

Vivisection in India

by James Routledge

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DEAR MR. EDITOR,

Knowing you to be a true friend of dumb animals, and an ardent upholder of the Law of Mercy wherever it is possible for mercy to be exercised, I venture to call your attention to the feeling with which the report of the Hyderabad Chloroform Commission (so-called) — in reality a Commission for Vivisection — has been received in this country.

It is not a noisy feeling, or one that is to any great extent represented in the daily newspaper press; but among the calmest and most resolved friends that India has in the British Islands, (and I am sure the same remark will apply to America, and to several European nations, when once the facts are known), it has a depth and intensity which I do not remember to have been equalled, in any like case, in my experience of public affairs. [Page 16]

The feeling is one of simple horror that India, of whose gentleness and mercifulness many Englishmen have strongly, and often spoken, should have been selected for experiments which it has been publicly asserted would not be permitted in this country, lax as English law is with regard to the system of secret torture which goes under the name of vivisection.

The *Lancet* states that in Hyderabad 490 dogs, horses, monkeys, goats, cats and rabbits had been *used* — (kindly notice the word that I have italicised), and that 600 experiments had been carried out, under the direction of this Commission. The same animals had, in some cases, been used more than once, after an interval, say of three or four days. Every intelligent reader of the words knows what this means.

"In order" (the Report says) "to test the alleged danger from shock during chloroform administration, the Committee performed a very large number of those operations which are reputed to be particularly dangerous in this connection — such as extraction, evulsion (tearing out) of nails — section of muscles of the eye, etc.. In many cases the operations were performed after the animals were merely stupefied by chloroform and not fully insensible". The stories of the fiendish cruelties inflicted by vivisection as we know it in England, I shall not attempt in any case to re-narrate, They are too horrible to keep before one, or to dwell upon.

I am quite sure that the Nizam cannot know what, in its naked deformity, vivisection really is, and how it

has been depicted and stripped of its pretences, by men of the highest character and culture, both in science and literature, in this country. The vivisectors say that the operations are in many cases painless. They do not say in all cases; and for what they do say their word is not accepted. From all parts of the British Islands have come words as direct as these — "*We do not believe you!* The power, and the exercise of the power, of secret torture are in their very nature brutalising; and neither you nor any other men are to be trusted to draw the line at which you suppose that there is no suffering. No such power as you claim ever was entrusted to any human beings without leading step by step to cruelties far beyond what was at first contemplated, or at least avowed."

We are pointed also to the fact that some eminent men have carried on these operations. I reply that eminent men have condemned these operations; and that for one vivisector who might perhaps be trusted to reduce the suffering to its smallest possible limits, there must, in the nature of things, be scores of vivisectors who do not care in the least what amount of suffering they inflict, or how long their helpless victims suffer. [page 17]

There are many strong and unanswerable arguments against the practice of vivisection in any hands. I will mention three. Eminent doctors, and scientific men, testify that, in their opinion, Nature does not give up her secrets to the vivisector; that her way to knowledge, for any purposes of mercy to man never can be the way of cruelty and suffering intentionally inflicted on any other living creatures.

Another argument is that in the medical profession, (in many cases distinguished by gentleness and pitifulness, and in which these qualities are so greatly needed and so deeply prized) there is great danger that even the habitual sight of cruelty and torture will harden the heart to the cry of suffering, and turn the mercy into cruelty, the kindness into callousness.

Other points, with undeniable examples from history, to the fact that the love of cruelty grows; and that people who have begun by torturing animals which cannot speak, have generally ended by torturing helpless human beings.

Each of these arguments is, I think, worthy of consideration from its own point of view; and the concluding one is surely of great importance to India, which depends so much on its power to protect itself from every form and kind of cruelty. What may not be the consequences if these practices are allowed? You know that the kidnappers of half a century ago found in eminent doctors customers for dead bodies, Allow vivisection to prevail in India and we may have a new system of Thuggee, sanctioned by the Law and blessed by Science — till the evil thing is found out. This is but one reason among many which will occur to your readers why India in particular should not have vivisection forced upon it on any plea whatever. For the protection of India itself, and especially of its poor people, I plead against this unholy experiment.

But, Sir, these arguments, strong as they may be, do not include the one which I venture to submit to the Nizam, and to you, and to the intelligent men of India, as the strongest and highest argument of all. That we have no warrant, in the faiths of India, any more than in the faith of England, or in any instinct of the human heart, for the claim to inflict torture on any living thing, be the presumed, or asserted, benefit to man what it may. The cowardly plea that the vivisector may, by his researches, learn something useful to

mankind has been dealt with by many earnest and gifted speakers and writers; and I am sure it will be met in the same spirit by many of the true men of India, and by none more earnestly than the generous writer who sketched the picture of the "Bengalee *pariah*, my poor Tom".

I can fancy poor Tom under the vivisector's knife, and fastened to [Page 18] a board, every limb bound down so that he could not stir, and his mouth gagged so that he could not cry. Can you, Mr. Editor, fancy this, and then fancy the writer who drew Tom's picture looking on, like a philosopher, callous to suffering ? The latter fancy is beyond me. I can fancy that writer flying at the vivisector's throat, and trying conclusions with him, man to man,

I earnestly appeal to the Nizam, on behalf of many English ladies, whose feeling I know that these words all too weakly represent, and of many Englishmen, ardent defenders of India's just rights, that he will reconsider the permission he has given to this Chloroform Commission; that he will consider the danger of opening the door to vivisection in India; the value to India, "Prince and Peasant" alike, of the law of mercy, which never before ran so great a risk of being set at nought in your land.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours truly,

James Routledge

Carmarthenshire.

P.S. — One other thought I might have mentioned. There is, I think, no doubt that many vivisectors push their experiments to the utmost extent that a living being can endure and live, or endure before death, the object being to gauge the limit of endurance. I leave this fact to speak for itself. J. R.