

# Nonsectarian Ahimsa

From [The Writings of Vasu Murti](#)

## 1. A Nonsectarian Ethic

Do you feel like you're being forced to practice the Quaker religion since the government doesn't allow you to own a slave? Did the Quakers impose their morality on the rest of mankind when we abolished slavery? Or was it social and moral progress for all mankind to abolish slavery? What about abortion? A lot of people don't see abortion as a secular and nonsectarian civil rights issue which applies to all mankind (including atheists and agnostics), they see it as religious fanatics pushing their personal beliefs on others.

Why do pro-lifers see *one ethic* (not killing the unborn) as applying to everyone, including those outside of their faith and including atheists and agnostics, but see *another ethic* (not killing animals) as only applicable to certain religions? **That's my point.** Like pacifists and/or pro-lifers, vegetarianism, in itself, is merely **an ethic**, and *not a religion*. There are Jewish pacifists, Catholic pacifists, Protestant pacifists, Hindu pacifists, atheist pacifists, etc. In all cases, moral opposition to war, militarism, and bloodshed is the common denominator. Similarly, there are Jewish pro-lifers, Catholic pro-lifers, Protestant pro-lifers, Hindu pro-lifers, atheist pro-lifers, etc. In all cases, moral opposition to killing the unborn is the common denominator. Similarly, there are Jewish vegetarians, Catholic vegetarians, Protestant vegetarians, Hindu vegetarians, atheist vegetarians, etc. In all cases, the common denominator is moral opposition to killing animals. One can become a vegetarian without fear of being "converted" to "another religion."

Are pro-lifers more likely to "convert" to "another religion" where the mistreatment of animals is less brutal, or are they more likely to accept animal rights as a secular and nonsectarian moral philosophy which applies to all mankind (including atheists and agnostics), along the lines of the abolition of (human) slavery and/or women's suffrage?

Like pacifists and/or pro-lifers, vegetarianism, in itself, is merely **an ethic**, *not a religion*. Like the pro-life ethic, vegetarianism has attracted some of the greatest figures in history: Leonardo Da Vinci, Count Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Percy Shelley, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks, etc. Like the pro-life ethic, vegetarianism has served as the basis for entire religious traditions. Buddhism, Jainism, Pythagoreanism, and possibly early Christianity all immediately come to mind.

Early church fathers like Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, and others were vegetarian, and many of them wrote extensively on the subject. It's possible Christianity began as a vegetarian religion and was gradually corrupted over the centuries, beginning, perhaps, with the "apostle" Paul. Over 150 canonized Christian saints were vegetarian and their lives and teachings have been well documented. Protestant reformers like John Wesley (founder of the Methodist church), Ellen White (founder of the Seventh Day Adventist church), and General William Booth (founder of the Salvation Army) were vegetarian, as were Quaker poets, pacifists, and abolitionists like Joshua Evans. The moral status animals continues to be debated within Christianity to this day, as evidenced by the writings of Karl Barth and Dr. Albert Schweitzer, as well as current trends in animal liberation theology: Reverend Marc Wessels, Reverend Andrew Linzey, Reverend Annika Spalde, Reverend Frank Hoffman, the late Reverend Janet Regina Hyland, Dr. Stephen Webb, Baptist theologian Dr. Richard Alan Young, Dr. Charles Camosy, Rick Dunkerly of Christ Lutheran Church, etc.

When I was doing research on religion and animal rights, I was pleasantly surprised by the volumes of information on Christian vegetarianism. Rose Evans (1928 - 2015), editor and publisher of *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, a "consistent-ethic" periodical on the religious left, said there are more Christian vegetarians than Jewish vegetarians. Yet some people still react to the idea of Christian vegetarianism as if it were an oxymoron.

Would it be unusual for a Christian to teach compassion for animals to the point of vegetarianism? Some of the most distinguished figures in the history of Christianity were vegetarian. "Well, they were wrong," said my friend Tim Parks, who spent a number of years in China as a Protestant missionary. Someone else similarly commented, "They were some of the most *unusual* figures in Christianity." How do we know if they were wrong or if their views were unusual? We have no way of knowing unless these Christians, the long history of animal advocacy, concern for animals, and vegetarianism in Christianity, etc. are given a fair hearing. Christian vegetarians throughout history and Christian vegans today may be a minority, but as pastor Rick Warren says, *"A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority."*

Reverend Marc Wessels of the International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA) writes: "The most important teaching which Jesus shared was the need for people to love God with their whole self and to love their neighbor as they loved themselves. Jesus expanded the concept of neighbor to include those who were normally excluded, and it is therefore not too farfetched for us to consider the animals as our neighbors.

"To think about animals as our brothers and sisters is not a new or radical idea. By extending the idea of neighbor, the love of neighbor includes love of, compassion for, and advocacy of animals. There are many historical examples of Christians who thought along those lines, besides the familiar illustration of St. Francis. An abbreviated listing of some of those individuals worthy of study and emulation includes Saint Blaise, Saint Comgall, Saint Cuthbert, Saint Gerasimus, Saint Giles, and Saint Jerome, to name but a few."

The Christian writer Lactantius of Bithinia wrote about the Sixth Commandment ("*Thou shalt not kill*") as follows:

*"When God prohibits killing, he not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed even by public laws, but he warns us not to do even those things which are legal among men. And so it will not be lawful for a just man to serve as a soldier for justice itself is his military service, nor to accuse anyone of a capital offense, because it makes no difference whether they kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden."*

Attacking even capital punishment, the great Church father Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage wrote:

*"Christians are not allowed to kill, it is not permitted to be guiltless to put even the guilty to death."*

The earliest Christians were vegetarians as well as pacifists. Clemens Prudentius, the first Christian hymn writer, in one of his hymns exhorted his fellow Christians not to pollute their hands and hearts by the slaughter of innocent cows and sheep, and pointed to the variety of nourishing and pleasant foods obtainable without blood-shedding. Secular scholar Keith Akers concludes: "But many others, both orthodox and heterodox, testified to the vegetarian origins of Christianity. Both Athanasius and his opponent Arius were strict vegetarians. Many early church fathers were vegetarian, including Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Heironymus, Boniface, and John Chrysostom... *Vegetarianism is at the heart of Christianity.*"

## 2. Sentience and Self-Awareness

A rational case exists for the rights of preborn humans. The case for animal rights is equally compelling. Animals are highly complex creatures, possessing a brain, a central nervous system and a sophisticated mental life.

Animals actually *suffer* at the hands of their human tormentors and exhibit such “human” behaviors and feelings as fear and physical pain, defense of their children, pair bonding, group/tribal loyalty, grief at the loss of loved ones, joy, jealousy, competition, territoriality, and cooperation.

Dr. Tom Regan, the foremost intellectual leader of the animal rights movement and author of *The Case for Animal Rights*, notes that animals:

“...have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; and emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference and welfare interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independent of their utility for others and logically independent of their being the object of anyone else’s interests.”

*“The reasons for legal intervention in favor of children apply not less strongly to the case of those unfortunate slaves—the animals.”*

---John Stuart Mill

In his book, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, Reverend Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest, notes that "In some ways, Christian thinking is already oriented in this direction. What is it that so appalls us about cruelty to children or oppression of the vulnerable, but that these things are betrayals of relationships of special care and special trust? Likewise in the case of animals who are mostly defenseless before us."

*"Animals are God's creatures, not human property, nor utilities, nor resources, nor commodities, but precious beings in God's sight... Christians whose eyes are fixed on the awfulness of crucifixion are in a special position to understand the awfulness of innocent suffering. The Cross of Christ is God's absolute identification with the weak, the powerless, and the vulnerable, but most of all with unprotected, undefended, innocent suffering."*

--Anglican priest Reverend Andrew Linzey, from the PETA website, [www.jesusveg.com](http://www.jesusveg.com)

In determining a boundary between sentient and insentient life (e.g., plants), Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* suggests that "somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster seems as good a place to draw the line as any, and better than most."

The animal rights movement, representing a cross-section of mainstream secular American society, is *not* “officially pro-choice,” but *is* divided on abortion. Pro-lifers, avoiding vaccines containing aborted fetal cells as they don't want to be implicated in the death of another human being, are in a position to immediately understand animal activists. By refraining from eating animals, refraining from using products tested on animals, refraining from patronizing forms of "entertainment" that use animals, refraining from wearing the furs or skins of animals, etc., we

are, in effect, refraining from harming and killing animals altogether...just as pro-life Christians who refuse vaccines containing aborted fetal cells are refraining from contributing to the death of another human being.

Why is protecting animals, with many mental capacities comparable to small children, considered "funny" by religious pro-lifers but protecting single-celled organisms (zygotes and embryos) taken seriously? Especially when pro-lifers claim to care about children?

Along the lines of Reverend Linzey's words above, I would argue pro-lifers are in a special position to understand animal rights: the animals' right to life.

### **3. The Slippery Slope**

*"When we turn to the protection of animals, we sometimes hear it said that we ought to protect men first and animals afterwards... By condoning cruelty to animals, we perpetuate the very spirit which condones cruelty to men."*

*---Henry Salt*

*"It Is Contrary To Human Dignity To Cause Animals To Suffer And Die Needlessly"*

*--Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2418*

Reverend Basil Wrighton of the Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare, in London, wrote:

"As things are in our society, man is conditioned to violence and bloodshed from his earliest years... he (or she) can look unmoved at the ghastly display of mangled limbs and bleeding carcasses in a butcher's shop. And he (or she) can see nothing but fun in the cruel massacres that are perpetrated in the name of 'sport.'

"From this it is but a step -- and an easy step -- to accepting the dismemberment and massacre of one's fellow-men in war as part of the order of things... And while such an attitude prevails, there can be no hope of banishing war.

"Our best hope, then, is to address the deeper level of man's psyche and recondition him in his attitude to the animals. If we can convince him of the essential outrageousness of killing or injuring an animal, he will be far less disposed to kill or injure a fellow-man...

"Such a reconditioning of modern Western society may seem so wildly improbable as to be hopeless. But the thing has happened before, and it could happen again. The movements associated with the Buddha and Pythagoras had a profound influence on the world in the direction of nonviolence and respect for life...

"The Christian gospel is a similar force, with its accent on love and compassion... Christians have signally failed to extend their charity to the whole animal world... Christ's Sermon of the Mount is more honoured in the breach than in observance... and what we call 'Christian civilization' falls lamentably short of the humane standard of the gospel."

Father John Dear, a vegetarian (*he admits he really should be vegan!*), wrote a pamphlet on Christianity and vegetarianism and nonviolence for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and PETA encourages other Christian clergy and clergy of other faiths to do likewise.

The case for animal rights and vegetarianism should be readily understandable to the millions of Americans opposed to abortion on demand.

"Although I may disagree with some of its underlying principles," writes pro-life activist Karen Swallow Prior, "there is much for me, an anti-abortion activist, to respect in the animal rights movement.

"Animal rights activists, like me, have risked personal safety and reputation for the sake of other living beings. Animal rights activists, like me, are viewed by many in the mainstream as fanatical wackos, ironically exhorted by irritated passerby to 'Get a Life!'

"Animal rights activists, like me, place a higher value on life than on personal comfort and convenience, and in balancing the sometimes competing interests of rights and responsibilities, choose to err on the side of compassion and nonviolence."

In his 1987 booklet, *The New Abolitionists: Animal Rights and Human Liberation*, subtitled, "An introduction to the ascendant animal rights movement, framed in the historical context of human emancipation and explained in the terminology of progressive thought and politics," B.R. Boyd similarly writes:

"With more and more people sensing connections between the looming global violence of environmental collapse and thermonuclear war, on the one hand, and our various 'localized' or specific violences of child abuse, sexual assault, class exploitation, etc., on the other, the message of the animal rights movement echoes an ancient Chinese Buddhist saying:

*"If you wish to know  
"Why there are disasters  
"Of armies and weapons in the world  
"Listen to the piteous cries  
"From the slaughterhouse at midnight"*

"Whether viewed spiritually as *karma* or in secular, psychological terms as the natural result of our individual and collective psychic numbing to the suffering we inflict, it does seem that our violence comes back to haunt us -- as we have sown, so are we reaping -- and that the roots of our ecological and nuclear dilemma reach deep into our history and our psychology.

"It seems increasingly clear that a thoroughgoing solution to the big problems we face will require a radical change in many of our ways of thinking and feeling and being in the world. Radical ecofeminism and some other wholistic perspectives are teaching us that an integral part of that change lies in learning to balance our intellect -- including clear-headed analysis, which is essential -- with our emotions, integrating head and heart, and developing circular and complete relationships with the earth and her creatures, as contrasted with the separated, linear patterns and the absolute primacy of intellect over feeling and intuition that seem to typify Western patriarchal thinking."

In the April 1995 issue of *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, a peace and justice periodic on the religious left, Catholic civil rights activist Bernard Broussard similarly concludes:

"...our definition of war is much too limited and narrow. Wars and conflicts in the human kingdom will never be abolished or diminished until, as a pure matter of logic, it includes the cessation of war between the human and animal kingdoms.

"For, if we be eaters of flesh, or wearers of fur, or participants in hunting animals, or in any way use our might against weakness, we are promoting, in no matter how seemingly insignificant a fashion, the spirit of war."

The "might makes right" mentality that makes abortion possible begins with what we humans do to other animals.

Animals are like children. If you can't see toddlers as persons, how will you ever see zygotes and embryos as persons?

The institutionalized killing of billions of animals has led directly to global hunger, global warming, the energy, environmental, population and water crises. Why is it so hard to accept that there's a slippery slope, a connection between the killing of animals and the killing of human beings?

Abortion and war are the *karma* for killing animals.

"Who loves this terrible thing called war?" asked Isadora Duncan. "Probably the meat-eaters, having killed, feel the need to kill... The butcher with his bloody apron incites bloodshed, murder. Why not? From cutting the throat of a young calf to cutting the throats of our brothers and sisters is but a step. While we ourselves are living graves of murdered animals, how can we expect any ideal conditions on the earth?"

"I personally believe," wrote Isaac Bashevis Singer, "that as long as human beings will go on shedding the blood of animals, there will never be any peace. There is only one little step from killing animals to creating gas chambers a' la Hitler and concentration camps a' la Stalin -- all such deeds are done in the name of 'social justice.' There will be no justice as long as man will stand with a knife or with a gun and destroy those who are weaker than he is."

The fate of the animals and the fate of man are interconnected. (Ecclesiastes 3:19) A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said in 1974:

"We simply request, 'Don't kill. Don't maintain slaughterhouses.' That is very sinful. It brings a very awkward *karmic* reaction upon society. Stop these slaughterhouses. We don't say, 'Stop eating meat.' You can eat meat, but don't take it from the slaughterhouse, by killing. Simply wait (until the animal dies of natural causes) and you'll get the carcasses.

"You are killing innocent cows and other animals--nature will take revenge. Just wait. As soon as the time is right, nature will gather all these rascals and slaughter them. Finished. They'll fight among themselves--Protestants and Catholics, Russia and America, this one and that one. It is going on. Why? This is nature's law. Tit for tat. 'You have killed. Now you kill *yourselves*.'

"They are sending animals to the slaughterhouse, and now they'll create their own slaughterhouse. You see? Just take Belfast. The Roman Catholics are killing the Protestants, and the Protestants are killing the Catholics. This is nature's law. It is not necessary that you be sent to the ordinary

slaughterhouse. You'll make a slaughterhouse at home. You'll kill your own child--abortion. This is nature's law.

"Who are these children being killed? They are these meat-eaters. They enjoyed themselves when so many animals were killed and now they're being killed by their own mothers. People do not know how nature is working. *If you kill you must be killed.* If you kill the cow, who is your mother, then in some future lifetime your mother will kill you. Yes. The mother becomes the child, and the child becomes the mother.

"We don't want to stop trade, or the production of grains and vegetables and fruit. But we want to stop these killing houses. It is very, very sinful. That is why all over the world they have so many wars. Every ten or fifteen years there is a big war--a wholesale slaughterhouse for humankind. But these rascals--they do not see it, that by the law of *karma*, every action must have its reaction."

In a 1979 essay entitled "Abortion and the Language of Unconsciousness," contemporary Hindu spiritual master Ravindra-svarupa dasa (Dr. William Deadwyler) explains Srila Prabhupada's words in terms of a secular slippery slope argument, familiar to pro-lifers:

"A (spiritually) conscious person will not kill even animals (much less very young humans) for his pleasure or convenience. Certainly the unconsciousness and brutality that allows us to erect factories of death for animals lay the groundwork for our treating humans in the same way."

In the March 1982 issue of *Back to Godhead*, another contemporary Hindu spiritual master, Srila Hridayananda dasa Goswami (Dr. Howard Resnick), comments on this shortcoming of the anti-abortion movement:

Insisting that human life begins at conception, the anti-abortion movement seeks to shock us into the awareness that abortion means killing -- killing a human being rather than an animal, a bird, an insect, or a fish.

"Thus although the movement calls itself '*pro-life*,' it is really '*pro-human-life*.' Its fudging with the terms '*life*' and '*human life*' reveals a disturbing assumption: that nonhuman life is somehow not actually life at all, or, if it is, then it is somehow not as '*sacred*' as human life and therefore not worth protecting....

"If the pro-life movement can become part of a broader struggle to recognize the sacredness of all life... then undoubtedly it will attain great success."

No lay practitioner of *bhakti-yoga* nor ordained (initiated) with lifelong vows can take a stand against the killing of the unborn without simultaneously taking a stand against the killing of animals for food, clothing, sport, etc.

If vegetarianism were merely about "fit" or following a peculiar set of "dietary laws" why are pro-lifers offended by pro-choice vegetarians and pro-choice vegans? Clearly, they're offended because *they know* vegetarianism involves *the animals' right to life*, and thus these pro-choicers appear to value animal life over human life under some circumstances. And issues like animal experimentation, circuses, and fur have nothing to do with diet, eating, nor food, but do involve the animals' right to life. Leonardo Da Vinci, Count Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony, Percy Shelley, Rosa Parks, etc. were all vegetarian, and none of them were Jewish nor Muslim.

The ancient eastern reincarnationist religions Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism all predate Christianity, all oppose abortion, all teach *ahimsa*, or nonviolence towards humans and animals alike to the point of vegetarianism, all are vegan-friendly, and all teach that abortion and war are the *karma* for killing animals, and that therefore, we cannot end abortion nor bring about world peace until first we abolish the killing of animals.

In an article entitled "The Primacy of Nonviolence as a Virtue," appearing in *Embracing Earth: Catholic Approaches to Ecology* (1994), Brother Wayne Teasdale wrote: "One key answer to a culture's preoccupation with violence is to teach, insist on, and *live* the value of nonviolence. It can be done successfully, and it has been done for more than 2,500 years by Jains and Buddhists.

"Neither Jainism nor Buddhism has ever supported war or personal violence; this nonviolence extends to all sentient beings. Christianity can learn something valuable from these traditions. This teaching on nonviolence has been incarnated in the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama with significant results..."

According to Teasdale: "...it is necessary to elevate nonviolence to a noble place in our civilization of loving-compassion because nonviolence as *ahimsa* in the Hindu tradition, a tradition that seems to possess the most advanced understanding of nonviolence, IS love! Love is the goal and ultimate nature of nonviolence as an inner disposition and commitment of the heart. It is the fulfillment of love and compassion in the social sphere, that is, in the normal course of relations among people in the matrix of society."

In an article entitled "All About the Consistent Life Ethic, Some History..." appearing in the April 1995 issue of *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, editor and publisher Rose Evans writes: "The consistent ethic of reverence for life has a long history. Jain and Buddhist voices affirmed *ahimsa*, an ethic of total nonviolence, which included not only all human beings, but the animals also. The early Christian church banned both abortion and killing in war."

#### **4. Hinduism and *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence)**

The word "*himsa*" literally means "injury" or "violence" in Sanskrit. And just as "amoral" is the opposite of "moral," or means "without morals," "*ahimsa*" means the opposite of "*himsa*," or "without violence." "*Ahimsa*" literally translates as "non-injury" or "nonviolence," whereas "*shanti*" is the Sanskrit word for "peace." In past decades, the stereotype of "religious vegetarians" was that they're all followers of the ancient Eastern reincarnation religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, believing you might be reincarnated as a cow in your next life if you're not careful. Hinduism and her sacred cows, a belief in rebirth in lower species as a punishment for sinning, a belief in *karma* and reincarnation (rather than, say, Darwinian evolution), as the basis for seeing all living entities with equal vision. In past decades, it was the followers of the Eastern religions who had all the vegetarian restaurants: the followers of the Hare Krishna movement, the followers of Sri Chinmoy, the followers of Yogananda's Self Realization Fellowship, the followers of Muktananda's Siddha Yoga, the followers of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM). Even now, today, the followers of Buddhist Supreme Master Ching Hai have some two hundred vegan restaurants worldwide and are enjoying the kind of success the Hare Krishnas had in the '60s, '70s, and '80s with Govinda's Vegetarian Restaurant.

Hinduism is an ancient religion practiced by hundreds of millions in India and abroad. One commentator describes it as

"...more than just a creed: it is a total culture, a way of life based on the belief in the unity of all creation. Hindus, like Buddhists, see humankind not as an entity separate from animals, but rather as an integral part of the universe that includes all living creatures. Although Hinduism is well known for considering cows to be holy, in Hindu doctrine, all living creatures, including insects, plants, and trees, are thought to enjoy a kinship with one another and to be worthy of respect and life."

According to *Nine Beliefs of Hinduism*, a tract published by the Himalayan Academy of San Francisco: "Hindus believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice *ahimsa*, or nonviolence." All life is sacred because all creatures are manifestations of the Supreme Being.

The Hindu practice of nonviolence is connected to a belief in reincarnation: the repeated re-embodiment of souls in different species of life. The *karma* generated in one's present life determines whether one enjoys a higher or suffers a lower existence in the next reincarnation. Dr. T. K. Venkateswaran, a Hindu leader in the Parliament of the World's Religions, writes that *karma* is "the moral and physical law of cause and effect by which each individual creates one's own future destiny." Hinduism teaches that there are 8,400,000 species of life, beginning with the microbes, rising through the fish, plants, insects, reptiles, birds, and animals to the humans and gods. According to their desires, living entities perpetually take birth in these species. These transmigrations are directed by the mind propelling the soul to newer and newer bodies. As Dr. Venkateswaran notes, "All souls are evolving and progressing towards union with God....The individual soul reincarnates, evolving through many births and deaths, until all the *karmic* results, good and bad, are resolved."

Hinduism teaches that abortion, like any other act of violence, thwarts a soul in its progress toward God. Why does the Hindu community seem silent on the abortion issue? Dr. K. S. Krishnan of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Kerala, India, offered this explanation for the apparent silence: "Personally, I feel that a *sannyassi* [monk] should have no chance of discussing the private life of a lady. That can only happen when a lady approaches him to become a disciple."

Nevertheless, Hindu scriptures and tradition have from the earliest of times condemned the practice of abortion, except when the life of the mother is in danger. Hinduism teaches that the fetus is a living, conscious person needing and deserving protection. Hindu scriptures refer to abortion as *garba-batta* (womb killing) and *bhroona hathya* (killing the undeveloped soul). A hymn in the *Rig Veda* (7.36.9, RvP, 2469) begs for protection of fetuses. The *Kaushitaki Upanishad* (3.1 UpR, 774) draws a parallel between abortion and the killing of one's parents. The *Atharva Veda* (6.113.2 HE, 43) remarks that the fetus slayer, or *brunaghni*, is among the greatest of sinners (6.113.2).

In modern times, India's greatest apostle of nonviolence, Mohandas Gandhi, has written: "It seems to me clear as daylight that abortion would be a crime." The international periodical *Hinduism Today* acknowledges: "Across the board, Hindu religious leaders perceive abortion at any stage of fetal development as killing (some say murder)...and as an act that has serious *karmic* repercussions." For example, Swami Kamalatmananda of the Ramakrishna Monastery in Madras, India, has said: "No human being has the right to destroy the fetus. If having a baby is economically and socially problematic, one can very well *take precautions* to avoid such unwanted birth rather than killing the baby. *Precaution is better than destruction.*"

(Swami Kamaltmananda's words are the closest endorsement of contraception from a recognized Hindu spiritual master.)

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is India's greatest scholar, philosopher, cultural ambassador, author, and spiritual leader. His teachings on the subject of abortion are very clear:

"They are killing the baby in the womb. How cruel! In this age of unwanted population, man is losing his compassion. When you kill a living entity, even an ant, you are interfering with its spiritual evolution, its progress. That living entity must again take on that same life form to complete its designated life term in that body. And the killer must return to pay for damages."

The fate of the animals and the fate of man *are* interconnected. (Ecclesiastes 3:19) A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said in 1974:

"We simply request, 'Don't kill. Don't maintain slaughterhouses.' That is very sinful. It brings a very awkward *karmic* reaction upon society. Stop these slaughterhouses. We don't say, 'Stop eating meat.' You can eat meat, but don't take it from the slaughterhouse, by killing. Simply wait (until the animal dies of natural causes) and you'll get the carcasses.

"You are killing innocent cows and other animals--nature will take revenge. Just wait. As soon as the time is right, nature will gather all these rascals and slaughter them. Finished. They'll fight among themselves--Protestants and Catholics, Russia and America, this one and that one. It is going on. Why? This is nature's law. Tit for tat. 'You have killed. Now you kill *yourselves*.'

"They are sending animals to the slaughterhouse, and now they'll create their own slaughterhouse. You see? Just take Belfast. The Roman Catholics are killing the Protestants, and the Protestants are killing the Catholics. This is nature's law. It is not necessary that you be sent to the ordinary slaughterhouse. You'll make a slaughterhouse at home. You'll kill your own child--abortion. This is nature's law.

"Who are these children being killed? They are these meat-eaters. They enjoyed themselves when so many animals were killed and now they're being killed by their own mothers. People do not know how nature is working. *If you kill you must be killed*. If you kill the cow, who is your mother, then in some future lifetime your mother will kill you. Yes. The mother becomes the child, and the child becomes the mother.

"We don't want to stop trade, or the production of grains and vegetables and fruit. But we want to stop these killing houses. It is very, very sinful. That is why all over the world they have so many wars. Every ten or fifteen years there is a big war -- a wholesale slaughterhouse for humankind. But these rascals--they do not see it, that by the law of *karma*, every action must have its reaction."

As early as 1966, Srila Prabhupada commented about those who kill cows: "There are very severe (*karmic*) reactions awaiting all of them (in the afterlife, that is, in future lifetimes). Cattlemen, cow butchers, transporters, restaurant owners and consumers. Even the dishwasher."

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls

(Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens. Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

Establishing Krishna-conscious farms where the cows and other animals are not killed or even mistreated IS a genuine alternative, response and solution to the cow-killing, factory-farming and meat-eating in the West.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence (and the heavy *karma* involved in cow-killing and meat-eating in general!) would carry greater weight from **vegans** than from vegetarians.

"...they are killing cows... Therefore they are unfortunate in spiritual consciousness, and nature disturbs them in so many ways, especially through incurable diseases like cancer and through frequent wars among nations. As long as human society continues to allow cows to be regularly killed in slaughterhouses, there cannot be any question of peace and prosperity." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 8.8.11 purport)

"Now if you are willingly killing cows and so many animals, so how much we are being responsible? Therefore at the present moment there is war and the human society becomes subjected to be killed in mass massacre -- the nature's law. You cannot stop war and go on killing animals. That is not possible... The wholesale kill." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* lecture, 7/24/1971)

"So we have created a society for killing cows and eating the meat and maintaining slaughterhouse in the name of religion. This is going on. So how we can be happy? There cannot be happiness. It is not a sentiment. Therefore this is most sinful activity, meat-eating, cow killing. Most sinful activity. And you have to suffer for that. Unfortunately these rascals they do not know that what is the result of this sinful activity. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* lecture, London, 11/25/1973)

According to Manu, the great author of civic codes and religious principles, even the killer of an animal is to be considered a murderer because *animal food is never meant for the civilized man,*

whose prime duty is to prepare himself for going back to Godhead. He says that in the act of killing an animal, there is a regular conspiracy by the party of sinners, and all of them are liable to be punished as murderers exactly like a party of conspirators who kill a human being combinedly. He who gives permission, he who kills the animal, he who sells the slaughtered animal, he who cooks the animal, he who administers distribution of the foodstuff, and at last he who eats such cooked animal food are all murderers, and all of them are liable to be punished by the laws of nature. No one can create a living being despite all advancement of material science, and therefore no one has the right to kill a living being by one's independent whims. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.7.37 purport)

"Animals are never meant to be killed. Killing of animals is a symptom of barbarian society... The human society should give more attention to animal protection." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.9.26 purport)

"Those who are animal-killers, their brain is dull as stone. They cannot understand anything. Therefore meat-eating should be stopped. In order to revive the finer tissues of the brain to understand subtle things, one must give up meat-eating." (*Bhagavad-gita* lecture, London, 8/24/1973)

"There are so many doctrines of universal love, universal friendship, fraternity, but they are fighting, and they are killing... If you are universal, if you are after universal love, then how you can maintain regular slaughterhouse?... Where is your universal idea?" (*Bhagavad-gita* lecture, 1/6/1967)

Similarly, in his purport to the *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.10.9, Srila Prabhupada writes: "One cannot continue killing animals and at the same time be a religious man. That is the greatest hypocrisy. Jesus Christ said, 'Do not kill,' but hypocrites nevertheless maintain thousands of slaughterhouses while posing as Christians. Such hypocrisy is condemned..."

"If one kills many thousands of animals in a professional way so that other people can purchase the meat to eat, one must be ready to be killed in a similar way in his next life and in life after life. There are many rascals who violate their own religious principles. According to Judeo-Christian scriptures, it is clearly said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Nonetheless, giving all kinds of excuses, even the heads of religions indulge in killing animals while trying to pass as saintly persons. This mockery and hypocrisy in human society brings about unlimited calamities; therefore occasionally there are great wars. Masses of such people go out onto battlefields and kill themselves. Presently, they have discovered the atomic bomb, which is simply waiting to be used for wholesale destruction." (*Chaitanya Charitamrita*, Madhya 24.251, purport)

And:

"To be nonviolent to human beings and to be a killer or enemy of the poor animals is Satan's philosophy. In this age there is enmity towards poor animals, and therefore the poor creatures are always anxious. The reaction of the poor animals is being forced on human society, and therefore there is always the strain of cold or hot war between men, individually, collectively or nationally." (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.10.6, purport)

"If one gives another living entity unnecessary pain, one will certainly be punished by the laws of nature with a similar pain. Although the hunter Mrigari was uncivilized, he still had to suffer the results of his sinful activities. However, if a civilized man kills animals regularly in a slaughterhouse to maintain his so-called civilization, using scientific methods and machines to

kill animals, one cannot even estimate the suffering awaiting him. So called civilized people consider themselves very advanced in education, but they do not know about the stringent laws of nature. According to nature's law, it is a life for a life. We can hardly imagine the sufferings of one who maintains a slaughterhouse." (*Chaitanya Charitamrita*, Madhya 24.249 purport)

Here Are Quotes on *Ahimsa* or Nonviolence, from the Vedic (Hindu) Scriptures:

“You must not use your God-given body for killing God’s creatures, whether they are human, animal or whatever.”

--*Yajur Veda* 12.32

“One should be considered dear, even by the animal kingdom.”

--*Atharva Veda* 17.1.4

“Those noble souls who practice meditation and other *yogic* ways, who are ever careful about all beings, who protect all animals, are the ones who are actually serious about spiritual practices.”

--*Atharva Veda* 19.48.5

“By not killing any living being, one becomes eligible for salvation.”

--*Manusmriti* 6.60

“The purchaser of flesh performs *himsa* (violence) by his wealth; he who eats flesh does so by enjoying its taste; the killer does *himsa* by actually tying and killing the animal. Thus, there are three forms of killing. He who brings flesh or sends for it, he who cuts off the limbs of an animal, and he who purchases, sells, or cooks flesh and eats it—all of these are considered meat-eaters.”

--*Mahabharata*, Anu. 115.40

“He who desires to augment his own flesh by eating the flesh of other creatures lives in misery in whatever species he may take his birth.”

--*Mahabharata*, Anu. 115.47

“*Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the highest duty.”

--*Padma Purana* 1.31.27

According to contemporary Hindu scholar Satyaraja dasa (Steven Rosen):

“*Ahimsa* loosely translates as ‘nonviolence.’ In the Vedic tradition, however, the word possesses a much broader meaning: ‘Having no ill feeling for any living being, in all manners possible and for all times is called *ahimsa*, and it should be the desired goal of all seekers.’ (*Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, 2.30).

“The *Manusmriti*, one of India’s earliest sacred texts, says: ‘Without the killing of living beings, meat cannot be made available, and since killing is contrary to the principles of *ahimsa*, one must give up eating meat.’

“The *Vedas* (Hindu scriptures) condemn more, however, than just those who eat meat. Equally guilty, they say, is anyone assisting in animal slaughter, sanctioning it, anyone who cuts the flesh, buys, sells, or even serves it. Only those who have not participated in any of these activities can be considered true practitioners of *ahimsa*.”

Hindu spiritual masters like Srila Prabhupada have similarly taught that if one wishes to eat cow’s flesh (or the flesh of any other animal for that matter), one should wait until the animal dies of natural causes, rather than take the life of a fellow creature. Animals that died of natural causes can’t be offered to Krishna. This indicates that Krishna devotees are vegetarian first and foremost out of nonviolence toward and compassion for animals, rather than because the supposed intent is merely following “dietary laws.”

The *Manusmriti*, one of India’s earliest sacred texts, says: "Without the killing of living beings, meat cannot be made available, and since killing is contrary to the principles of *ahimsa*, one must give up eating meat."

Since without the killing of living beings through modern factory farming, milk cannot be made available, either, and since killing is contrary to the principles of *ahimsa*, does it not logically follow that one must give up the drinking of milk?

The cow is sacred, yes, and must never be abused or killed. But through modern factory farming, cows ARE being abused and killed in the process of obtaining milk. If the milk is sacred because it comes from the cow (a sacred animal), how does one justify abusing and killing a sacred animal to obtain its milk?

*Is the milk more sacred than the cow itself?*

Jesus accused the Pharisees of valuing the gold of the Temple more than the Temple itself and the sacred gifts upon the altar more than the altar itself! (Matthew 23:14,16-23; Luke 11:42, 20:45-47)

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls (Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens.

Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

Establishing Krishna-conscious farms where the cows and other animals are not killed or even mistreated IS a genuine alternative, response and solution to the cow-killing, factory-farming and meat-eating in the West.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence (and the heavy *karma* involved in cow-killing and meat-eating in general!) would carry greater weight from **vegans** than from vegetarians.

Shankar Narayan of the Indian Vegan Society Writes:

"I always believed there is a connection between not eating meat/milk and our spiritual advancement as we have developed the habit of exploiting animals for over a million years.

"A spiritual *guru*, based in Bangalore, was recently introduced to me. After a while I spoke to him (a lacto-vegetarian) about cruelty in milk. He not only immediately stopped use of milk but also wrote to all his followers about milk. He even forwarded me the replies of his followers who also followed his suit.

"Another religious *guru* Sri Rahaveshwara Bharathi Swami with large base and following is also saying that keeping cows is not for milk. Sri Sri Ravishankar of Art of Living with worldwide reach also (one of his followers told me) says in his literature that milk is to be avoided. Maybe there is a link between these two cases and our Indian Vegan Society efforts in reaching the message of veganism to them.

"In addition, Jain spiritual leader Sri Chitrabhanu also advocates veganism and converted many of his followers to veganism.

"Well, the spiritual movement is turning vegan. I wish the vegan movement also turns spiritual so that we have a solid platform. For me veganism is more than not using animal products, see my veganism at

<http://www.indianvegansociety.com/>

## 5. Our Own Hypocrisy

I must point out our own hypocrisy in this regard: strict devotees of Krishna, practicing *ahimsa* or nonviolence towards humans and animals alike as *bhakti-yoga*, or devotion to a personal God, avoid rennet, an enzyme used in coagulating cheeses and found in store-bought cheeses from the commercial dairies, because rennet comes from the lining of a calf's stomach. If you believe the cow is sacred and must never be killed and you're morally opposed to cow-killing, it makes no sense to purchase cheese containing rennet. Similarly, it makes no sense to consume dairy products as an alternative to meat (e.g., enjoying "curd steaks" at Ratha Yatra festivals instead of

beef steaks), if the cows are being killed in the commercial dairies in the process of obtaining the dairy! Many lacto-ovo-vegetarians, too, might purchase Morningstar Farms veggie burgers and veggie sausages from the supermarket, as a cruelty-free alternative to meat, but if these items contain even traces of eggs and dairy, one is still implicated in the violence of animal-killing, just as pro-lifers are implicated in the violence of killing an unborn child if they don't refrain from vaccines containing aborted fetal cells. It's counterproductive. It's self-defeating.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), a secular organization, similarly tries to show its members that even if one purchases items containing only "fur trim," *an entire animal had to be killed*. The killing of millions of unborn children is subsidized by our tax dollars, wealthy philanthropic organizations, supported by politicians in both political parties, etc., but the killing of animals is institutionalized on a scale a thousand times greater, with animals killed by the billions and fish killed by the trillions. We are appalled at the Nazis making soaps and lampshades from the skins of Jews, but are we humans any different in wearing leather?

You'd think the unborn-right-to-lifers would immediately understand the animal-right-to-lifers. Similarly, you'd think Krishna devotees, thinking themselves smugly superior to and referring derisively to the meat-eaters as "*mlecchas*" and "*yavanas*" (Sanskrit for flesh-eaters, barbarians, etc.), concerned about foods containing animal ingredients like gelatin, lecithin, mono-and-diglycerides, etc., not wanting to dine in restaurants which serve meat, not wanting to be implicated in the violence associated with animal-killing, showcasing cruelty-free products in temple gift shops in the 1992 *Hare Krishna Resource Guide and Directory* along with articles on permaculture or sustainable agriculture, the problems of a petroleum-based economy, citing Gandhian economics, Frances Moore Lappe, Vandana Shiva, etc. would immediately understand the vegans, not wanting to be implicated in cow-killing through the commercial dairies. If a preparation is strictly vegan, then lacto-ovo-vegetarians, and even meat-eaters can enjoy it, too!

In the 1980s, when semi-vegetarians were giving up red meat but still eating chicken and fish, thinking themselves "healthier" and wanting to call themselves "vegetarians" because it was fashionable and trendy, there was outrage in *Vegetarian Times*, with hardcore long-time vegetarians asking, "*Since when did chicken and fish become vegetables?!*" Animal advocates differ on strategies on reducing the number of animals being killed for food. As early as 1988, Rudolph Ballentine authored *Transition to Vegetarianism*, which advocated first phasing out red meat and pork, followed by eliminating chicken and fish from one's diet, and in a chapter entitled "Now that you're a vegetarian," the health hazards with eggs and dairy are discussed. More recently, we've seen vegetarians advocating campaigns like "Meatless Mondays" and *Vegan Before Six* to reduce the number of animals being killed. If meat-eating were healthy would you eat it? Pro-lifers believing the unborn child has a right to life won't be swayed by studies showing abortion is safer than childbirth. Neither are animal advocates affected by debates whether animal products are healthier.

In the 1980s, my family and I were dining with an Indian family, Dr. & Mrs. Garg in Del Mar, California. We had ordered take out food (Indian or Chinese) consisting of both vegetarian and nonvegetarian dishes. Mrs. Garg accidentally put some meat on her father's plate. Her father, whom she affectionately referred to as "Papaji," recoiled in horror! She immediately got him a fresh plate and put only vegetarian food on it. In 1991, Rankin Fisher was excited that a new Mexican fast food chain, La Salsa, had appeared in the San Diego area: they were not using lard, but rather vegetable oil in their preparations. Here in Northern California, there are soup and salad bar restaurant chains like Fresh Choice and Sweet Tomatoes, similar to the Soup Exchange and the Souplantation in Southern California. In 1999, my mom and I were dining with my cousin Shobha and her parents (my aunt and uncle) visiting from India at Sweet Tomatoes. Shobha

helped herself to some Jell-O for dessert. I told Shobha that gelatin contains some of the worst animal byproducts (e.g., animal hooves) and thus isn't even vegetarian. Shobha immediately put down the Jell-O and opted for another dessert. *Similarly, once we learn chickens are killed in the production of eggs and cows are killed in the production of dairy, how do we respond?* Meat is Murder says Morrissey.

The same arguments that convince meat-eaters to go vegetarian (ecological, economic, energy, environmental, ethical, health and nutrition) can be taken a step farther and convince meat-eaters and vegetarians to go vegan.

In the Central Valley of California cows generate the same amount of fecal waste as a city of 21 million people, much of which goes untreated and pollutes waterways.

Dairy products, like other animal products, are obtained through modern agribusiness and factory farming, and the issues of animal cruelty, the health hazards caused by eating higher rather than lower on the food chain, as well as the energy and environmental concerns are not avoided by switching from one commercially produced animal product to another.

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls (Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens. Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

Establishing Krishna-conscious farms where the cows and other animals are not killed or even mistreated IS a genuine alternative, response and solution to the cow-killing, factory-farming and meat-eating in the West.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence (and the heavy *karma* involved in cow-killing and meat-eating in general!) would carry greater weight from **vegans** than from vegetarians.

Srila Prabhupada took the commandment "*Thou shalt not kill*" literally in conversation with Christian clergy.

At a monastic retreat near Paris in July of 1973, the following conversation took place between A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and French Roman Catholic Cardinal Jean Danielou:

ACBSP: Jesus Christ said, "Thou shalt not kill." So why is it that the Christian people are engaged in animal killing?

CD: Certainly in Christianity it is forbidden to kill, but we believe that there is a difference between the life of a human being, and the life of the beasts. The life of a human being is sacred because man is made in the image of God; therefore, to kill a human being is forbidden.

ACBSP: But the Bible does not simply say, "Do not kill the human being." It says broadly, "*Thou shalt not kill.*"

CD: We believe that only human life is sacred.

ACBSP: That is your interpretation. The commandment is "*Thou shalt not kill.*"

CD: It is necessary for man to kill animals in order to have food to eat.

ACBSP: No. Man can eat grains, vegetables, fruits...

CD: No flesh?

ACBSP: No. Human beings are meant to eat vegetarian food. The tiger does not come to eat your fruits. His prescribed food is animal flesh. But man's food is vegetables, fruits, grains... So how can you say that animal killing is not a sin? Jesus Christ taught "*Thou shalt not kill.*" Why do you interpret this to suit your own convenience? When there is no other food, someone may eat meat to keep from starving. That is another thing. But it is most sinful to regularly maintain slaughterhouses just to satisfy your tongue. Actually, you will not even have a human society until this cruel practice of maintaining slaughterhouses is stopped.

Srila Prabhupada went on to say:

"...consider the cow: we drink her milk; therefore, she is our mother. Do you agree?"

"Yes, surely," replied Cardinal Danielou.

"So if the cow is your mother," asked Srila Prabhupada, "how can you support killing her? You take the milk from her, and when she's old and cannot give you milk, you cut her throat. *Is that a very humane proposal?*... cow killing is the greatest sin... Don't kill cows. It is the greatest sin. And as long as a man is sinful, he cannot understand God. The human being's main business is to understand God and to love him. But if you remain sinful, you will never understand God, what to speak of loving Him."

In 1974, near Frankfurt, Germany, a similar discussion took place with Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk:

Father Emmanuel: We Christians also preach love of God, and we try to realize love of God and render service to Him with all our heart and all our soul. Now, what is the difference between your movement and ours? Why do you send your disciples to the Western countries to preach love of God when the gospel of Jesus Christ is propounding the same message?

ACBSP: The problem is that the Christians do not follow the commandments of God. Do you agree?

FE: Yes, to a large extent you're right.

ACBSP: Then what is the meaning of the Christians' love for God? If you do not follow the orders of God, then where is your love? Therefore we have come to teach what it means to love God: if you love Him, you cannot be disobedient to His orders. And if you're disobedient, your love is not true...They have rubber-stamped themselves "Christian," "Hindu," or "Mohammadan," but they do not obey God. That is the problem...The first point is that they violate the commandment "*Thou shalt not kill*" by maintaining slaughterhouses. Do you agree that this commandment is being violated?

FE: Personally, I agree.

ACBSP: Good. So if the Christians want to love God, they must stop killing animals... This program follows the teachings of the Bible; it is not my philosophy. Please act accordingly and you will see how the world situation will change.

Hinduism is a religion of multi-armed gods and goddesses; *yogis* in the Himalayas in meditation; saffron-clad monks with shaven heads; women in *saris* with red dots on their foreheads; the chanting of mantras; sacred cows, sacred plants, sacred rivers, etc.

"The Lord is the protector of cows and the *brahminical* culture. A society devoid of cow protection and *brahminical* culture is not under the direct protection of the Lord, just as the prisoners in the jails are not under the protection of the king but under the protection of a severe agent of the king. Without cow protection and cultivation of the *brahminical* qualities in human society, at least for a section of the ...members of society, no human civilization can prosper at any length."

*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.14.34 purport

Srila Prabhupada's own teachings on nonviolence are closer to the vegans' than those of meat-eating "pro-lifers"! To an impartial observer, Krishna devotees look inconsistent: believing the cow is sacred, but willing to commit violence against the cows just to obtain the milk. Srila Prabhupada wanted us to live an agrarian lifestyle and be dependent upon cows: a symbiotic relationship with cattle. The cow is central to Krishna's pastimes in the spiritual world. Whereas Catholics in the Philippines nail themselves to crosses to participate in the Lord's passion play, we merely herd and protect cattle to participate in the Lord's pastimes.

*Herding cows, NOT hurting cows!*

Killing cows and obtaining dairy cruelly and violently from the commercial dairies flies in the face of Srila Prabhupada's own teachings on nonviolence. Merely abstaining from dairy along with abstaining from meat, fish, eggs, etc. does not. It is merely a slight disagreement.

Anyone can challenge: "If you believe it's wrong to kill animals, why are you supporting the factory farms, the commercial dairies, etc. with your consumer dollars, where the cows are killed in the process of obtaining their milk? Why are you killing cows just to drink their milk?"

Anyone can challenge: "If you believe the cow is sacred, why are you killing cows in the process of obtaining cow's milk? Is the milk more sacred than the cow?!"

Anyone can challenge: "If it's acceptable to kill cows just to obtain their milk, why isn't it acceptable to kill cows to eat their flesh?"

*Is raping mother cow to obtain her milk a humane proposal?*

*Is selling mother cow's babies to become veal a humane proposal?*

*Vegans aren't implicated in that kind of violence!*

How can we tell people of other faiths that killing cows and other animals leads to abortion and war, killing cows and other animals is demoniac, cow-killers and animal-killers will suffer torment in hell followed by rebirth in lower species when their punishment in hell is over, slaughter is the way of the subhumans, animal-killers cannot understand God, etc., if we ourselves are killing cows? They won't take us seriously. My friend Tim Parks, whom I met through Life Chain in 1992, and who spent a number of years serving as a Protestant missionary in China, said in 2005 he thought the Dalai Lama was a hypocrite for saying the people of Tibet have a "special dispensation" which allows them to eat meat... kinda like the *gurus* in our movement claiming the factory farmed cows will be blessed if their milk is offered to Krishna, huh?!

In past decades, Krishna devotees were reading ingredient labels to avoid mono-and-diglycerides which comes from animal sources unless specifically labeled as "vegetable mono-and-diglycerides"; avoiding lecithin, which comes from eggs, unless specifically labeled as "soy lecithin"; avoiding commercial cheeses which contain rennet, an enzyme taken from the lining of a calf's stomach and used in coagulating cheeses, but failing to realize cows are killed in commercial dairy products as well; showcasing cruelty-free products in temple gift shops, etc.

It was reported in the '80s that Satsvarupa dasa Goswami made it a point to abstain from sugar on *ekadasi*, because white sugar is processed through animal bones, and thus isn't even vegetarian. Similarly, as long as veganism is merely seen as a stricter degree of vegetarianism, the vegans and their views should be welcomed in the association of devotees.

## **6. A Generic or Nonsectarian *Ahimsa***

You argue:

*"Veganism is a man-made philosophy, it rejects common sense and it rejects ahimsa. Ahimsa means nonviolence. Since vegans do not support the consumption of honey, unfertilized eggs, and gently milked cows, they are not following the philosophy of nonviolence. They are following a philosophy which segregates animals and humans unnaturally from one another."*

The analogy of fertile versus nonfertile eggs to distinguish contraception from abortion is a secular and nonsectarian distinction: part of the past five hundred years of secular social progress:

...democracy and representative government in place of monarchy and belief in the divine right of kings; the separation of church and state; the abolition of (human) slavery; the emancipation of women; birth control; the sexual revolution; LGBT rights...

Social progress which even conservative Christians take for granted. A hundred years ago, for example, ALL Christian churches opposed birth control.

Whether fertile or nonfertile, eggs can't be offered to Krishna. Eggs are considered impure, *tamasic* or in the mode of ignorance. And there's no violence against animals in onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, canned and frozen foods, etc.

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls (Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens. Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

In 1987, when vegetarianism was brought up on USENET, Dave Butler, whose main claim to fame is having coined the radical pro-choice slogan "not even close" (implying the unborn may be killed for the same trivial reasons we now kill animals), argued against vegetarianism. Dave Butler said unlike herbivores, the human body can't break down cellulose, the principal component of plant foods (though it does serve a purpose as dietary fiber); historically mankind has been omnivorous; there's the problem of obtaining enough Vitamin B-12 on a vegan diet, When it was pointed out that most vegetarians get their Vitamin B-12 through eggs and dairy

products, Dave Butler responded, "Exactly. And these are *vegetarians*, not herbivores." Animal advocates no longer claim humans are herbivores, but rather argue *humans resemble the other primates, the frugivores*, so Dave "Exactly" Butler's point is moot. To claim humans are omnivores despite the radical differences in physiology or to claim humans need animal products in their diet would be to play right into the hands of the meat-eaters who argue there's nothing wrong with eating meat, nothing wrong with killing animals, etc. Vegans aren't the problem. The sectarian hostility towards giving up meat before we can end abortion and war is not coming from vegans, it's coming from meat-eating Christians!

Are pro-lifers more likely to "convert" to "another religion" where the mistreatment of animals is less brutal, or are they more likely to accept animal rights as a secular and nonsectarian moral philosophy which applies to all mankind (including atheists and agnostics), along the lines of the abolition of (human) slavery and/or women's suffrage?

At the World Vegetarian Festival in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, I told Adventist minister Dave Koot, when he was saying grace over some vegan cuisine, that Srila Prabhupada taught us that saying grace is second-class, and that the highest standard is to offer one's food to the Lord beforehand.

Srila Prabhupada gave an example of guests seated at a banquet. He said the third-class man will immediately dig in and start eating without acknowledging the host who has provided the food. The second-class man will thank the host and then begin to eat, but the first-class man will say to the host, "You first," and will eat only after the host has partaken.

Similarly, I said, the highest standard of worship is to offer one's food to God beforehand.

Srila Prabhupada wanted Christians and Vaishnavas (devotees of Lord Vishnu, or Krishna) to cooperate and respect and appreciate each other's faith.

You're advocating a generic *ahimsa* or nonsectarian *ahimsa*, or a nonviolent philosophy not tied to a particular religion, not involving offering one's food nor involving religious taboos like "dietary laws," "sacred cows," or various forms of "ritual slaughter." And the animal advocates are doing likewise. The distinction between an animal advocate and a devotee of Krishna offering one's food to the Lord is similar to the distinction between a secular pro-lifer and a religious pro-lifer. A secular pro-lifer would not object to single mothers nor to groups like PLAGAL (the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians), whereas a religious pro-lifer might argue that it's not enough to be nonviolent toward the unborn and merely refrain from killing the unborn: sex is only permitted in holy wedlock. A religious pro-lifer might also oppose contraception and divorce as well.

In determining a boundary between sentient and insentient life (e.g., plants), Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* suggests that "somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster seems as good a place to draw the line as any, and better than most."

But we now know sea turtles are killed in Caribbean shrimp operations. It makes sense to eat lower on the food chain!

In 1987, when vegetarianism was brought up on USENET, Dave Butler, whose main claim to fame is having coined the radical pro-choice slogan "not even close" (implying the unborn may be killed for the same trivial reasons we now kill animals), argued against vegetarianism. Dave Butler said unlike herbivores, the human body can't break down cellulose, the principal

component of plant foods (though it does serve a purpose as dietary fiber); historically mankind has been omnivorous; there's the problem of obtaining enough Vitamin B-12 on a vegan diet, When it was pointed out that most vegetarians get their Vitamin B-12 through eggs and dairy products, Dave Butler responded, "Exactly. And these are *vegetarians*, not herbivores." Animal advocates no longer claim humans are herbivores, but rather argue *humans resemble the other primates, the frugivores*, so Dave "Exactly" Butler's point is moot. To claim humans are omnivores despite the radical differences in physiology or to claim humans need animal products in their diet would be to play right into the hands of the meat-eaters who argue there's nothing wrong with eating meat, nothing wrong with killing animals, etc. Vegans aren't the problem. The sectarian hostility towards giving up meat before we can end abortion and war is not coming from vegans, it's coming from meat-eating Christians!

In the 1980s, my family and I were dining with an Indian family, Dr. & Mrs. Garg in Del Mar, California. We had ordered take out food (Indian or Chinese) consisting of both vegetarian and nonvegetarian dishes. Mrs. Garg accidentally put some meat on her father's plate. Her father, whom she affectionately referred to as "Papaji," recoiled in horror! She immediately got him a fresh plate and put only vegetarian food on it. In 1991, Rankin Fisher was excited that a new Mexican fast food chain, La Salsa, had appeared in the San Diego area: they were not using lard, but rather vegetable oil in their preparations. Here in Northern California, there are soup and salad bar restaurant chains like Fresh Choice and Sweet Tomatoes, similar to the Soup Exchange and the Souplantation in Southern California. In 1999, my mom and I were dining with my cousin Shobha and her parents (my aunt and uncle) visiting from India at Sweet Tomatoes. Shobha helped herself to some Jell-O for dessert. I told Shobha that gelatin contains some of the worst animal byproducts (e.g., animal hooves) and thus isn't even vegetarian. Shobha immediately put down the Jell-O and opted for another dessert. *Similarly, once we learn chickens are killed in the production of eggs and cows are killed in the production of dairy, how do we respond?* Meat is Murder says Morrissey.

The same arguments that convince meat-eaters to go vegetarian (ecological, economic, energy, environmental, ethical, health and nutrition) can be taken a step farther and convince meat-eaters and vegetarians to go vegan.

In the Central Valley of California cows generate the same amount of fecal waste as a city of 21 million people, much of which goes untreated and pollutes waterways.

Dairy products, like other animal products, are obtained through modern agribusiness and factory farming, and the issues of animal cruelty, the health hazards caused by eating higher rather than lower on the food chain, as well as the energy and environmental concerns are not avoided by switching from one commercially produced animal product to another.

Are pro-lifers more likely to "convert" to "another religion" where the mistreatment of animals is less brutal, or are they more likely to accept animal rights as a secular and nonsectarian moral philosophy which applies to all mankind (including atheists and agnostics), along the lines of the abolition of (human) slavery and/or women's suffrage?

Again:

You're advocating a generic *ahimsa* or nonsectarian *ahimsa*, or a nonviolent philosophy not tied to a particular religion, not involving offering one's food nor involving religious taboos like "dietary laws," "sacred cows," or various forms of "ritual slaughter." And the animal advocates are doing likewise. The distinction between an animal advocate and a devotee of Krishna offering

one's food to the Lord is similar to the distinction between a secular pro-lifer and a religious pro-lifer. A secular pro-lifer would not object to single mothers nor to groups like PLAGAL (the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians), whereas a religious pro-lifer might argue that it's not enough to be nonviolent toward the unborn and merely refrain from killing the unborn: sex is only permitted in holy wedlock. A religious pro-lifer might also oppose contraception and divorce as well.

Are pro-lifers more likely to "convert" to "another religion" where the mistreatment of animals is less brutal, or are they more likely to accept animal rights as a secular and nonsectarian moral philosophy which applies to all mankind (including atheists and agnostics), along the lines of the abolition of (human) slavery and/or women's suffrage?

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls (Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens. Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

Establishing Krishna-conscious farms where the cows and other animals are not killed or even mistreated IS a genuine alternative, response and solution to the cow-killing, factory-farming and meat-eating in the West.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence (and the heavy *karma* involved in cow-killing and meat-eating in general!) would carry greater weight from **vegans** than from vegetarians.

Are we reviving Vedic culture? When visiting Moscow in 1971, Srila Prabhupada told Professor Kotovsky, "our point is not to try and bring back the old type of Hindu society. That is impossible. Our idea is to take the best ideas from the original idea."

*Bhakta* Matias Carnevale Cano, sympathetic to veganism, wrote from Argentina in 2006:

“Also, because we are trying to follow Vedic culture in all of its aspects we don’t avoid milk in our preparations, otherwise no *halava*, no *khir*, no *lassi* would be possible.”

That may be, but contemporary Western social conventions and standards of morality, like dating, boyfriends and girlfriends, contraception and divorce were never part of the Vedic social system, either. And 5,100 years into the *Age of Kali*, these social conventions are becoming commonplace even in India.

*Going vegan for the sake of ahimsa or nonviolence towards the cow -- a sacred animal that must never be killed -- is "deviating" from Srila Prabhupada or "deviating" from Vedic civilization... but failing to marry off one's daughter no later than age sixteen (what to speak of dating, boyfriends, girlfriends, contraception and divorce!) \*isn't\* "deviating" ?!*

The *prasadam* served in Krishna temples in the West often includes familiar Western vegetarian dishes, which weren’t part of Vedic civilization thousands of years ago.

During the college preaching programs at UC San Diego in the 1980s, devotees would say that Western vegetarian dishes can be offered to Krishna in place of rice and *sabji* (vegetable preparations).

Devotees of Krishna should not falsely claim that they are trying to bring back the ancient Vedic civilization, which even Srila Prabhupada said to Professor Kotovsky is impossible.

Gangeya dasa (Glen Smith), a disciple of Hridayananda dasa Goswami, was asked years ago if devotees offering dairy products to the Lord were doing so out of devotion or out of sense gratification. He diplomatically responded that would depend on the consciousness of the devotee.

Srila Prabhupada opposed dissection, animal experimentation, etc. — issues which have nothing to do with diet, eating, or food.

So it is clear devotees of Krishna are vegetarian first and foremost out of nonviolence toward and compassion for other living entities, rather than because meat, fish and eggs and even some vegetarian foods cannot be offered to the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada himself appears to have advocated a generic *ahimsa* or nonsectarian *ahimsa* for the general mass of people.

*Quote, "Slaughterhouse Civilization":*

*“For meat-eaters, that is what the Vedic culture recommends... don’t eat cows until after they have died a natural death. We don’t say, 'Don’t eat,' you are so very fond of eating cows. All right, you can eat them, because after their death we have to give them to somebody, some living entity. Generally, cow carcasses are given to the vultures. But then, why only to the vultures? Why not the modern 'civilized' people, who are as good as vultures?”*

## 7. Devotees of Krishna and Hindus in General Should Consider These Points:

a) Srila Prabhupada has written, “*If people are to be educated in the path back to Godhead, they must be taught first and foremost to stop the process of animal-killing.*”

b) Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486 – 1534) made vegetarianism central to the *sankirtan* (“God-praise”) movement when He brought up the subject of meat-eating with the Chand Kazi of Navadvipa, a local Muslim ruler, learned in the Koran. And Srila Prabhupada followed our Lord’s example by repeatedly bringing up the subject with people of other faiths (“*Thou shalt not kill*”).

c) In a purport from the First Canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Srila Prabhupada writes: “*It is nonsensical to say that the killing of animals has nothing to do with spiritual realization.*”

d) In his purport to the *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.10.9, Srila Prabhupada writes:

“One cannot continue killing animals and at the same time be a religious man. That is the greatest hypocrisy. Jesus Christ said, ‘*Do not kill,*’ but hypocrites nevertheless maintain thousands of slaughterhouses while posing as Christians. Such hypocrisy is condemned...”

e) Srila Prabhupada even candidly told a Catholic priest in London in 1973, that, “*Animal-killers cannot understand God. I have seen this. It is a fact.*”

f) Elsewhere Srila Prabhupada has written:

“If one kills many thousands of animals in a professional way so that other people can purchase the meat to eat, one must be ready to be killed in a similar way in his next life and life after life. There are many rascals who violate their own religious principles. According to Judeo-Christian scriptures, it is clearly said, ‘*Thou shalt not kill.*’

“Nonetheless, giving all kinds of excuses, even the heads of religions indulge in killing animals while trying to pass as saintly persons. This mockery and hypocrisy in human society brings about unlimited calamities; therefore occasionally there are great wars. Masses of such people go out onto battlefields and kill themselves.

“Presently, they have discovered the atomic bomb, which is simply waiting to be used for wholesale destruction.” (*Chaitanya Charitamrita*, Madhya 24.251, purport).

g) “To be nonviolent to human beings and to be a killer or enemy of the poor animals is Satan’s philosophy. In this age there is enmity towards poor animals, and therefore the poor creatures are always anxious. The reaction of the poor animals is being forced on human society, and therefore there is always the strain of cold or hot war between men, individually, collectively or nationally.” (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.10.6).

h) The *Srimad Bhagavatam* quotes King Pariksit as having said, “only the animal-killer cannot relish the message of the Absolute Truth.” And Srila Prabhupada himself said in conversation with Christians, “If the Christians want to love God, they must stop killing animals.” Srila Prabhupada taught that nonviolence is the first principle in spiritual life (*Letter to Bhakta das*, August 3, 1973).

Srila Prabhupada not only opposed killing animals for food, he also opposed dissection, animal experimentation and killing animals for “sport.”

i) In the *Lilamrita*, for example, Satsvarupa Maharaja records an incident where an Indian graduate student tells Srila Prabhupada he is studying biology. Srila Prabhupada responds: “...poor frogs!” His challenge to the dissectors and vivisectors: “Would you give *your* body to science for the advancement of knowledge?”

Similarly, in a 1976 interview, when the editors of *Back to Godhead* told Srila Prabhupada:

“...Another point in the Declaration of Independence is that all men are endowed by God with certain natural rights that cannot be taken away from them. These are the rights of life, liberty, and...”

Srila Prabhupada immediately interjected: “But animals also have the right to life. Why don’t animals also have the right to live? The rabbits, for instance, are living in their own way in the forest. Why does the government allow hunters to go and shoot them?”

The editors of *Back to Godhead* told Srila Prabhupada: “They (America’s founding fathers) were simply talking about human beings.”

Srila Prabhupada replied: “Then they have no real philosophy. The narrow idea that my family or my brother is good, and that I can kill all others, is criminal.

“Suppose that for my family’s sake I kill your father. Is that philosophy? Real philosophy is *suhridam sarva-bhutanam*: friendliness to all living entities.

“Certainly this applies to human beings, but even if you unnecessarily kill one animal, I shall immediately protest, ‘What nonsense are you doing?’ ”

Srila Prabhupada’s words above debunk the argument that because animals are not part of our “human family” (whatever that means) we have no duties toward them.

j) On numerous occasions, Srila Prabhupada taught that even rodents and insects have rights, and (like Pythagoras) he even opposed the unnecessary destruction of trees.

These facts indicate that devotees of Krishna are vegetarian out of compassion for animals, and not merely because meat, fish and eggs are unofferable to Lord Krishna.

k) It is a significant fact that Srila Prabhupada did not reject any of his fallen disciples, as long as they did not return to flesh-eating.

Like Lord Chaitanya’s dialogue with the Chand Kazi, this underscores the importance of vegetarianism to the *sankirtan* movement.

l) If Srila Prabhupada’s only concern was merely that his disciples merely abstain from *rajasic* and *tamasic* foods in the lower modes of nature, like onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, etc. (i.e., follow a peculiar set of “dietary laws”), because of the possible effect such foods might have on their consciousness, or because they are unofferable to Lord Krishna, he would not have opposed dissection, nor animal experimentation.

Nor would Srila Prabhupada have repeatedly said that if the *karmis* (nondevotees) want to eat meat they can wait until the cows (and other animals) die of natural causes, before eating them. ("Slaughterhouse Civilization," *Back to Godhead*, 1979). Animals that died of natural causes can't be offered to Krishna, either.

It's clear Srila Prabhupada was morally opposed to taking the life of a fellow creature. These facts and points indicate devotees of Krishna are vegetarian first and foremost out of nonviolence toward and compassion for animals.

### **8. "Dietary Laws" or the Animals' Right to Life?**

Srila Prabhupada said elsewhere: "...as far as meat-eating is concerned, every cow will die—so you just wait awhile, and there will be so many dead cows. Then you can take all the dead cows and eat...Don't kill. When the cow is dead, you can eat it."

One of the first things new devotees learn from initiates is that Srila Prabhupada said this not only about cows, but about meat in general: *if you want to eat flesh, wait until the animal dies of natural causes.*

And the eating of carrion (carcasses from animals that died of natural causes) is clearly forbidden in Jewish and Islamic dietary laws. Animals that died of natural causes can't be offered to Krishna, either.

This indicates that Srila Prabhupada was **not** thinking in terms of "dietary laws," or food in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance, but rather in terms of the moral wrong of taking the life of a fellow creature. *The original intent of vegetarianism in the Krishna Consciousness movement really is the animals' right to life.*

The animals' right to life takes precedence over "dietary laws"! The *Mahabharata* (Santi-parva 141.88) similarly says that the eating of "unclean" food is not as terrible as the eating of flesh. (It must be remembered that the *brahmanas* of ancient India exalted cleanliness to a divine principle).

Leonardo Da Vinci, Count Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony, Percy Shelley, etc. were all vegetarian, and none of them were Jewish.

Animal rights issues like circuses, fur, and vivisection (animal experimentation) have nothing to do with diet, eating, or food. *The real issue is the animals' right to life.*

Adolf Hitler thought Albert Einstein's scientific discoveries were mere "Jewish science" and thus not applicable to gentiles. This is the mentality of meat-eating Christians toward vegetarianism, which they see as a sectarian dietary restriction (like "keeping kosher") rather than as a universal ethic for all mankind, like abstaining from cannibalism.

Meat-eating Christians relegating vegetarianism solely to Judaism are as bigoted as Hitler.

The sad irony here is that a lot of liberals see abortion as sectarian, too. If you're not born again, you don't have to be pro-life.

Again, Srila Prabhupada said elsewhere: *"...as far as meat-eating is concerned, every cow will die--so you just wait awhile, and there will be so many dead cows. Then you can take all the dead cows and eat...Don't kill. When the cow is dead, you can eat it."*

One of the first things new devotees learn from initiates is that Srila Prabhupada said this not only about cows, but about meat in general: *if you want to eat flesh, wait until the animal dies of natural causes.*

And the eating of carrion (carcasses from animals that died of natural causes) is clearly forbidden in Jewish and Islamic dietary laws. Animals that died of natural causes can't be offered to Krishna, either.

This indicates that Srila Prabhupada was **not** thinking in terms of "dietary laws," or food in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance, but rather in terms of the moral wrong of taking the life of a fellow creature. *The original intent of vegetarianism in the Krishna Consciousness movement really is the animals' right to life.*

Dietary laws are not as important as the animals' right to life! The *Mahabharata* (Santi-parva 141.88) similarly says that the eating of "unclean" food is not as terrible as the eating of flesh. (It must be remembered that the brahmanas of ancient India exalted cleanliness to a divine principle).

Krishna Consciousness ISN'T Jewish!

Jews and Muslims don't worship images.

Jews and Muslims don't believe in the incarnations of God.

Jews and Muslims don't worship a plural Godhead, like that of the Trinity.

Jews and Muslims don't worship other human beings (saints and spiritual masters in disciplic succession).

If vegetarianism were merely about "fit" or following a peculiar set of "dietary laws" why are pro-lifers offended by pro-choice vegetarians and pro-choice vegans? Clearly, they're offended because *they know* vegetarianism involves the animals' right to life, and thus these pro-choicers appear to value animal life over human life under some circumstances. And issues like animal experimentation, circuses, and fur have nothing to do with diet, eating, nor food, but do involve the animals' right to life. Leonardo Da Vinci, Count Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony, Percy Shelley, Rosa Parks, etc. were all vegetarian, and none of them were Jewish nor Muslim.

Sometimes, being lighthearted gets the point across to Christians that vegetarianism is about the animals' right to life rather than "dietary laws": like Steve Martin in the '70s asking, "How many polyesters did you have to kill to make that suit?"

Establishing Krishna conscious farm communities, where the milk is obtained humanely and nonviolently, IS a genuine solution to the issue of animal cruelty. But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence would carry greater weight from vegans.

### **9. Srila Prabhupada's *Bhagavad-gita* Puports Indicate Obtaining Food Nonviolently is the Overriding Concern.**

Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport to the *Bhagavad-gita* (Chapter 16, verse 3):

“*Ahimsa* (nonviolence) means not arresting the progressive life of any living entity. One should not think that since the spirit spark is never killed even after the killing of the body there is no harm in killing animals for sense gratification. People are now addicted to eating animals, in spite of having an ample supply of grains, fruits...

“There is no necessity for animal killing. *This injunction is for everyone*. When there is no alternative, one may kill an animal, but it should be offered in sacrifice.

“At any rate, when there is an ample food supply for humanity, persons who are desiring to make advancement in spiritual realization should not commit violence to animals. Real *ahimsa* means not checking anyone’s progressive life.

“The animals are also making progress in their evolutionary life by transmigrating from one category of animal life to another. If a particular animal is killed, then his progress is checked.

“If an animal is staying in a particular body for so many days or so many years and is untimely killed, then he has to come back again to that form of life to complete the remaining days in order to be promoted to another species of life.

“So their progress should not be checked simply to satisfy one’s palate. This is called *ahimsa*.”

In *Bhagavad-gita* (Chapter 17, verse 8), Lord Krishna says:

“Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness (*sattva-guna*) increase the duration of life, purify one’s existence and give strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart.”

Srila Prabhupada comments:

“Milk, butter, cheese and similar products give animal fat in a form which rules out any need for the killing of innocent creatures. It is only through brute mentality that this killing goes on. The civilized method of obtaining needed fat is by milk. Slaughter is the way of the subhumans. Protein is amply available through split peas, dahl, whole wheat, etc.”

Srila Prabhupada’s words indicate that milk products are considered “pure” (*after all, the cow is sacred!*), but they must be obtained *nonviolently*: “killing innocent creatures” is a “brute mentality” and slaughtering animals “is the way of the subhumans.”

Thus, *veganism is not ruled out*. Indeed, veganism would appear to be a logical conclusion of (or at least consistent with) Srila Prabhupada’s teachings on nonviolence (see above).

Dairy products, however, are not forbidden, either — *\*\* but they must be obtained humanely! \*\**

In *A Vegetarian Primer* (1983), Canadian tennis champion Peter Burwash (a long-time friend and well-wisher of the Krishna Consciousness movement) compares human anatomy with the other terrestrial vertebrates (carnivores; omnivores; frugivores [the primates, whom he refers to as our ancestors]; and herbivores). He concludes humans are suited for a plant-based diet.

Olive oil is popular with vegans looking for a cruelty-free alternative to butter and other dairy products. Agave nectar is popular with vegans as well, as a cruelty-free alternative to honey. Animal byproducts like milk and honey can be obtained nonviolently, but usually aren't!

And its doubtful if even animal byproducts could be produced cruelty-free on a massive scale to satisfy the demands of the world's affluent consumers, even if they can afford these luxuries. A transition to a vegan economy makes perfect sense.

Elsewhere in *A Vegetarian Primer*, Peter Burwash writes favorably of Gandhi and says the world's human population has long since passed the point at which everyone could be comfortably fed on a meat-centered diet, so it makes sense to eat lower on the food chain — an argument first popularized by Frances Moore Lappe in her 1971 bestseller, *Diet for a Small Planet*.

Which is the greater deprivation or harm: the “finer brain tissues” not developing due to a lack of dairy products, or remaining an animal-killer, a cow-killer, and not understanding God at all?

Gangeya dasa (Glen Smith), a disciple of Hridayananda dasa Goswami, was asked years ago if devotees offering dairy products to the Lord were doing so out of devotion or out of sense gratification. He diplomatically responded that would depend on the consciousness of the individual devotee.

Why should it be hard for Krishna temples to go vegan? The vegans are similar in their level of strictness (e.g., reading ingredient labels, avoiding mono-and-diglycerides unless they're specifically vegetable-mono-and-diglycerides, avoiding lecithin which often comes from eggs unless it's soy lecithin, etc.) to the level of strictness of Krishna devotees. But vegans don't object to onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, canned and frozen foods, caffeine, alcohol, *ganja*, etc.

And on pilgrimage to Santa Cruz in the late '90s, my friend Anantarupa dasa who took his present birth in Ireland and came to Krishna Consciousness from an Irish Catholic background, said *it's easier to be vegan than to be Vaishnava*, as apart from onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, etc. Srila Prabhupada also said things like soy and lentils can't be offered to the Deities, etc.

## **10. Srila Prabhupada's Own Teachings on *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence).**

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 2.7.52, Purport (commentary): "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the philosophy of devotional service and the scientific presentation of man's relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prior to the age of Kali there was no need for such a book of knowledge to know the Lord and His potential energies, but with the beginning of the age of Kali human society gradually became influenced by four sinful principles, namely illegitimate connection with women, intoxication, gambling and unnecessary killing of animals. Because of these basic sinful acts, man gradually became forgetful of his eternal relation with God. Therefore man became blind, so to speak, to his ultimate goal of life."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.6.28, Purport: "... *the animals... are meant to be protected by mankind. Persons who indulge in unnecessary animal killing ...are destined to be degraded to lower statuses of life.* The planetary systems are calculated as upper (heavenly) and lower (hellish) in terms of the classes of living entities who live there."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.7.33, Purport: "The purport here is that animals should not be unnecessarily killed."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.11.7, Purport: A *kṣatriya* (soldier, warrior) is allowed to kill only for maintenance of the law and order of the state; he is not allowed to kill or commit violence without reason. Violence is certainly a path leading to a hellish condition of life, but it is also required for maintenance of the law and order of the state. Here Lord Manu prohibited Dhruva Mahārāja from killing the Yakṣas because only one of them was punishable for killing his brother, Uttama; not all of the Yakṣa citizens were punishable. We find in modern warfare, however, that attacks are made upon innocent citizens who are without fault. According to the law of Manu, such warfare is a most sinful activity. Furthermore, at the present moment civilized nations are unnecessarily maintaining many slaughterhouses for killing innocent animals. When a nation is attacked by its enemies, the wholesale slaughter of the citizens should be taken as a (*karmic*) reaction to their own sinful activities. That is nature's law.

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.11.10, Purport: "The words *sādhūnām hṛṣīkeśānuvartinām* are very significant. *Sādhu* means "a saintly person." But who is a saintly person? A saintly person is he who follows the path of rendering service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hṛṣīkeśa. In the *Nārada-pañcarātra* it is said, *hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa-sevanām bhaktir ucyate*: (CC Madhya 19.170) the process of rendering favorable service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead with one's senses is called *bhakti*, or devotional service. Therefore, why should a person who is already engaged in the service of the Lord engage himself in personal sense gratification? ...A human being, especially one who is a devotee of the Lord, should not act like this. A *sādhu*, a saintly devotee, is not supposed to kill animals unnecessarily."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.17.25, Purport: "The maintenance of slaughterhouses for the satisfaction of the tongue and the killing of animals unnecessarily should never be sanctioned by a government."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.26.25, Purport: "The word *dambha-yajñeṣu* in this verse is significant. If one violates the Vedic instructions while performing *yajña* (sacrifice) and simply makes a show of sacrifice for the purpose of killing animals, he is punishable after death. In Calcutta there are many slaughterhouses where animal flesh is sold that has supposedly been offered in sacrifice before the goddess Kālī. The *sāstras* (scriptures) enjoin that one can sacrifice a small goat before the goddess Kālī once a month (*the original intent of animal sacrifices is to curtail, limit, and restrict the killing of animals*). Nowhere is it said that one can maintain a slaughterhouse in the name of temple worship and daily kill animals unnecessarily. Those who do so receive the punishments (in hell) described herein."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.4.7, Translation and Purport: "O greatly fortunate ones, you should not kill these poor trees by burning them to ashes. Your duty is to wish the citizens (*prajāṣ*) all prosperity and to act as their protectors."

"It is indicated herein that the government or king has the duty of protecting not only the human beings, but all other living entities, including animals, trees and plants. No living entity should be killed unnecessarily."

*Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.15 Summary: " One should not make very elaborate arrangements to perform the *śrāddha* ceremony of offering oblations to one's forefathers. The best process for the *śrāddha* ceremony is to distribute *bhāgavata-prasāda* (remnants of food that has first been offered to Kṛṣṇa) to all of one's forefathers and relatives. This makes a first-class *śrāddha* ceremony. In the *śrāddha* ceremony there is no need to offer meat or eat meat. *Unnecessary killing of animals must be avoided. Those who are in the lower grades of society prefer to*

*perform sacrifices by killing animals, but one who is advanced in knowledge must avoid such unnecessary violence."*

*Srimad Bhagavatam 7.15.24, Purport: " By practice, one should avoid eating in such a way that other living entities will be disturbed and suffer. Since I suffer when pinched or killed by others, I should not attempt to pinch or kill any other living entity. People do not know that because of killing innocent animals they themselves will have to suffer severe reactions from material nature. Any country where people indulge in unnecessary killing of animals will have to suffer from wars and pestilence imposed by material nature. Comparing one's own suffering to the suffering of others, therefore, one should be kind to all living entities."*

*Srimad Bhagavatam 10.10.12, Purport: "Atheists do not believe in the existence of the soul. Nonetheless, unless one is very cruel, why should one kill animals unnecessarily? The body is a manifestation of a combination of matter. In the beginning it was nothing, but by a combination of matter it has come into existence. Then again, when the combination is dismantled, the body will no longer exist. In the beginning it was nothing, and in the end it will be nothing. Why then should one commit sinful activities when it is manifested? It is not possible for anyone to do this unless he is rascal number one."*

#### *Bhagavad-gita As It Is Lectures*

*Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 1.21-22 -- London, July 18, 1973: Now they are making correction: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not murder." That means it will come to human being. But the actual commandment is "Thou shalt not kill." But these Christian people, they are making some amendment, "Thou shalt not murder." Because murder will apply to the killing of human beings. But Lord Jesus Christ never said like that. "Thou shalt not kill." It is applicable both for human being and for animal or even for trees. Unnecessarily you cannot kill. That is *sādhu*. *Suḥṛdam sarva-bhūtānām* (BG 5.29). "Don't kill my brother, but you can kill my neighbors." Not like that. He is not *sādhu*. *Sādhu* is kind to all living entities.*

*"Thou shalt not kill."*

The March 1986 issue of *Hinduism Today* reported that across the board, Hindu religious leaders condemn abortion at any stage of fetal development as killing (some say murder) and as an act which carries very serious *karmic* repercussions (like the killing of cows). I commented on the Democrats For Life email list in 2007 that abortion falls somewhere between cow-killing and murder in the Hindu religious tradition, prompting Bill Samuel (raised a Quaker and a lifelong vegetarian) to exclaim, "Do something!"

Since all of Srila Prabhupada's words are recorded on CD ROM, we can determine if Srila Prabhupada ever used the word "murder" with regard to abortion. My understanding is that Srila Prabhupada referred to abortion as killing, not murder.

And Srila Prabhupada was very specific in his choice of words! For example, Srila Prabhupada said in conversation with Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk, in 1974, "If you do not follow the first order, '*Thou shalt not kill*,' then where is the question of love of God?"

A visitor responded, "Christians take this commandment to be applicable to human beings, not to animals."

Srila Prabhupada said, "That would mean that Christ was not intelligent enough to use the right word: murder. There is *killing*, and there is *murder*. *Murder* refers to human beings. Do you think Jesus was not intelligent enough to use the right word -- murder -- instead of the word killing? Killing means any kind of killing, and especially animal killing. If Jesus had meant simply the killing of humans, he would have used the word murder."

(In an issue of PETA's *Animal Times* magazine from several years ago, Prince explained his reasons for being strictly vegan by saying, "Thou shalt not kill" means just that.")

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gita* 2.2-6 -- Ahmedabad, December 11, 1972: Just like Mahārāja Parīkṣit, Arjuna's grandson, when he was touring in his empire... The whole world was at that time Indian empire. Not Indian exactly. Bhārata-varṣa. Now we have imitated some name, Bhārata, the "Indian," "Hindustan." But formerly the whole planet was known as Bhārata-varṣa. So when he saw that man was trying to kill one cow, immediately he took his sword: "Immediately I shall kill you. Who are you, killing cows in my kingdom?" This is *kṣatriya's* (soldier's, warrior's) business. So... But there is no *kṣatriya* now because so many cows are being killed. Nobody is protesting. It is the duty of the *kṣatriya* to protect every living entity born in the land, in his kingdom. *It is not that, as it is going on now, that only the human beings should be protected and not the animals. No animal could be killed except in sacrifice, as prescribed. Unnecessarily, there was no need of killing animals. That is great sin.*

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.7.26 -- Vrndavana, September 2, 1976: We can get all the necessities of our life from the land. The land is so important. But the uncivilized man, they do not know how to utilize the land. Therefore they commit sinful activities for their existence. Instead of utilizing land for the necessities of life, unnecessarily... Although they are civilized—they should not have done so—they are killing animals.

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.1.17 -- Honolulu, May 17, 1976:

*Suḥṛdaḥ sarva-bhūtānām*: "He is friend of everyone." There is no distinction that "He is American," "He is Indian," "He is Christian," "He is Hindu," "He is dog," "He is cat," "He is man..." No. He is kind to everyone. Why we are preaching "No meat-eating"? If you stop meat-eating, then the poor animals will be saved. So what business we have got with the animals? *Suḥṛdaḥ sarva-bhūtānām*. A saintly person is friend to everyone. "Why unnecessarily an animal should be killed?" That is his feeling.

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.1.32 -- Surat, December 16, 1970: So these are sinful activities: illicit sex life and meat-eating, *unnecessarily killing the animals*. *Why should you kill animals?* If God has given you so many nice foodstuffs—varieties of fruit, varieties of grain, sufficient milk—why should you take to this obnoxious foodstuff? But it is ill luck, unfortunate. By ill association you have learned all this nonsense. So therefore one has to give up these nonsense habits. That is called *tapasya*. *Tapo divyam* (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.5.1).

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.1.34-39 -- Surat, December 19, 1970: And the pillars of sinful activities, that is also mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*. *Striya-sūna-pāna-dyūta yatra pāpās catur-vidhāḥ*: (SB 1.17.38) "Four kinds of sinful activities: illicit sex, and intoxication, and unnecessarily killing of animals, and gambling." All the slaughterhouses of the world are being maintained unnecessarily. That is recruiting simply sins. They are eating sins, and therefore the world is in trouble. Simply committing. *There is no necessity of killing animals*. But here in India they are killing ten thousand cows daily, what to speak of Western countries. So people are so much addicted to sinful activities. How they can be happy? They are condemned. Only this

movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if they take to this movement, they can be saved. Otherwise, there is no saving.

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.5.30 -- Mauritius, October 2, 1975: Everyone is working very hard simply for sense gratification. And as soon as you take this life of sense gratification, you are sure to commit sinful activities. For example, throughout the whole world there are so many breweries manufacturing liquor. Especially in the Western countries you will find so many, the advertisement, liquor advertisement, whiskey advertisement, cigarette advertisement. And what to speak of slaughterhouse? There are many, many hundreds and thousands of slaughterhouse. And innocent animals are being killed all over the world unnecessarily. People can live with food grains. That is allowed for the all living entities. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*: (BG 3.14) "Simply by growing food grains, both the animals and the man, they can live very happily."

Lecture on *Srimad Bhagavatam* -- Melbourne, May 19, 1975: So Parīkṣit Mahārāja was very pious. That was the system. A king, monarch is supposed to give protection everyone within the kingdom. It doesn't matter whether he is man or animal. Even trees. There was no law, unnecessarily cutting or killing, no. Actually, if you are reasonable, national... National means anyone who is born in that land. At the present moment the governments take care of the man only, not of the animals. What is this nationalism? What the animal has done that they should not be protected? So this is called *Kali-yuga*, the sinful age. Sinful age.

*Sri Vyasa-puja* -- New Vrindaban, September 2, 1972: National means one who has taken birth in the land. That is called national. That is... You know, everyone. So the trees, they are also born in the land, the aquatics also born in the land. The flies, the reptiles, the snakes, the birds, the beasts, human beings—everyone is born in that land. Suppose your land, America, United States... Why the government should give protection to one class of living entities, rejecting others? This means they have lost their sympathy for others. This is *Kali-yuga*. Formerly, before *Kali-yuga*, unnecessarily even an ant would not be killed. Even an ant. There are many instances that a hunter who was taking advantage of killing animals, but when he became a devotee he was not prepared to kill even an ant.

Pandal Lecture -- Delhi, November 20, 1971: *Sūnā* means unnecessarily killing the animals. Just like slaughterhouse. You cannot maintain slaughterhouse in the human society and at the same time you want peace. It is not possible. Every living entity is son of God. You cannot kill even an ant, then you dissatisfy God. Take for example just like a gentleman has got five sons, one of them is useless, doing nothing. But if the expert son says, "My dear father, your this son is useless. Let us kill him and eat," cannibal. Will the father agree, "Oh, yes, yes, this son is useless. You can kill and eat"? Time will come in this *Kali-yuga* when actually people will become what is called man-eater. Still there are existence man-eaters in Africa. So the human society is coming to that position. Like animal, they will eat their own sons and daughters. So therefore this practice, *unnecessarily killing animal, is one of the pillar of sinful life*.

Lecture -- Bombay, September 25, 1973: We have to give up *anācāra*, forbidden things, sinful things. *Striyaḥ sūnā pānaṁ dyūtaṁ yatra pāpās catur-vidhaḥ*. There are four kinds of sinful activities. Basic principle of sinful life is *avaidha*, illicit sex life. *Avaidha stri-saṅga*. *Striyaḥ sūnā*, unnecessary animal killing. *Pāna*, drinking intoxicant; and gambling. We have to give up these four principles. Then our life becomes pure. If we give up these four principles and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, then we become perfect. How it is? You can see the examples. These European, Americans, they were accustomed to all these practices. That is their daily affair. But

they have given up this. Now you see, how they are saintly. So the thing is not very difficult, but one has to accept the principles. Then one's life becomes perfect.

Room Conversation with David Wynne, Sculptor -- July 9, 1973, London:

Prabhupāda: What is this culture? A human being is killing so many animals, innocent animals, is that culture? They are less than animals. Who kills? The tiger kills, ferocious. A human being killing innocent animals... In Christian religion, therefore: "*Thou shalt not kill.*" But they are killing only. Where is the culture? Killing culture. That is not culture. What do you think?

David Wynne: It must be so. Yes.

Prabhupāda: Yes. How a human being can kill another human being or another animal unnecessarily? And if you kill, there is law, life for life. But they have made laws for human beings. When an animal is killed, he's not criminal. But in the God laws you cannot avoid that. If you have killed an ant, you must be shot. That is God's law. You can avoid man-made law, but you cannot avoid God-made law.

Room Conversation with Sir Alistair Hardy -- July 21, 1973, London:

Prabhupāda: The Bible says, "*Thou shalt not kill,*" and the Christian people are killing, maintaining slaughterhouse. What is this? This is my question. How they'll understand God if they are implicated in sinful activities? According to *Vedas*, there are four kinds of sinful activities: illicit sex, unnecessary killing of animals, intoxication and gambling. *Yatra pāpās catur-vidhaḥ*. So God is purest. *Param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramam bhavān* (BG 10.12). How one can approach God if he leads a sinful life? That is our propagation. You give up this sinful life. Then you'll be able to understand God.

*"Thou shalt not kill."*

The March 1986 issue of *Hinduism Today* reported that across the board, Hindu religious leaders condemn abortion at any stage of fetal development as killing (some say murder) and as an act which carries very serious *karmic* repercussions (like the killing of cows). I commented on the Democrats For Life email list in 2007 that abortion falls somewhere between cow-killing and murder in the Hindu religious tradition, prompting Bill Samuel (raised a Quaker and a lifelong vegetarian) to exclaim, "Do something!"

Since all of Srila Prabhupada's words are recorded on CD ROM, we can determine if Srila Prabhupada ever used the word "murder" with regard to abortion. My understanding is that Srila Prabhupada referred to abortion as killing, not murder.

And Srila Prabhupada was very specific in his choice of words! For example, Srila Prabhupada said in conversation with Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk, in 1974, "If you do not follow the first order, '*Thou shalt not kill,*' then where is the question of love of God?"

A visitor responded, "Christians take this commandment to be applicable to human beings, not to animals."

Srila Prabhupada said, "That would mean that Christ was not intelligent enough to use the right word: murder. There is *killing*, and there is *murder*. *Murder* refers to human beings. Do you think Jesus was not intelligent enough to use the right word -- murder -- instead of the word killing?"

Killing means any kind of killing, and especially animal killing. If Jesus had meant simply the killing of humans, he would have used the word murder."

(In an issue of PETA's *Animal Times* magazine from several years ago, Prince explained his reasons for being strictly vegan by saying, "'Thou shalt not kill' means just that.")

Garden Conversation with Professors -- June 24, 1975, Los Angeles:

Prabhupāda: We are also working. It is not that we are simply sitting down and chanting. Because we are chanting, therefore we are loving everyone. That is a fact. These Hare Kṛṣṇa chanters, they will never agree to kill any animal, even a plant, because they know everything is part and parcel of God. Why unnecessarily one should be killed? That is love.

Morning Walk -- October 25, 1975, Mauritius:

Prabhupāda: No, no, to kill animal is not very heroic. Nonsense. Innocent animal wandering and you kill. "Oh, very great hero." Again he deserves to be kicked on the face. All action, they are simply rewarded with kicking on the face. Why should you kill animal? *Ātmavat sarva-bhūteṣu*. If you are killed, you feel pain. Why should you kill others unnecessarily?

1976 Conversations and Morning Walks

Conversation with Clergymen -- June 15, 1976, Detroit:

Prabhupāda: So, we have to teach people how to refrain from sinful activities. Then, when he's pure, then God will reveal. If we keep them in sinful life, at the same time we want to preach them, it will not be possible. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said that those who are animal killer, they cannot understand about God. *Vinā paśu-ghnāt. So if in the human society unnecessary animal killing is encouraged, he will never be able to understand what is God. The greatest sinful activity, paśu-ghnāt. So in human society, unnecessarily animal killing is going on. So they are entangled in sinful activities; therefore they are unable to understand what is God.*

Room Conversation -- August 8, 1976, Tehran:

Prabhupāda: Wrong, one thing is wrong in my country, and that is right in your country. *Just like animal slaughter is wrong according to our Vedic civilization. Unnecessary animal slaughter is forbidden.* But in your country or in other Western countries, they kill so many animals. So what is wrong, what is right? Who will decide?

Moustafa: That's the reason I don't kill animals and I don't eat meat. For three years now.

Prabhupāda: That's very good, very good idea.

1977 Conversations and Morning Walks

Morning Walk -- January 24, 1977, Bhuvanesvara:

Prabhupāda: A little family, a little community, that is your world. We do not think in that way. We include even the animals, trees, plants-brothers. That is our philosophy. We feel. When you cut a tree unnecessarily, we feel. This is our feeling. Unless there is absolute necessity, we do not wish to kill even a tree, what to speak of animals. When in our Bombay the coconut trees were

being cut, I was feeling actually: "Why unnecessarily the coconut trees...?" You cannot give anyone life, so how, what is living, you can kill? It may be tree or animal or plant. You cannot give him life. So you have to suffer for this.

According to Manu, the great author of civic codes and religious principles, even the killer of an animal is to be considered a murderer because *animal food is never meant for the civilized man*, whose prime duty is to prepare himself for going back to Godhead. He says that in the act of killing an animal, there is a regular conspiracy by the party of sinners, and all of them are liable to be punished as murderers exactly like a party of conspirators who kill a human being combinedly. He who gives permission, he who kills the animal, he who sells the slaughtered animal, he who cooks the animal, he who administers distribution of the foodstuff, and at last he who eats such cooked animal food are all murderers, and all of them are liable to be punished by the laws of nature. No one can create a living being despite all advancement of material science, and therefore no one has the right to kill a living being by one's independent whims.

[Srila Prabhupada from Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.37]

### **11. Nonviolence is a Higher *Dharma* (Religious Duty) Than Eating or Offering Only Food in the Mode of Goodness.**

John Stuart Mill observed, "The reason for legal intervention in favor of children apply not less strongly to the case of those unfortunate slaves— the animals."

In his book, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, Reverend Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest, notes that "In some ways, Christian thinking is already oriented in this direction. What is it that so appalls us about cruelty to children or oppression of the vulnerable, but that these things are betrayals of relationships of special care and special trust? Likewise in the case of animals who are mostly defenseless before us."

According to the *Vedas*, humans exist in a special relationship with cows. Protecting cows is a religious duty.

But in the cases of child abuse, there is loss of child custody. In the case of spousal abuse, there is divorce.

(Severed relationships Vs proper relationships.)

And children leaving their parents as well as divorce do not exist under the Vedic social system.

The only exceptions are when a lower *dharma* or religious duty is superseded by a higher *dharma*, like devotion to God.

Prahlad Maharaja rebuked his father Hiranyakashipu.

Bali Maharaja disobeyed his *guru*, Sukracharya, to surrender to Lord Vishnu in the form of Vamana.

The *gopis* (milkmaids) left their husbands or their fathers' care to dance with Krishna in the middle of the night.

Srila Prabhupada himself left his wife and family after his wife sold his copy of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* to purchase tea!

Nonviolence, similarly, is a higher *dharma* than eating or offering only food in the mode of goodness.

“*Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the highest duty.”

--*Padma Purana* 1.31.27

The animals' right to life takes precedence over “dietary laws” !

The *Mahabharata* (Santi-parva 141.88) similarly says that the eating of “unclean” food is not as terrible as the eating of flesh. (It must be remembered that the *brahmanas* of ancient India exalted cleanliness to a divine principle).

*Quote, "Slaughterhouse Civilization":*

*“For meat-eaters, that is what the Vedic culture recommends... don't eat cows until after they have died a natural death. We don't say, 'Don't eat,' you are so very fond of eating cows. All right, you can eat them, because after their death we have to give them to somebody, some living entity. Generally, cow carcasses are given to the vultures. But then, why only to the vultures? Why not the modern 'civilized' people, who are as good as vultures?”*

Srila Prabhupada similarly said:

"We simply request, 'Don't kill. Don't maintain slaughterhouses.' That is very sinful. It brings a very awkward *karmic* reaction upon society. Stop these slaughterhouses. We don't say, 'Stop eating meat.' You can eat meat, but don't take it from the slaughterhouse, by killing. Simply wait (until the animal dies of natural causes) and you'll get the carcasses."

("Slaughterhouse Civilization", *Back to Godhead*, 1979)

Animals that died of natural causes can't be offered to Krishna. So it's clear obtaining food nonviolently is the overriding concern. Srila Prabhupada similarly told his disciples in India if they were in a position where they couldn't offer their food to just go to a vegetarian restaurant.

## 12. The Main Ingredient

You write:

*"Yes, I appreciate the Eastern religions for bringing about more vegetarian restaurants. Vegan restaurants are okay as far as they go. We can even offer our food to Krishna in a public restaurant. Unfortunately, vegan restaurants do not have Krishna's favorite ingredient. However, the good news about vegan restaurants is at least they are not going to be contaminated by animal lard and the like."*

In the 1980s, my family and I were dining with an Indian family, Dr. & Mrs. Garg in Del Mar, California. We had ordered take out food (Indian or Chinese) consisting of both vegetarian and nonvegetarian dishes. Mrs. Garg accidentally put some meat on her father's plate. Her father, whom she affectionately referred to as "Papaji," recoiled in horror! She immediately got him a

fresh plate and put only vegetarian food on it. In 1991, Rankin Fisher was excited that a new Mexican fast food chain, La Salsa, had appeared in the San Diego area: they were not using lard, but rather vegetable oil in their preparations. Here in Northern California, there are soup and salad bar restaurant chains like Fresh Choice and Sweet Tomatoes, similar to the Soup Exchange and the Souplantation in Southern California. In 1999, my mom and I were dining with my cousin Shobha and her parents (my aunt and uncle) visiting from India at Sweet Tomatoes. Shobha helped herself to some Jell-O for dessert. I told Shobha that gelatin contains some of the worst animal byproducts (e.g., animal hooves) and thus isn't even vegetarian. Shobha immediately put down the Jell-O and opted for another dessert. *Similarly, once we learn chickens are killed in the production of eggs and cows are killed in the production of dairy, how do we respond?* Meat is Murder says Morrissey.

The same arguments that convince meat-eaters to go vegetarian (ecological, economic, energy, environmental, ethical, health and nutrition) can be taken a step farther and convince meat-eaters and vegetarians to go vegan.

In the Central Valley of California cows generate the same amount of fecal waste as a city of 21 million people, much of which goes untreated and pollutes waterways.

Dairy products, like other animal products, are obtained through modern agribusiness and factory farming, and the issues of animal cruelty, the health hazards caused by eating higher rather than lower on the food chain, as well as the energy and environmental concerns are not avoided by switching from one commercially produced animal product to another.

Krishna's "favorite ingredient" is *bhakti* or devotion! The food must be offered with to Krishna in love and devotion (see below):

--

Krishna's Diet is *Bhakti* (Devotion)

Q & A with Swami B.V. Tripurari

Thursday, April 22, 2005

Does one have to drink milk or offer milk to Krishna to be a devotee?

Q. I'm a vegan so I don't eat any animal products. I question the need to offer milk products to Krishna because of the horrendous things modern factory farming does to cows in order to make them produce more milk. Most of the milk served today comes from these farms where cows are slaughtered when their milk production diminishes. Considering this, it seems to me that it would be better if devotees did not support the factory farming system by using milk products. My question is does one have to drink milk or offer milk to Krishna to be a devotee?

A. Scripture says that Krishna is fond of milk products. Still, one does not have to drink milk or offer milk to Krishna to be a devotee. *Bhagavad-gita* says, *patram puspam phalam toyam*, that if one offers to Krishna with devotion a leaf, flower, water, or fruit, then he will accept it. The main ingredient mentioned in this verse is devotion, *bhaktya prayacchati*. It is the *bhakti* (devotion) in the offering that satisfies Krishna. Therefore, if someone refrains from offering milk to Krishna because of conscientious objections over inhumane dairy farming methods, there is no harm.

I do feel that whenever possible devotees should avoid buying milk from companies that grossly mistreat cows, even if milk from more humane companies is costlier. Here at Audarya our cows provide all of our milk products. Fortunate are those who can alter their lifestyles to have the same situation. Otherwise, one does not need to offer and consume milk to practice devotional service. A person can be vegan and still be a devotee of Krishna, but he or she should aspire to be a *bhakta* (devotee) first and foremost, and a vegan, vegetarian, fruitarian, or whatever second. A *bhakta* (devotee) is a person who values devotion above all else.

--

Krishna is known as "*Govinda*" friend of the cows, and as "*Gopala*" a cowherd. *Do you think Krishna wants us to commit violence towards the cows just to obtain / offer their milk? Srila Prabhupada himself even said milk touched by the lips of a serpent is poison!* A devotee sympathetic to veganism writes:

"What hypocrisy it is to call out '*jaya Govinda*' and yet support the killing of the innocent creatures which He loves most of all. Krishna loves cows so that His planet is called Goloka Vrindavan. As we would not allow the destruction of a forest of sacred *tulsi* bushes (*Vrinda*), we should not allow the destruction of a herd of dairy cows through modern methods of exploitation for milk, followed by meat. At the very least we should not support it. We should not view vegans as a threat or even as outsiders, as they are pleasing Govinda in their own way, and may even be more pleasing to Him than we who call on His name without integrity of action."

Jennifer Marigold similarly writes:

"And Srila Narayana also said that (factory farmed) milk produced in the conventional grocery store is 'like meat. We should not take it.' *Bhakti Yoga*, "Yoga for Peace," p.14"

Even if you argue that love of God (offering Krishna His favorite foods) takes precedence over love of one's neighbor (other living entities) does this justify killing one's neighbors (the cows) in the name of religion?

On the other hand, the *Bhagavad-gita* takes place on a battlefield, with Krishna ordering Arjuna to kill his kinsmen.

And Srila Prabhupada considered the Sikhs to be *kshatriyas* (soldiers, warriors) even though the Sikh religion permits abortion in the first trimester.

If you accept the premise that the factory-farmed cows are blessed if their milk is offered to Krishna, you can't oppose cow-killing as violence, without admitting that you're committing violence too, but it's sacred violence (*violence against cows!*), or violence in the name of religion.

To many, this is reminiscent of the generals in Vietnam saying, "We had to destroy this village in order to save it."

In the '70s, Srila Prabhupada was speaking with a couple of Indian *gurus*, a Sikh and a Jain. Srila Prabhupada spoke favorably of the Sikhs, as principled warriors. The Jain spiritual master tried to bring some balance into the conversation by bringing up *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Srila Prabhupada said, "Here in the West, there is *himsa* (violence) only."

"...the teachings of Jesus were based on love, compassion, and mutual respect. Where would anyone get the idea that Jesus taught love and compassion and also advocated the slaughter of innocent animals for the sake of the palate? To believe this, it would seem, is tantamount to believing that Jesus was a hypocrite... One tends to indulge in word-jugglery when forced to rationalize an evil habit. The translators of the Bible seem to be no exception."

--Steven Rosen (Satyaraja dasa), *Vegetarianism and the Bible*

Steven Rosen (Satyaraja dasa) favorably refers to Jesus' teachings on nonviolence as "supremely pacifistic," to convince Christians to think of extending their precepts of nonviolence to animals... even though as Vaishnavas (devotees of Lord Vishnu or Krishna) we are not absolute pacifists.

How can we tell people of other faiths that killing cows and other animals leads to abortion and war, killing cows and other animals is demoniac, cow-killers and animal-killers will suffer torment in hell followed by rebirth in lower species when their punishment in hell is over, slaughter is the way of the subhumans, animal-killers cannot understand God, etc., if we ourselves are killing cows? They won't take us seriously. My friend Tim Parks, whom I met through Life Chain in 1992, and who spent a number of years serving as a Protestant missionary in China, said in 2005 he thought the Dalai Lama was a hypocrite for saying the people of Tibet have a "special dispensation" which allows them to eat meat... kinda like the *gurus* in our movement claiming the factory farmed cows will be blessed if their milk is offered to Krishna, huh?!

In past decades, Krishna devotees were reading ingredient labels to avoid mono-and-diglycerides which comes from animal sources unless specifically labeled as "vegetable mono-and-diglycerides"; avoiding lecithin, which comes from eggs, unless specifically labeled as "soy lecithin"; avoiding commercial cheeses which contain rennet, an enzyme taken from the lining of a calf's stomach and used in coagulating cheeses, but failing to realize cows are killed in commercial dairy products as well; showcasing cruelty-free products in temple gift shops, etc.

It was reported in the '80s that Satsvarupa dasa Goswami made it a point to abstain from sugar on *ekadasi*, because white sugar is processed through animal bones, and thus isn't even vegetarian. Similarly, as long as veganism is merely seen as a stricter degree of vegetarianism, the vegans and their views should be welcomed in the association of devotees.

Why should it be hard for Krishna temples to go vegan? The vegans are similar in their level of strictness (e.g., reading ingredient labels, avoiding mono-and-diglycerides unless they're specifically vegetable-mono-and-diglycerides, avoiding lecithin which often comes from eggs unless it's soy lecithin, etc.) to the level of strictness of Krishna devotees. But vegans don't object to onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, canned and frozen foods, caffeine, alcohol, *ganja*, etc.

And on pilgrimage to Santa Cruz in the late '90s, my friend Anantarupa dasa who took his present birth in Ireland and came to Krishna Consciousness from an Irish Catholic background, said *it's easier to be vegan than to be Vaishnava*, as apart from onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, etc. Srila Prabhupada also said things like soy and lentils can't be offered to the Deities, etc.

### **13. These Ideas Are Now in the Mainstream**

Of course, there are other angles of persuasion. Keith Akers writes in his (updated) 1986 edition of *A Vegetarian Sourcebook*:

"Jesus' teachings focus on nonviolence and poverty. It could hardly be otherwise for anyone who recommends loving one's enemies, and selling everything one owns and giving it to the poor. Would it not be a logical extension of the principles of nonviolence to extend these principles from humans to animals? Should we not love animals and care for them? And isn't meat a wasteful luxury item, a food for the rich? Shouldn't we be making more food available for the poor and hungry by eating plant foods?"

"Our knowledge of a vegetarian tradition within Christianity comes from several places. There is first of all the Bible; secondly, the history of the early church; and thirdly, the evidence given by figures in the Christian tradition themselves."

I understand there are conservative Christians who fear veganism... which is kind of like being afraid of nonsmoking, nondrinking, or recycling. Ronald J. Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action, in his 1977 book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, pointed out that 220 million Americans were eating enough food (largely because of the high consumption of grain fed to livestock) to feed over one billion people in the poorer countries.

Buddhist spiritual master Thich Nhat Hanh has similarly said along the lines of a belief in *karma* and reincarnation: "Every day forty thousand children die in the world for lack of food. We in the West, who are feeding grains to animals to make meat, are eating the flesh of these children."

In his 1987 Pulitzer Prize nominated *Diet for a New America*, vegan author John Robbins' concluding chapter on the environmental devastation caused by raising animals for food, the waste of energy, grain, and other resources that could feed the hungry, etc., begins with a quote from (reincarnationist) Christian mystic Edgar Cayce about *karma*: "Destiny, or *karma*, depends upon what the soul has done about what it has become aware of."

John Robbins then elaborates:

"To supply one person with a meat habit food for a year requires three-and-a-quarter acres. To supply one lacto-ovo-vegetarian requires only one-half of an acre. To supply one pure vegetarian (vegan) requires only one-sixth of an acre. In other words, a given acreage can feed twenty times as many people eating a pure vegetarian (vegan) diet-style as it could people eating the standard American diet-style..."

"In a world in which a child dies of starvation every two seconds, an agricultural system designed to feed our meat habit is a blasphemy. Yet it continues, because we continue to support it. Those who profit from this system do not need us to condone what they are doing. The only support they need from us is our money. As long as enough people continue to purchase their products they will have the resources to fight reforms, pump millions of dollars of 'educational' propaganda into our schools, and defend themselves against medical and ethical truths.

"A rapidly growing number of Americans are withdrawing support from this insane system by refusing to consume meat. For them, this new direction in diet-style is a way of joining hands with others and saying we will not support a system which wastes such vast amounts of food while people in this world do not have enough to eat."

John Robbins concludes, "*A new direction for America's diet-style would be a significant step towards a nonviolent world. It is a way of saying: 'Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.' A nonviolent world has roots in a nonviolent diet.*"

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) literature from the 1980s similarly concluded: "*A nonviolent philosophy begins at breakfast.*"

Raising animals for food, even raising animals for animal by-products like milk and eggs, means wasting valuable acreage, because the animals themselves are raised on plant food! If we eat lower on the food chain, fewer resources are required to feed everyone, which means less agricultural acreage, etc., which means fewer rodents and insects are killed when fields are ploughed for farming, etc. Fewer plants are killed, too. If you carry this argument to its logical conclusion, a **vegan** diet is the least violent, because it requires one-third less acreage than a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet, and twenty times less acreage than a meat-centered diet.

And these ideas are now in the mainstream. Country music star Reba McEntire believes in reincarnation. Carrie Underwood was voted sexiest vegetarian by PETA members in 2007; an honor previously given to Shania Twain. There are millions of ordinary mainstream Americans who don't smoke, nor drink, nor do any drugs, nor gamble, are vegetarian or vegan, choose life, practice *mantra* meditation (e.g., pray the rosary or chant the holy names), practice *yoga* not merely along the lines of aerobics, jazzercise, or pilates, or as physical fitness to attract the opposite sex, but as an actual *sadhana* (Sanskrit for spiritual practice or spiritual discipline), don't believe in evolution but do believe in *karma* and reincarnation, take part in *kirtan* (glorifying God through music, song, dance, and ecstatic behavior in general) in traditional Hindu temples, etc.

Decaffeinated coffees and teas have been on the marketplace since the late 1970s, with decaffeinated and diet or sugar-free sodas appearing shortly thereafter, as well as nonalcoholic beers, etc. I see vegetarians as "fellow travelers" alongside vegans. Obviously not everyone on the political left is a militant vegan, but issues like antibiotics, cage-free, cruelty-free, factory farming, fair trade, gluten-free, GMOs, grain-fed Vs grass-fed, organic, pesticide-free, sustainable agriculture, vegan, vegetarian, etc. are all given serious discussion on the political left, whereas the right won't even give these issues the time of day.

According to the editors of *World Watch*, July/August 2004: "The human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future -- deforestation, topsoil erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities and the spread of disease."

In her 2008 book, *Yoga and Vegetarianism*, Sharon Gannon, who attended Catholic school till the sixth grade, and now follows an earlier and deeper spiritual tradition, advocates veganism:

"In the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali presents an eight-step plan for liberation called *raja-yoga*. The first step is *yama*, which means restraint. It consists of five ethical guidelines regarding how *yogis* should treat others, all of which clearly support a vegetarian diet. The first *yama* Patanjali gives is *ahimsa*, or nonharming... *Stop perpetuating violence and it will cease...* Billions of animals are killed every year for human consumption after living confined in horrible conditions on factory farms and enduring untold extremes of suffering. This fact alone is good reason for any *yoga* practitioner to adopt a vegetarian diet.

"Meanwhile, from the individual health perspective, a vegetarian diet has been proven to prevent and even reverse heart disease and cancer, two of the leading causes of human death in our world today. The terrible toll that eating meat, fish, and dairy takes on our planet's air, water, soil, and whole ecosystem is another reason for *yogis*, who have traditionally cultivated a close

relationship with nature, to consider vegetarianism... Extending compassion towards animals purifies our *karmas*, creating an internal state of being conducive to enlightenment."

According to Sharon Gannon, the single most important part of one's *yoga* practice is the strict adherence to a vegetarian diet--a diet free of needless cruelty, harm, and injustice. Gannon offers truth and wisdom from a tradition of spiritual practice thousands of years old and explains how to apply these practices to our modern lifestyles. Along with David Life, she is the creator of the Jivamukti Yoga Method, a path to enlightenment through compassion for all beings. Blessed by her teachers Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati, Swami Nirmalananda, and SriK.Pattabhi Jois, she is a pioneer in teaching *yoga as spiritual activism*. Vegetarianism as nonviolence towards humans and animals alike is a core principle of the Jivamuki Yoga Method.

As for the sexual restraint taught in *yoga* (alongside abstinence from all mind-altering substances as a spiritual discipline), also found in all the world's great religions as well, Sharon Gannon merely asks her readers to use discretion before entering into committed relationships. Gannon is the author of many books and the producer of numerous *yoga*-related DVDs and music CDs. She is the recipient of the 2008 Compassionate Living Award. *Vanity Fair* gives her credit for making *yoga* cool and hip.

Here in the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the most liberal parts of the country, you see bumper stickers spelling out the word "*Coexist*" with symbols from each of the world's great religious traditions. There is now a thriving vegan scene in the SF Bay Area, with vegan restaurants in San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Jose. There are vegan restaurants in Sacramento as well.

Vegan Meetups abound! San Francisco Bay Area Vegans in Technology has nearly eight hundred members. Bay Area Vegan Food and Meditation Circle has nearly eight hundred members. Silicon Valley Social Vegans has over nine hundred members. East Bay Vegan Food and Health has over fifteen hundred members. Rhythm & Greens in the Bay Area has nearly seven hundred members. The San Francisco Organic & Plant-Based Food Meetup has close to three thousand members.

Adventist couple Dave Koot (an ordained minister) & Patricia Koot (a certified nutritionalist) host weekly vegan dinners in San Francisco, there are vegan Meetups for dining out at vegan restaurants, vegan potlucks, vegan speed dating, etc. Animal rights organizations like Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) hold vegan parties, vegan potlucks, vegan "ice cream" socials, vegan movie nights, etc. Kid-friendly and teen-friendly VegFests are held annually in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Sacramento, too.

Again, these ideas are now in the mainstream. At a Respect Life conference at the Diocese of San Francisco in September 2004, I managed to distribute copies of *They Shall Not Hurt or Destroy*, my 2003 book on religion and animal rights, to a few priests and a nun. Vicki Evans, the local Feminists For Life contact, later told me in a phone conversation, "Somebody distributed PETA literature!"

*"I hate to say it," sings Sting, "but it's probably me."*

#### **14. Attention: armchair activists!**

In his 1987 booklet, *The New Abolitionists*, B.R. Boyd writes: "Seventy to one hundred million, including lost and abandoned pets, are quite literally injected, infected, mutilated, driven insane, strapped immobile for years on end, blinded, concussed, burned, mechanically raped,

dismembered, disemboweled, mutilated, and otherwise violated--often without adequate anesthesia--in order to test shampoos, oven cleaners, make-up, and scientific hypotheses; to advance medical science or personal careers; to develop and test nuclear, biological, chemical, and conventional weapons; or for general scientific curiosity, and because public funding is available.

"Twenty million unwanted companion animals undergo euthanasia every year and countless others are abused by their guardians. Spay-neuter clinics get little or no public funding, while the pet-breeding industry continues to enrich itself by pumping out living, disposable toys. Seventeen million wild fur-bearing animals (and twice as many 'trash' animals) are mangled in steel jaw traps and seventeen million more factory farmed, then gassed or electrocuted, that we may wear furs. 170 million animals are hunted down and shot to death in their habitats, mostly for sport, often leaving their offspring to die of exposure or starvation.

"Industrial pollution, habitat destruction, and our transportation system kill and maim untold millions, while we kidnap and imprison others for our entertainment in zoos. Ten billion land animals and trillions of aquatic animals are killed in the United States every year; 95 percent of them are killed for food. We force-breed, cage, brand, castrate, and over-milk them, cut off their beaks, horns, and tails, pump them full of antibiotics and growth stimulants, steal their eggs, and kill and eat them."

Animal activists are the new abolitionists. There are many reasons for a plant-based diet. Our food system -- from farm to table -- is dominated by large corporations whose main aim is not to keep us healthy; it is to make profits. Promoting meat, dairy and highly processed food is dangerous for your health and dangerous for our planet, but great for corporate profits. The book, *Rethinking Food*, features more than one hundred doctors citing scientific studies proving that a plant-based diet (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes) is best for human health. They also present abundant evidence that eating animal products is the cause of many of our most prevalent and dangerous diseases.

*"Isn't man an amazing animal? He kills wildlife - birds, kangaroos, deer, all kinds of cats, coyotes, beavers, groundhogs, mice, foxes and dingoes - by the million in order to protect his domestic animals and their feed. Then he kills domestic animals by the billion and eats them. This in turn kills man by the millions, because eating animals leads to degenerative - and fatal - health conditions like heart disease, kidney disease, and cancer. So then man tortures and kills millions more animals to look for cures for these diseases. Elsewhere, millions of other human beings are being killed by hunger and malnutrition because food they could eat is being used to fatten domestic animals. Meanwhile, some people are dying of sad laughter at the absurdity of man, who kills so easily and so violently, and once a year, sends out cards praying for Peace on Earth."*

--David Coats

The meat industry abuses and kills billions of animals every year. If meat-eaters would visit one of these slaughterhouses, or just watch some of the videos available online, they would see the incredible suffering our food system imposes on these helpless animals. The meat industry has a worse impact on climate change than fossil fuel. Meat production produces huge amounts of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>). Methane traps up to ninety times more heat than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The federal government does not regulate methane emissions. The meat, dairy, and egg industries produce 65 percent of global nitrous oxide emissions. Nitrous oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) is three hundred times for powerful than CO<sub>2</sub> at trapping heat in the earth's atmosphere.

The diets of meat-eaters create seven times the greenhouse gases as the diets of vegans. To produce one pound of animal protein versus one pound of soy protein, it takes twelve times as much land, thirteen times as much fossil fuel, and fifteen times as much water. Cows use 85 percent of the energy from agricultural land but account for only eight percent the food we eat. Over 260 million acres of U.S. forest land has been cleared to create room to grow grain to feed farmed animals. The equivalent of seven football fields of land are bulldozed every minute to create more room for farmed animals. By not eating one pound of beef, you save more water than you would by not showering for six months. Meat industry workers suffer some of the lowest pay and most dangerous working conditions of any workers. One vegan meal can save three thousand gallons of water, sixteen pounds of grain, and possibly your life, and possibly the planet's ability to support human existence.

The International Network for Religion and Animals was founded in 1985. Since then, numerous books have been written on animals and theology, including:

*The Vegetarianism of Jesus Christ: the Pacifism, Communalism and Vegetarianism of Primitive Christianity; Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religions; The Souls of Animals; Replenish the Earth; Of God and Pelicans; Is God A Vegetarian?; God's Covenant with Animals; They Shall not Hurt or Destroy; The Lost Religion of Jesus; Good News for All Creation; Vegetarian Christian Saints; The Dominion of Love; Good Eating; Of God and Dogs; Every Creature a Word of God; School of Compassion; For Love of Animals, etc.*

While humans are starving, half the world's grain is fed to livestock! Aren't feeding the hungry; treating the body as a temple of God which should not be defiled nor dishonored through antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, poisons and other unhealthy toxins and unhealthy food in general; the institutionalized killing of billions of animals being directly responsible for global hunger, global warming, the energy, environmental, population and water crises; treating animals humanely, and compassionate stewardship over the environment, over all of God's creation, all biblical issues? The editors of the Green Bible, which highlights environmentally-friendly biblical passages might think so.

Test tube meat? It's animal protein, but it doesn't involve violence. It doesn't involve taking the life of a fellow creature. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is offering millions to anyone who can perfect lab grown meat. To me, test tube meat is science fiction. When I was in grade school in the early '70s, I read a science fiction book called *The Lost Race of Mars*. It was set in the year 2017, depicting a future in which humans have colonies on Mars. The colonists enjoy meat grown in labs and test tubes, as it's impossible to transport livestock through space, go through the waste of resources and energy to raise animals for food (and deal with the animals' waste!) in colonies on other worlds, etc.

No need for test-tube meat: the imitation meat and dairy products are just as delicious! Shifting to a plant-based diet in 2017 was fact, not fiction. Vegetarian and vegan celebrities included: Russell Brand, Kristen Wiig, Natalie Portman, Pamela Anderson, Mýa, Toby MacGuire, Kristen Bell, Russell Simmons, Ellen DeGeneres, Olivia Wilde, Stevie Wonder, Kellie Pickler, Alec Baldwin, Anthony Kiedis, Leona Lewis, Paul McCartney, Carrie Underwood, Venus Williams, Alicia Silverstone, Shania Twain, Alyssa Milano, Brad Pitt, Christina Applegate, Lea Michele, Steve-O, Erykah Badu, Jared Leto, Portia DeRossi, Kimberly Elise, Daryl Hannah, Sandra Oh, Petra Nemcova, David Carter, Miley Cyrus, Moby, Tony Kanal, Alicia Silverstone, John Salley, Emily Deschanel, Joaquin Phoenix, Seba Johnson, Kat Von D, Daisy Fuentes, and Jessica Chastain.

An animal rights message is warmly received on the political left, not on the right. Bill Clinton was vegan and Al Gore is vegan. Dennis Kucinich is vegan. Cory Booker is vegan. Reverend Al Sharpton is vegan. Chelsea Clinton was vegan for a number of years... her wedding in 2010 was strictly vegan. Amy Carter is a vegetarian. And the Bush daughters were famous for... underage drinking? Well, to be fair, PETA reports that Lauren Bush, niece of George W. Bush, is a vegetarian.

Pound for pound, many vegetarian foods are better sources of protein than meat. A one-hundred-gram portion of lentils yields twenty-five grams of protein, while a hundred grams of soybeans yields thirty-four grams of protein. But although meat provides less protein, it costs more. A spot check of supermarkets in Florida in August 2005 showed sirloin steak costing \$7.87 a pound, while staple ingredients for delicious vegetarian meals averaged less than \$1.50 a pound. Becoming a vegetarian could potentially save an individual shopper at least several hundred dollars each year, thousands of dollars over the course of a lifetime. The savings to consumers as a whole would amount to billions of dollars annually. Considering all this, it's hard to see how anyone could afford *not* to become a vegetarian.

Merely shifting to a plant-based diet: a slight change in lifestyle, comparable to cellphones; going from gas guzzlers to compact cars and unleaded fuels; legalizing industrial hemp; paper Vs plastic bags; recycling; switching to decaf; switching to the metric system, etc., can save the planet. Attention: armchair activists! Through a slight change in lifestyle, we can save redwoods and rainforests, the ozone layer, and end global hunger, global warming, the energy, environmental, population and water crises... as well as end abortion and bring about world peace, too, as abortion and war are the *karma* for killing animals!

"If anyone wants to save the planet," says Paul McCartney in an interview with PETA's *Animal Times* magazine from 2001, "all they have to do is stop eating meat. That's the single most important thing you could do. It's staggering when you think about it. "Vegetarianism takes care of so many things in one shot: ecology, famine, cruelty. Let's do it! Linda was right. Going veggie is the single best idea for the new century."

Roberta Kalechofsky of Jews for Animal Rights similarly says: "Merely by ceasing to eat meat, merely by practicing restraint, we have the power to end a painful industry. We do not have to bear arms to end this evil. We do not have to contribute money, we do not have to sit in jail or go to meetings or demonstrations or engage in acts of civil disobedience. Most often, the act of repairing the world, of healing mortal wounds, is left to heroes and *tzaddikim* (holy people): saints and people of unusual discipline. But here is an action every mortal can perform--surely it is not too difficult!"

## 15. A Spiritual Basis

Animal rights should not be solely aligned with a particular political party. Neither should they be tied to a particular religion. The International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA) was founded in 1985. Since then, dozens of books have been written on animals and Christianity. As I told Dr. Richard Schwartz (author, *Judaism and Vegetarianism*) via email in 1997: arguing as some Christians do that animal rights and vegetarianism are solely "Jewish" concerns is like saying, "It's only wrong to own a slave if you're a Quaker." No. Suffering and injustice concern us all. Like the abolition of slavery, animal rights and vegetarianism are social and moral progress for all mankind, including atheists and agnostics.

Richard agreed with me that churches should have animal issues at the top of their agenda as well. Catholic Concern for Animals and some progressive churches (Episcopal, Methodist, Quaker, Unitarian) have shown interest in animal rights issues. The Baha'i faith endorses vegetarianism, and the Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) all teach *ahimsa*, or nonviolence towards humans and animals alike, to the point of vegetarianism.

You'd think the unborn-right-to-lifers would immediately understand the animal-right-to-lifers! Talk of a vegetarian future is usually met with an anti-semitic yawn from conservative Christians, recalling Woody Allen's 1973 movie, *Sleeper*: a natural foods faddist goes into suspended animation, and wakes up two hundred years later to find that what he thought would become the wave of the future, didn't happen. I've thought of a vegetarian future along the lines of a future of electric cars: *a real possibility!*

Food expert Frances Moore Lappe, author of the bestseller *Diet for a Small Planet*, once said in a television interview that we should look at a piece of steak as if it were a Cadillac. "What I mean," she explained, "is that we in America are hooked on gas-guzzling automobiles because of the illusion of cheap petroleum. Likewise, we got hooked on a grain-fed, meat-centered diet because of the illusion of cheap grain." Ronald J. Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action, in his 1977 book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, pointed out that 220 million Americans were eating enough food (largely because of the high consumption of grain fed to livestock) to feed over one billion people in the poorer countries.

The Worldwatch Institute has released a remarkable report entitled *Taking Stock: Animal Farming and the Environment*, which lists nation after nation where food deprivation has followed the switch from a grain-based diet to a meat-based one. Most of the nations importing grain from the United States were once self-sufficient in grain. The main reason they aren't is the rise in meat production and consumption.

In country after country the pattern is repeated. Livestock industries are consuming feed to such an extent that now almost all Third World nations must import grain. Seventy-five percent of Third World imports of corn, barley, sorghum, and oats are fed to animals, not to people. In country after country, the demand for meat among the rich is squeezing out staple production for the poor. Oxfam similarly estimates that in Mexico, eighty percent of the children in rural areas are undernourished, yet the livestock are fed more grain than the human population eats! The livestock are exported of course, to satisfy the developed nations' craving for cheap hamburgers. Many of us believe that hunger exists because there's not enough food to go around. But as Frances Moore Lappe and her anti-hunger organization Food First! have shown, the real cause of hunger is a scarcity of justice, not a scarcity of food.

One-third of all raw materials in the U.S. are consumed by the livestock industry and it takes thrice the fossil fuel energy to produce meat than it does to produce plant foods. A report on the energy crisis in *Scientific American* warned: "The trends in meat consumption and energy consumption are on a collision course." According to Greenpeace, over 260 million acres of U.S. forest have been cleared to grow grain for livestock. Farmed animals produce an estimated 1.4 billion tons of fecal waste each year in the U.S. Much of this untreated waste pollutes the land and water.

According to the United Nations report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, raising chickens, turkeys, pigs, and other animals for food causes more greenhouse gas emissions than all the cars, trucks and other forms of transportation combined. Researchers from the University of Chicago similarly concluded that a vegetarian diet is the most energy efficient, and the average American does more

to reduce global warming emissions by not eating animal products than by switching to a hybrid car.

Livestock production affects a startling 70 to 85 percent of the land area of the United States, United Kingdom, and the European Union. That includes the public and private rangeland used for grazing, as well as the land used to produce the crops that feed the animals. By comparison, urbanization only affects three percent of the United States land area, slightly larger for the European Union and the United Kingdom. Meat production consumes the world's land resources.

According to the United Nations, raising animals for food (including land used for grazing and land used to grow feed crops) now uses a staggering thirty percent of the Earth's land mass. And a staggering 51 percent or more of global greenhouse-gas emissions are caused by animal agriculture, according to a report published by the Worldwatch Institute!

With a world population now at seven billion, colonizing space is not a realistic solution to the pressures of overpopulation and armed conflict over dwindling resources on earth. Nor will it directly address the threat of global warming; global hunger; nor the energy, environmental, population and water crises. According to the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, moving from fossil fuel to nuclear power on a global level would require building a new reactor every one to three days for the next forty years, at a cost of \$200 billion per year. This would result in 300,000 tons of radioactive waste in the United States alone. A vegan economy would be easier to implement. On a vegan diet, the world could easily support a population several times its present size. The world's cattle alone consume enough to feed over 8.7 billion people.

Science shows that going vegan is one of the most effective ways to fight climate change as well as one of the most powerful steps that you can take to make your life greener and healthier. It alleviates pressure on the world's precious resources, helps tackle climate change and world hunger, and radically decreases your own risk of developing life-threatening diseases. And don't forget that it saves the lives of animals, too!

Some find it easier to be vegan on certain days of the week as a way to transition to being completely vegan. Sir Paul McCartney endorses a "Meatless Mondays" campaign. In 2011, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors signed a VegDay Resolution encouraging a plant-based diet on Mondays. They point out that if everyone in San Francisco went veg one day per week, it would save 37,000,000 lbs. of greenhouse gas emissions. That is the equivalent of taking 123,822 cars off the streets of San Francisco!

peta2 is now the largest youth movement of any social change organization in the world. peta2 has 267,000 friends on MySpace and 91,000 Facebook fans. Several years ago, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was the top-ranked charity when a poll asked teenagers what nonprofit group they would most want to work for. PETA won by more than a two to one margin over the second place finisher, The American Red Cross, with more votes than the Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity combined.

Keith Akers concludes in *A Vegetarian Sourcebook*:

"In the long run, we are all going to be vegetarians. Doubtless through further exploitation of the environment, we can prolong the period in our history in which we think it is necessary to kill animals for food. But the ecological limitations of this procedure will soon make manifest to all that a vegetarian economy is both necessary and desirable.

"Only a small minority of the world's citizens will ever be able to consume meat at current American levels: the resources to support a more intensive livestock agriculture simply don't exist. To continue to maintain a meat economy can only make matters increasingly difficult for everyone, and can only adversely affect the goals of health for everyone and world peace."

Yes, the animal rights movement needs a spiritual basis. Without religion, pro-lifers cry "MOVE" as if we were talking about some lifeless, soulless thing devoid of religious inspiration. River Phoenix (1970 - 1993) died of a drug overdose: pro-lifers probably don't consider him very spiritual. Howard Lyman, former fourth-generation cattle rancher turned animal activist has warned that without a spiritual basis, the vegetarian movement in the West will flounder. Daniel Berrigan said, "It is very rare to sustain a movement in recognizable form without a spiritual base."

With current trends in animal liberation theology worldwide, and a growing number of theologians, clergy and activists in all the world's great religions jumping on the PETA bandwagon, it must be pointed out: the animal rights movement really began as a secular and nonsectarian civil rights movement, and is now courting all the world's great religions for inspiration, blessings, and support. An article in *The People's Almanac* (1975), said meditation is endorsed by all the world's great religions, and animal advocates would like to see it happen with vegetarianism. Vegetarian writer Steven Rosen, in his 1987 book, *Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religions*, tried to show that all the world's great religions support the vegetarian way of life: to win people of different faiths to vegetarianism through friendly moral persuasion.

Catholic Concern for Animals and some progressive churches (Episcopal, Methodist, Quaker, Unitarian) have shown interest in animal rights issues. The Baha'i faith endorses vegetarianism, and the ancient eastern reincarnationist religions which predate Christianity (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) all teach *ahimsa*, or nonviolence towards humans and animals alike, to the point of vegetarianism, and are vegan-friendly. Frances Arnetta of Christians Helping Animals and People endorses vegetarianism as "God's best for good health, the environment, to feed the hungry." She writes: "When we Christians are *compassionate* to animals, we are imitating our Heavenly Father. If non-Christian people are leading the way in respect for the lives of animals, it is because we Christians have failed to be the light Jesus commanded us to be. We should be an example of boundless mercy."

The International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA) was founded in 1985. Its educational and religious programs were meant to "bring religious principles upon humanity's attitude towards the treatment of our animal kin... and, through leadership, materials, and programs, to successfully interact with clergy and laity from many religious traditions... Religion counsels the powerful to be merciful and kind to those weaker than themselves, and most of humankind is at least nominally religious. But there is a ghastly paradox. Far from showing mercy, humanity uses its dominion over other animal species to pen them in cruel close confinement; to trap, club, and harpoon them; to poison, mutilate, and shock them in the name of science; to kill them by the billions; and even to blind them in excruciating pain to test cosmetics. Some of these abuses are due to mistaken understandings of religious principles; others, to a failure to apply those principles. Scriptures need to be fully researched concerning the relationship of humans to nonhuman animals, and to the entire ecological structure of nature. Misinterpretations of scripture taken out of context, or based upon questionable theological assumptions need to be re-examined."

INRA's Executive Director, Reverend Marc Wessels, concluded on Earth Day, 1990:

*"It is a fact that no significant social reform has yet taken place in this country without the voice of the religious community being heard. The endeavors of the abolition of slavery; the women's suffrage movement; the emergence of the pacifist tradition during World War I; the struggles to support civil rights, labor unions, and migrant farm workers; and the antinuclear and peace movements have all succeeded in part because of the power and support of organized religion. Such authority and energy is required by individual Christians and the institutional church today if the liberation of animals is to become a reality."*

George Harrison said, "There are a lot of 'closet Krishnas' out there." (The other side treats us as a "cult" and wonders why?) The Baha'i faith endorses vegetarianism, Catholic Concern for Animals supports animal rights, and some progressive churches (Episcopal, Methodist, Quaker, Unitarian) have shown interest in animal rights issues. On the left, the *Bhagavad-gita* is accepted as one of the world's great scriptures, alongside the Bible and the Koran. On the left, the Hare Krishnas are merely one voice in a larger chorus of voices (religious and secular) calling for vegetarianism. Norm Phelps, Spiritual Outreach Director for the Fund For Animals, even authored a 2007 book, *The Longest Struggle: Animal Advocacy from Pythagoras to PETA*. In Krishna temples, we're bowing down before statues, eating food offered to idols, etc. The Christians in Los Angeles who protest our Ratha Yatra Festival every year don't accuse us of being "Jews" or "moonies" -- they attack us for being **pagan**, with signs reading "*Krishna is an idol*," "*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*," "*Read the Bible while you're able*," etc. On the left, Krishna devotees can preach *karma* and reincarnation, vegetarianism and nonviolence, *mantra* meditation, etc. On the right, we're forced to masquerade as "Jews" or "Muslims" following a peculiar set of "dietary laws." etc. An animal rights message is warmly received on the political left, not on the right. Bill Clinton was vegan and Al Gore is vegan. Dennis Kucinich is vegan. Cory Booker is vegan. Reverend Al Sharpton is vegan. Chelsea Clinton was vegan for a number of years: her wedding in 2010 was strictly vegan. Amy Carter is a vegetarian. And the Bush daughters were famous for... underage drinking? Well, to be fair, PETA reports that Lauren Bush, niece of George W. Bush, is a vegetarian.

## **16. Generic *Ahimsa* or Nonsectarian *Ahimsa* Is the Spiritual Basis for Animal Rights**

The word "*himsa*" literally means "injury" or "violence" in Sanskrit. And just as "amoral" is the opposite of "moral," or means "without morals," "*ahimsa*" means the opposite of "*himsa*," or "without violence." "*Ahimsa*" literally translates as "non-injury" or "nonviolence," whereas "*shanti*" is the Sanskrit word for "peace." In past decades, the stereotype of "religious vegetarians" was that they're all followers of the ancient Eastern reincarnation religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, believing you might be reincarnated as a cow in your next life if you're not careful. Hinduism and her sacred cows, a belief in rebirth in lower species as a punishment for sinning, a belief in *karma* and reincarnation (rather than, say, Darwinian evolution), as the basis for seeing all living entities with equal vision. In past decades, it was the followers of the Eastern religions who had all the vegetarian restaurants: the followers of the Hare Krishna movement, the followers of Sri Chinmoy, the followers of Yogananda's Self Realization Fellowship, the followers of Muktananda's Siddha Yoga, the followers of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM). Even now, today, the followers of Buddhist Supreme Master Ching Hai have some two hundred vegan restaurants worldwide and are enjoying the kind of success the Hare Krishnas had in the '60s, '70s, and '80s with Govinda's Vegetarian Restaurant.

Shutting down the slaughterhouses is at the top of a Krishna Conscious agenda! Unnecessary violence towards humans and animals is prohibited. Cow-killing is the greatest sin (and cows are

killed in the commercial dairies!). While apart from the general rule of nonviolence towards humans and animals alike there are restrictions on the kind of vegetarian foods which can be offered to the Lord, the animals' right to life takes precedence over "dietary laws." Even rodents and insects are to be protected, and Srila Prabhupada was opposed to the unnecessary destruction of trees and plants in general. The *sadhus* (saints, holy people) are kind to all creatures: the saints and sages see all living entities with equal vision (*Bhagavad-gita* 5.18)

Even if you argue that love of God (offering Krishna His favorite foods) takes precedence over love of one's neighbor (other living entities) does this justify killing one's neighbors (the cows) in the name of religion?

On the other hand, the *Bhagavad-gita* takes place on a battlefield, with Krishna ordering Arjuna to kill his kinsmen.

And Srila Prabhupada considered the Sikhs to be *kshatriyas* (soldiers, warriors) even though the Sikh religion permits abortion in the first trimester.

If you accept the premise that the factory-farmed cows are blessed if their milk is offered to Krishna, you can't oppose cow-killing as violence, without admitting that you're committing violence too, but it's sacred violence (*violence against cows!*), or violence in the name of religion.

To many, this is reminiscent of the generals in Vietnam saying, "We had to destroy this village in order to save it."

In the '70s, Srila Prabhupada was speaking with a couple of Indian *gurus*, a Sikh and a Jain. Srila Prabhupada spoke favorably of the Sikhs, as principled warriors. The Jain spiritual master tried to bring some balance into the conversation by bringing up *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Srila Prabhupada said, "Here in the West, there is *himsa* (violence) only."

The *kshatriyas* (soldiers, warriors) take instruction from the *brahmanas* (priests)! *They do not wage war whimsically, rather, they are guided by ethical restraint.* The *brahmanas* hold real political power in Vedic civilization. If the *kshatriyas* run amok, they are deposed: read the story of King Vena in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The *kshatriyas* protect animals as well as humans in an enlightened civilization: *they do not engage in violence whimsically, but only when required by duty* (e.g., to maintain law and order, apprehending, punishing, and executing criminals, defending one's country from aggressors, etc.) ...even devout pacifists must acknowledge the need for a police force to protect innocent citizens from the criminal element! And the *Vedas* say violence in self-defense is acceptable. Presidential candidate John Kerry similarly said in 2004 that he was opposed to the death penalty except for terrorists. A military draft is contrary to Vedic civilization, which recognizes that only some members of human society will have militaristic inclinations, and a military draft forces persons from other classes of society to take up arms against their will.

The *Bhagavad-gita* (Hinduism's main scripture) was spoken on a battlefield, and the Gita itself is contained in the *Mahabharata*, ancient India's epic poem of heroism, tragedy, and divine intervention, in which it is clearly indicated that war is fought only as a last resort, when all attempts at peace have failed. According to the *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna Himself went to the opposing party, the Kauravas, to propose a peace plan! Abortion and war are the *karma* for killing animals! During the Vietnam War, Srila Prabhupada scoffed at the hippies and peace activists: "You talk of peace while eating meat," he said. "You speak of peace while slaughtering your mother cow. And you are surprised when wars. Solidarity means more than talking of

universal brotherhood while eating an animal. There will never be universal brotherhood until we recognize a universal Father and all living entities as His sons. That is the real basis for solidarity."

In 2014, Kristen Day of Democrats For Life said: "Roughly a third of the Democratic Party is pro-life. And while many do not call themselves liberal, they share the values which seem to identify with liberalism, particularly a commitment to helping the vulnerable and providing a social safety net." Hinduism teaches that women, children, and cows are protected in an enlightened civilization. One of the staff members of *Hinduism Today* told me in a 1989 phone conversation: "The Hindu scriptures are pretty anti-abortion." So, yes, abortion is a crime. Sabapathy Siva, a physician, wrote about sex-selective abortions in India:

"What happened to our time-honored *dharma* [natural law of holy living] and duty to our children? Illiteracy, poverty and the dowry system have corrupted the society to the level of barbarianism. The man blames the woman for bearing a female child while he himself is [biologically] responsible for determining the sex of the baby. This fact ought to be taught first to the people. Next comes the public education regarding the dowry system. It is time that the women are bought with love and respect instead of money. Those of us who have come away from such a conducive atmosphere should not kill unborn female babies in the name of abortion once the sex of the fetus is known. We have to set an example and bring back the value of human life irrespective of the sexes."

And Srila Prabhupada himself said about the decline of Western civilization: "The mother is killing the child in the womb. Where is that 'civilization'?"

But Srila Prabhupada said as well that abortion and war are the *karma* for killing animals! The pro-life and peace movements will never succeed until we first shut down the slaughterhouses. No Hindu, believing in *karma* and reincarnation, will ever take "meat-eating pro-lifers" nor "meat-eating pacifists" seriously! Educating others about animal issues IS pro-life activism.

Not purchasing silk and a return to organic farming are a direct response to the moral issue of unnecessarily killing insects. Avoidance of onions and garlic is not limited to Hindus in India following an Ayurvedic diet; there is a tradition of avoiding these foods in China, antedating the arrival of Buddhism. The 'Enjoy' Vegetarian Restaurant chain in San Francisco, CA is run by Chinese Buddhists, and they do not serve onions or garlic in any of their preparations. However, they do serve mushrooms!

In Theravada Buddhist countries (Burma, Ceylon, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Tibet, Malaya), although the monks are forbidden to kill animals, they beg for food and are expected to eat whatever is offered them. Contrasting the Mahayana Buddhist countries (e.g., China) with the Theravada, in *A Vegetarian Sourcebook*, author Keith Akers writes:

"In the Mahayana countries, the custom regarding monks is completely different, reflecting a different attitude towards meat consumption. The Mahayana Buddhist monks do not beg for food at all; they prepare their own food, which is either bought, grown, or collected as rent. The Mahayana monks in China were strictly vegetarian in ancient times and remain so today.

"Dietary abstinence from meat was an ancient Chinese tradition that antedated the arrival of Buddhism. *In China, all animal foods, onions, and alcohol were either forbidden or customarily avoided. Animal products were avoided in dress as they were in diet. There was a prohibition on the use of silk or leather* (not observed in Theravada countries).

“Not only are the Mahayana Buddhist monks vegetarian, but so are many Buddhist lay people in China. Lay people usually receive a lay ordination, in which they must take from one to five vows. *Almost everyone takes the first vow, which is not to take the life of any sentient creature.*”

The 'Jataka Tales' (folk tales) within Mahayana Buddhism promote vegetarianism. Dr. Tony Page writes in his 2000 book, *Buddhism and Animals*:

"In the Buddha's past life as Ajastya, a forest-dwelling ascetic, he sustained himself on a strictly **vegan** diet. He lived off 'roots and fruit' plus fresh water.

(*Jatakamala*, by Aryasura, translated into English as *The Marvelous Companion*, Dharma Publishing, Berkeley, CA, 1983, p. 55)

"When this source of food dried up, Ajastya was not unduly worried, for he knew he could still survive on leaves, water, and grass... The thought clearly did not occur to him to kill and roast a few birds, or snare and eat the occasional rabbit. The animals which lived in the forest with him were perfectly safe - and they admiringly looked up to him as their friend, protector and role model...

"In another life, as the wandering ascetic, Mahabodhi, the Buddha once told a powerful king that - contrary to the king's suspicions - he had not once been guilty of animal murder, nor could his adherence to a virtue ever allow such a thing. He says:

'In truth, your majesty, I have never killed even a single living creature...

'He who... maintains virtuous action, who cherishes compassion - how could such a person kill any living being?'

(*Jatakamala*, p. 226)

And Srila Prabhupada regarded meat-eating as barbaric:

*"Animals are never meant to be killed. Killing of animals is a symptom of barbarian society... The human society should give more attention to animal protection."* (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.9.26 purport)

"All the people who are less than the *sudras* (laborers, the working class). They are called *panchamas*, fifth grade. First grade, *brahmana* (priests), second grade, *kshatriya* (soldiers, warriors), third grade, *vaishya* (mercantile, business), fourth grade, *sudra* (laborers, the working class), and all the others -- fifth grade. They are called *chandalas* (untouchables). The *chandalas*... the sweeper, the cobbler, and the.... low grade. Still, in India, these fifth-grade persons only, they eat meat, pigs, and sometimes cows. Fifth grade. Now it has become a practice. And he's a first-grade man. So just see. What was the business of the fifth-grade men, that has become the business of the so-called politicians. You see. So if you are ruled by the fifth-grade men, then how can you be happy? That is not possible. How there can be any social tranquility? That is not possible. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* lecture, 8/4/1974)

At a monastic retreat near Paris in July of 1973, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada told French Roman Catholic Cardinal Jean Danielou:

*"Actually, you will not even have a human society until this cruel practice of maintaining slaughterhouses is stopped."*

In 1974, near Frankfurt, Germany, Srila Prabhupada similarly said to Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk:

*If the Christians want to love God, they must stop killing animals... This program follows the teachings of the Bible; it is not my philosophy. Please act accordingly and you will see how the world situation will change.*

Srila Prabhupada said elsewhere: "...as far as meat-eating is concerned, every cow will die--so you just wait awhile, and there will be so many dead cows. Then you can take all the dead cows and eat...Don't kill. When the cow is dead, you can eat it."

One of the first things new devotees learn from initiates is that Srila Prabhupada said this not only about cows, but about meat in general: if you want to eat flesh, wait until the animal dies of natural causes.

And the eating of carrion (carcasses from animals that died of natural causes) is clearly forbidden in Jewish and Islamic dietary laws.

This indicates that Srila Prabhupada was **not** thinking in terms of "dietary laws," or food in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance, but rather in terms of the moral wrong of taking the life of a fellow creature. *The original intent of vegetarianism in the Krishna Consciousness movement really is the animals' right to life.*

The *Mahabharata* (Santi-parva 141.88) similarly says that the eating of "unclean" food is not as terrible as the eating of flesh. (It must be remembered that the *brahmanas* of ancient India exalted cleanliness to a divine principle).

Animal rights issues like circuses, fur, "sport" hunting, and vivisection (animal experimentation) have nothing to do with diet, eating, or food. *The real issue is the animals' right to life.*

Establishing Krishna conscious farm communities, where the milk is obtained humanely and nonviolently, IS a genuine solution to the issue of animal cruelty.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence would carry greater weight from **vegans**.

Which is the greater deprivation or harm: the "finer brain tissues" not developing due to a lack of dairy products, or remaining an animal-killer, a cow-killer, and not understanding God at all?

Srila Prabhupada similarly opposed dissection, animal experimentation, hunting for "sport", etc. - issues which have nothing to do with diet, eating, or food.

So it is clear devotees of Krishna are vegetarian first and foremost out of nonviolence toward and compassion for other living entities, rather than because meat, fish and eggs and even some vegetarian foods cannot be offered to the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada's words in his *Bhagavad-gita* purports indicate that "killing innocent creatures" is a "brute mentality" and slaughtering animals "is the way of the subhumans."

Srila Prabhupada's comments in the *Bhagavad-gita* suggest he was advocating consuming dairy products as an alternative to the cruelty involved with eating meat.

This might make sense if the dairy products were obtained humanely, and if dairy products differed considerably from meat, with its saturated fat and cholesterol, lack of fiber and complex carbohydrates.

The same arguments that convince meat-eaters to go vegetarian (ecological, economic, energy, environmental, ethical, health and nutrition) can be taken a step farther and convince meat-eaters and vegetarians to go vegan.

In the Central Valley of California cows generate the same amount of fecal waste as a city of 21 million people, much of which goes untreated and pollutes waterways.

Dairy products, like other animal products, are obtained through modern agribusiness and factory farming, and the issues of animal cruelty, the health hazards caused by eating higher rather than lower on the food chain, as well as the energy and environmental concerns are not avoided by switching from one commercially produced animal product to another.

Adiraja dasa does not decry veganism in *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (1985):

"The term 'Indian cooking' when used in this book refers to Vedic cooking, not to any of the 'chicken-curry' schools of Indian cuisine. Meat-eating was practically nonexistent in the ancient Vedic culture. It was introduced into India by foreign conquerors, especially the Moguls (Muslims), who came via Persia in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese, who ruled Goa for four centuries; and finally the British colonialists. But despite centuries of domination by meat-eaters, India is still the home of vast numbers of vegetarians.

"India is still traditionally vegetarian (meat-eaters are called 'nonvegetarians') because her timeless Vedic culture teaches that all life is sacred, and to kill innocent creatures unnecessarily is a gross violation of the laws of God.

"The *Vedas* define a true vegetarian as one who eats no meat, fish, nor eggs. Those who abstain from meat but eat eggs or fish are not considered true vegetarians because they are eating flesh, even though it may be hidden, as in eggs, under a calcium coating. One who becomes a vegetarian only to avoid killing may see no reason to refuse unfertilized eggs, but if we take the Vedic view that all flesh is not meant for human consumption, it makes sense to shun eggs, which, fertilized or not, are nothing but the assembled materials for the bodies of chickens. Krishna's devotees are strict vegetarians in the Vedic sense of the word: they eat no meat, fish, nor eggs.

*"Some vegetarians, called vegans, abstain not only from meat, fish, and eggs but also from milk and milk products, because of moral concern about abuse of cows in the dairy industry. The devotees of Krishna also condemn animal abuse, but rather than abstain from milk, they show their compassion in a positive way by teaching the Vedic principle of cow protection, and as far as possible, drinking milk only from Hare Krishna dairy farms, where the cows are loved and protected..."*

Establishing Krishna-conscious farms where the cows and other animals are not killed or even mistreated IS a genuine alternative, response and solution to the cow-killing, factory-farming and meat-eating in the West.

But Srila Prabhupada's teachings on nonviolence (and the heavy *karma* involved in cow-killing and meat-eating in general!) would carry greater weight from **vegans** than from vegetarians.

In *Elevation to Krishna Consciousness*, Srila Prabhupada writes:

"When we come to the platform of truth... and understand that we are not these bodies, then our activities change from material activities to spiritual activities. As long as we are operating under the bodily conception of life, our activities are material, but as soon as we understand, 'I do not belong to this body, *aham brahmasmi*, I am spirit soul,' our activities will be in accordance to that realization, that is to say that they will cease to be motivated from the material or bodily platform. Knowledge of our proper identity as separate from the body is real knowledge, but this knowledge is denied as long as we cling to this bodily identification.

"In the scriptures it is said that as long as we are in this bodily conception of life, all our activities will be defeated... everyone requires to be educated as to his real identity... by following the purificatory processes...

"...there are four basic characteristics of an impure life -- illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. According to the Vedic principles, sex should not be indulged in outside of marriage. In human society there is therefore a system of marriage... Whether we are Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, we acknowledge the system of marriage. The purpose of this system is to avoid illicit sex. According to the Vedic system, intoxication is also discouraged; *nor is meat-eating advocated, for human beings should be nonviolent. We have been given sufficient grains, fruit, milk, and vegetables, and there is no necessity to kill poor animals...* Gambling is also discouraged because it simply agitates the mind..."

Srila Prabhupada classifying milk as "nonviolent" only makes sense if the milk is obtained *humanely and nonviolently* and not from factory farms!

I've said before: Srila Prabhupada said that if the general mass of people want to eat meat, they can wait until the animal dies of natural causes. The eating of carrion, or animals that died of natural causes, is forbidden in Jewish and Islamic dietary laws, nor can animals that died of natural causes be offered to Krishna, either.

Srila Prabhupada told his disciples in India if they were in a position where they couldn't offer their food to just go to a vegetarian restaurant.

Srila Prabhupada opposed dissection, animal experimentation, etc. which have nothing to do with diet, eating, or food.

When told so many of his disciples had fallen from their vows, were taking drugs, having illicit sex, etc., Srila Prabhupada asked, "Are they eating meat?"

When told they weren't eating meat, Srila Prabhupada said, "Then they are still my disciples."

Srila Prabhupada did not ask, "Are they still offering their food?", nor, "Are they abstaining from onions, garlic, mushrooms, vinegar, etc., too?"

And Srila Prabhupada regarded meat-eating as uncivilized. Srila Prabhupada said to a female reporter in 1975:

*"Actually, giving up meat-eating is not a question of Krishna consciousness but of civilized human life.*

*"This is civilized life -- not directly killing an animal and eating its flesh.*

Srila Prabhupada asked: *"Do you think cutting the cow's throat and eating its flesh is civilized?"*

When Srila Prabhupada brought up the issue of vegetarianism with people of other faiths, he framed it in terms of the animals' right to life and moral opposition to killing: *a sanctity-of-life issue*, not a dietary restriction. He did not ask Christian clergy, "Why are you eating onions and garlic?", but rather, "Jesus Christ said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' So why is it that the Christian people are engaged in animal killing?"

*"...the teachings of Jesus were based on love, compassion, and mutual respect. Where would anyone get the idea that Jesus taught love and compassion and also advocated the slaughter of innocent animals for the sake of the palate? To believe this, it would seem, is tantamount to believing that Jesus was a hypocrite... One tends to indulge in word-jugglery when forced to rationalize an evil habit. The translators of the Bible seem to be no exception."*

*--Steven Rosen (Satyaraja dasa), Vegetarianism and the Bible*

Steven Rosen (Satyaraja dasa) favorably refers to Jesus' teachings on nonviolence as "supremely pacifistic," to convince Christians to think of extending their precepts of nonviolence to animals... even though as Vaishnavas (devotees of Lord Vishnu or Krishna) we are not absolute pacifists.

Srila Prabhupada himself said:

*"If you love your neighbor as yourself, then why this 'civilization' which claims to be Christian, is slaughtering so many animals, and why they are constantly slaughtering each other in wars, in the streets? Jesus says you will not kill...and my spiritual master is giving love of God, he is giving love of God to the world."*

*---Srimad Bhagavatam lecture, 1971*

## **17. What's Wrong with the Silk Industry?**

*What's Wrong With The Silk Industry?*

*by Mathew Davis*

More and more people are becoming aware of the horrors of the leather, fur, feather, and exotic skin industries. That's why the products they produce are becoming increasingly unpopular among consumers, and many high-profile brands are dropping them from their lines. Israel was the first country to ban the sale of fur, and the year before that California did the same.

However, many people are still unfamiliar with the silk industry and the ethical issues that are associated with it. After all, they're only insects, right? And how cruel could the industry be? The answers may surprise you.

*How Silk is Produced*

First of all, silkworms aren't worms at all, rather they are moths who are in the caterpillar stage of their life cycles when killed. After several weeks of shedding their skins, these caterpillars create a cocoon for themselves from their salivary glands that look kind of like cotton balls. If the caterpillars are allowed to live, they would emerge from their cocoons after a couple of weeks, find a mate, and produce some eggs.

But silk producers never let them get to this stage because the moths emit an enzyme that severs the cocoon, which allows them to emerge, but means the product is damaged and loses value. To keep the cocoon intact, farmers will boil or bake the moths to death. To produce a pound of silk, around 2,500 silkworms are killed. This amounts to billions and possibly even trillions of these insects being killed every year in the name of fashion.

Silkworms have also been domesticated for thousands of years and selectively bred. Today's silkworms are unable to fly because they've been bred to produce more and more silk, which has made them too heavy for their wings to support them. The silkworms that are given the chance to live long enough to mate and have babies are then discarded or "crushed to death."

Silk production also harms the environment. The farms have to be kept at certain temperatures and boiling water and hot air are used to kill the worms. Since silkworms eat mulberry leaves, water is required to sustain and grow the trees, which can limit freshwater in areas where it's already low. Also, the chemicals used to clean and dye the finished product can contaminate the local water.

#### *Are Silkworms Sentient?*

While the science is still unclear when it comes to measuring the sentience level of silkworms, there are a few important things to consider. First, silkworms have a brain, a central nervous system, and they release endorphins, which are hormones that are present when pain is experienced. Second, like all insects, silkworms will retreat when they are threatened. Just put your finger next to a spider and watch them scurry away. Just because they are smaller and look different from us doesn't mean they don't feel pain.

And lastly, the more scientists study animals and insects, the more research comes out to suggest they are more sentient than what was previously thought. So, while the current scientific evidence may be unclear regarding silkworm sentience, there are plenty of signs which point to the fact that they should at least be given the benefit of the doubt.

#### *Alternatives to Silk*

There is an alternative to traditional silk production which is called "peace silk" or "*ahimsa* silk." In theory, this silk comes from cocoons where the moths were allowed to hatch. However, there is no regulatory oversight to make sure this occurs. Also, reports have come out about regular silk being sold as "peace silk," and silkworms being underfed and forced out of their cocoons too early. That's why the best thing to do is to avoid silk altogether.

Luckily, many viable alternatives don't involve boiling silkworms to death. This year, luxury brand niL partnered with PETA to produce Kimono robes that are made from PETA-approved "silk" called Cupro fabric. They also sell shirts, pants, pillowcases, and sleep masks. A few years ago, Rihanna also launched a silk-free lingerie collection on Valentine's Day. Other silk alternatives include rayon, Tencel, polyester, and nylon.

## 18. A Return to Organic Farming

Author Keith Akers, in *A Vegetarian Sourcebook* (1983), notes that by arguing against the killing of plants, the meat-eater "seeks to reduce vegetarianism to absurdity. If vegetarians object to killing living creatures (it is argued), then logically they should object to killing plants and insects as well as animals. But this is absurd. Therefore, it can't be wrong to kill animals.

"Fruitarians take the argument concerning plants quite seriously; they do not eat any food which causes injury or death to either animals or plants. This means, in their view, a diet of those fruits, nuts and seeds which can be eaten without the destruction of the plant that produces the food.

"Finding an ethically significant line between plants and animals, though, is not particularly difficult. Plants have no evolutionary need to feel pain, and completely lack a central nervous system. Nature does not create pain gratuitously, but only when it enables the organism to survive. Animals, being mobile, would benefit from having a sense of pain; plants would not."

In determining a boundary between sentient and insentient life, Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* suggests that "somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster seems as good a place to draw the line as any, and better than most."

Keith Akers states further, "Even if one does not want to become a fruitarian and believes that plants have feelings (against all evidence to the contrary), it does not follow that vegetarianism is absurd. We ought to destroy as few plants as possible. And by raising and eating an animal for food, many more plants are destroyed indirectly by the animals we eat than if we merely ate the plants directly."

*(Meat-eaters indirectly kill ten times more plants than do vegetarians!)*

"What about insects?" asks Akers, "While there may be reason to kill insects, there is no reason to kill them for food. One distinguishes between the way meat animals are killed for food and the way insects are killed.

"Insects are killed only when they intrude upon human territory, posing a threat to the comfort, health, or well-being of humans. There is a huge difference between ridding oneself of intruders and going out of one's way to find and kill something which would otherwise be harmless."

According to Akers:

"These questions may have a certain fascination for philosophers, but most vegetarians are not bothered by them. For any vegetarian who is not a biological pacifist, there would not seem to be any particular difficulty in distinguishing ethically between insects and plants on the one hand, and animals and humans on the other."

*Organic farming is a direct response to the moral question of unnecessarily killing insects!*

Anna Lappe, daughter of bestselling author Frances Moore Lappe (*Diet for a Small Planet*, 1971), says:

"Organic farming is also proving to dramatically reduce on-farm emissions as well as related emissions associated with producing food. Cut out synthetic fertilizer and on-farm petroleum-based chemicals and you're cutting back on significant greenhouse gases."

I'd like to see a return to organic farming. In 1989, concern over the use of the pesticide Alar on apples caused many Americans to consider organic produce. John Robbins writes in his Pulitzer Prize nominated book, *Diet for a New America* (1987), "We produce pesticides at a rate more than 13,000 times faster than we did only 35 years ago. Our environment and food chains are being inundated by a virtual avalanche of pesticides. What three decades ago took us six years to produce, we now produce every couple of hours."

"It is hard for us to imagine how destructive these substances are. Pesticides are extraordinarily concentrated and powerful chemicals which have been intentionally developed to kill living creatures. In fact, some of them were originally developed to kill human beings. Phosgene, used today to produce chemical herbicides and insecticides, was originally developed for use in chemical warfare, and as, in fact, the agent of almost all deaths due to poison gas in World War I. Zykon-B, another modern pesticide, is the substance which the Nazis used to produce deadly hydrogen cyanide gas, used to kill millions upon millions at Auschwitz, Dachau, and other concentration camps."

"Many of today's most widely used pesticides--including malathion and parathion--are members of the nerve gas family. So lethal is parathion that a chemist who swallowed an infinitesimal dose, amounting to 0.00424 of an ounce, was instantaneously paralyzed and died before he could take an antidote he prepared in advance and had at hand."

"Pesticides are not the kind of substances you'd want to have hanging around in your environment. But hang around many of them do. In fact, the chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides--DDT, aldrin, kepone, dieldrin, chlordane, heptachlor, endrin, mirex, PCB's, toxaphene, lindane, etc.--are extremely stable compounds. Ominously, they do not break down for decades, and in some cases, centuries."

Poisons intended to kill insects accumulate on crops, in the soil and in greater concentration in the tissues of living creatures higher on the food chain. The Environmental Protection Agency's *Pesticide Monitoring Journal* reports that "Foods of animal origin (are) the major source of... pesticide residues in the diet."

John Robbins writes: *"Recent studies indicate that of all the toxic chemical residues in the American diet, almost all, 95% to 99%, comes from meat, fish, dairy products and eggs. If you want to include pesticides in your diet, these are the foods to eat. Fortunately, you can overwhelmingly reduce your intake of these poisons by eating lower on the food chain, and not choosing foods of animal origin..."*

"While DDT has gotten most of the publicity, there are unfortunately many other toxic chemicals that are equally widespread in the environment, and actually more poisonous. The pesticide dieldrin, for example, is five times more poisonous than DDT when swallowed, and forty times more so when absorbed by the skin. Yet by the time dieldrin was finally banned in 1974, the FDA found it in 96 percent of all the meat, fish and poultry in the country, in 85% of all dairy products, and in the flesh of 99.5% of the American people! Sadly, dieldrin will remain with us for a long time; it is one of the most biologically stable of all pesticides, taking many decades to break down."

In his Pulitzer Prize nominated book, *How to Survive in America the Poisoned*, pesticide authority Lewis Regenstein writes: "Meat contains approximately 14 times more pesticides than do plant foods; dairy products 5 1/2 times more. Thus, by eating foods of animal origin, one ingests greatly concentrated amounts of hazardous chemicals. Analysis of various foods by the FDA shows that meat, poultry, fish, cheese and other dairy products contain levels of these pesticides more often and in greater amount than in other foods."

As early as 1966, it was admitted in Congressional hearings that:

*"No milk available on the market, today, in any part of the United States, is free of pesticide residues."*

In 1975, the Council on Environmental Quality concluded dairy and meat products account for over 95% of the population's intake of DDT. The same is true of other pesticides.

A 1976 study by the Environmental Protection Agency found the breast milk of mothers who consume animal products to be 50 to 100 times more contaminated by pesticide residues than the milk of vegetarian or vegan mothers.

John Robbins writes:

"Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture under Nixon, used to say that before the United States could consider organic farming, it would have to decide which fifty or sixty million Americans were going to be allowed to starve. His attitude exemplified the stance that government and agribusiness have taken in the past: that organic farming is a luxury we can ill-afford, and we need these chemicals to feed ourselves. The chemical companies...have spent millions to reinforce this way of thinking.

"But it could hardly be less true."

Organic farming and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) are getting more attention today. These utilize natural insect controls, such as predatory insects, weather, crop rotation, pest-resistant varieties, soil tillage, and other environmentally safe practices.

A 1979 Department of Agriculture task force of scientists and economists came to "...positive conclusions on the importance of organic farming and its potential contributions to agriculture and society." Until the end of the Second World War, American farmers produced bountiful harvests without relying on pesticides. There is no reason why America cannot do so again.

--Vasu Murti

vasumurti@netscape.net