



# Mother Earth has a hole in her heart

## Looking through the lenses of ahimsa, science and history to correct the blindness of commercialism and heal Mother Earth



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About a month ago, I passed out in a restaurant for a few minutes. When I came to, our granddaughter Kimaya was bawling her eyes out, and her dad, our son Akhil, was dabbing the sweat on the back of my head with my dinner napkin. After I spent a few hours in the emergency room, a doctor told me to contact a cardiologist and get myself checked out. I asked him, 'Why do you want me to see a cardiologist? You just told me that you couldn't find anything wrong with my vital signs.'



Dr Sailesh Rao with his granddaughter Kimaya

He replied, 'Because you are no spring chicken.'

In the past month, I have been put through many medical tests and I have an appointment with my cardiologist later this month for his diagnosis.

I am keeping my fingers crossed and trusting that all is well. After all, as the Robert Frost poem<sup>1</sup> says, I have a promise to keep, and miles to go before I sleep. Six years ago, I made a solemn promise to Kimaya to do my job and create a vegan world for her by her sixteenth birthday on 19 November 2026, so that people will stop eating her relatives, the animals. That was the least I could do after

I had created a world full of monsters for a 5-year-old little girl when I explained to her how evolution works.

I am 62, about three years older than when my mother was also in a cardiologist's office over a quarter of a century ago. Back in 1996, the cardiologist said that it was just a matter of time before her heart gave out, and he was surprised that she was still alive.

I made an appointment to see a hypnotherapist right away. I was desperate. Over the previous decade and a half, the only thing that my mother had asked me to do was to stop smoking. She reminded me constantly that I was a sickly, asthmatic infant. Therefore, my smoking habit was truly a wrong-headed move, but from the moment I inhaled that first cigarette, I was hooked. And from the moment she found out about my smoking, 'Amma' made it her mission to get me to stop.

I tried to quit several times using nicotine patches, nicotine gum and, after her heart disease diagnosis, even hypnotherapy, but nothing worked for too long. And during every telephone call and in every letter from India to the US, Amma pleaded with me to quit.

In February 1997, Amma died in her sleep peacefully in her sixtieth year on this planet. Her heart gave out. In March 1997, I quit my smoking habit for good. I was devastated that I could not fulfil my mother's one simple wish when she was alive, and I was determined to quit. This time, it was not Amma's pleading that was making me go through the motions of quitting, but an irresistible force from within the depths of my being that was compelling me to quit. All the propaganda, advertising and chemical machinations of the tobacco purveyors were no match for this inner force.

Human behavioural change occurs in one of two ways: through manipulation by external forces or through inspiration from within. It is transformation of the latter kind that is enduring. The former changes come from fear or coercion and can be reversed when the coercion stops, while the latter transformation comes from love.

### Do we love our Mother Earth enough to quit our addictions before she dies?

The heat map of India over the past week as I write is in agreement with climate model predictions that the subcontinent of India will be ground zero for climate disasters if we continue our global consumerist addictions. High temperatures in India, the land of ahimsa and the spiritual heart of Mother Earth, exceeded 62 degrees C (143 degrees F) in the past week.

Looking back in history, we rightly castigate Sir Winston Churchill for his wartime policies during the Bengal famine of 1943. The Churchill government deliberately let 3 million people die of hunger in India during that famine. George Santayana wrote, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'<sup>2</sup> What about those who can remember the past but nevertheless repeat it?

How will history judge the Biden administration's 'Discover Dairy' campaign in elementary schools with its 'Adopt a Cow' program to lure children into becoming consumer addicts, even as the global climate disaster unfolds and India burns?

How will history judge the US and Brazilian government intervention in the latest United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report to eliminate the recommendation of plant-based diets and replace it with mealy-mouthed language about grass-fed animal agriculture

deceptions, even as the climate disaster unfolds and India burns?

Not well, I am sure, assuming that there are future historians chronicling these misdeeds.

My good friend Glen Merzer keeps asking the question 'Are they fools?' in his new slide presentation *A Convenient Truth*, a robust antidote to Al Gore's Nobel prize-winning presentation *An Inconvenient Truth*. I told him to add the question 'Do they think we are fools?', but I prefer to think that the answer to both these questions is 'No'. They are prisoners stuck to an economic Ponzi scheme that systematically fritters precious planetary resources at the top while systematically denying vital planetary resources at the bottom. They cannot express their agony openly. Instead, they are exposing the basic arithmetic that we need to master to help free them from their predicament.

Before I attended the UN climate change meeting COP26 in Glasgow, I asked the question 'Are they trying to kill us?', along with the basic arithmetic that can be found in UN scientific reports. After attending COP26, I believe that yes, they are trying to kill us, but they do not have a choice in that matter as long as we keep failing to take action as a community. They cannot change by themselves. We collectively shoulder the responsibility to make them change. Mother Earth has a hole in her heart. Many scientists are surprised that she is still alive. How will you respond?

About a century ago, Mahatma Gandhi was trying to convince the people of India to change their clothes, from British ones made in the corporate mills of Manchester to plain 'Khadi' clothes made by Indians in India. Within a dozen years, the Khadi movement had succeeded in bringing the British government to its knees. The government begged to negotiate with Gandhi in the Round Table Conferences, especially after his Salt March in 1930. During the Khadi campaign, Gandhi wrote in the *Naujivan* magazine in 1926, 'I am a salesman of Swaraj (Freedom). I am a devotee of Khadi. I consider it my duty to induce people, by every honest means, to wear Khadi.'

Today, in our campaign to turn the world largely vegan by 2026, I paraphrase Gandhi as follows, 'I am a salesman of ahimsa. I am a devotee of veganism. I consider it my duty to induce people, by every honest means, to go vegan.'

Philip Wollen suggests that veganism is like the Swiss Army knife of the future; one instrument solves our ethical, economic, environmental, water and health problems, and ends animal cruelty forever. The vegan movement is the Khadi movement of the twenty-first century and it is global. Now, it is not about changing clothes, but about changing our diets and our consumerist addictions and attitudes. In addition to a whole-foods plant-based (WFPB) diet to not harm our personal health, veganism envisions a world without the exploitation of humans, the Earth itself or animals to promote an end to the harming of our fellow earthlings and ensure the hole in the heart of our Mother Earth heals.

Ultimately, it is only when we routinely treat her and all our fellow earthlings as sacred that we will truly create a sustainable civilisation. All the rest is marketing hokum, electric nonsense. Anyone with a middle school education can calculate that we are not going to merely solar-panel our way out of this climate disaster.

Jeff Bezos has pointed out that if our global energy needs to continue to grow, by the end of the twenty-first century we would have to pave every square inch of the Earth's surface with solar panels to supply the energy demands of humanity. His response is to colonise space and install solar panels up there. And carry on, *ad infinitum*, until we cover the known universe with solar panels, presumably. My response is to call for a phased transition from our climate-heating, infinite-growth economic paradigm to a climate-healing, eternal-gratitude economic paradigm right here on Earth, our only planetary home.

World Food Healers Day (19 November 2022), is the modern-day equivalent of Gandhi's Salt March of 1930. Instead of

walking to the ocean and making salt, let us walk into our kitchens and cook up a storm to feed every human being on the planet a healthy, WFPB universal vegan meal and end world hunger on that day. World hunger is supposed to be an evil problem, but only when you look at it through the lens of the money system. When you take money out of the equation, world hunger is a simple problem to solve. We procure six times as much food as we need from the planet – and we do not know how to feed everyone? Oh, please! Let us see what it feels like to live in harmony with each other and all life on Earth, on at least one day, and take it from there.

Let us find the love within our hearts on World Food Healers Day and beyond. Mother Earth has a hole in her heart. It needs healing. How will you respond? Love is the only solution. Have the courage to be kind to all life. Make this greatest transformation in human history happen sooner rather than later. Eat plants. Plant trees. Love animals. Heal the planet. It is that simple.

Sailesh Rao

#### References

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#### Notes

- 1 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', in *New Hampshire*, Henry Holt 1923.
- 2 *The Life of Reason*, Vol. 1, Scribner 1905.

