

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Mohandas K. Gandhi said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals.” This noble sentiment reflects the strong bond between human beings and animals throughout history. Beyond our dependence on animals for labor or food or clothing, people across the globe have domesticated animals for millennia. Our ancient engagement with animals may

be one of the reasons why so many people feel so strongly about their pets. Americans and Indians continue to take animals into our homes, giving them special places in our family lives. People adopt animals, raise them, name them, love them, and have founded organizations to care for lost, wounded or unwanted animals, as Laurinda Keys Long writes in our cover story, “Humans’ Best Friends.”

Most pet owners feel that the care and love we shower on our animals is repaid, many-fold. (We have all heard stories about people leaving bequests from their estates for their surviving animals. Judy Richter tells more of these tales in “When Your Heirs are Hairy.”)

Yet, many also contend that caring for pets is good for our souls, and our bodies. In her article “Puppies Behind Bars,” Andrea Neal describes American programs that allow prisoners to bond with and train dogs to help others—the blind, elderly, sick or disabled. Although not all animals can be trained to do such important tasks, “Pets are Good for Your Health” explains that just having a pet around has significant and long-term health benefits.

SPAN staffers are fond of their pets and have pressed me to share my dog story in the hope you will write to us with special stories about yours. When my young children began to plead for a family dog some years ago, I could not resist. So on a cold winter day my son and I went to an animal shelter and picked up a mixed-breed puppy. We named her Nikki and she won our hearts. With the kids now grown and living elsewhere, Nikki today presides over our New Delhi garden, sleeps by my side and welcomes our Indian and American guests enthusiastically in ever-hopeful anticipation of attention or a treat.

We hope you will enjoy reading about pets, as well as pieces on other pleasures that Indians and Americans share, such as food and music. In “Beyond Tikka Masala,” Sebastian John reveals the innovations U.S.-based chefs are making in Indian cuisine, while Ruma Dasgupta explores eastern India’s fascination with Bob Dylan, who recently became the first rock music artist to win the Pulitzer Prize, a prestigious American award for written and photographic work.

In friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jany Arundel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.