a token response rather than facilitating real contemplation, preparation and action stages of behavior change.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY THE MISSION

Religious/Spiritual

- **The pandemic as a “karmic” call for animal rights** – In a video titled *The Cause of Human Suffering*⁷⁷, late Dada Vaswani talks to Bollywood actor Boman Irani about the links between animal slaughter and the karmic suffering of humans. The video includes visuals of violent treatment of chickens and cows in slaughterhouses. Dada Vaswani beckons people to come together and build a “Charter of Animal Rights.” He further adds that just like the 18th century gave rights to man, the 19th century to slaves, and the 20th century to women, the 21st will give rights to animals. It should be noted that the video has been recorded pre-pandemic, before 2018 (Dada Vaswani died in 2018) and re-shared in 2020 linking the messaging with Covid-19.
- **Advocacy against slaughter on Eid** – The Mission’s advocacy against animal-slaughter on Eid—and neglect of Hindu festivals that involve animal slaughter—may come across as being selective and anti-minority.

4. JAIN PREACHERS AND MONKS – MODERN-DAY DAIRY AS THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL DEGRADATION

Jain dietary practices have historically been lacto-vegetarian, but their values can be interpreted as aligning with veganism, given the concept of ahimsa, causing less harm to all sentient lifeforms and not eating anything that grows below the ground. Jainism is starting to develop links with the vegan movement, as is evident from this case study.

Advocacy Approach

- Spirituality remains the main frame for advocacy while health and animal rights are used as secondary framing.
- Advocate that milk in the modern industrial system is “like blood”, “sinful” and “non-vegetarian”. Talk about the violence within the dairy industry—slaughter, abandonment, repeated pregnancies and shortened lives, and denial of milk to the calf—while also arguing that cow milk is not necessary for humans.
- Do not reject traditional care and value of the cow as mother; chief target is modern dairy farming.

⁷⁷ Titled in Hindi as “Karma, Karuna aur Coronavirus” (Karma, compassion and the Coronavirus).

THEME: MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS (IN HINDI)

Date – March 2018 | **Media Used** – YouTube video (medium – 4119). |

Message – Dairy in the modern age is violent to cows. It carries the sin of animal slaughter and suffering, shortened lives and is akin to “non-veg” food. |

CTA – Followers of Jainism should give up or reduce milk consumption.

Labdhisagar Maharaj (LM) is a Jain leader and preacher who quit dairy in 2012. In a YouTube video delivered in Hindi, he offers a range of reasons why regular dairy consumption is not aligned with Jain values.⁷⁸

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Linking the violence within the dairy industry with modernity.** LM compares present-day milk consumption with ancient times stating that the religious gurus as well as the Gods used to consume milk. But the large-scale production and consumption in modern times has led to immense suffering of cows, he says, citing Dr. Verghese Kurien’s White Revolution as one of the examples.
- **Comparing milk with blood.** LM uses pathos-based language to explain how humans put pipes on cow’s udders to pull out milk, perform artificial impregnation, and send cows to slaughter houses. LM mentions repeated pregnancies, shortened lives of cows and how they live in a “half-dead” state, the use of oxytocin and the pain it causes to cows. He also speaks about the calf’s right to the cow’s milk saying, “The one entitled to the milk is sent to the slaughterhouse and we instead drink its milk. Is this milk or blood?” This is the crux of this advocacy. He states that even though milk is not really “non-vegetarian” food, the fact that it reduces the animal’s lifespan from 20 to six–seven years, it (the milk) becomes like blood and we partake in this sin. Milk is non-vegetarian in a more obvious sense too, as milking machines cause injury to udders and bring blood and pus into milk.⁷⁹ The video also includes images of cows being impregnated, dragged, dumped and taken for slaughter.



क्या हम वर्तमान पशू का दूध और डेरी प्रोडक्ट्स का सेवन कर सकते हैं या नहीं
अगर नहीं कर सकते है तो किस प्रकार के पालन किये गए पशू का दूध, कब और कितनी मात्रा में इसका सेवन कर सकते है
अधिक मात्रा में सेवन करेंगे तो कैसी शारीरिक और आध्यात्मिक दुर्गति होगी

Screenshots of YouTube video

Translation of Hindi Text (above)

Can we consume milk and dairy products in the present day? If we cannot, then how can we consume the milk of an animal that’s bred ethically, when, and in how much quantity? How does excessive consumption (of dairy) lead to physical and spiritual degeneration?

⁷⁸ Another talk by LM addresses Gujarati-speaking audience and has higher views (8.1k).

⁷⁹ He explains that “While two drops of blood and eight drops of pus in a liter of milk is accepted in the food standards of some western countries, India has no such standards”.

- **Implicating the dairy industry as well as the consumer.** LM uses logos-based appeal citing “Kurien’s own data”, that shows that 80,000 calves are sent for slaughter every year in Mumbai alone. He also puts the onus of this violence on the consumer.
- **Milk is not a natural food for humans.** LM argues that mammals produce milk only for their own children; it is only humans who continue to drink milk of other animals even into adulthood. He suggests alternatives like almond, cashew and coconut milk that don’t accrue the sin of animal slaughter.
- **Presenting traditional practices rooted in religion as the ideal way.** LM cites Jain texts which have declared milk, curd, ghee, fried foods and jaggery as *vigayi* (not beneficial/proscribed foods). Such foods are believed to hamper the aspirant’s spiritual advancement; at most they can be used for specific rituals, penance diets or medical reasons. The messaging here differs from vegan advocacy, as there’s some leeway for occasional consumption for critical needs, and home-based rearing of cows is given some acceptance. He recalls that traditional practices that used to leave the calf’s share of milk to the calf saying, “If the cow is raised like a mother, a family member, and milk taken in the right proportion, yes this cow milk is nectar, but today’s milk is blood, taking the lives of thousands of animals.” The religious preacher also prefers milking by hand, criticizes use of antibiotics and hormones, as well as fodder with “non-veg” content and various kinds of adulteration in milk.

Behavior Change Focus

- Addresses pre-contemplation and contemplation stages of behavior change.

Limitations

- The philosophy of the Jain preachers will largely appeal to the followers of the religion and those already following a vegetarian diet. The talk also upholds the majoritarian views that considers dairy in its traditional form to be benign, sacred even, which may work against vegan adoption messaging, or certainly limit its impact.

5. OTHER RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL INFLUENCERS

Vegan and animal rights consciousness grew in India during British rule, fostered by reformers such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rukmini Devi Arundale. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism also share ideals of ahimsa, and these factors continue to inform current advocacy.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar of the Art of Living Foundation (AOL) and Jaggi Vasudev (also referred to as “Sadhguru”) of Isha Foundation. Two leading contemporary spiritual influencers with an international following as well. They both promote vegetarianism for better physical and spiritual well-being⁸⁰ and also promote dairy-based products, especially ghee as part of the Ayurvedic regime they integrate. Vasudev often presents mixed arguments for e.g., in a video titled “[Don’t be identified as a vegan or vegetarian](#)”, he claims that it is logical to eat food that is assimilated most easily by our bodies. He tells his viewers, “You don’t need to go to a doctor, guru or nutritionist, you must ask your body.” He states that the food that is furthest away from us in the evolutionary process has the least “complex memories” and is easier to absorb, making plant-foods, even fish or honey acceptable. In

⁸⁰ Read [article](#) here and see [video](#) on *The Ranveer Show* on YouTube

another conversation he has promoted Hindu majoritarian narratives that defend the milking of cows and selectively criticized cow-slaughter.⁸¹

These two spiritual leaders have sufficient influence to motivate their followers towards veganism, but they focus only on meat, and in one instance even endorse milk consumption. In this sense they have a tense relationship with vegan advocacy.

Brahmarishi Mohanji and Acharya Prashant. Two speakers with a new-age appeal; they both promote veganism. Mohanji was named “Most Influential Vegan” at the 2021 Vegan Food Awards by PETA. Acharya Prashant talks on religious as well as socio-political issues, at times with controversial opinions. An IIT-IIM alumnus and ex-civil service officer, he argues that veganism can be seen as a logical culmination of vegetarianism and should be welcomed by Indians. He’s also conducted dialogues with vegan activist Singh.

Basics of Sikhi. A London-based project started by Everything 13, an educational charity dedicated to sharing the wisdom of the Sikh Gurus. In one of the videos the speaker stitches vegan arguments with the values of Sikhism.

PETA’s Website “Animals in Islam.” Much like UFCI, PETA also advocates a slaughter-free Eid and vegan lifestyle among Muslims through its dedicated website. Various blog posts address animal cruelty, climate change and health. They argue how meat consumption does not meet with the actual concepts of compassion, sacrifice or halal mentioned in the Quran. PETA also re-posted actor and vegan activist Sadaa Sayed’s article titled “Why I am vegan on Eid and every other day.”⁸²

Subverting Religion and Spirituality. Instagrammer Ankur Gedam presents a rare and much-needed Dalit vegan critique of any advocacy that builds on the logic of purity and spirituality, or avoiding onion and garlic, because such diets are tied to upper-caste Hindu/Jain lifestyles and a history of discrimination. He insists on a rights-based, anti-speciesist perspective to back rights for all, including animals. He also takes pot-shots at satvik diet that accepts dairy and honey, while also critiquing those who say they eat meat and beef as an expression of solidarity with marginalized communities.

II E. VEGAN ADOPTION FRAME

This section focuses on content, including commercial advertising that promote vegan substitutes for meat/dairy, and support the preparation, action, and maintenance phases of behavior change towards veganism.

Most large-scale vegan organizations promote their own vegan-diet kits or “challenges.” FIAPo’s “21-Day Compassion Challenge” and “Eat the Plant, Not the Planet,” PETA’s “Vegan Starter Kit” are a few such examples.⁸³ In addition, there has been a recent mushrooming of several companies producing vegan substitutes for dairy and meat. Most of these products are readily available in the larger metro cities, and their reach should be expanding in the coming years. Apart from Sofit, a brand under the Hershey’s umbrella, which uses much larger

⁸¹ Vegan activist Kannan and UFCI criticized his views in two separate videos. See chapter II A 7 (Arvind Animal Activist) and II D 1 (UFCI).

⁸² Other advocacies for a Compassionate Eid include AE’s tweetathon for a Compassionate Eid; VIM’s tweetathon titled “I am me, not meat” against goat killing; Vegan First’s short film on “How to celebrate Eid with a Goat.”

⁸³ Refer to chapters II A 1 (PETA), 2 (FIAPo), 4 (Animal Equality), 9 (Vegan Outreach); II B 5 (FIAPo); II C 1 (SHARAN) 2 (Million Dollar Vegan).

outreach such as television commercials, other brands rely mainly on social media, networks with vegan groups and various offline promotions.⁸⁴

1. SOFIT – FREE OF DAIRY AND IDEOLOGY

Sofit is perhaps one of the oldest brands of soya milks globally and in India. Given that the parent company Hershey's is well-known for using dairy products to make chocolates and milk-based drinks, the brand refrains from any advocacy of vegan ideology. However, Sofit soya milk is linked with health. The appeal is mostly generic, relevant to both vegan and non-vegan consumers. "Healthy energy to do more" is the brand's common tagline and their promotions are linked with certain strategic moments of consumption – healthy breakfast with cereal and fruit or as coffee, or in relation to sports or physical activities. Bollywood star John Abraham, a vegetarian, has consistently remained Sofit's brand ambassador.

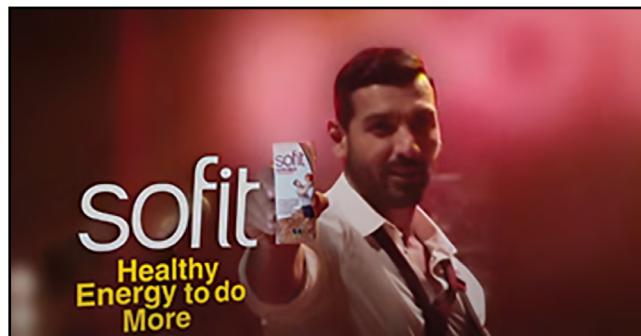
CAMPAIGN: TV COMMERCIAL – HEALTHY ENERGY TO DO MORE

Date – November 2020 | **Media Used** – YouTube video (very high – 6.7mn).

| **Message** – Associating soya milk with healthy energy.

| **CTA** – Switch to Sofit for more energy through the day.

In the TVC featuring Abraham, the audience sees the actor doing multiple activities throughout the day, right from early morning exercise to attending a work meeting and strumming a guitar at a bar later in the evening. He's seen drinking soya milk all through these activities. The ad is targeted towards working professionals of late-20s to mid-30s who live a busy and fast life.



Screenshot of YouTube video

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Positive reinforcement towards vegan products.** The ad tries to change the perception that vegan products cannot adequately replace dairy and become a part of everyday diet. It counters fears that vegan milks are strange-tasting and unappealing or that they are expensive and inaccessible. Promotes soy milk with the 4Ns (natural, normal, necessary and nice) (Piazza et al., 2015).⁸⁵
- **Health-based appeal.** Associates drinking soya milk with the energy to do more, being active and effective, getting happiness and fulfillment. Rather than directly promoting plant-based proteins, or Sofit as an alternative to dairy-based milk, "healthy energy" becomes a heuristic and offers a wider appeal relevant to both vegans and non-vegans.

2. ONE GOOD – ASPIRATIONAL YET ACCESSIBLE

One Good—previously known as Goodmylk—was founded by Abhay Rangan who has been a fierce animal rights activist. Rangan is a University Innovation Fellow at Stanford University

⁸⁴ Tie-up with corporates, events, residential colony outreaches, collaborating with advocacy groups.

⁸⁵ See Literature Review section of this report for reference.

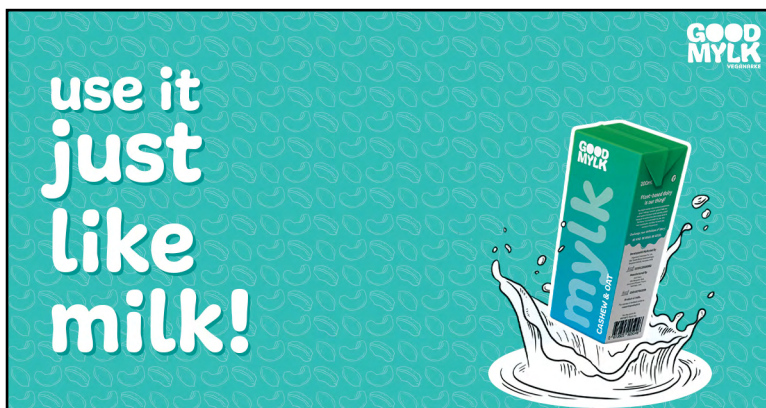
and has also been listed under Forbes' 30 Under 30. Unlike Sofit which isn't an explicitly pro-vegan brand, One Good is a committed advocate offering a wide range of fairly affordable⁸⁶ substitutes for dairy and more recently, meat as well. One Good uses animal rights and environmental sustainability as secondary frames and in a very light ethos, logos tone. The brand uses the term "mylk" rather than "milk", which plays on the idea of the alternative while also sidestepping legal concerns about whether plant-based milks can really be called milk; and yet, they had to change their brand name from Goodmylk to One Good in order to avoid getting into legal wrangles.

CAMPAIGN: REINVENTING DAIRY

Date – All through data period | **Media Used** – Instagram posts (very low to low likes – 79, 197). | **Message** – Plant-based milk/mylk can be used just like dairy-based milk and become a part of everyday diet. | **CTA** – Use it just like milk.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **One Good product as dairy alternative.** "Use it just like milk" is a common tagline used across social media posts. Various posts on Instagram show how One Good mylk, curd, butter, paneer etc. can be used in Indian as well as western-style cooking. Visuals use images like a splash, or pouring of milk just like dairy brands, signaling abundance, whiteness and creaminess.



Screenshots of Instagram posts

- **Tackles mental barriers against vegan milk products.** Chai is an important part of the daily ritual for many Indians; One Good talks about "making cruelty-free tea" using its oats-cashew mylk. In a similar way a post tells consumers, "Don't quit the coffee, just quit the cow milk." Another post does a play on Amul's tagline "Utterly Butterly Delicious," changing it to "Utterly Butterly Goodalicious" associating vegan butter with "goodness" as well as being ethical and healthy.
- **Cleverly-timed vegan messaging that rides on special days.** On India's Independence Day a poster says "Dairy Se Bhi Azaadi" (freedom from dairy). This messaging drives home an anti-speciesist stance that equates human and animal freedom, while also giving this serious issue a lightness of touch to make the message more acceptable.
- **Uses pop culture references to drive home the message.** A post parodying Pink Floyd's song says "Leave them cows alone," with an ethos-based appeal to leave the cow's milk for the calves.

⁸⁶ Relative to high-end gourmet vegan food offered by other market players.

- **Collaborations with larger vegan movement and industry.** As a conscious participant in the vegan movement, One Good often collaborates with restaurants and cafes promoting vegan food.

Limitations

- In the data collected there is very little use of logos (nutritional information, health benefits) to make the vegan products credible. No mention of ingredients, shelf life. These are mentioned to some extent on the website but not in social media posts. Much of the communication speaks only to the converted. The posts, though attractive, have minimal information.

3. GOODDOT AND VEGGIE CHAMP – RISING TIDE OF MOCK-MEAT BRANDS

GoodDot is a food technology company that produces and retails plant-based proteins, mainly mock meats including faux chicken, faux mutton, vegetarian egg and other vegetarian food and beverages, sold through retail outlets and directly through GoodDot's website. A subsidiary brand called **GoodDo** runs their Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) side – food trucks, cafes and vegan eateries. GoodDot's logo and mascot is a goat called GoodDo. Rescued from a slaughterhouse, the goat became the inspiration for the founders to start their mock-meat brand. They promote the goat light-heartedly as a “full-time goat, part-time ambassador.” This rescued animal becomes part of the brand story and the explicit link between saving animal lives and choosing the brand's mock-meats.

GoodDot's main focus is on health and compassion—“Doing Good” for oneself (healthy, nutritional food) as well as for the animals (cruelty-free) and the environment—along with the taste and pleasure of eating meat. The brand also associates with celebrities with larger appeal like the Olympic gold medal-winning track and field athlete Neeraj Chopra.

CAMPAIGN: DOING GOOD!

| **Date** – July 2020 | **Media Used** – Instagram video (very low – 176).
| **Message** – Mock meat is a healthy and cruelty-free substitute to meats.
| **CTA** – Choose GoodDot. |

In this short Instagram video, the brand speaks of its *raison d'être*. It shows how animals are raised in massive numbers with intensive use of chemicals and in poor conditions, adding that 70% of health problems are related to what we eat. It also triggers guilt associated with killing animals for consumption.

Key Messaging Strategies

- **Health-based framing supported by animal rights and environmental sustainability.** The “goodness” of GoodDot's products signals that it's good to taste, good for our health, as well as good for sentient beings and the planet. It foregrounds health and taste appeals, which are more direct and personally relevant, while using ethics as a background appeal.
- **Futurism and innovation.** The company presents itself as a platform of food innovation, and its products as the “future of food”. The initiative is given an exciting, aspirational feel by creating sleek animation that presents information in an interesting way. This brand positioning also separates GoodDot from a dialogue with tradition. It is not trying to argue with the present, it seems to appeal to those who seek to step out and think

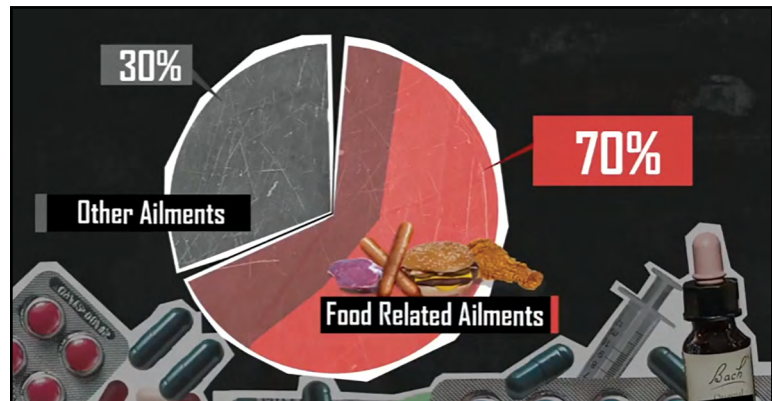
differently for e.g., the video talks about “choosing the right path” as it shows two doors – one with red dot on it and the other with green that leads to a greener world.

- **Logos-based appeal.** Uses data and facts to make a case for veganism and mock meats.

- **Creates aspirational food.**

Mock meat is presented not simply as a tasty, meat-alternative but as part of an enduring and aspirational lifestyle.

- **Involves influencers and consumers in the brand’s mission.** GoodDot collaborated with music director and singer Salim Merchant and Shankar Mahadevan to create “[The Good Song](#)”. They also share [video reviews](#) of their customers on Instagram. This participation creates a sense of ownership for the brand and widens its net of influence.



Screenshot of Instagram video

This participation creates a sense of ownership for the brand and widens its net of influence.

Limitations

- Does not address issues related to dairy, a possibly deliberate move as they wish to focus on meat and eggs. Their mascot is a rescued goat and the only religious festival on which the mock-meats are advertised seems to be Eid. These factors can suggest a limited focus and bias.

OTHER ADVOCACY BY GOODDOT

Health

- Pandemic related messaging – GoodDot’s health-based messaging includes not only the harm of toxins and chemicals in meat but also the diseases triggered by mass meat production. In one post the words “coronavirus” and “carnivorous” are shown as anagrams.

Animal Rights/Welfare

- GoodDot has shared a segment of Joaquin Phoenix’s Oscar speech on Instagram where he talks about the egocentric ways in which humans can plunder nature. By reposting Phoenix’s speech, GoodDot supports the values of compassion and sustainability.

Religious/Spiritual

- On Eid, GoodDot posted about celebrating a compassionate Eid and shared images of traditional dishes such as biriyani and haleem cooked using mock meat.

Veggie Champ is a sub-brand of Ahimsa Food, a food manufacturing company set-up in 2008 in New Delhi. It offers a range of gourmet vegan mock-meats and other vegetarian snacks in ready-to-eat or ready-to-cook formats. Veggie Champ is fairly new to the market and the social media universe. Their [Instagram page](#) was launched only in 2020 and has a little over 2,000 followers.

- The brand avoids the terms “plant-based” or “mock-meat” in its social media posts, and uses meat-equivalent terms like “meat-free salami” or “vegan fish finger” etc.

The messaging targets the same triggers and need-space that drive consumption of carnist meats – taste and indulgence, and tries to offset normative beliefs about boring vegetarian food by promoting their products as tasty “gourmet” food.

CAMPAIGN: DIFFERENT BUT BETTER!

Date – All through data period | **Media Used** – Instagram posts (high likes – 2602). More posts [here](#) and [here](#) (very low – <100). | **Message** – Mock meat is a guilt-free indulgence, something that saves lives and helps the planet | **CTA** – “Make an impact today” (by buying Veggie Champ products).

We analyze a few Instagram posts that draw on the appeal of the pleasurable taste of meat combined with the ethical satisfaction of guilt-free eating. The posts use hashtags like #crueltyfree, #noanimalsharmed, #animalfriendly, #meatfree etc.

Key Messaging Strategies

- Ethos-based messaging that encourages audience to choose a food option that is ethical, “saves lives,” is “guilt-free,” and that helps them “consciously contribute” towards helping animals and the environment.
- Presenting vegan meat as the future of food. An Instagram post says, “Start Planning for the Future today,” and also adds facts and data (switching to plant-based diet uses 46% less energy) for a logos-based appeal.



Screenshots of Instagram post

- Vegan meat as a lifestyle-based choice rather than a short-term option. Also acknowledges the struggles that meat-eaters may face in sustaining meat-abstinence.
- Positive reinforcement for vegan food. Images of tasty and gourmet food offset normative beliefs that vegetarian food is boring or conventional, and that the consumer can choose vegetarian/vegan food without losing the taste of meat.

Behavior Change Focus

- Both Good Dot and Veggie Champ’s advocacy address preparation, action and maintenance stages of behavior change.

Limitations

- May put off vegetarian audiences because of their meat-like taste, texture and look – but clearly their target audiences are meat eaters open to replacing meat with vegan substitutes.

CHAPTER III. SOCIAL MODELING THROUGH CELEBRITIES AND INFLUENCERS

The role of celebrities in promoting social and behavioral change stems from the recognition that learning is not simply an intentional process of self-education, but oftentimes the result of social osmosis from a variety of sources, including media and the celebrities they present. This process is outlined in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) which emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling and imitating the behaviors, attitudes and emotional reactions of influential others. Commonly referred to as “social modeling,” this approach considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior.

Celebrity figures are increasingly relevant influencers today, given that lifestyle and consumption choices of audiences are strongly impacted via media in all its varied and ubiquitous forms (Lundahl, 2017; Hackley & Hackley, 2015). Evidence from consumer research suggests the positive role of celebrities in grabbing attention, aiding recall and increasing purchasing intentions, especially among younger age segments (Biswas et al., 2009). The role of celebrities as “positive deviants”⁸⁷ in shaping social norms, and shifting the perception of veganism from a stigmatized practice to a normalized lifestyle choice of “kindness” and “healthism” is evidenced in the *LR* (Lundahl, 2018; Doyle, 2016).

Celebrity endorsement may be especially powerful in India. As a collectivist culture, there is a greater pressure to align individual behaviors with perceived social norms, and thereby earn the approval of socially-respected influencers (Khara et al., 2020; Biswas et al., 2009; Ruby & Heine, 2012). However, the specific impact of celebrities on changing individual behaviors is mediated by several factors such as credibility and congruence with the specific cause, and can vary across different socio-cultural contexts (Biswas et al., 2009). PETA’s trademark provocative campaigns featuring popular stars and sex symbols rely on the attention-grabbing power of these celebrities, a critical goal for a social movement that seeks to draw attention to issues that people would otherwise prefer to not think about.⁸⁸ However, increased awareness alone may be insufficient to create sustained dietary change, but it does help shift social norms and attitudes towards these issues, making them aspirational and legitimate.

Some of the key findings from our analysis of social modeling for veganism in India are outlined below, together with recommendations for strengthening this as a strategy.

FINDINGS

- 1. Vegan celebrities added glamor to campaigns**, with some interesting departures. A large number of celebrities from the world of film, television and sports were chosen to lend a glamorous and aspirational feel to veganism, many of them with associations of sexiness, fitness and weight-loss. Actresses Mallika Sherawat and Ayesha Takia Azmi, both known for their glamour and sex appeal, were used by FIAPO and Animal Equality (AE) respectively, for their campaigns. In an interesting departure from the

⁸⁷ Positive deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviour and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers. Positive Deviance aims to identify these behaviours and allow the rest of the community to learn from them.

⁸⁸ Refer to [this article](#) that highlights the tactics used by PETA.

norm, FIAPO's portrayal of Sherawat in their "Don't Get Milked" campaign⁸⁹ was non-sexualized, instead highlighting the fact that she has been vegan for 15 years. Similarly, AE's "Love Veg" campaign⁹⁰ featured Takia Azmi in a fairly well-scripted advocacy video detailing how she practices veganism as a married woman and mother in her Muslim household. While the Sherawat post on Facebook received high views of 15000, the AE video received low viewership (possibly the result of several factors, including inadequate marketing and boosting of content). In both instances the celebrities chosen were a little past their heyday, and the campaigns sidestepped their core USP of glamor and sex appeal, and the effectiveness of these campaigns is unclear and requires further inquiry.



From Animal Equality's "Love Veg" website

- 2. Strategic selection of vegan celebrity endorsers with proven commitment to broader social justice issues** (not necessarily restricted to animal rights) can provide legitimacy to veganism, both as a lifestyle and a philosophy (see *LR* for related discussion). Some celebrities in India, like their global counterparts, are becoming more vocal about their standpoint on various political and ideological issues. This is especially the case with actors known for their portrayal of unconventional, nuanced characters and whose public personas are that of activists spearheading change.

Anushka Manchanda, known for her role in *Angry Indian Goddesses*, a film that addresses women's emancipation and struggle with tradition, has been roped in by FIAPO, AE and others to speak for animal rights and veganism. Actress Richa Chadha speaks up on social and political issues, including veganism; [the Indian Express](#) article written by her reveals her detailed understanding of the cause, and she has also contributed to the [Vegan First](#) portal. Similarly, vegan actress Swara Bhaskar's public support for important human rights issues in recent years lends her strong credibility. The presence of such figures help ground vegan advocacy in strong ideological moorings, beyond the mere lifestyle positioning by other celebrities.

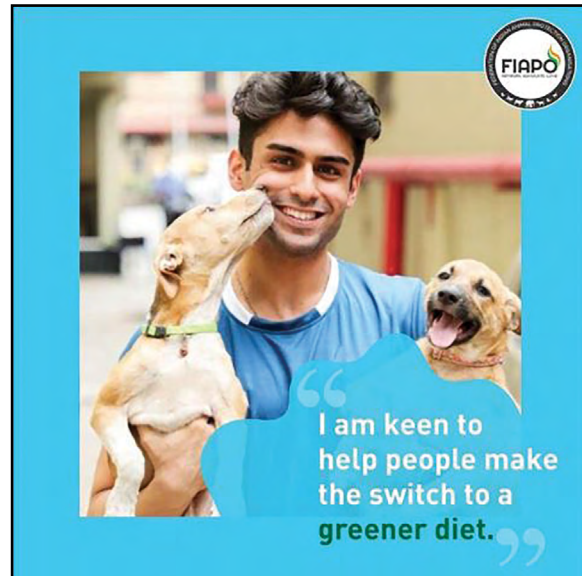
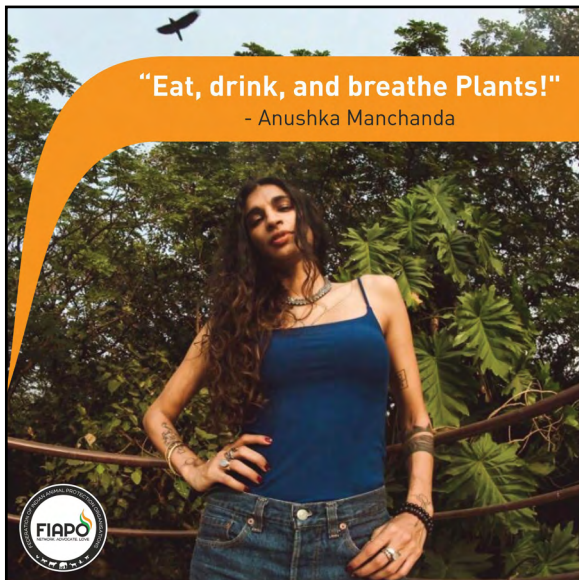


Vegan Outreach's social media post featuring Richa Chadha

- 3. Youth influencers provide relatable, nuanced mentoring for adopting and sustaining a vegan lifestyle.** Arvind Kannan and Robin Singh are perhaps the two most widely-followed vegan activists (with Facebook following of over 2,00,000 each) who have played a significant role in influencing thousands of their followers. They have explicated and legitimized veganism even while their advocacy approach remains quite different – Kannan promotes total veganism; Singh leans more towards welfarism and incremental steps towards change. Other examples include YouTube lifestyle and fashion

⁸⁹ See chapter II A 2 – FIAPO.

⁹⁰ See chapter II A 4 – AE.



FIAPO's social media posts featuring actress-singer Anushka Manchanda and TV Star Rohan Hingorani

vlogger Heli Ved⁹¹ who promoted FIAPO's DGM campaign, and fitness coach Annavi Khot who promoted AE's "Love Veg" campaign. Influencers are also able to effectively address the nuances of adopting a vegan diet at different life stages. For example, Indian platform Vegan First shares an interview with actor-belly dancer Meher Malik where she talks about veganism in the context of pregnancy and motherhood, and raising a baby as a vegan. Malik's lifestyle demonstrates commitment to veganism, and by sharing her journey, dilemmas and solutions Malik inspires other women and mothers who may be considering veganism.

4. **Vegan advocacy in India sometimes drew upon globally-renowned celebrity vegans**, thus creating a sense of global community and solidarity. Hence when Amul launched a distasteful attack on Phoenix for his Oscar speech promoting veganism, the issue galvanized the Indian vegan community. There was a strong pushback by animal rights groups (refer PETA Roasts Amul) which received media coverage, resulting in Amul making a (lame) attempt at an apology through a second ad.⁹²
5. **Minority community voices can broaden the appeal of veganism while also breaking prevailing religious barriers and stereotypes.** UFCI's webinars host young Muslim vegan influencers from diverse backgrounds across Indian cities.⁹³ These young activists share their struggles, resistance and support they received from friends and families, along with tips for dietary shifts. They demonstrate that ethical vegan concerns override narrow and stereotypical notions of communities and diet traditions. Late actor Irrfan Khan was not vegan but tended towards vegetarianism. Specifically, his much-publicized criticism of commercial trends of large-scale animal sacrifice during Eid carried significant weight, and he is often quoted by vegan advocacy groups to call for a more "compassionate Eid". These community voices are especially necessary to preempt the critique of veganism in India as an extension of upper-caste majoritarian

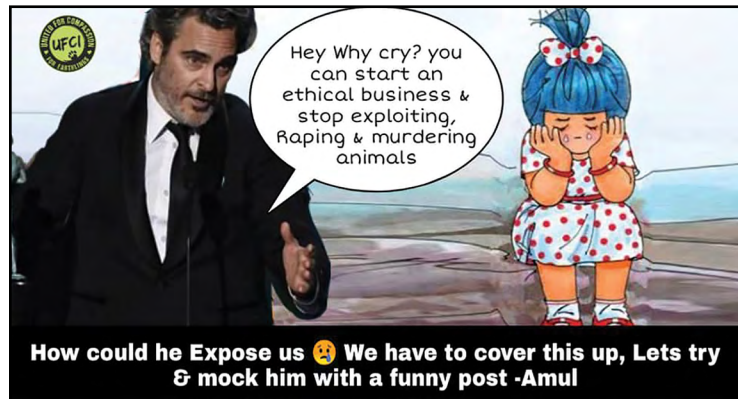
⁹¹ Ved shared her own vegan experiences in a YouTube video titled "Going vegan in India! Is it sustainable? Struggles and Solutions". The video has some notable comments from late-teen audiences on how they have recently gone vegan.

⁹² The original ad featured the Amul girl smearing butter on Phoenix's face, and referred to him as "Joquer"; following criticism by animal rights groups Amul issued another ad with the girl feeding him butter.

⁹³ See chapter II D 1 – UFCI.

ideology, and break stereotypes of minority communities.

6. **The voice of veg*n sports persons is especially critical to counter the longstanding legitimacy given to carnist products** in India (meat and eggs especially) by renowned sports celebrities.⁹⁴ Instances of celebrity sportspersons quitting meat for health reasons can be highly impactful. Cricketer Virat Kohli's story⁹⁵ of his visible health improvement after quitting meat is perhaps the most publicized and discussed in Indian sports to date. The health benefits of a vegan diet (not vegetarianism) are more established among practitioners of endurance sports where the focus is on all-round health and endurance rather than muscle mass and strength. Mountaineer Kuntal Joisher,⁹⁶ the first vegan to climb Mount Everest, has supported multiple vegan campaigns including those by FIAPO, Vegan Outreach, UFCI, and VIM; he has also conducted standalone zero-waste vegan treks open to all. India's first vegan woman "Ironman" Aarathi Swaminathan is another example of the endurance benefits of a vegan diet.



Amul ad deriding Joaquin Phoenix for his Oscar speech promoting veganism and screenshots of PETA and UFCI posts responding to the Amul ad

7. **Globally vegan food brands that leverage celebrities as brand ambassadors either completely avoid the ethical aspects of veganism, or reference them in a highly muted way,** given their marketing concerns to not alienate any consumers.⁹⁷ For

⁹⁴ Cricketers such as Sachin Tendulkar, Sunil Gavaskar, Rahul Dravid, Kapil Dev, and badminton champion Sania Nehwal have featured on national primetime ads run by the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) – an industry association of poultry farmers in India. Given that the NECC is a quasi-government entity, such advocacy by these celebrities comes across as public interest messaging rather than profit-driven brand advertising (Read [here](#)).

⁹⁵ Kohli often speaks about how a meat-based diet was making his body acidic, pulling calcium from his bones, and weakening them. This personal experience that he shared in a live discussion is powerful in making meat reduction (or a vegetarian diet) both legitimate or even aspirational, especially among men or regular meat-eaters in general (Watch [here](#)).

⁹⁶ Joisher supports veganism not just for health but also for animal rights and environmental reasons. Read Vegan First article [here](#).

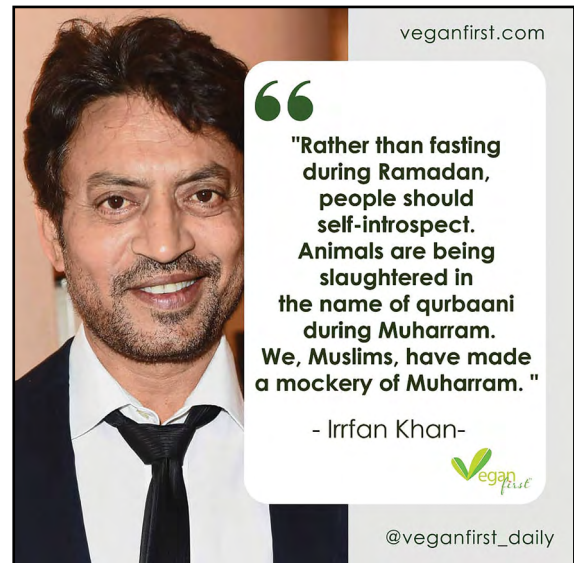
⁹⁷ Lundahl, 2018; Doyle, 2016.

example, actor-producer John Abraham is the very visible face of Sofit⁹⁸, the globally-renowned soya milk brand. While he is quite vocal in the media about his love for animals and his support for animal charities,⁹⁹ these are not leveraged in any brand communication; he is largely presented as a healthy action hero. Mock meat brand Imagine Meats, founded by vegan actor-couple Genelia and Ritesh Deshmukh is pitched as preserving the familiar and authentic taste of animal meat. Another mock-meat brand, GoodDot, endorsed by athlete and Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra, merely alludes to the notion that it is good to refrain from eating meat by comparing it to other civic acts of responsibility.

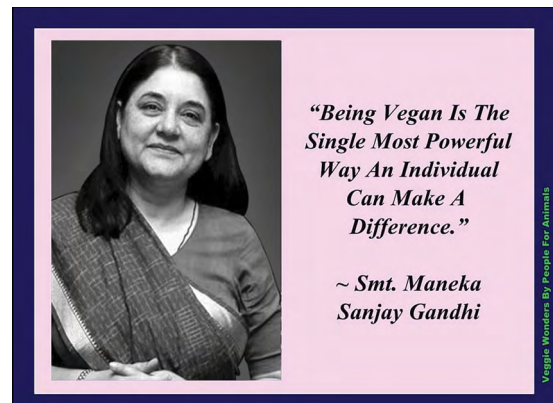
8. **Some notable vegan activists have been eminent public icons in their own right**, and remain instrumental in foregrounding the ethical imperatives for veganism. For example, MP Maneka Gandhi, while being in the public eye due to her association with the Gandhi family, has been a longstanding and leading icon for animal rights in India since the 1980s. As the founder of the animal NGO People for Animals (PFA)¹⁰⁰ and Chairperson of the Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) she integrates environmental concerns and discourages the excessive consumerist focus on veganism, advocating instead for veganism that is based on simple, minimalistic living. In the field of health Dr. Nandita Shah of SHARAN¹⁰¹ has been a notable influencer, effectively visibilizing the disease-reversing benefits of vegan and raw-food diets, especially for diabetes¹⁰² both in India and internationally (her social media following, though, is relatively limited).



Vegan Mountaineer Kuntal Joisher



Vegan First's social media post featuring Irrfan Khan



⁹⁸ See chapter II E 1 – Sofit

⁹⁹ Kalote Animal Trust, Animal Rahat, Bezubaan, among others

¹⁰⁰ See chapter II A 3 – PFA

¹⁰¹ See chapter II C 1 – SHARAN

¹⁰² Based on a model developed by Dr. Neal Bernard/USA

SOME AREAS OF CAUTION

1. Vegan stakeholders must ensure that celebrity endorsers' values and behavior are consistent with veganism; inconsistencies can undermine the cause overall. For example, AE shared a video-clip with television soap actress Rupali Ganguly where she asserts that "dairy should be declared non-vegetarian"; but in a later video, she is seen endorsing a brand of cow milk. Actress Rakul Preet Singh who was part of PETA's "Try Vegan" posters, and supported Million Dollar Vegan's campaign to distribute vegan meals during lock down,¹⁰³ but has subsequently publicly spoken about her diet including eggs for breakfast and ghee as a creamer for her coffee.¹⁰⁴
2. Vegan advocacy campaigns should exercise caution before promoting vegetarian celebrities as vegan icons. For example, many vegan groups have cited Kohli as a vegan icon even though news reports suggest that he only quit meat and reduced his dairy intake, chiefly for health reasons. False, incorrect and inconsistent reports about a celebrity's vegan status undermine the issue as a whole.
3. While celebrities with a strong political consciousness lend credibility to the vegan issue, campaigners must recognize the attendant risks when such celebrities vocalize their opinion on other controversial issues, thus triggering polarizing political debates¹⁰⁵ which could be aspirational to a certain audience but alienate most others.



Peta's social media post featuring Rakul Preet Singh

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Social modeling can be a powerful strategy for vegan advocacy and campaigning. On the basis of this analysis the following recommendations are being made to optimize social modeling as a tool to intensify and accelerate vegan advocacy in India.

1. Mobilizing **a broad and diverse range of vegan celebrities, public figures from diverse domains, and on-ground influencers can yield dividends** in terms of mainstreaming and normalizing veganism, so that it is not seen as merely an aspiration lifestyle trend. These "mixed-ensemble" campaigns can be a potent mix of star power, credibility, practical, tried-and-tested information and ethical perspectives. For example, AE's campaign to end battery cages was supported not only by celebrities but also others such as digital content creator Sonam C. Chhabra, dog trainer and behavior specialist Mitali Salvi, raw-vegan chef and yoga teacher, Parmita Shroff, among others. Evidence from consumer research increasingly points towards this trend as being effective (Biswas et al., 2009).
2. Vegan campaigns must focus on more **detailed and consistent storytelling**, allowing celebrities to shed light on their personal journeys, especially the choices that they have made in different situations – so that these actions can also be modeled for audiences. This is in line with social modeling theory which states that what is "learnt" is primarily

¹⁰³ See chapter II C 2 – Million Dollar Vegan

¹⁰⁴ These two examples, while recent, are outside of our data collection period.

¹⁰⁵ Refer to this [Outlook India](#) article that talks about Chadha's controversial tweet about the Galwan Valley attack.

what is viewed, making it important to visibilize not only the larger choice of adopting a vegan diet, but also the “how to” – i.e., the entire journey of adoption.

3. Intensify efforts to spotlight **celebrities and influencers especially from the fields of sports, health, fitness and nutrition**. This is important to tackle the deeply-entrenched notion of the 4Ns (Piazza et al., 2015), especially the “necessary”-ness of meat, eggs and dairy for health and fitness. Specifically, this could include greater mobilization of male (and female) health and sports icons to offset the current focus on (female) beauty and weight loss. In addition, it would be strategic to **leverage vegan health practices in the international sports community** to contextualize and motivate veganism among domestic sportspersons. For example, footballer Sunil Chhetri turned vegan for health reasons citing that it helped him in terms of “recovery and digestion”. He further contextualized this as not just a personal choice, but rather an adoption of global standards of health and nutrition that he observed while playing in Europe.

CHAPTER IV. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VEGAN ADVOCACY

This chapter distills the key findings and recommendations emerging from our media content analysis of online vegan advocacy in India. The purpose of this analysis was to understand how veganism is being framed, positioned and promoted within the complex socio-cultural milieu of India, and in this context identify the key barriers and triggers addressed by vegan advocacy. More specifically, the objectives of this analysis are to:

1. Outline the key advocates for veganism in India, and the viewership and reach of their vegan advocacy and campaigning efforts;
2. Examine their campaigning strategies in light of theoretical frameworks and models for behavior change communication,¹⁰⁶ and identify their strengths and limitations;
3. Provide recommendations to strengthen and accelerate vegan advocacy and campaigning in India.

In order to do this, key advocates (organizations and individuals) promoting veganism were identified inductively covering a few key domains – animal rights/welfare; environment and climate change; health; religion and spirituality; and finally, those supporting the transition to veganism through DIY content or the production and marketing of vegan substitutes simply called “vegan adoption”. These five key “frames” guided the development of 24 case studies of online vegan advocacy campaigns conducted between January 2018 and January 2021. The social media platforms chosen for the study include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and in some cases websites of vegan advocates. Data collection for the study was conducted between January and May 2021.

The study draws from theoretical frameworks such as critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and rhetorical analysis to analyze the key content and messaging strategies. The TTM (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983, 1986) was applied to map the phases of behavior change addressed by the content.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Overall, the Reach of Most Vegan Campaigns is Low, with a Few Important Exceptions.** As outlined in Table 2 below, a bulk of the data (68%) had very low (100 to 500 views and likes) to low viewership (500–3000 views and likes), with barely 14% having high or very high viewership (30k to 1Mn+ views and likes). Clearly, vegan advocacy has a long way to go in terms of reaching and engaging audiences.

The reasons for such low viewership could be many – most vegan advocacy campaigns stem from AR groups, and reach mostly only those already subscribed from the country’s nascent vegan movement, resulting in narrow “echo chambers.” Another reason could be that while much effort is invested in content production, far less is invested in marketing and disseminating such content, which is equally important. It is also pertinent to note that evidence from the *LR* suggests that except for younger age groups, and those who have turned veg*n already, AR is outranked by health and environmental concerns as a motivation for adopting veg*nism (Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2017; Fehér et al., 2020; Radnitz et al., 2015).

¹⁰⁶ Drawing from the evidence gathered through the *Literature Review*, the first phase of the overall study.

Table 2: Engagement Levels for Social Media Campaigns and Content Analyzed in this Study

Categories for Views/ Likest	Criterion for Videos (Views)	No of Videos	Criterion for Posts (Likes/ Reactions)	No of Posts	Overall No. (Total of 521 entries)	Distribution in the dataset (Total of 521 entries)
Very Low	<500	35	<100	183	218	41.8%
Low	500–3k	42	100–300	96	138	26.4%
Medium	3k–30k	35	300–1k	57	92	17.6%
High	30K to 1mn	27	1k and +	35	62	11.9%
Very High	1mn+	11	N/A	–	11	2%
Total		150		371	521	

There are some notable exceptions – for example, Arvind Kannan’s confrontational style of videos where he takes on spiritual guru Jaggi Vasudev, and Robin Singh’s distinctive and engaging storytelling style have received very high views (at 240k+ and 2.1Mn respectively; these figures are comparable to videos by large carnist brands such as Amul), while BK Shivani of the Brahmakumaris group, which promotes vegetarianism, also has a high viewership of 69.5k.

It is worth noting that viewership for specific campaigns seemed in keeping with the pre-existing number of followers of the advocate’s social media handles. It is recommended that vegan advocates increase their investment beyond content creation alone to building a following for their sites through content marketing and dissemination, since this will yield long-term dividends. In addition, a greater focus on video content may help, given that platforms like Instagram and Facebook give more prominence to videos vis-a-vis static content, and effectively disseminate them to new and relevant (algorithmically-determined) audiences. Other tactics for exponentially multiplying social media reach include paid-for boosting; strategic and coordinated use of common or related hashtags across posts, links, slogans or CTAs, as applicable, to create consistent messaging. We can see the increased viewership that this clarity provided to campaigns like “Save the Boy Child.”

- 2. Animal rights was the primary "frame" for vegan advocacy**, with 9/24 campaigns studied, followed by environmental sustainability (5/24), religion/spirituality and “vegan adoption” (4/24 each) and health (2). While this is partly the result of the study’s sampling methodology, it is indicative of broad trends that may explain why vegan advocacy is yet to achieve its full potential (further corroborated by the *w*).¹⁰⁷ Health remained somewhat on the backseat, often as a supporting frame; and rather than an explicit climate change focus, advocates tend to rely more on ideas of holistic or sustainable living – which can include welfare of people, planet and animals. This makes for a softer style of veganism, which appears to coexist with a sharper advocacy

¹⁰⁷ Bryant, 2019; Grassian, 2019; Radnitz et al., 2015; Animal Equality, 2018, Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2016.

with an animal rights frame.¹⁰⁸ Vegan campaigners must actively build alliances and strike common cause with related domains such as health, human rights, environment and climate change, so that vegan advocacy is generated from a wider range of actors in order that it gets reframed and repositioned as a larger social justice issue. The *LR* suggests that while AR frames make for effective and longer-term vegan adoption, health and environment are also key. The personal benefits of the health frame particularly promote behavior shifts, especially in the older age groups (Dauksza, 2018; Animal Equality, 2018; Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2016).

3. **Vegan Advocacy Focuses Mostly on Early Stages of Behavior Change.** A majority of the case studies focused on increasing awareness and conscientizing the general public to the violence in the meat/dairy industries — i.e., the pre-contemplation and contemplation phases of the behavior change. Far fewer focused on the latter phases of preparation, action, and maintenance phases (with the last phase mostly dominated by commercial brands). The analysis, of course, recognizes that these phases are not water-tight, nor lend themselves to easy quantification.

Given the increasing availability of vegan alternatives in the Indian market, as well as DIY recipes on the net, it is strongly recommended that far greater focus be given to the latter stages of behavior change—preparation, action and maintenance—so that audiences understand not just the “why” of veganism but the “how to” as well. The *LR* clearly identifies perception barriers stemming from the construction of veganism as a complex and unrealistic lifestyle, with concerns about potential nutritional deficiencies, and a lack of knowledge about vegan cooking (Twine, 2018; Fehér et al., 2020). Deconstructing veganism into a normal and doable everyday practice by focussing on creativity and material substitution is important, as is ensuring a balanced diet and highlighting the health, nutritive benefits and disease reversal potential of vegan diets.

4. **None of the campaigns directly address the issue of religion and caste in India when it comes to vegan promotion;** instead, they appeal to, and build on, a mostly upper caste Hindu sensibility (for example, equating milk with beef). These are, of course, powder keg issues best left for panel discussions and webinars. However, **there were notable examples of minority community voices to tackle traditional religious practices and promote change from within.** UFCI’s webinars, for example, feature young Muslim vegans who share their struggles, resistance as well as support received from family and friends, along with tips for transitioning to a vegan diet.¹⁰⁹ These “insider” stories and minority voices which integrate sensitivity to religious traditions broaden the appeal of veganism as an ethical movement relevant for all, rather than a modern-day extension of cultural vegetarianism motivated by right-wing majoritarian ideology.
5. **Given the omniscience of dairy in India, a bulk of the campaigns (17/24) focused on demolishing the Grand Narrative surrounding milk in India.** Deeply ingrained in Hindu mythology, widely consumed across religions and castes, milk enjoys a sacrosanct status, impervious to the prevailing politics of what can, or can’t, be eaten. Within this Grand Narrative (Lyotard, 1984)—historically-constructed stories and belief systems that tie together experience, knowledge and meaning in such a totalizing manner that alternative interpretations are rendered impossible—the cow is a nurturing mother

¹⁰⁸ Freeman, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ See chapter II D 1 – UFCI.

figure, her milk an elixir of life, lifting millions out of poverty and malnutrition, and transforming into a nationalist symbol (Wiley, 2011; Narayan, 2018). Cow slaughter, therefore, is unthinkable and eating cow meat a sacrilege. Yet, milk is to India what meat is to the west – “Natural, Normal, Necessary and Nice” (Piazza et al., 2015).

Dairy-focused campaigns have typically received high visibility – Kannan and Singh’s presentations received views ranging from 200k to more than a million. Dairy-related advocacy leverages cognitive dissonance and moral shock strategies, often juxtaposing benign symbolism with hard reality, the supposed reverence for the “cow as mother” with the violence inflicted on them (and to a more limited extent, buffaloes). The cow and calf bonds are anthropomorphized to generate pathos, while ethos and logos are deployed to spotlight the realities and persuade audiences towards veganism.¹¹⁰

Only a few campaigns tackle barrier beliefs around the perceived health and nutrition benefits of milk, probably because challenging ages-old wisdom about milk can be tricky and even counterproductive, exposing vegan campaigns to accusations of false claims. The few that do integrate these barrier beliefs include Mazumdar’s video “Leafletting in your own neighborhood: Will she go vegan?”; an UFCI video on how “Dairy Leads to Bad Health”, and talks by Jain monks. While activists such as Mazumdar and Kannan categorically oppose dairy, Singh promotes a reductionist “veganish” approach, of minimizing the “suffering footprint” within the larger context of rehabilitating abandoned cows through shelters. His conciliatory, middle-of-the road approach may hold more appeal for mainstream audiences, but also risks animal welfare, diluting the ideological stance and legitimizing “free-range” dairy.

Dairy-focused advocacy is highly relevant in India, given that the country has the highest cattle population in the world, is the leading producer of milk, and third highest exporter of beef globally. It is also crucial for deflecting potential conflation of veganism with upper-caste majoritarian ideology of vegetarianism.

6. The analysis found a strategic use of communication strategies and tactics

that have been empirically established as being effective in promoting behavior and social change both within and outside of the domain of vegan advocacy, a practice that deserves continuation (Wang and Basso, 2019; Cherry, 2010; Rosenfeld, 2019; Bratanova et al., 2011). For example,

- **Anthropomorphizing farmed animals** by ascribing human attributes (such as the capacity for intelligence, love and familial bonds, and experiencing pain) creates a strong emotional bridge with the audience. This is reflected in campaigns that humanize animals by giving them names and personalities, as seen in Singh’s video¹¹¹; mock meat brand GoodDot’s animated goat mascot named “GoodDo”; PFA and FIAPO campaigns that focus on the mother-child bond between the cow and her calf, the pain of separation, and the denial of milk to the calf; AE’s depiction of hens as “maternal” and “social.”¹¹² Some campaigns draw strong parallels with

¹¹⁰ Key examples of advocacy with in-depth explanations are activist Mazumdar’s street interviews where she explains the entire process of dairy farming; Kannan and UFCI’s video presentations on why “Ahimsa Milk is a Lie.”

¹¹¹ The video is titled *How to Save India From This Sickness*.

¹¹² See Chapter II A 4 – Animal Equality

gender-based violence against women,¹¹³ and others create re-enactments of animal confinement using human actors.¹¹⁴

- **Cognitive Dissonance** (Festinger, 1957)¹¹⁵ is used by many vegan campaigns to highlight the conflict between the stated beliefs and values of individuals and their dietary behaviors, and offer veganism as a solution to resolve this conflict. For example, Mazumdar appeals to the humane side of her interviewee by saying, “You are a lovely, compassionate, kind person” and then contrasts that with the violence intrinsic to their (carnist) dietary behaviors: “Your conscience says it’s a wrong thing to do, still why do we do this?”, thus spotlighting cognitive dissonance in her audience(s). She then deflects the blame on social norms and conditioning (rather than blaming the individual) and allows for them to resolve this dissonance by switching from carnist to vegan dietary choices. Some vegan campaigns also successfully reference and subvert cultural symbols and icons to have the same effect. For example, PFA’s campaign which uses the popular jingle for dairy brand Amul, “The Taste of India”, but changes the lyrics to “Mother’s Love is Taste of India” referencing the denial of milk to the calf, and superimposing this over unflinching graphic visuals of systemic violence in the dairy industry.
- **Moral shock** spotlights the sheer brutality and scale of systemic violence within factory farms. For example, PETA’s footage of male chicks being drowned or crushed to death, and male calves being killed;¹¹⁶ PFA’s footage of calves being routinely tortured, and transporters putting chili powder in the eyes of cows to force them onto trucks for transportation to slaughterhouses.

It must be noted that the relative effectiveness of the above strategies is contingent on several factors, hence a closer understanding of the same, together with audience research, is recommended prior to planning their use for campaigns in India. In particular, caution needs to be used in the case of moral shock as a strategy (Wrenn, 2013; Scudder and Mills, 2019; Mika, 2006).

7. **Notable effort to Indianize advocacy by leveraging cultural symbols, vernacular and contextual cues that anchor veganism in the Indian socio-cultural context** and may hold greater resonance and aid easy comprehension and empathy. For example, VIM’s “Satyagraha 2.0” fashions itself after the non-violent public protests of India’s freedom movement; vegan brand One Good makes a similar comparison in its promotion of plant-based milk with “Dairy Se Bhi Azaadi” (freedom from dairy as well). PETA’s “Save the Boy Child” campaign also borrows from the high-visibility “Save the Girl Child” national campaign by the Government of India and various NGOs to address the historic discrimination towards girls and women in India, but inverts it to pique curiosity and attention. Activists also call upon the existing cultural empathy for cows to spotlight the otherwise hidden violence of dairy. These strategies root veganism within its unique

¹¹³ PETA’s campaign “Save the Boy Child” drew parallels between the culling of male (baby) animals and sex-selection and female feticide among humans in India.

¹¹⁴ See chapter II A 5 – HSI/India

¹¹⁵ Cognitive dissonance is a theoretical framework which refers to the psychological stress resulting from conflict/contradiction occurring among/between an individual’s actions, feelings, ideas, beliefs, values, and environmental factors. For example, an individual may hold values of compassion and kindness to animals, but when they receive information that their eating of meat involves violence to animals they will try to reduce/resolve this psychological distress through a variety of strategies. Creating and visibilizing cognitive dissonance is one of the key strategies used by vegan campaigns.

¹¹⁶ See chapter II A 1 – PETA

Indian context, rather than being a simple reproduction of a western sensibility, and can be crucial for sustainable behavior change (Berti, 2019).

Indianizing vegan advocacy also involved tailoring language to appeal to diverse Indian audiences, ranging from aspirational Americanized slang¹¹⁷ to everyday conversational “Hinglish”,¹¹⁸ in order to be both intelligible and persuasive to different audiences. FIAPO’s DGM campaign is notable in that it uses a range of styles in the same campaign, for e.g., “Ditch Dairy” and “Doodh kam jhooth zyada”; VIM’s pan-India “Satyagraha 2.0” included participants from several tier 2 towns (breaking the large metro stereotype for veganism) writing placards in their mother tongues, serving to further Indianize the campaign. It is recommended that vegan advocates continue to anchor campaigns in India’s socio-cultural context, with a focus on local sustainable foods, helping the movement take firm root.

8. **Vegan advocacy in India has a predominantly young face**, whether it is VIM’s pan-India animal rights marches, UFCI’s webinars with new vegans, or brave Young Turks such as Kannan demolishing the pro-dairy stance of leading spiritual icons like Jaggi Vasudev. This lends a much-needed sense of energy and passion to the movement, and is aligned with evidence cited in the *LR* that suggest that younger age groups are especially motivated towards veg*nism by animal rights and ethical concerns (Filippini and Srinivasan, 2018; Maxfield et al., 2016; Stoll-Kleemann and Schmidt, 2016; Animal Equality, 2018). In addition, vegan advocacy needs to expand its reach to wider age groups by building on the few examples using the health frame (cited by the *LR* as being most effective for the older 41–60 age group). Mobilizing spiritual leaders to expand their longstanding focus from vegetarianism to veganism can also help leverage their increasing number of followers across all age groups.
9. **Use of celebrities and social modeling was a common strategy.** The focus on glamorous film and television stars (such as Mallika Sherawat), cricketing (Virat Kohli) and sports stars, was complemented with experts from the fields of health (Dr. Nandita Shah) nutrition and fitness, as well as vegan chefs and on-ground influencers who provide ongoing tips and support for adopting and maintaining vegan practice. These “mixed ensembles” help diversify the reach of veganism; while some draw upon international vegan celebrities such as Joaquin Phoenix and Brad Pitt to lend a sense of scale and global community. Advocacy was also informed by some vegan actors such as Richa Chaddha and Swara Bhaskar, both known for supporting broader social justice issues, lending credibility and legitimization for veganism; in other cases such as Sofit’s use of actor-producer John Abraham (a vegetarian, and known to support animal charities) messaging was restricted to health and fitness.

It is also noteworthy that some vegan activists have emerged as leading icons in their own right – for example, MP Maneka Gandhi who has spearheaded the animal rights movement since the 1980s. Kannan and Singh have a following that rivals Amul, while others such as Dr. Nandita Shah have gained much traction (even if offline) thanks to her work on the disease reversal potential of vegan diets.

Using celebrities, however, must be tempered with a high degree of caution: while they provide visibility and recall for vegan campaigns, they may also imbue it with an undue sense of glamor, elitism and consumerism. In addition, care must be exercised to not project vegetarian celebrities as vegan icons. Some organizations featured actresses

¹¹⁷ See chapter II A 2 – FIAPO.

¹¹⁸ See chapter II B 1 – Peepal Farm.

such as Rakul Preet Singh and Rupali Ganguly as vegan – but subsequently these same celebrities featured in commercial advertising endorsing animal-derived products, completely undermining the credibility of the vegan cause.

10. It is also important to deconstruct veganism into a simple everyday practice so that it is not perceived as a difficult, elitist, consumerist fad, divorced from the realities of India. For example, Gandhi discourages the excessive focus on vegan products, consumption and consumerism, advocating instead for a veganism that integrates simple, minimalistic, low-carbon footprint living, which aligns with the country's longstanding valorization of holistic living. Various advocates regularly share vegan recipes on social media that use local, affordable and nutritious foods.

11. New and contemporary content formats increase perceived credibility. In today's media landscape that is swamped with misinformation, fake news, and click-bait, audiences tend to be more skeptical of online information. More contemporary content formats address this concern by offering audiences a sense of clarity and reliability that is often lacking in traditional news and documentary formats. For example, as cited by the *LR*, a UK-based study found value in the use of videos featuring a narrator, preferably a celebrity narrator (Bryant, 2019).

- **Investigative journalism exposes wrongdoing and holds those in power accountable.** A mainstay of vegan campaigns globally, revelatory content that employs a quasi-documentary style is employed in vegan campaigns in India. Campaigners such as PFA, AE, PETA have conducted investigations and collected video footage of dairy and egg farms. These are shared as reports or woven into emotive ad films with disturbing footage and explanatory voice-overs, as in the case of PETA's "Save the Boy Child" campaign which has received reasonably good views of 22,000.
- **Online activists clarify and sharpen audience understanding of veganism through strong arguments and facts.** As a new-age arbiter of fact, Kannan respects the intelligence of his audiences by presenting not only a clear rights-based position for his analysis but also sharing detailed and systematic facts and information. By adopting a debating style, he is also able to tackle specific barriers against veganism by addressing popular carnist discourses and sometimes specifically rebutting the carnist views of well-known political and religious figures.
- **Unscripted dialogues generate more credibility.** Mazumdar's street-level interventions should be viewed in the context of the growing popularity of "street interviews" on social media. In her videos, audiences witness a live and seemingly unscripted interaction where specific barriers around veganism are tackled. Such content can be even more engaging if kept concise and less pushy.
- **Personalized narratives by popular advocates create emotional connect with listeners.** An activist like Singh relies on a storytelling approach that weaves a narrative with pathos and empathy in simple accessible language (Hindi with some English). His conversational style fosters a sense of intimacy that increases trust. Kannan also at times shares videos of his own struggles going vegan which humanize his journey.

Despite the longer format of these videos, the personal appeal of these influencers who combine facts with sound narrative or argument seems to have good impact as evidenced by high views. Other content formats that can be leveraged include long-form content

with in-depth analysis and contextualization, as well as podcasts hosted by domain experts. Cues can also be taken from popular online news outlets like Vox and BuzzFeed that combine informative reporting with engaging visuals, graphics, and storytelling techniques to make complex topics more accessible and interesting for a wide audience.

SOME AREAS OF CAUTION FOR VEGAN ADVOCACY IN INDIA

- Given the highly sensitive nature of dietary choices in the country, it would be wise to refrain from targeting minority communities or perpetuating existing prejudices in the process of advocating veganism. Advocacy against dog meat markets¹¹⁹ in the north-eastern states of India singled out particular diets of an already marginalized group, while some advocacy with government aimed to promote plant-based mid-day meals in schools nationwide. While well-intentioned, such advocacy risks being perceived as insensitive to issues of malnutrition especially among marginalized communities and their right to food and nutrition, which is already under attack by majoritarian forces. Vegan advocacy would do well at this point to maintain focus on populations that have the privilege of making a choice.
- Highlighting the Covid-19 pandemic as a possible trigger can make vegan advocacy appear sensational and less credible. The ongoing debates around the origin of the pandemic can affect the credibility of campaigns¹²⁰ that hinge on conclusively declaring that live animal markets are the cause for all zoonotic diseases. It also leaves room for carnist brands to bypass these objections by fashioning their products as “organic” and “free-range”.
- As is the case globally, a welfarist stance risks being co-opted by carnist brands that declare themselves to be organic and free-range,¹²¹ hence vegan advocates must remain rooted in an abolitionist stance.

CONCLUSION

This content analysis of social media provides a nuanced understanding of the online vegan advocacy landscape in India, the different frames, strategies and messages currently being deployed. In the process it reveals some good practices and strategies, and offers recommendations informed by empirical evidence cited in the *LR*. It also laid the ground for the next phase of the study – *A Public Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)* with regard to veganism and the socio-cultural frameworks impacting dietary choices in India.

As stated upfront, this analysis is by no means an impact assessment. It is strongly recommended that vegan advocacy integrate formative research and pretesting with audience segments being targeted as well as impact assessments in order to ensure 360° advocacy planning processes. It is only by investing in such efforts can vegan advocacy and campaigning in India achieve its full potential.

¹¹⁹ The ban on dog meat markets was supported and celebrated by the community of dog lovers across India who do not necessarily align with vegan advocacy.

¹²⁰ PETA, PFA, AE and MDV all advocated for shutdowns of live-animal markets in India, linking their cramped, diseased conditions with the rise of zoonotic diseases.

¹²¹ Organic dairy brands like Akshayakalpa even offer guided tours of their facilities in Bengaluru while hiding the grim realities for male calves.

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