

THE HIGHER TASTE

Based on the teachings of His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada
The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

Dedication

We dedicate this book to our beloved spiritual master and guide, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, who brought the transcendental teachings of Lord Krsna to the Western world.
- The Editors

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Introduction

Influenced by factors ranging from health and economics to ethics and religion, millions of people around the world are turning to a vegetarian diet. In America alone, ten million people now consider themselves vegetarian.

Among those who have renounced meat are many celebrities – film stars Gloria Swanson, William Shatner, Dennis Weaver, Samantha Eggar, Candace Bergen, and Sandy Dennis; recording artists Michael Jackson, Paul and Linda McCartney, George Harrison, John Denver, Johnny Cash, Jeff Beck, Chubby Checker, Graham Nash, David Cassidy, Johnny Rivers, Captain and Tennille, Alice Coltrane, Annie Lennox, Chrissie Hynde, Donovan, Stevie Wonder, and Todd Rundgren; models Brooke Shields and Christine Brinkley. In sports, the list includes Chris Campbell (1981 world wrestling champion), Aaron Pryor (welterweight world boxing champion), Edward Moses (world record holder for 400 meter hurdles). Robert DiCostella (Olympic marathon champion), Anton Innaver (Olympic ski champion), Killer Kowalski (wrestler), and the entire Seibu Lions (Japanese) baseball team (who won the Pacific League championship two years in a row after switching to a vegetarian diet).

The Higher Taste clearly explains the many reasons why people stop eating meat. But beyond that it contains over sixty gourmet vegetarian recipes that are guaranteed to carry you beyond the pleasures of ordinary food into new realms of epicurean delight. If you ever thought that being a vegetarian means eating only limp steamed vegetables and cold salads – you're in for a big surprise. In *The Higher Taste* you'll learn how to prepare complete, nourishing, taste-tempting meals. How about an evening in Italy, with savory minestrone soup, a hearty spaghetti main course complete with veggie-balls in tomato sauce, breaded zucchini sticks, hot ricotta-stuffed calzone, and a Neapolitan cheesecake for dessert? *The Higher Taste* will show you how. You'll also find equally delicious Chinese, Indian, French, Mexican, and Middle eastern dinners. And best of all, these tested recipes have all been chosen for their simplicity, quickness, and ease of preparation.

Just as important as the ingredients we use in cooking is our consciousness. *The Higher Taste* shows how anyone can turn a daily chore into a blissful, enlightening experience. Preparing *karma*-free vegetarian food is an integral part of the topmost system of *yoga* and meditation described in the timeless teachings of India's Vedic literature. In *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krsna says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it". One who prepares pure, natural vegetarian food and then offers it to the Supreme will automatically feel an awakening of sublime spiritual pleasure in the heart.

The Supreme Lord is described in the *Vedas* as the reservoir of all pleasure, and to increase His pleasure He expands Himself by His pleasure energy into uncounted millions of living beings who are all meant to share in His enjoyment. We are all part of

the eternal pleasure potency, and by the simple act of preparing food for the pleasure of God we can experience transcendental enjoyment. You'll notice that as soon as you taste the food you've offered. As George Harrison said in a recent interview, "When you know someone has begrudgingly cooked something, it doesn't taste as nice as when someone has done it to try and please God, to offer it to Him first. Just that in itself makes all the food taste so much nicer." That's what we mean by "a higher taste".

Along with trying the recipes, be sure to have a look at the opening chapters of *The Higher Taste*. They explain the whole philosophy behind spiritual vegetarianism, and reading them will help you prepare food in the best possible state of mind.

Chapter One reveals how modern medical research has shown links between meat-eating and killer diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Chapter Two exposes the myth of a worldwide food scarcity and explains the economic advantages of a vegetarian diet for society and the individual. In Chapter Three, the ethical foundations of vegetarianism are set forth, focusing on the writings of some of the world's greatest philosophers, authors, and religious leaders, among them Pythagoras, Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, Rousseau, Franklin, Shelley, Tolstoy, Thoreau, Gandhi, and others. The principle of nonviolence, as found in the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, is also examined. An analysis of how the laws of *karma* and reincarnation are related to vegetarianism forms the basis of Chapter Four. Chapter Five explains in detail the rationale and procedures for offering vegetarian food to the Supreme Lord as part of the *bhakti-yoga* system. In Chapter Six, excerpts from the writings of Srila Svami Maharaja, one of India's greatest authorities on Vedic culture and science, provide a concise, highly readable summary of the philosophy underlying the spiritual vegetarian diet outlined in *The Higher Taste*.

An appendix provides an overview of the Krsna consciousness movement's varied food-related activities – vegetarian restaurants, self-sufficient farm communities, food-relief programs for the unemployed and underprivileged, and more.

Chapter 1 – Health and a Meatless Diet

The central question about vegetarian diets used to be whether it was healthy to eliminate meat and other animal foods. Now, however, the main question has become whether it is healthier to be a vegetarian than to be a meat eater. The answer to both questions, based on currently available evidence, seems to be yes. – Jane E. Brody, New York Times News Service.

Today, with increasing evidence of diet's critical effect on good health and longevity, more and more people are investigating this question: Is the human body better suited to a vegetarian diet or one that includes meat?

In the search for answers, two areas should be considered – the anatomical structure of the human body, and the physical effects of meat consumption.

Since eating begins with the hands and mouth, what can the anatomy of these bodily parts tell us? Human teeth, like those of the herbivorous creatures, are designed for grinding and chewing vegetable matter. Humans lack the sharp front teeth for tearing flesh that are characteristic of carnivores. Meat-eating animals generally swallow their food without chewing it and therefore do not require molars or a jaw capable of moving sideways. Also, the human hand, with no sharp claws and with its opposable thumb, is better suited to harvesting fruits and vegetables than to killing prey.

Digesting Meat

Once within the stomach, meat requires digestive juices high in hydrochloric acid. The stomachs of humans and herbivores produce acid less than one-twentieth the strength of that found in carnivores.

Another crucial difference between the meat-eater and the vegetarian is found in the intestinal tract, where the food is further digested and nutrients are passed into the blood. A piece of meat is just part of a corpse, and its putrefaction creates poisonous wastes within the body. Therefore, meat must be quickly eliminated. For this purpose, carnivores possess alimentary canals only three times the length of their bodies. Since man, like other non-flesh-eating animals, has an alimentary canal twelve times his body length, rapidly decaying flesh is retained for a much longer time, producing a number of undesirable toxic effects.

One body organ adversely affected by these toxins is the kidney. This vital organ, which extracts waste from the blood, is strained by the overload of poisons introduced by meat consumption. Even moderate meat-eaters demand three times more work from their kidneys than do vegetarians. The kidneys of a young person may be able to cope with this stress, but as one grows older the risk of kidney disease and failure greatly increases.

Heart Disease

The inability of the human body to deal with excessive animal fats in the diet is another indication of the unnaturalness of meat-eating. Carnivorous animals can metabolize almost unlimited amount of cholesterol and fats without any adverse effects. In experiments with dogs, up to one half pound of butterfat was added to their daily diet over a period of two years, producing absolutely no change in their serum cholesterol level.

On the other hand, the vegetarian species have a very limited ability to deal with any level of cholesterol or saturated fats beyond the amount required by the body. When over a period of many years an excess is consumed, fatty deposits (plaque) accumulate on the inner walls of the arteries, producing a condition known as arteriosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. Because the plaque deposits constrict the flow of blood to the heart, the potential for heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots is tremendously increased.

As early as 1961, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* stated that ninety to ninety-seven percent of heart disease, the cause of more than one half of the deaths in the United States, could be prevented by a vegetarian diet. [1] These findings are supported by an American Heart Association report that states, "In well-documented population studies using standard methods of diet and coronary disease assessment ... evidence suggests that a high-saturated-fat diet is an essential factor for a high incidence of coronary heart disease." [2] The National Academy of Sciences also reported recently that the high serum cholesterol level found in most Americans is a major factor in the coronary heart disease "epidemic" in the United States. [3]

Cancer

Further evidence of the unsuitability of the human intestinal tract for digestion of flesh is the relationship, established by numerous studies, between colon cancer and meat-eating. [4] One reason for the incidence of cancer is the high-fat, low-fiber content of the meat-centered diet. This results in a slow transit time through the colon, allowing toxic wastes to do their damage. States Dr. Sharon Fleming of the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of California at Berkeley, "Dietary fiber appears to aid in reducing ... colon and rectal cancer". 5] Moreover, while being digested, meat is known to generate steroid metabolites possessing carcinogenic (cancer-producing) properties.

As research continues, evidence linking meat-eating to other forms of cancer is building up at an alarming rate. The National Academy of Sciences reported in 1983 that "people may be able to prevent many common cancers by eating less fatty meats and more vegetable and grains". [6] And in his *Notes on the Causation of Cancer*, Rollo Russell writes, "I have found of twenty-five nations eating flesh largely, nineteen had a high cancer rate and only one had a low rate, and that of thirty-five nations eating little or no flesh, none had a high rate". [7]

Some of the most shocking results in cancer research have come from exploration of the effects of nitrosamines. Nitrosamines are formed when secondary amines, prevalent in beer, wine, tea, and tobacco, for example, react with chemical preservatives in meat. The Food and Drug Administration has labeled nitrosamines "one of the most formidable and versatile groups of carcinogens yet discovered, and their role ... in the etiology of human cancer has caused growing apprehension among experts." Dr. William Lijinsky of Oak Ridge National Laboratory conducted experiments in which nitrosamines were fed to test animals. Within six months he found malignant tumors in one hundred percent of the animals. "The cancers," he said, "are all over the place; in the brain, lungs, pancreas, stomach, liver, adrenals, and intestines. The animals are a bloody mess." [8]

Dangerous Chemicals in Meat

Numerous other potentially hazardous chemicals, of which consumers are generally unaware, are present in meat and meat products. In their book *Poisons in Your Body*, Gary and Steven Null give us an inside look at the latest gimmicks used in the corporate-owned animal factories. "The animals are kept alive and fattened by the continuous administration of tranquilizers, hormones, antibiotics, and 2,700 other drugs", they write. "The process starts even before birth and continues long after death. Although these drugs will still be present in the meat when you eat it, the law does not require that they be listed on the package."

One of these chemicals is diethylstilbestrol (DES), a growth hormone that has been used in the U.S. for the last twenty years despite studies that have shown it to be carcinogenic. Banned as a serious health hazard in thirty-two countries, it continues to be used by the U.S. meat industry, possibly because the FDA estimates it saves meat producers more than \$ 500 million annually.

Another popular growth stimulant is arsenic. In 1972 this well-known poison was found by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to exceed the legal limit in fifteen percent of the nation's poultry. [9]

Sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite, chemicals used as preservatives to slow down putrefaction in cured meat and meat products, including ham, bacon, bologna, salami, frankfurters, and fish, also endanger health. These chemicals give meat its bright-red appearance by reacting with pigments in the blood and muscle. Without them, the natural gray-brown color of dead meat would turn off many prospective consumers.

Unfortunately, these chemicals do not distinguish between the blood of a corpse and the blood of a living human, and many persons accidentally subjected to excessive amounts have died of poisoning. Even smaller quantities can prove hazardous, especially for young children and babies, and therefore the United Nations' joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives warned, "Nitrate should on no account be added to baby food". A. J. Lehman of the FDA pointed out that "only a small margin of safety exists between the amount of nitrate that is safe and that which may be dangerous".

Because of the filthy, overcrowded conditions forced upon animals by the livestock industry, vast amounts of antibiotics must be used. But such rampant use of antibiotics naturally creates antibiotic-resistant bacteria that are passed on to those who eat the meat. The FDA estimates that penicillin and tetracycline save the meat industry \$1.9 billion a year, giving them sufficient reason to overlook the potential health hazards.

The trauma of being slaughtered also adds "pain poisons" (such as powerful stimulants) into the meat. These join with uneliminated wastes in the animal's blood, such as urea and uric acid, to further contaminate the flesh the consumers eat.

Diseases in Meat

In addition to dangerous chemicals, meat often carries diseases from the animals themselves. Crammed together in unclean conditions, force-fed, and inhumanely treated, animals destined for slaughter contract many more diseases than they ordinarily would. Meat inspectors attempt to filter out unacceptable meats, but because of pressures from the industry and lack of sufficient time for examination, much of what passes is far less wholesome than the meat purchaser realizes.

A 1972 USDA report lists carcasses that passed inspection after the diseased parts were removed. Examples included nearly 100,000 cows with eye cancer and 3,596,302 cases of abscessed liver. The government also permits the sale of chickens with airsacculitis, a pneumonialike disease that causes pus-laden mucus to collect in the lungs. In order to meet federal standards, the chicken's chest cavities are cleaned out with air-suction guns. But during this process diseased air sacs burst and pus seeps into the meat.

The USDA has even been found to be lax in enforcing its own low standards. In its capacity of overseeing federal regulatory agencies, the U.S. General Accounting Office cited the USDA for failure to correct various violations by slaughterhouses. Carcasses contaminated with rodent feces, cockroaches, and rust were found in meat-packing companies such as Swift, Armour, and Carnation. [10] Some inspectors rationalize the laxity, explaining that if regulations were enforced, no meat-packers would remain open for business.

Nutrition Without Meat

Many times the mention of vegetarianism elicits the predictable reaction, "What about protein?" To this the vegetarian might well reply, "What about the elephant? And the bull? And the rhinoceros?" The ideas that meat has a monopoly on protein and that large amounts of protein are required for energy and strength are both myths. While it is being digested, most protein breaks down into its constituent amino acids, which are reconverted and used by the body for growth and tissue replacement. Of these twenty-two amino acids, all but eight can be synthesized by the body itself, and these eight "essential amino acids" exist in abundance in nonflesh foods. Dairy products, grains, beans, and nuts are all concentrated sources of protein. Cheese, peanuts, and lentils, for instance, contain more protein per ounce than hamburger, pork, or porterhouse steak. A study by

Dr. Fred Stare of Harvard and Dr. Mervyn Hardinge of Loma Linda University made extensive comparisons between the protein intake of vegetarians and flesh-eaters. They concluded that "each group exceeded twice its requirement for every essential amino acid and surpassed this amount by large margins for most of them".

For many Americans, protein makes up more than twenty percent of their diet, nearly twice the quantity recommended by the World Health Organization. Although inadequate amounts of protein will cause loss of strength, excess protein cannot be utilized by the body; rather, it is converted into nitrogenous wastes that burden the kidneys. The primary energy source for the body is carbohydrates. Only as a last resort is the body's protein utilized for energy production. Too much protein intake actually reduces the body's energy capacity. In a series of comparative endurance tests conducted by Dr. Irving Fisher of Yale, vegetarians performed twice as well as meat-eaters. By reducing the nonvegetarians' protein consumption by twenty percent, Dr. Fisher found their efficiency increased by thirty-three percent. Numerous other studies have shown that a proper vegetarian diet provides more nutritional energy than meat. Furthermore, a study by Dr. J. Iotekyo and V. Kipani at Brussels University showed that vegetarians were able to perform physical tests two to three times longer than meat-eaters before exhaustion and were fully recovered from fatigue in one fifth the time needed by the meat-eaters.

Chapter 2 – The Hidden Cost of Meat

The Myth of Scarcity

In his 1975 bestseller, The Eco-Spasm Report, futurist Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock and The Third Wave, suggested a positive hope for the world's food crisis. He anticipated "the sudden rise of a religious movement in the West that restricts the eating of beef and thereby saves billions of tons of grain and provides a nourishing diet for the world as a whole".

Solving the Hunger Problem

Food expert Francis Moore Lappé, author of the bestselling *Diet for a Small Planet*, said in a recent television interview that we should look at a piece of steak as a Cadillac. "What I mean is", she explained, "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."

According to information compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture, over ninety percent of all the grain produced in America is used for feeding livestock – cows, pigs, lambs, and chickens – that wind up on dinner tables. Yet the process of using grain to produce meat is incredibly wasteful. For example, information from the USDA's Economic Research Service shows that we get back only one (1) pound of beef for every sixteen (16) pounds of grain.

In his book *Proteins: Their Chemistry and Politics*, Dr. Aaron Altshul notes that in terms of calorie units per acre, a diet of grains, vegetable, and beans will support twenty times more people than a diet of meat. As it stands now, about half the harvested acreage in America is used to feed animals. If the earth's arable land were used primarily for the production of vegetarian foods, the planet could easily support a human population of twenty billion and more.

Facts such as these have led food experts to point out that the world hunger problem is largely illusory. The myth of "overpopulation" should not be used by advocates of abortion to justify the killing of more than fifty million unborn children worldwide each year. Even now, we are already producing enough food for everyone on the planet, but unfortunately it is being allocated inefficiently. In a report submitted to the United Nations World Food Conference (Rome, 1974), René Dumont, an agricultural economist at France's National Agricultural Institute, made this judgment: "The overconsumption of meat by the rich means hunger for the poor. This wasteful agriculture must be changed –

by the suppression of feedlots where beef are fattened on grains, and even a massive reduction of beef cattle."

Living Cows Are an Economic Asset

It is quite clear that a living cow yields society more food than a dead one – in the form of a continuing supply of milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and other high-protein foods. In 1971, Stewart Odend'hal of the University of Missouri conducted a detailed study of cows in Bengal and found that far from depriving humans of food, they ate only inedible remains of harvested crops (rice hulls, tops of sugarcane, etc.) and grass. "Basically," he said, "the cattle convert items of little direct human value into products of immediate utility." This should put to rest the myth that people are starving in India because they will not kill their cows. Interestingly enough, India recently seems to have surmounted its food problems, which have always had more to do with occasional severe drought or political upheaval than with sacred cows. A panel of experts at the Agency for International Development, in a statement cited in the *Congressional Record* for December 2, 1980, concluded, "India produces enough to feed all its people".

If allowed to live, cows produce high quality, protein-rich foods in amounts that stagger the imagination. In America, there is a deliberate attempt to limit dairy production; nevertheless, Representative Sam Gibbons of Florida recently reported to Congress that the U.S. government was being forced to stockpile "mountains of butter, cheese, and nonfat dried milk". He told his colleagues, "We currently own about 440 million pounds of butter, 545 million pounds of cheese, and about 765 million pounds of nonfat dried milk". The supply grows by about 45 million pounds each week. In fact, the 10 million cows in America provide so much milk that the government periodically releases millions of pounds of dairy products for free distribution to the poor and hungry. It's abundantly clear that cows (living ones) are one of mankind's most valuable food resources.

Movements to save seals, dolphins, and whales from slaughter are flourishing – so why shouldn't there be a movement to save the cow? From the economic standpoint alone, it would seem to be a sound idea – unless you happen to be part of the meat industry, which is increasingly worried about the growth of vegetarianism. In June 1977, a major trade magazine, *Farm Journal*, printed an editorial entitled, "Who Will Defend the Good Name of Beef?" The magazine urged the nation's beef-cattle raisers to chip in \$ 40 million to finance publicity to keep beef consumption and prices sky high.

You're Paying More than You Think for Meat

The meat industry is a powerful economic and political force, and besides spending millions of its own dollars to promote meat-eating, it has also managed to grab an unfair share of our tax dollars. Practically speaking, the meat production process is so wasteful and costly that the industry needs subsidies in order to survive. Most people are unaware of how heavily national governments support the meat industry by outright grants, favorable loan guarantees, and so forth. In 1977, for example, the USDA bought an extra \$ 100 million of surplus beef for school lunch programs. That same year, the governments

of Western Europe spent almost a half-billion dollars purchasing the farmers' overproduction of meat and spent additional millions for the cost of storing it.

More tax dollars go down the drain in the form of the millions of dollars the U.S. government spends each year to maintain a nationwide network of inspectors to monitor the little-publicized problem of animal diseases. When diseased animals are destroyed, the government pays the owners an indemnity. For instance, in 1978 the American government paid out \$ 50 million of its citizens' tax money in indemnities for the control of brucellosis, a flulike disease that afflicts cattle and other animals. Under another program, the U.S. government guarantees loans up to \$ 350,000 for meat producers. Other farmers receive guarantees only up to \$ 20,000. A *New York Times* editorial called this subsidy bill "outrageous", characterizing it as "a scandalous steal out of the public treasury". Also, despite much evidence from government health agencies showing the link between meat-eating and cancer and heart disease, the USDA continues to spend millions promoting meat consumption through its publications and school lunch programs.

Environmental Damage

Another price we pay for meat-eating is degradation of the environment. The United States Agricultural Research Service calls the heavily contaminated runoff and sewage from America's thousands of slaughterhouses and feedlots a major source of pollution of the nation's rivers and streams. It is fast becoming apparent that the fresh water resources of this planet are not only becoming polluted but also depleted, and the meat industry is particularly wasteful. In their book *Population, Resources, and Environment*, Paul and Anne Ehrlich found that to grow one pound of wheat requires only 60 pounds of water, whereas production of a pound of meat requires anywhere from 2,500 to 6,000 pounds of water. And in 1973 the *New York Post* uncovered this shocking misuse of a valuable national resource – one large chicken slaughtering plant in America was found to be using 100 million gallons of water daily! This same volume would supply a city of 25,000 people.

Social Conflict

The wasteful process of meat production, which requires far larger acreages of land than vegetable agriculture, has been a source of economic conflict in human society for thousands of years. A study published in *Plant Foods for Human Nutrition* reveals that an acre of grains produces five times more protein than an acre of pasture set aside for meat production. An acre of beans or peas produces ten times more, and an acre of spinach twenty-eight times more protein. Economic facts like these were known to the ancient Greeks. In Plato's *Republic* the great Greek philosopher Socrates recommended a vegetarian diet because it would allow a country to make the most intelligent use of its agricultural resources. He warned that if people began eating animals, there would be need for more pasturing land. "And the country which was enough to support the original inhabitants will be too small now, and not enough?" he asked of Glaucon, who replied

that this was indeed true. "And so we shall go to war, Glaucon, shall we not?" To which Glaucon replied, "Most certainly".

It is interesting to note that meat-eating played a role in many of the wars during the age of European colonial expansion. The spice trade with India and other countries of the East was an object of great contention. Europeans subsisted on a diet of meat preserved with salt. In order to disguise and vary the monotonous and unpleasant taste of their food, they eagerly purchased vast quantities of spices. So huge were the fortunes to be made in the spice trade that governments and merchants did not hesitate to use arms to secure sources.

In the present era there is still the possibility of mass conflict based on food. Back in August 1974, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) published a report warning that in the near future there may not be enough food for the world's population "unless the affluent nations make a quick and drastic cut in their consumption of grain-fed animals".

**Relative per-acre yields
of usable protein from
various food sources**

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Soybeans | 356 |
| Rice | 260 |
| Corn | 211 |
| Wheat | 138 |
| Meat (all types) | 45 |
| Beef | 20 |

Saving Money with a Vegetarian Diet

But now let's turn from the world geopolitical situation, and get right down to our own pocketbooks. Although not widely known, grains, beans, and milk products are an excellent source of high-quality protein. Pound for pound many vegetarian foods are better sources of this essential nutrient than meat. A 100-gram portion of meat contains only 20 grams of protein. (Another fact to consider: meat is more than 50% water by

weight.) In comparison, a 100-gram portion of cheese or lentils yields 25 grams of protein, while 100 grams of soybeans yields 34 grams of protein. But although meat provides less protein, it costs much more. A spot check of supermarkets in Los Angeles in August 1983 showed sirloin steak costing \$ 3.89 a pound, while staple ingredients for delicious vegetarian meals averaged less than 50 cents a pound. An eight-ounce container of cottage cheese costing 59 cents provides 60% of the minimum daily requirement of protein. 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 America's 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.

Chapter 3 – "Do Unto Others ..."

I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals. – **Thoreau**

I do feel that spiritual progress does demand at some stage that we should cease to kill our fellow creatures for the satisfaction of our bodily wants. – **Gandhi**

Each year about 134 million mammals and 3 billion birds are killed for food in America. But few people make any conscious connection between this slaughter and the meat products that appear on their tables. A case in point: in television commercials a clown called Ronald McDonald tells kiddies that hamburgers grow in "hamburger patches". The truth is not so pleasant – commercial slaughterhouses are like visions of hell. Screaming animals are stunned by hammer blows, electric shock, or concussion guns. They are then hoisted into the air by their feet and moved through the factories of death on mechanized conveyor systems. Often still alive, their throats are sliced and their flesh is cut off. Describing his reaction to a visit to a slaughterhouse, champion tennis player Peter Burwash wrote in his book *A Vegetarian Primer*, "I'm no shrinking violet. I played hockey until half of my teeth were knocked down my throat. And I'm extremely competitive on a tennis court ... But that experience at the slaughterhouse overwhelmed me. When I walked out of there, I knew I would never again harm an animal! I knew all the physiological, economic, and ecological arguments supporting vegetarianism, but it was firsthand experience of man's cruelty to animals that laid the real groundwork for my commitment to vegetarianism."

Ancient Greece and Rome

Ethical considerations have always attracted many of the world's greatest personalities to adopt a vegetarian diet. Pythagoras, famous for his contributions to geometry and mathematics, said,

"Oh, my fellow men, do not defile your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples bending down the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines. There are sweet-flavored herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied milk or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches, of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter; only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of those, because horses, cattle, and sheep live on grass."

The biographer Diogenes tells us that Pythagoras ate bread and honey in the morning and raw vegetable at night. He would also pay fishermen to throw their catch back into the sea.

In an essay titled "On Eating Flesh", the Roman author Plutarch wrote:

"Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstinence from flesh? For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies, and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. How could eyes endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limb? How could his nose endure the stench? How was it that the pollution did not turn away his taste, which made contact with sores of others and sucked juices and serums from mortal wounds? It is certainly not lions or wolves that we eat out of self-defense; on the contrary, we ignore these and slaughter harmless, tame creatures without stings or teeth to harm us. For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life to which they are entitled by birth and being. "

He then delivered this challenge to flesh-eaters:

"If you declare that you are naturally designed for such a diet, then first kill for yourself what you want to eat. Do it, however, only through your own resources, unaided by cleaver or cudgel or any kind of ax. "

Da Vinci, Rousseau, Franklin ...

The great Renaissance painter, inventor, sculptor, scientist and poet Leonardo Da Vinci epitomized the ethical approach to vegetarianism. He wrote, "He who does not value life does not deserve it". He considered the bodies of meat-eaters to be "burial places", graveyards for the animals they eat. His notebooks are full of passages that show his compassion for living creatures. He lamented, "endless numbers of these animals shall have their little children taken from them, ripped open, and barbarously slaughtered."

French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau was an advocate of natural order. He observed that the meat-eating animals are generally more cruel and violent than herbivores. He therefore reasoned that a vegetarian diet would produce a more compassionate person. He even advised that butchers not be allowed to testify in court or sit on juries.

In *The Wealth of Nations* economist Adam Smith proclaimed the advantages of a vegetarian diet. "It may indeed be doubted whether butchers' meat is anywhere a necessary of life. Grain and other vegetables, with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil, where butter is not to be had, afford the most plentiful, the most wholesome, the most nourishing, and the most invigorating diet. Decency nowhere requires that any man should eat butchers' meat." Similar considerations motivated Benjamin Franklin, who became a vegetarian at age sixteen. Franklin noted "greater progress, from that greater

clearness of head and quicker apprehension". In his autobiographical writings, he called flesh-eating "unprovoked murder".

The poet Shelley was a committed vegetarian. In his essay "A Vindication of Natural Diet", he wrote, "Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood ... then, and then only, would he be consistent." Shelley's interest in vegetarianism began when he was a student at Oxford, and he and his wife, Harriet, took up the diet soon after their marriage. In a letter dated March 14, 1812, his wife wrote to a friend, "We have foresworn meat and adopted the Pythagorean system." Shelly, in his poem *Queen Mab*, described a utopian world where men do not kill animals for food.

... no longer now

He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,

And horribly devours his mangled flesh,

Which, still avenging Natures's broken law,

Kindled all putrid humors in his frame,

All evil passions, and all vain belief,

Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,

The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy became a vegetarian in 1885. Giving up the sport of hunting, he advocated "vegetarian pacifism" and was against killing even the smallest living things, such as the ants. He felt there was a natural progression of violence that led inevitably to war in human society. In his essay "The First Step", Tolstoy wrote that flesh-eating is "simply immoral, as it involves the performance of an act which is contrary to moral feeling – killing". By killing, Tolstoy believed, "man suppresses in himself unnecessarily the highest spiritual capacity – that of sympathy and pity towards living creatures like himself – and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel."

Composer Richard Wagner believed that all life was sacred. He saw vegetarianism as "nature's diet", which could save mankind from violent tendencies and help us return to the "long-lost Paradise".

At various times in his life, Henry David Thoreau was a vegetarian. Although his own practice of vegetarianism was spotty at best, he recognized its virtues. In *Walden* he

wrote, "Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal? True, he can and does live, in a great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way – as anyone who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn – and he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet. Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized."

The Twentieth Century

It goes without saying that the great twentieth-century apostle of nonviolence Mohandas Gandhi was a vegetarian. His parents, being devout Hindus, never gave him meat, fish, or eggs. Under British rule, however, there was a great attack on the age-old principles of Indian culture. Under such pressures, many Indians began to adopt the meat-eating habits of the West. Even Gandhi fell victim to the advice of some schoolfriends, who urged him to eat meat because it would increase his strength and courage. But he later resumed a vegetarian diet and wrote, "I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to our species. We err in copying the lower animal world if we are superior to it." He felt that ethical principles are a stronger support for lifelong commitment to a vegetarian diet than reason of health. "I do feel," he stated, "that spiritual progress does demand at some stage that we should cease to kill our fellow creatures for the satisfaction of our bodily wants."

Playwright George Bernard Shaw first tried to become a vegetarian at age twenty-five. "It was Shelley who first opened my eyes to the savagery of my diet", he wrote in his autobiography. Shaw's doctors warned that the diet would kill him. When an old man, he was asked why he didn't go back and show them what good it had done him, he replied, "I would, but they all passed away years ago." Once someone asked him how it was that he looked so youthful. "I don't," Shaw retorted. "I look my age. It is the other people who look older than they are. What can you expect from people who eat corpses?" On the connection between flesh-eating and violence in human society, Shaw wrote:

We pray on Sundays that we may have light

To guide our footsteps on the path we tread;

We are sick of war, we don't want to fight,

And yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead.

H.G. Wells wrote about vegetarianism in his vision of a future world, *A Modern Utopia*. "In all the round world of Utopia there is no meat. There used to be. But now we cannot stand the thought of slaughterhouses. And, in a population that is all educated, and at about the same level of physical refinement, it is practically impossible to find anyone

who will hew a dead ox or pig... I can still remember as a boy the rejoicings over the closing of the last slaughterhouse."

Nobel-prize-winning author Isaac Bashevis Singer became a vegetarian in 1962, at age fifty-eight. He said, "Naturally I am sorry now that I waited so long, but it is better later than never." He finds vegetarianism quite compatible with his mystical variety of Judaism. "We are all God's creatures – that we pray to God for mercy and justice while we continue to eat the flesh of animals that are slaughtered on our account is not consistent." Although he appreciates the health aspect of vegetarianism, he states very clearly that the ethical consideration is primary. "Even if eating flesh was actually shown to be good for you, I would certainly still not eat it."

Singer has little patience with intellectual rationalizations for meat-eating. "Various philosophers and religious leaders tried to convince their disciples and followers that animals are nothing more than machines without a soul, without feelings. However, anyone who has ever lived with an animal – be it a dog, a bird, or even a mouse – knows that this theory is a brazen lie, invented to justify cruelty."

Vegetarianism and Religion

Avoidance of meat has been a part of religious practice in nearly all faiths. Some Egyptian priests were vegetarians, avoiding meat in order to help them maintain vows of celibacy. They also avoided eggs, which they called "liquid flesh".

Although the Old Testament, the foundation of Judaism, contains some prescriptions for meat-eating, it is clear that the ideal situation is vegetarianism. In Genesis (1:29) we find God Himself proclaiming: "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in that which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." In the beginning of creation as described in the Bible, it seems that not even the animals ate flesh. In Genesis (1:30) God says, "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so." Genesis (9:4) also directly forbids meat-eating: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it."

In later books of the Bible, major prophets also condemn meat-eating. Isaiah (1:5) states, "Saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood." According to Isaiah (66:3), the killing of cows is particularly abhorrent: "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man."

In the Bible we also find the story of Daniel, who while imprisoned in Babylon refused to eat the meat offered by his jailers, preferring instead simple vegetarian food.

Major stumbling blocks for many Christians are the belief that Christ ate meat and the many references to meat in the New Testament. But close study of the original Greek manuscripts shows that the vast majority of the words translated as 'meat' are *trophe*, *brome*, and other words that simply mean 'food' or 'eating' in the broadest sense. For example, in the gospel of St. Luke (8:55) we read that Jesus raised a woman from the dead and "commanded to give her meat". The original Greek word translated as 'meat' is *phago*, which means only 'to eat'. So what Christ actually said was, "Let her eat". The Greek word for meat is *kreas* ('flesh'), and it is never used in connection with Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any direct reference to Jesus eating meat. This is in line with Isaiah's famous prophecy about Jesus' appearance: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Clement of Alexandria, an early Church father, recommended a fleshless diet, citing the example of the apostle Matthew, who "partook of seeds, and nuts, and vegetable, without flesh". St. Jerome, another leader of the early Christian Church, who gave the authorized Latin version of the Bible still in use today, wrote, "the preparation of vegetables, fruit, and pulse is easy, and does not require expensive cooks". He felt such a diet was the best for a life devoted to the pursuit of wisdom. St. John Chrysostom considered meat-eating to be a cruel and unnatural habit for Christians. "We imitate but the ways of wolves, but the ways of leopards, or rather we are even worse than these. For to them nature has assigned that they should be thus fed, but us God hath honored with speech and a sense of guilty, and we are become worse than the wild beasts". St. Benedict, who founded the Benedictine Order in A.D. 529, stipulated vegetable foods as the staple for his monks. The Trappist Order uniformly prohibited meat, eggs, and other flesh foods from its founding in the seventeenth century. The regulations were relaxed by the Vatican Councils of the 1960s, but most of the Trappists still follow the original teachings. Remarkably enough, however, many Trappist monasteries raise cattle for slaughter to support themselves financially.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church strongly recommends vegetarianism for its members. Although little known to the general public, the huge American breakfast cereals industry got its start at an Adventist health resort run by Dr. John H. Kellogg. Dr. Kellogg was constantly devising new varieties of vegetarian breakfast foods for the wealthy patients of his Battle Creek Sanitorium. One of his inventions was cornflakes, which he later marketed nationwide. Over the course of time, he gradually separated his business from the Seventh Day Adventist Church and formed the company that still bears his name.

The largest concentration of vegetarians in the world is found in India, the homeland of Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhism began as a reaction to widespread animal slaughter that was being carried out through perversion of religious rituals. Buddha put an end to these practices by propounding his doctrine of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence.

Indian Philosophy and Nonviolence

The Vedic scriptures of India, which predate Buddhism, also stress nonviolence as the ethical foundation of vegetarianism. The *Manu-samhita*, the ancient Indian code of law, states, "Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to the attainment of heavenly bliss; let him therefore shun the use of meat". In another section, the *Manu-samhita* warns, "Having well considered the disgusting origin of flesh and the cruelty of fettering and slaying of corporeal beings, let him entirely abstain from eating flesh".

In recent years the International Society for Krsna Consciousness has introduced these ethical considerations around the world. Srila Svami Maharaja, the movement's founder-*acarya* (spiritual master), once stated, "In the *Manu-samhita* the concept of a life for a life is sanctioned, and it is actually observed throughout the world. Similarly, there are other laws which state that one cannot even kill an ant without being responsible. Since we cannot create, we have no right to kill any living entity, and therefore man-made laws that distinguish between killing a man and killing an animal are imperfect ... According to the laws of God, killing an animal is as punishable as killing a man. Those who draw distinction between the two are concocting their own laws. Even in the Ten Commandments it is prescribed, 'Thou shalt not kill'. This is a perfect law, but by discriminating and speculating men distort it. 'I shall not kill man, but I shall kill animals'. In this way people cheat themselves and inflict suffering on themselves and others."

Emphasizing the Vedic conception of the unity of all life, Srila Svami Maharaja then stated, "Everyone is God's creature, although in different bodies or dresses. God is considered the one supreme father. A father may have many children, and some may be intelligent and others not very intelligent, but if an intelligent son tells his father, 'My brother is not very intelligent; let me kill him', will the father agree? ... Similarly, if God is the supreme father, why should He sanction the killing of animals who are also His sons?"

Chapter 4 – Karma and Reincarnation

In human society, if one kills a man he has to be hanged [or punished]. That is the law of the state. Because of ignorance people do not perceive that there is a complete state controlled by the Supreme Lord. Every living creature is the son of the Supreme Lord, and He does not tolerate even an ant's being killed. One has to pay for it.

– Srila Svami Maharaja

Capital punishment is the state's ultimate act of reprisal, and no sacrifice surpasses offering one's life for the sake of others. But although we seemingly attach great value to life, each year in America hundreds of millions of defenseless animals are butchered. This wholesale slaughter of animals is not necessary to prevent us from starving. Moreover, it is economically extravagant and ethically reprehensible. Most seriously, however, animal killing violates the universal law of *karma*, which is similar to the modern scientific principle of action and reaction.

Scientists clearly understand how the physical law of action and reaction ("for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction") applies to material objects, but most are unaware of the more subtle law of action and reaction in the realm of consciousness. Nevertheless, we do have a kind of instinctive awareness that somehow we all create our own happiness and distress. This realization dawns upon us when in response to some mishap we reflect, "Well, maybe I had that coming to me".

In fact, we sometimes find people jokingly attributing unfortunate occurrences in their lives to "bad *karma*". But the law of *karma*, like any other law, is ultimately no joking matter. It operates impartially and unerringly, awarding us exactly what we deserve. Specifically, the law of *karma* insures that those who cause violence and suffering to other living beings must themselves experience equivalent violence and suffering – immediately or in the future.

Karma, as many in the West now know, is intimately related with the principle of reincarnation. In India's greatest spiritual classic, *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krsna describes the soul as the source of consciousness and the active principle that animates the body of every living being. This vital force, which is of the same spiritual quality in all beings, is distinct from and superior to the matter comprising the temporary material form. At the time of death, the indestructible soul transmigrates into another physical body, just as one changes clothing. All living beings (not just a few select individuals) undergo this process of reincarnation, lifetime after lifetime. The *Bhagavad-gita* states, "As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones".

The Journey of the Soul

The *Vedas* explain that the soul, known as the *atma*, may inhabit any of 8,400,000 general species of material bodies. The physical forms vary in complexity, beginning with the primitive microbes and amoebas, continuing through the aquatic, plant, insect, reptile, bird, and animal species, and culminating in human beings and demigods. In consequence of its own desires to enjoy matter, the *atma* continually journeys through these various bodies, on an endless voyage of births and deaths.

The action of the mind is the prime force compelling the living entity to transmigrate from one body to another. The *Gita* explains, "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state of being he will attain without fail". Our minds are constantly recording all of our thoughts and desires, and the totality of these memories floods our consciousness in the last moments of life. The nature of our thoughts at this critical juncture propels us into the appropriate physical body. Thus the body we now occupy is an accurate physical projection of our state of mind at the time of our last death.

The *Bhagavad-gita* explains, "The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of eye, ear, tongue, nose, and sense of touch, which are grouped around the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects."

According to the *Vedas*, a soul in a form lower than human automatically evolves to the next-higher species, ultimately arriving at the human form. But because the human being possesses freedom to choose between matter and spirit, there is a chance that the soul will descend again into the lower species. The laws of *karma* are so arranged that if a human lives and dies with the animalistic mentality of a creature such as a dog, then in the next life he will be able to fulfill his doglike desires through the senses and organs of a dog. This is certainly an unfortunate occurrence, but such a fate is a definite possibility for a person immersed in ignorance. The *Gita* declares, "When he dies in the mode of ignorance, he takes birth in the animal kingdom".

So the soul in the body of an animal may once have inhabited a human form and vice versa. Although a soul may successively occupy plant, animal, and human bodies, its intrinsic nature remains the same. Because the soul is pure spiritual energy, it cannot be altered in any way by matter. *Bhagavad-gita* explains that the soul is "immutable and unchangeable". It is only the bodily covering, with its particular combination of mind and senses, that temporarily restricts or releases the conscious energy of the soul.

The Equality of All Living Things

The basic and transcendental equality of all conscious entities is not an abstract notion but is obvious to everyday sense perception – if only we look beyond the superficial differences in the varieties of material bodies. Anyone who has ever had a pet or visited the zoo has experienced that animals behave much like humans as they search for food, protect their young, play, sleep, and fight. The outstanding difference is that their

intelligence and emotions are less developed, but this distinction is insufficient to discount the far more numerous and significant similarities in thinking, feeling, and willing that clearly point toward the universal equality of the consciousness within all bodies.

In nonhuman species, the living being is stringently controlled by his natural instincts. He is deprived of freedom of choice in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, being compelled by bodily demands to follow rigid behavioral patterns. For this reason, the *atma* dwelling within forms of life lower than human is not responsible for its actions and thus does not generate new *karma*. A similar principle operates within our everyday experience – a dog chasing a cat across the roadway is immune from any traffic situations. Animals are not expected to understand or obey a sophisticated set of laws. On the other hand, in both the social order and the universal order, a human being is obliged to be informed and obedient.

Therefore, when a human unnecessarily takes the life of another entity, especially under conditions of great pain and suffering, this act of overt aggression produces a severe karmic reaction. And, if year after year millions of animals are mercilessly butchered in huge, mechanized slaughterhouses, the accumulated negative *karma* produced by all those participating is almost unfathomable.

In his *Bhagavad-gita* commentary, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja sternly warns about the karmic danger of animal slaughter. "In human society, if one kills a man he has to be hanged. That is the law of the state. Because of ignorance people do not perceive that there is a complete state controlled by the Supreme Lord. Every living creature is the son of the Supreme Lord, and He does not tolerate even an ant's being killed. One has to pay for it."

"Do Unto Others ... "

This same instruction is present in all religious teachings. The Bible emphatically states, "Thou shall not kill", and Lord Jesus Christ, who always displayed deep compassion for all living beings, stated, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Lord Buddha also taught the principle of *ahimsa*, nonviolence, specifically to protect innocent creatures from being slaughtered.

People who find that personally killing an animal is too gruesome tend to believe that merely eating flesh does not implicate them in violence. But this opinion is short-sighted and unsupported by any valid spiritual authority. According to the law of *karma*, all those who are connected to the killing of an animal are liable – the person who gives permission for the killing, the person who kills, the person who helps, the person who purchases the meat, the person who cooks the flesh, and the person who eats it. (These six guilty parties are enumerated in the *Manu-samhita*, ancient India's book of civic and religious codes.) In a court of law all those who conspire in a murder are considered responsible, especially the party who purchases the assassin's service.

Psychological and emotional growth are essential to a progressive life, and all our thoughts and actions influence our character development. The Bible explains, "As you sow, so shall you reap". And the subtle laws of *karma* inform us that negative personality traits such as hostility, cruelty, depression, arrogance, apathy, insensitivity, anxiety, and envy are the psychological harvest of those who directly or indirectly make killing a regular feature in their life. When someone adopts a vegetarian diet, it is much easier for him or her to remain peaceful, happy, productive, and concerned for the welfare of others. As the brilliant physicist Albert Einstein said, "The vegetarian manner of living, by its purely physical effect on the human temperament, would most beneficially influence the lot of mankind". But when human consciousness is polluted by the effects of the negative *karma* resulting from destructive and injurious actions, its good qualities become covered.

The Cause of Violence

At present, despite impressive progress in science and technology, the world is faced with a crisis of unremitting violence in the shape of wars, terrorism, murder, vandalism, child abuse, and abortion. More than 140 wars have been fought since the United Nations was formed in 1945, and in America alone, 20,000 people are murdered each year. With social and political solutions conspicuously failing, perhaps it's time to analyze the problem from a different perspective – the law of *karma*. The callous and brutal slaughter of countless helpless animals must be considered as a powerful causative factor in this wave of uncheckable violence.

In his purports to the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Srila Svami Maharaja has pointed out how the widespread violence among humans is a karmic reaction to animal slaughter.

"In this age the propensity for mercy is almost nil. Consequently there is always fighting and wars between men and nations. Men do not understand that because they unrestrictedly kill so many animals, they must also be slaughtered like animals in big wars. This is very much evident in the Western countries. In the West, slaughterhouses are maintained without restriction, and therefore every fifth or tenth year there is a big war in which countless people are slaughtered even more cruelly than the animals. Sometimes during war, soldiers keep their enemies in concentration camps and kill them in very cruel ways. These are reactions brought about by unrestricted animal killing in the slaughterhouse and by hunters in the forest."

The question is sometimes raised that if the *atma* (soul) is completely transcendental to the material body, why should killing, if great pain is avoided, be considered wrongful violence? Even the *Bhagavad-gita* states, "For the soul there is neither birth nor death. He is not slain when the body is slain." In his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* purports, Srila Svami Maharaja addresses this question. "All living entities have to fulfill a certain duration of being engaged in a particular type of material body. They have to finish the duration allotted in a particular body before being promoted or evolved to another body. Killing an animal or any other living being simply places an impediment in the way of his completing his term of imprisonment in a certain body. One should therefore not kill

bodies for one's sense gratification, for this will implicate one in sinful activity." In short, killing an animal interrupts its progressive evolution through the species.

We can also appreciate the unjustness of animal-killing by seeing that the body is a dwelling place for the *atma* residing within. An individual unexpectedly driven out of his comfortable home suffers great inconvenience and distress. Such merciless and unjustified action is undoubtedly criminal. Furthermore, in order to receive his next material body, the living being must suffer extended rebirth tribulations. For the human being this involves months of being tightly packed in the darkness of the womb, where one is constantly disturbed by infections, acid fluids burning the skin, jarring motions, and discomforts resulting from the eating and drinking habit of the mother.

Is Killing Vegetables Wrong?

Another common metaphysical question is, "If all living entities are spiritually equal, then why is it acceptable to eat grains, vegetables, etc., and not meat? Aren't vegetarians guilty of killing vegetables?" In response, it may be pointed out that vegetarian foods such as fruits, nuts, milk, and grains do not require any killing. But even in those cases where a plant's life is taken, the pain involved is much less than when an animal is slaughtered, because the plant's nervous system is less developed. Clearly there is a vast difference between pulling a carrot out of the ground and killing a lamb. But still, one must undoubtedly suffer karmic reactions even for killing plants.

For this reason, Lord Krsna explains in *Bhagavad-gita* that not only should man eat only vegetarian foods, but he should also offer these eatables to Him. If we follow this process of sacrifice, the Supreme Lord, Krsna, protects us from any karmic reactions resulting from the killing of plants. Otherwise, according to the law of *karma*, we are personally responsible. The *Gita* states, "The devotees of the Lord are released from all sins because they eat food that is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin."

Srila Svami Maharaja elaborates on this principle of spiritual vegetarianism. "Human beings are provided with food grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk by the grace of the Lord, but it is the duty of human beings to acknowledge the mercy of the Lord. As a matter of gratitude, they should feel obliged to the Lord for their supply of foodstuff, and they must first offer Him food in sacrifice and then partake of the remnants." By eating such sanctified food – *prasadam* – one is protected from karmic reactions and advances spiritually.

Chapter 5 – Beyond Vegetarianism

If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it. – Bhagavad-gita (9.26)

Beyond concerns of health, psychology, economics, ethics, and even *karma*, vegetarianism has a higher, spiritual dimension that can help us develop our natural appreciation and love for God.

Walking through a supermarket, people may forget a very basic fact of nature – it's not man but God who makes food. There's something mystical about the way food grows. You put a tiny seed in the ground, it sprouts, and by the mysterious life force within it a food factory arises – a tomato plant producing dozens of tasty red tomatoes, and apple tree producing bushels of sweet apples. No team of scientists anywhere has yet invented anything as amazing as the simplest green creation of God.

But rather than admit the existence of a superior intelligence, scientists mislead the public with their theories of chemical evolution. Without substantial evidence, they proclaim that life comes from chemicals. Yet they cannot utilize those chemicals to make a seed that will grow into a shaft of wheat that will produce more seeds that will sprout into hundreds of more shafts of wheat.

Once we admit that life comes only from life, it's entirely reasonable to suppose that all life originates from a common living source, the one Supreme Lord, known to the Muslims as Allah, to the Jews as Yahweh, to the Christians as Jehovah, and to the followers of the *Vedas* as Krsna.

So at very least we should offer our food to God out of gratitude. Every religion has such a process of thanksgiving. But the spiritual path outlined in the Vedic scriptures of India is unique in that the offering of food to the Lord is part of a highly developed form of *yoga* that helps one develop one's personal loving relationship with God. This is called *bhakti-yoga*.

Originally, each soul has a direct relationship with God in the spiritual world, and according to the *Vedas* the main purpose of life is to revive this lost relationship. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, a classic Sanskrit work known as the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge, states, "The human form of life affords one a chance to return home, back to Godhead, therefore every living entity, especially in the human form of life, must engage in devotional service".

Devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, is the highest form of *yoga*. In *Bhagavad-gita*, after discussing various kinds of *yoga*, Lord Krsna, the master of all *yoga*, declares, "Of all *yogis*, one who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service [*bhakti*], is most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is highest of all". Lord Krsna further states, "One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God."

The Yoga of Eating

Summarizing the process of *bhakti-yoga*, the *yoga* of devotion, the Lord says, "All that you do, *all that you eat*, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me". So offering food is an integral part of the *bhakti-yoga* system.

The Lord also describes the types of offerings that He will accept. "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." Krsna specifically does not include meat, fish, or eggs in this list; therefore a devotee does not offer them to Him. Out of love, the devotee offers Krsna only the purest and choicest foods – and these certainly do not include the weeks-old rotting corpses of slaughtered animals or the potential embryos of chickens.

In most religious systems people ask God to feed them ("Give us this day our daily bread"), but in Krsna consciousness the devotee offers food to God as an expression of love for Him. Even in ordinary dealings, somebody will prepare a meal as a sign of love and affection. It isn't only the meal itself that is appreciated, but the love and consideration that goes into it. In the same way, the process of offering food to God is intended to help us increase our love and devotion toward Him. Of course, it is very difficult to love someone we have never seen. Fortunately, the Vedic scriptures, unique in all the world, describe God's personal features in great detail.

The Vedic conception of God is not vague. In the scriptures of other major religions God is briefly mentioned as the Supreme Father, but surprisingly little information is given about His personality. Christ spoke of himself as being the son of God, and Muhammad was His prophet; but what of God Himself? He appears only indirectly – as a voice from heaven, a burning bush, and so on.

However, once we admit that God has created us, then we cannot reasonably deny that He Himself possesses all the attributes of personhood – a distinct form and appearance, and all the powers and abilities of various senses and organs. It is illogical to suppose that the creature of God can in any way surpass his creator. If we possess distinct forms and personalities, and God were not to possess them, then we would be superior to Him in that respect. So just as we are persons, God is also a person – the Supreme Person, with an infinitely powerful spiritual form, but nevertheless a person. After all, it is said that we are created in the image and likeness of God.

Using their imaginations, Western artists have generally depicted God as a powerfully built old man with a beard. But the Vedic scriptures of India give direct descriptions of God's personality – information found nowhere else. First of all, God is eternally youthful, and He possesses wonderful spiritual qualities that attract the minds of liberated souls. He is the supreme artist, the supreme musician. He speaks wonderfully and manifests unlimited intelligence, humor, and genius. Moreover, He displays incomparable transcendental pastimes with His eternal associates. There is no end to the descriptions of the attractive features of the Personality of Godhead found in the *Vedas*. Therefore He is called Krsna, or "all-attractive". When we understand God's personal identity, it becomes much easier to meditate upon Him, especially when offering Him food.

Because Krsna is supremely powerful and completely spiritual, anything that comes in contact with Him also becomes completely pure and spiritual. Even in the realm of physical nature certain things have the ability to purify various substances. For instance, the sun, with its powerful rays, can distill fresh, pure water from a lake contaminated with pollutants. If a material object like the sun can act in this way, then we can only imagine the purifying potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has effortlessly created millions of suns.

Spiritual Food

By His immense transcendental energies, Krsna can actually convert matter to spirit. If we place an iron rod in fire, before long the iron rod becomes red hot and takes on all the essential qualities of fire. In the same way, the material substance of food that is offered to Krsna becomes completely spiritualized. Such food is called *prasadam*, a Sanskrit word meaning "the mercy of the Lord".

Eating *prasadam* is a fundamental practice of *bhakti-yoga*. In other forms of *yoga*, one is required to restrain the senses, but the *bhakti-yogi* is free to use his senses in a variety of pleasing spiritual activities. For instance, he can use his tongue to taste the delicious foods offered to Lord Krsna. By such activities, the senses gradually become spiritualized and automatically become attracted to divine pleasures that far surpass any material experience.

The Vedic scriptures contain many descriptions of *prasadam* and its effects. Lord Caitanya, an incarnation of the Supreme Lord who appeared in India five hundred years ago, said of *prasadam*, "Everyone has tasted these material substances before. However, in these ingredients there are extraordinary tastes and uncommon fragrances. Just taste them and see the difference in the experience. Apart from the taste, even the fragrance pleases the mind and makes one forget any other sweetness besides its own. Therefore it is to be understood that the spiritual nectar of Krsna's lips has touched these ordinary ingredients and transferred to them all its spiritual qualities."

Eating only food offered to Krsna is the ultimate perfection of a vegetarian diet. After all, even many animals such as pigeons and monkeys are vegetarian, so becoming a

vegetarian is in itself not the greatest accomplishment. The *Vedas* inform us that the purpose of human life is reawakening the soul's original relationship with God, and only when we go beyond vegetarianism to *prasadam* can our eating be helpful in achieving this goal.

How to Prepare and Offer Prasadam

Our consciousness of the higher purpose of vegetarianism begins as we walk down the supermarket aisles selecting the foods we will offer to Krsna. In *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krsna states that all foods can be classified according to the three modes of material nature – goodness, passion, and ignorance. Milk products, sugar, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains are foods in the mode of goodness and may be offered to Krsna. As a general rule, foods in the modes of passion and ignorance are not offerable to Krsna, who says in the *Gita* that such eatables "cause pain, distress, and disease" and are "putrid, decomposed, and unclean". As may be guessed, meat, fish, and eggs are foods in the lower modes. But there are also a few vegetarian items that are classified in the lower modes – garlic, carrots, onions, leek and mushrooms for example. They should not be offered to Krsna. (Hing, sometimes called asafetida, is an acceptable substitute for them in cooking and is available in most Oriental or Indian specialty shops.) Coffees and teas that contain caffeine are also considered to be in the lower modes. If you like beverages of this sort, purchase caffeine-free coffees and herbal teas.

In shopping, you should be aware that you may find meat, fish, and egg products mixed in with other foods, so be sure to study labels carefully. For instance, some brands of yogurt and sour cream contain gelatin, which is prepared from the horns, hooves, and bones of slaughtered animals. Make sure any cheese you purchase is rennetless, because rennet is an enzyme extracted from the stomach tissues of calves.

You should also avoid foods precooked by people who are not devotees of Krsna. According to the subtle laws of nature, the cook acts upon the food not only physically, but mentally as well. Food is an agency for subtle influences on our consciousness. To give another example of this principle, a painting is not simply a collection of strokes on a canvas. It is also an expression of the artist's state of mind, and this mental content is absorbed by the person who looks at the painting. Similarly, if we eat foods cooked by people devoid of spiritual consciousness – employees working in a factory somewhere – then we are sure to absorb a dose of materialistic mental energies. As far as possible, use only fresh, natural ingredients.

In preparing food, cleanliness is the most important principle. Nothing impure should be offered to God, so keep your kitchen work-area very clean. Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food. While preparing food, do not taste it. This is part of meditating that you are cooking the meal not simply for yourself but for the pleasure of Krsna, who should be the first to enjoy it. When the meal is prepared, you are ready to offer it. Arrange portions of the food on diningware kept especially for this purpose. (No one else should eat from these dishes.) The very simplest form of offering is to simply pray, "My dear Lord Krsna, please accept this food". Remember that the real purpose of

this is to show your devotion and gratitude to the Lord; the actual food you are offering is secondary. Without this devotional feeling, the offering will not be accepted. God is complete in Himself; He has no need of anything. Our offering is simply a means for us to show our love and gratitude toward Him. Following the offering one should chant for a few minutes *krsna-nama*, the holy names of the Lord in sixteen syllables which is the greatest *mantra* of all Vedic literatures and divine teaching: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Then the *prasadam* may be served. Try to appreciate the spiritual quality of *prasadam* by remembering how it frees one from the effects of *karma*. But above all, enjoy it.

Eventually you may wish to make a more formal offering according to the procedures established by the *de bhagavat-parampara* (disciplic succession of spiritual masters coming from Krsna Himself, then Brahma, Narada Muni, Vyasadeva, etc.) for persons who desire to practise Krsna consciousness in their own homes. Briefly, this involves setting up a simple altar with pictures of Sri Radha- Krsna, or Sri Caitanya and the spiritual master (who initiated you into the proper process), learning some simple Sanskrit *mantras*, and so forth. If you would like to learn how to do this, please contact the Krsna temple nearest you [or mail to the owner of the website, ed.].

Other Principles of Bhakti-yoga

Of course, offering *prasadam* is only part of the process of *bhakti-yoga*. In order to further purify your consciousness and spiritualize your senses, you can practice other chanting of the Hare Krsna *mantra* - Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. The *Kalisantarana Upanisad* states, "The chanting of these sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy]. In all the *Vedas* it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name." *Krsna-nama* [or *hari-nama*] may be chanted either congregationally, sometimes to the accompaniment of musical instruments, or quietly as a private meditation. For private meditation, the recommended procedure is to chant *krsna-nama* on beads especially made for this purpose. For further information, see the Contemporary Vedic Library Series book *Chant and Be Happy*, which fully explains the process of *krsna-nama* meditation.

To improve the quality of your spiritual life, you should also avoid the use of intoxicants – drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes, as well as soft drinks, coffee, and tea if they contain caffeine. Using these substances unnecessarily clouds the mind, which is already clouded with all kinds of material concepts of life. The *Vedas* also recommend that a person attempting to advance in spiritual life have nothing to do with gambling, for it invariably puts one in anxiety and fuels greed, envy, and anger. Another activity that increases material desires and blocks the growth of spiritual awareness is illicit sex. The regulations of *bhakti-yoga* do, however, allow sex within the context of marriage.

By following the principles mentioned above, one can always experience increasing spiritual pleasure as a tangible part of one's life. In particular, one's offerings of food

become more pleasing to Krsna. God does not require the food we offer; rather, He appreciates the degree of purity and devotion in our hearts as we offer it.

Eventually, one should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master, without whose instruction and guidance it is not possible to attain the perfection of Krsna consciousness. In *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krsna says, "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."

The *acarya* (spiritual master) of the Krsna consciousness movement in the Western world is Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (Svami Maharaja). Srila Svami Maharaja is a member of the authorized chain of disciplic succession established in the Gaudiya Vedanta Sampradaya reaching back through time to Lord Krsna Himself, the supreme spiritual master. Shortly before he departed this world in 1977, Srila Svami Maharaja appointed a number of his disciples to carry on the line of succession in the West.

Srila Svami Maharaja, renowned as one of India's greatest cultural and spiritual ambassadors to the world, personally instructed his disciples in the art of Vedic cooking and distributing *prasadam*. Furthermore, in his books and public lectures, he extensively explained the Vedic philosophy underlying the practice of offering food to Krsna. "We should remember then that it is not vegetarianism which is important", Srila Svami Maharaja once said. "the important thing is that we simply have to try to learn how to love Krsna. Love begins with give and take. We give something to our lover, he or she gives something to us, and in this way love develops." Anyone can enter into this loving transaction by offering vegetarian foods to Krsna and accepting the remnants as *prasadam*.

Chapter 6 – The Higher Taste

(Excerpts from the writings of

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja)

The Myth of Scarcity

With the good will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead there can be enough fruits, grains, and other foodstuffs produced so that all the people in the world could not finish them, even if they ate ten times their capacity. In this material world there is actually no scarcity of anything but Krsna consciousness. If people become Krsna conscious, by the transcendental will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead there will be enough foodstuffs produced so that people will have no economic problems at all. One can very easily understand this fact. The production of fruits and flowers depends not upon our will but the supreme will of the Personality of Godhead. If He is pleased, He can supply enough fruits, flowers, etc., but if people are atheistic and godless, nature, by His will, restricts the supply of food. – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (Adi 9.38)

God Is a Vegetarian

Mr. Faill: Is it necessary to follow certain eating habits to practise spiritual life?

Srila Svami Maharaja: Yes, the whole process is meant to purify us, and eating is part of that purification. I think you have a saying, "You are what you eat", and that's a fact. Our bodily constitution and mental atmosphere are determined according to how and what we eat. Therefore the *sastras* [scriptures] recommend that to become Krsna conscious, you should eat remnants of food left by Krsna [*krsna-prasadam*]. If a tuberculosis patient eats something and you eat the remnants, you will be infected with tuberculosis. Similarly, if you eat *krsna-prasadam*, then you will be infected with Krsna consciousness. Thus our process is that we don't eat anything immediately. First we offer the food to Krsna, then we eat it. This helps us advance in Krsna consciousness.

Mr. Faill: You are all vegetarians?

Srila Svami Maharaja: Yes, because Krsna is a vegetarian. Krsna can eat anything because He is God, but in the *Bhagavad-gita* [9.26] He says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I will accept it". He never says, "Give Me meat and wine". – *Science of Self-Realization* (p. 185)

There Is No Scarcity

If we throw a bag of grain into the street, pigeons may come and eat four or five small grains and then go away. They will not take more than they can eat, and having eaten they go freely on their way. But if we were to put many bags of flour on the sidewalk and invite people to come and get them, one man would take ten or twenty bags and another would take fifteen or thirty bags and so on. But those who do not have the means to carry so

much away will not be able to take more than a bag or two. Thus the distribution will be uneven. This is called advancement of civilization; we are even lacking in the knowledge which the pigeons, dogs, and cats have. Everything belongs to the Supreme Lord, and we can accept whatever we need, but not more. That is knowledge. By the Lord's arrangement the world is so made that there is no scarcity of anything. Everything is sufficient, provided that we know how to distribute it. However, the deplorable condition today is that one is taking more than he needs while another is starving. – *Raja-vidya* (p. 91)

"Thou Shalt Not Kill"

Srila Svami Maharaja: We have to accept all the injunctions of the scripture as they are given, not only those that suit us. If you do not follow the first order, "Thou shalt not kill", then where is the question of love of God?

Visitor: Christians take this commandment to be applicable to human beings, not to animals.

Srila Svami Maharaja: 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*... If you want to interpret these words, that is something else. We understand the direct meaning, "Thou shalt not kill" means "The Christians should not kill".

Father Emmanuel: Isn't the eating of plants also killing?

Srila Svami Maharaja: The Vaisnava philosophy teaches that we should not even kill plants unnecessarily. In the *Bhagavad-gita* [9.26] Krsna says: "If someone offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water, I will accept it". We offer Krsna only the kind of food He demands, and then we eat the remnants. If offering vegetarian food to Krsna were sinful, then it would be Krsna's sin, not ours. But God is *apapa-viddha* – sinful reactions are not applicable to Him ... Eating food first offered to the Lord is also something like a soldier's killing during wartime. In a war, when the commander orders a man to attack, the obedient soldier who kills the enemy will get a medal. But if the same soldier kills someone on his own, he will be punished. Similarly, when we eat only *prasadam* we do not commit any sin. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gita* [3.13]: "The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food that is first offered for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin."

Father Emmanuel: Krsna cannot give permission to eat animals?

Srila Svami Maharaja: Yes – in the animal kingdom. But the civilized human being, the religious human being, is not meant to kill and eat animals. If you stop killing animals and chant the holy name of Christ, everything will be perfect ... I think the Christian priests should cooperate with the Krsna consciousness movement. They should chant the name Christ or Christos and should stop condoning the slaughter of 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. – *Science of Self-Realization* (pp. 129-33)

Physical Effects of Meat-Eating

Ample food grains can be produced through agricultural enterprises, and profuse milk, yogurt, and *ghee* [clarified butter] can be arranged through cow protection. Abundant honey can be obtained if the forests are protected. Unfortunately, in modern society, men are busy killing the cows that are the source of yogurt, milk, and *ghee*; they are cutting down all the trees that supply honey, and they are opening factories to manufacture

nuts, bolts, automobiles, and wine instead of engaging in agriculture. How can the people be happy? They must suffer from all the misery of materialism. Their bodies become wrinkled and gradually deteriorate until they become almost like dwarves, and a bad odor emanates from their bodies because of unclean perspiration resulting from eating all kinds of nasty things. This is not human civilization. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (5.16.25)

Vegetarians Are Also Committing Violence

Sometimes the question is put before us: "You ask us not to eat meat, but you are eating vegetables. Do you think that is not violence?" The answer is that eating vegetables is violence, and vegetarians are also committing violence against other living entities because vegetables also have life. Nondevotees are killing cows, goats, and so many other animals for eating purposes, and one who is vegetarian is also killing ... that is the law of nature. *Jivo jivasya jivanam*: one living entity is the life for another living entity. But for a human being that violence should be committed only as much as necessary. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.29.15)

The Cow Should Be Protected

Milk is compared to nectar, which one can drink to become immortal. Of course, simply drinking milk will not make one immortal, but it can increase the duration of one's life. In modern civilization, men do not think milk to be important, and therefore they do not live very long. Although in this age men can live up to one hundred years, their duration of life is reduced because they do not drink large quantities of milk ... Instead of drinking milk, people prefer to slaughter an animal and eat its flesh. [*Editors' note: Beef has six times the cholesterol of milk. High cholesterol causes heart disease, America's major cause of death.*] The Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His instructions of *Bhagavad-gita*, advises *go-raksya*, which means cow protection. The cow should be protected, milk should be drawn from the cows, and this milk should be prepared in various ways. One should take ample milk, and thus one can prolong one's life, develop his brain, execute devotional service, and ultimately attain the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (8.6.12)

Prasadam Frees One from Material Contamination

When there is an epidemic disease, an antiseptic vaccine protects a person from the attack of such an epidemic. Similarly, food offered to Lord Visnu [Krsna] and then taken by us makes us sufficiently resistant to material affection, and one who is accustomed to this practice is called a devotee of the Lord. Therefore, a person in Krsna consciousness, who eats only food offered to Krsna, can counteract all reactions of past material infections, which are impediments to the progress of self-realization. On the other hand, one who does not do so continues to increase the volume of sinful action, and this prepares the next body to resemble hogs and dogs, to suffer the resultant reactions of all sins. The material world is full of contaminations, and one who is immunized by accepting *prasadam* of the Lord (food offered to Visnu) is saved from the attack, whereas one who does not do so become subjected to contamination. – *Bhagavad-gita* (3.14)

Those Who Kill Will Be Killed

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 bring 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 awaiting wholesale destruction. – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Madhya* 24.251)

Showing Devotion to God by Offering Food with Love

It is prescribed in *Bhagavad-gita*: "If a devotee offers Me a small flower, a leaf, some water, or a little fruit, I will accept it". The real purpose is to exhibit one's loving devotion to the Lord; the offerings themselves are secondary. If one has not developed loving devotion to the Lord and simply offers many kinds of foodstuffs, fruits, and flowers without real devotion, the offering will not be accepted by the Lord. We cannot bribe the Personality of Godhead. He is so great that our bribery has no value. Nor has He any scarcity; since He is full in Himself, what can we offer Him? Everything is produced by Him. We simply offer to show our love and gratitude to the Lord. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.29.24)

Animal-Killing Is Not Civilized

Civilized men know the art of preparing nutritious foods from milk. For instance, in our temples and monasteries we make hundreds of first-class preparations from milk. Whenever visitors come, they are astonished that from milk such nice foods can be prepared. The blood of the cow is very nutritious, but civilized men utilize it in the form of milk. Milk is nothing but cow's blood transformed. You can make milk into so many things – yogurt, curd, *ghee* (clarified butter), and so on – and by combining these milk products with grains, fruits, and vegetables, you can make hundreds of preparations. This is civilized life – not directly killing an animal and eating its flesh. – *Science of Self-Realization* (p. 14)

Offering food to Krsna Is an Exchange of Love

Krsna is so kind that if anyone offers Him a leaf, a flower, fruit, or some water, He will immediately accept it. The only condition is that these things should be offered with *bhakti* [devotion]. Otherwise, if one is puffed up with false prestige, thinking, "I have so much opulence, and I am giving something to Krsna", one's offering will not be accepted by Krsna ... for anything offered to Krsna with love and affection, Krsna can reciprocate many millions of times over, both materially and spiritually. The basic principle involved is an exchange of love. Therefore Krsna teaches in *Bhagavad-gita* (9.27): "O son of Kunti, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me". – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (10.11.11)

Animals Also Have the Right to Life

Interviewer: 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 Svami Maharaja: 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?

Interviewer: They were simply talking about human beings.

Srila Svami Maharaja: 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 *suhrdam sarva-bhutanam*: friendliness to all living entities. – *Science of Self-Realization* (p. 209)

Satan's Philosophy

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 always enmity against 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)

Do Animals Have Souls?

Srila Svami Maharaja: Some people say, "We believe that animals have no soul". That is not correct. They believe animals have no soul because they want to eat the animals, but actually animals do have a soul.

Reporter: How do you know that the animal has a soul?

Srila Svami Maharaja: You can know, also. Here is the scientific proof ... the animal is eating, you are eating; the animal is sleeping, you are sleeping; the animal is defending, you are defending; the animal is having sex, you are having sex; the animals have children, you have children; they have a living place, you have a living place. If the animal's body is cut, there is blood; if your body is cut, there is blood. So, all these similarities are there. Now, why do you deny this one similarity, the presence of the soul? That is not logical. You have studied logic? In logic there is something called analogy. Analogy means drawing a conclusion by finding many points of similarity. If there are so many points of similarity between human beings and animals, why deny one similarity? That is not logic. That is not science. – *Science of Self-Realization* (pp. 35-6)

The Danger of Starvation

In *Bhagavad-gita* it is confirmed that one who takes foodstuff after a performance of sacrifice eats real food for proper maintenance of the body and soul, but one who cooks for himself and does not perform any sacrifice eats only lumps of sin in the shape of foodstuffs. Such sinful eating can never make one happy or free from scarcity. Famine is not due to an increase in population, as less intelligent economists think. When human society is grateful to the Lord for all His gifts for the maintenance of the living entities, then there is certainly no scarcity or want in society. But when men are unaware of the intrinsic value of such gifts from the Lord, surely they are in want. A person who has no God consciousness may live in opulence for the time being due to his past virtuous acts, but if one forgets his relationship with the Lord, certainly he must await the stage of starvation by the law of the powerful material nature. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.5.49)

Killers of Animals Are Stone-hearted

Some rascals put forward the theory that an animal has no soul or is something like dead stone. In this way they rationalize that there is no sin in animal killing. Actually animals are not dead stone, but the killers of animals are stone-hearted. Consequently no reason or philosophy appeals to them. They continue keeping slaughterhouses and killing animals in the forest. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (4.26.9)

The Animal Killer Will Become an Animal and Be Killed

By killing animals, not only will we be bereft of the human form but we will have to take an animal form and somehow or other be killed by the same type of animal we have killed. This is the law of nature. The Sanskrit word *mamsa* means 'meat'. It is said: *mam sah khadatiti mamsah*. That is, "I am now eating the flesh of an animal who will some day in the future be eating my flesh". – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Madhya* 24.252)

Whether in the Name of Religion or for Food, Animal Slaughter Is Condemned

Animal sacrifice in the name of religion is current practically all over the world in every established religion. It is said that Lord Jesus Christ, when twelve years old, was shocked to see the Jews sacrificing birds and animals in the synagogues and that he therefore rejected the Jewish system of religion and started the religious system of Christianity, adhering to the Old Testament commandment "Thou shalt not kill". At the present day, however, not only are animals killed in the name of sacrifice, but the killing of animals has increased enormously because of the increasing number of slaughterhouses. Slaughtering animals, either for religion or for food, is most abominable and is condemned. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (7.15.10)

There Is Already Enough Food

As human society is presently structured, there is sufficient production of grains all over the world. Therefore the opening of slaughterhouses cannot be supported. In some nations there is so much surplus grain that sometimes extra grain is thrown into the sea, and sometimes the government forbids further production of grain. The conclusion is that the earth produces sufficient grain to feed the entire population, but the distribution of this grain is restricted due to trade regulations and a desire for profit. Consequently in some places there is scarcity of grain and in others profuse production. If there were one government on the surface of the earth to handle the distribution of grain, there would be no question of scarcity, no necessity to open slaughterhouses, and no need to present false theories about overpopulation. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (4.17.25)

A Diet to Cure the Disease of the Soul

Everyone should know that there are two kinds of diseases in human society. One disease, which is called *adhyatmika*, or material disease, pertains to the body, but the main disease is spiritual. The living entity is eternal, but somehow or other, when in contact with the material energy, he is subjected to the repetition of birth, death, old age, and disease ... The devotees of Krsna have taken up Lord Caitanya's [Krsna's] mission of curing this disease, but people are not very appreciative because they do not know what this disease is. A diseased person needs both proper medicine and a proper diet. Therefore the devotees of Krsna [Vaisnavas] supply materially stricken people with their medicine of the chanting of the holy name, or *krsna-nama*, and the diet of *prasadam* [vegetarian foods offered to Lord Krsna]. – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (Adi 10.51)

Elevation to the Transcendental Position

Krsna consciousness acts on this principle. The devotees simply give people the chance to hear about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and give them *prasadam* to eat, and the actual result is that all over the world people are replying to this process and becoming pure devotees of Lord Krsna. We open hundreds of centers and organize *vraja-bhakti* festivals all over the world just to give people in general a chance to hear about Krsna and accept Krsna's *prasadam*. These two processes can be accepted by anyone, even a child. It doesn't matter whether one is poor or rich, learned or foolish, black or white, old or still a child – anyone who simply hears about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and takes *prasadam* is certainly elevated to the transcendental position of devotional service. – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (Adi 7.141)

Spiritual Food

A flower accepted for one's sense gratification is material, but when the flower is first offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead by a devotee, it is spiritual. Food taken and cooked for oneself is material, but food cooked for the Supreme is spiritual *prasadam*. This is a question of realization. – *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (8.12.8)

An Ideal Diet

The purpose of food is to increase the duration of life, purify the mind, and aid bodily strength. This is its only purpose. In the past, great authorities selected those foods that best aid health and increase life's duration, such as milk products, sugar, rice, wheat, fruits, and vegetables.

Animal fat is available in the form of milk, which is the most wonderful of all foods. Milk, butter, cheese, and similar products give animal fat in a form which rules out any need for the killing of innocent creatures... Protein is amply available through split peas, *dal*, whole wheat, etc.

The best food is the remnant of what is offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In *Bhagavad-gita* the Supreme Lord says that He accepts preparations of vegetables, flour, and milk when offered with devotion. Of course, devotion and love are the chief ingredients which the Supreme Personality of Godhead please.

Therefore to make food antiseptic, eatable, and palatable for all persons, one should offer food to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. – *Bhagavad-gita* (17.8-10)

Food Offered to Krsna Becomes Transcendental

In *Bhagavad-gita* (9.26) Krsna says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it". The Lord is *purna*, complete, and therefore He eats everything offered by His devotees. However, by the touch of His transcendental hand, all the food remains exactly as before. It is the quality that is changed. Before the food was offered, it was something else, but after it is offered the food acquires a transcendental quality. Because the Lord is *purna*, He remains the same even after eating. The food offered to Krsna is qualitatively as good as Krsna; just as Krsna is *avyaya*, indestructible, the food eaten by Krsna, being identical with Him, remains as before. Apart from this, Krsna can eat the food with any one of His transcendental senses. He can eat by seeing the food, or by touching it. Nor should one think that it is necessary for Krsna to eat. He does not become hungry like an ordinary human being; nonetheless, He presents Himself as being hungry, and as such, He can eat everything and anything, regardless of quantity. – *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Adi* 4.78)

Cooking and Offering Procedure

Remember ...after preparing any of these recipes, please offer the food to Lord Krsna before serving. Here is a summary of the procedure.

1. Do not taste the food or eat anything else while cooking.
2. After cooking, place the food on a plate for offering to Radha and Krsna. This plate should not be used for any other purpose.
3. Set the plate before a picture of Sri Radha-Krsna. You may use one in the website.
4. In a devotional mood, ask the Lord to please accept your offering.

5. Repeat *krsna-nama* several times – Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.
 6. Wait for some minutes [10 minutes for a full meal], and remove the food from the offering plate. This food and any food remaining in the cooking pots may now be served.
 7. Left overs can be eaten the next day. They should not be thrown away into the toilet or the dustbin with other filth. Because the *prasadam* is sanctified food, if it cannot be eaten anymore one can return it to nature, in the garden, to be eaten by the smaller animals in nature. Their souls will make spiritual progression likewise.
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Appeal

After having taken notice of the first six chapters of *The Higher Taste*, anyone can perform a little service for the pleasure of Krsna, the transcendental cowherdboy of Vraja, and help to protect cows and other animals from human mistreatment and slaughter by distributing the truths about meat-eating, to inform your friends about the absolute necessity to (re)turn to cow-protection, and thereby induce people to stop meat-eating all together.

Anyone can copy and distribute *The Higher Taste* to friends, family members, school mates, universities, relevant organizations, governments, and have the information percolated through physical channels and mass-media as much as possible. At least, everyone should *know* what meat-eating actually is – committing violence on a regular basis affecting all spheres of life: physical, psychological, social, environmental, moral, ethical, subtle (karmic), and spiritual. In order to convince people of the importance of vegetarianism and cow-protection, kindly distribute copies via e-mail and/or link the document to your homesite, please.

In the holy name of Krsna, and the peaceful cows – Many thanks for your goodwishes and services!

- Indira dasi

[1] "Diet and Stress in Vascular Disease", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 3, 1961, p. 806.

[2] "Diet and Coronary Heart Disease", a statement developed by the Committee on Nutrition and authorized for release by the Central Committee for Medical and Community Programs of the American Heart Association, 1973.

[3] "Diet and Coronary Heart Disease", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 222, no. 13, (Dec. 25, 1972), p. 1647.

[4] Michael J. Hill, M.D., "Metabolic Epidemiology of Dietary factors in Large Bowel Cancer", *Cancer Research*, vol. 35, no. 11, part 2 (Nov., 1975), pp. 3398-3402; Bandaru S. Reddy, Ph.D. and Ernest L. Wynder, M.D., "Large-Bowel Carcinogenesis", Fecal Constituents of Populations with Diverse Incidence Rates of Colon Cancer", *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, vol. 50, 1973, pp. 1437-41.

[5] Dr. Sharon Fleming, personal correspondence, Feb. 26, 1981.

[6] *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

[7] Quoted from *Cancer and Other Diseases from Meat Consumption*, Blanche Leonardo, Ph.D., 1979, p. 12.

[8] Statement of Dr. William Lijinsky, U.S. House of Representatives' hearing "Regulation of Food Additives and Medicated Animal Foods", March 1971, p. 132.

[9] "Arsenic in Chicken Liver to Be Reviewed by Agency", *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 13, 1972.

[10] Jean Snyder, "What You'd Better Know About the Meat You Eat", *Today's Health*, vol. 19, Dec. 1971, pp. 38-9.