

SUMMER  
2006

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## Captive Elephants Suffering on an Unprecedented Scale



**A** new book has lifted the lid on the appalling circumstances of many of India's domesticated elephants. 'Gods in Chains' by Rhea Ghosh tells a shocking tale of neglect, cruelty and abuse of animals that are supposedly revered as a cherished national symbol.

There are around 3,500 domesticated elephants in India today and according to Ghosh they are 'kept primarily as business ventures and treated as such'.

The situation in India differs from that in south-east Asia due to the large number of domesticated elephants that are kept and hired out for use in religious festivals. The presence of elephants at a festival brings status and prestige to the event and no doubt excites and attracts crowds—but at what cost to the elephants?

The problem exists throughout India, but is particularly acute in Kerala state in southern India during May and November, when each temple will celebrate between two and five major festivals.

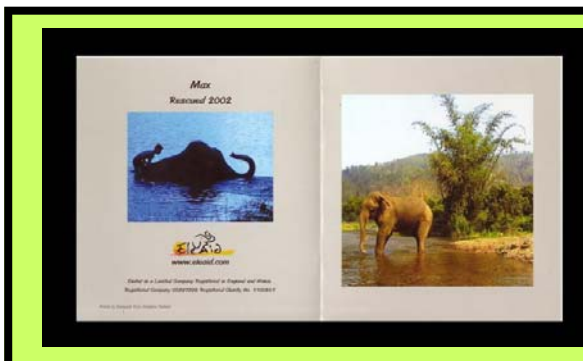
Often the elephants are richly caparisoned and sometimes overloaded with ornate howdahs and other decorations. It is quite common for elephants to have to stand in the sun with little water and no shade for up to twelve hours at a time. The scorching tarmac streets burn the elephants' feet and can cause permanent damage. Frequently owners and mahouts resort to the use of drugs to keep the elephants in a calm state.

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A brutal foot clamp used to control an Indian elephant in musth.

Picture courtesy of CUPA India.

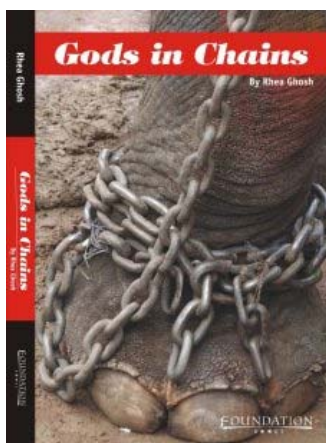


EleAid Greeting Cards

Now Available from our website

[www.eleaid.com](http://www.eleaid.com)

See page 3 for full details



## Gods in Chains by Rhea Ghosh

**G**ods in Chains offers a comprehensive study of the issues surrounding captive elephants in India.

The book is well researched and describes the disturbing conditions in which most captive elephants live and the current legal and economic situation concerning domesticated elephants in India.

The author makes well thought out recommendations and call for agencies to co-operate for the benefit of India's elephants.

You can order a copy from

[godsinchains.netfirms.com](http://godsinchains.netfirms.com)

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Other captive elephants are permanently kept at temples and spend the majority of the time on short chains. Many of these animals permanently rock from back to front and side to side so great is their distress.

Street begging is also common in India and owners try to exploit the public's love for these magnificent animals by eliciting donations. Street elephants are inflicted with sunburn as well as foot, digestive and respiratory complaints but the public's money is rarely used for veterinary care.

The problems captive elephants face are magnified by the disappearance of skilled mahouts. The old generation of mahouts, who were dedicated to the craft of elephant care have all but gone. Today looking after elephants is not a desirable profession and they have been replaced by unskilled men who struggle to find other forms of employment. The mahouts change frequently and control is often meted out at the end of a stick or the ankush. Abuse and cruelty are sadly very common.

Ironically, Ghosh reports that India has some of the most advance elephant welfare laws. Unfortunately there is a lack of effective monitoring and enforcement of the laws is very rare.

Ghosh concludes with a number of recommendations with an admirably pragmatic approach that takes into account the concerns of all groups, including the owners. She calls for the creation of elephant sanctuaries, the adoption of national standards of care and a registration scheme for all domesticated elephants.

## An Elephant Sanctuary for India – At Last!

**I**t seems incredible that India, the country with the largest number of Asian elephants and the second highest captive population, does not have a single safe haven for domesticated elephants in distress.

Thankfully that looks set to change in the near future with the intervention of an inspirational animal welfare group—Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA) and its sister organisation, the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (WRRC).

The two organisations operate out of Bangalore in central India. Established in 1991 CUPA has developed into a major animal welfare organisation concentrating mainly on smaller animals. However recently they have become increasingly concerned with the condition of many of India's domesticated elephants.

With the assistance Dr Raman Sukumar, the world's leading elephant expert, they began surveying the captive elephant population. Their findings, as reported in this newsletter, were shocking and as a result CUPA have decided to set up India's first sanctuary.

CUPA representatives recently visited Thailand to research methods used at the Elephant Nature Park. During their visit EleAid had long discussion about the proposed new sanctuary. We were extremely impressed not just with CUPA's obvious enthusiasm for the project but also with professional approach to the project.

The proposed sanctuary will be set up near Bangalore and will offer a natural setting where suffering elephants can recover and live in peace.

EleAid has promised CUPA our full support and hopes the new sanctuary will begin operation soon. We will keep you informed as the project develops.

Visit CUPA's website

<http://www.cupabangalore.org>

# Make Someone Smile – Send them an EleAid Card

EleAid is delighted to unveil our new range of greeting cards. The cards are available in four designs and feature some beautiful pictures of elephants that EleAid has rescued.

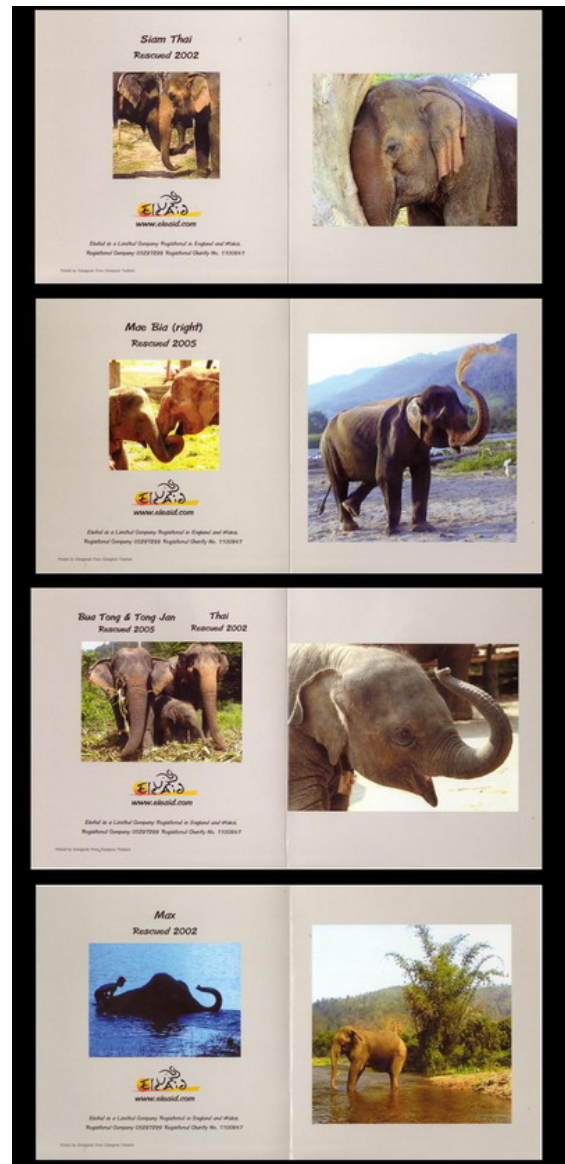
The cards are printed on high gloss 210 GSM card and are packaged individually with an envelope in a plastic wrapper. The inside of the cards has been left blank for your own message.

Please support us by placing an order, they are suitable for any occasion and are sure to make the recipient smile.

The cards are for sale for just 99p or £3.99 for a pack of all four designs, including postage and packing. You can place an order at our online shop [www.eleaid.com](http://www.eleaid.com)

or send a cheque to:

EleAid Cards  
20 Sandy Lane  
South Wootton  
Kings Lynn  
Norfolk  
PE30 3NX



## In Brief

### Gabion Appeal

A big thank you to all those who supported our gabion appeal to help with the flood protection scheme at the Elephant Nature Park. The appeal raised over £750.

Do you have a website?

We have been working hard to build up the EleAid website and are trying to increase the number of visitors. If you have a site can you please link it to ours. We would be very grateful and can offer a reciprocal link.

Please email [weblink@eleaid.com](mailto:weblink@eleaid.com) for details.

### T-Shirt Sale

We are offering a sale on EleAid T-shirts to reduce excessive stock holdings. The shirts with a design front and back are available from our website shop at **£6.99** including postage and packing. Different sizes available.

## Come and Join Us in Norwich

EleAid have arranged to have a stand at the popular Norwich Forum on **Saturday August 12th**.

The stand will be manned by Mike and Jackie Welham and Michael and Sheila Medlar all of whom have visited the EleAid elephants at the Nature Park over the past few months. They will be happy to talk about their experiences and EleAid's work.

On display will be plenty of elephant information and pictures. The stall will also have a range of EleAid and other elephant merchandise.

If you are in Norwich or the surrounding area please come and say hello!

Norwich Forum

Saturday August 12th

This event is kindly sponsored by  
Total Control

## FACE - For All Captive Elephants - Launched A New Era of Co-Operation in Elephant Conservation

An informal gathering between four organisations working to support elephants could mark the beginning of a new network to help elephants throughout Asia.

The organisations concerned were EleAid, Elephants & Friends, The Elephant Nature Park (both Thailand) and CUPA (India).

Wide ranging discussions were held over a couple of days concerning all aspects of the Asian elephant situation and possible solutions to the many problems elephants face. On many issues the groups found there was considerable common ground including the need for more co-operation between organisation working for elephants.

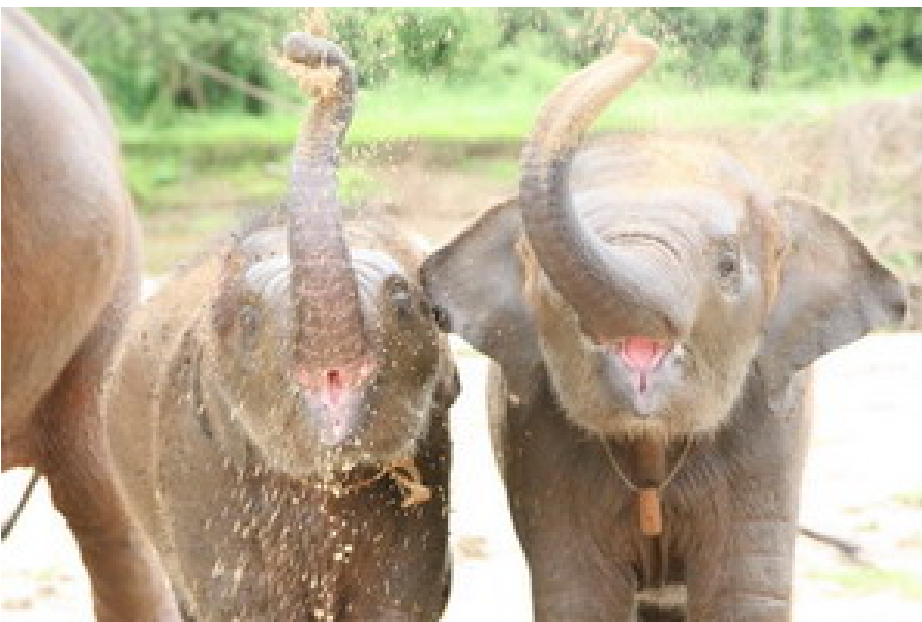
EleAid has long regretted the lack of co-operation between organisations working for elephants. We have often encountered a lack of willingness among certain NGO's to work together and in some cases outright antagonism. The meeting agreed that this approach is totally counter productive and damaging to the cause.

The groups agreed that the autonomy of individual organisations to run their own

affairs should be respected but that many issues could only be resolved by working together.

Representatives from CUPA made a proposal for the formation of an umbrella organisation called 'For All Captive Elephants' (FACE), which was unanimously agreed. The FACE network will concentrate its energies on improving the conditions and welfare of captive elephants. The individual groups are well qualified in this area with both Elephant Friends and the Nature Park operating sanctuaries for abused elephants and CUPA looking to open the first captive elephant rescue centre in India. EleAid is committed to helping through the Footsteps to Freedom programme and providing financial assistance for infrastructure development.

FACE will act as an informal network for information exchange and mutual support. At the moment only the four founder members are involved but it is hope that other organisations will join to create an effective body working for Asia's captive elephants.



### Two Happy Elephants!

EleAid's Tong Jan (right) and her friend Aura enjoy a good dusting after their afternoon bath.



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