



AHINSĀ
IS NOT A RELIGION

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IS NOT A RELIGION
IT IS A WAY OF LIFE.

by

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**Based on the Teachings
of
GURUDEV SHREE CHITRABHANU**



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મેઝીભાવનું પવિત્ર ઝરાણું મુજ હૈયામાં વફા કરે.
 શુભ ધાર્યા આ સદલ વિશ્વનું અવી ભાવના નિત્ય રહે
 ગુણથી ભરેલા ગુણીજન દાખી હૈયું મારું નૃત્ય કરે.
 આ સતોનાં ચરણ કમલમાં મુજ જીવનનું અર્ધ્ય રહે.
 દીન, દૂર ને ધર્મવિહોણા દાખી દિલમાં દદે રહે.
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*May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart.
 May the universe prosper, such is my cherished desire.
 May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous.
 And may my life be an offering at their feet.
 May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel,
 the irreligious.
 And may tears of compassion flow from my eyes.
 May I always be there to show the path to the pathless
 wanderers of life.
 Yet if they should not hearken to me, may I bide in patience
 May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts.
 May we all sing in chorus the immortal song of human
 concord.*

—Chitrabhanu

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THE IMMORTAL SONG

- (1) May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart,
May the universe prosper, such is my cherished desire.
- (2) May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous,
And may my life be an offering at their feet.
- (3) May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel, and the poor,
And may tears of compassion flow from my eyes.
- (4) May I always be there to show the path to the pathless wanderers of life,
Yet if they should not hearken to me, may I bide patiently.
- (5) May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts,
May we all sing together the immortal song of humanhood.

– Chitrabhanuji

INTRODUCTION

We live in a spendthrift universe of continuous giving. Everywhere the sun is radiating its warmth and light. The very breath of life is carried to us upon the air and wind. Clouds and oceans follow the same law to shower upon us their precious waters. Earth cultivates all manner of vegetation from which grain and fruit sprout forth. Our bodies are molded of all these gifts.

What are we giving back to this all-providing universe? Where there is abundance in our lives, are we sharing it or taking more than our share? Though we are receiving of its bounty, are we allowing ignorance, fear, apathy, or ego to blind us to the generous heart of our earth? Are we saturating the atmosphere, the seas, and the land with deadly wastes and pollutants? How long will mother nature continue to bear with our ingratitude?

When blood soaks the land, we label it enemy blood or friend blood, locking up or letting loose our emotions accordingly. In the same way, when the throats of helpless creatures are cut, human minds categorize, rationalize, and explain, cutting hearts off from natural compassion. Where has our human capacity for feeling and empathy gone?

Short though it is, our time on this planet can be valuable and meaningful, if we choose to discover and live by the laws of life. War, butchering, and all kinds of killing are abominations, antithetical to life. When we live in the cocoon of possessiveness, resentment, or cold-hearted intellect, we support,

whether we mean to or not, the machines of power and domination, exploitation and killing. We become accomplices in the large-scale destruction of billions of other human and non-human lives who, like us, are equally eager to grow, fulfill their needs, and bring their lives to fruition.

What we need is a new dimension of thinking, a new directive for living. We need to perceive all planetary life as one interdependent family from which no living being is excluded. We need to experience the plight and pain of all living beings as if it were our own. Indeed, the pain of others is our own, for the consequences of neglect and apathy cannot be long in coming our way.

Such a philosophy and practice does exist. Known as Jainism, it originated thousands of years ago in pre-historic India and was transmitted by twenty-four exemplary individuals who left the well-worn ruts of thinking to discover the causes and cures of violence, greed, dogmatism, and war in the human psyche and in the world. Beginning with Adinatha (or Rushabhadeva) and ending with Mahavira (or Vardhamana) who lived from 599-527 B.C., each enlightened master or Jina rediscovered the immortal laws of life, placing *Ahimsa* or Non-Violence first and foremost among them.

Mahavira matured his consciousness during twelve and a half years of silence, meditation, and fasting practices. The insights he shared during the next thirty years were gathered into forty-five books known as *Agamas*. Thanks to them, the heart of Jainism has been preserved. In one of the sutras, he spoke of *Ahimsa* in this way:

Unless we live with non-violence and reverence for all living beings in our hearts, all our humaneness and acts of goodness, all our vows, virtues, and knowledge, all our practices to give up greed and acquisitiveness are meaningless and useless.

Jains come from all faiths and all ethnic groups. What they have in common is the guiding of their lives by Reverence for All Life, a principle which includes pacifism and vegetarianism. Jains have been unique in the history of mankind in never having condoned war, the caste system, animal sacrifice, and the killing of animals for food, clothing, or any reason. As conscientious objectors, Jains believe that anyone who would not harm an animal would be equally unwilling to shoot his fellow man. The Indian government respects this, and the four million Jains living in India today and thousands more living abroad are exempted from the draft.

Attesting to this rare heritage, American scientist Carl Sagan said in a Time Magazine, Oct. 20, 1980 interview:

There is no right to life in any society on earth today, nor has there been at any former time with a few rare exceptions, such as among the Jains of India. We raise farm animals for slaughter, destroy forests, pollute rivers and lakes until no fish can live there, hunt deer and elk for sport . . .

Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged the powerful impact the Jain philosophy of Ahimsa had upon his personal and political decisions. His example inspired pacifists around the world, including the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

For generations, Jain teachings have been transmitted from master to disciple. Present day philosopher,

teacher, and spiritual leader, Pujya Shree Chitrabhanu, is now making this ancient philosophy available to a large number of people in countries beyond the borders of India. In his youth, after working with Gandhi for the freedom of India, he decided to become a Jain monk. Under the guidance of his master, he used the first five year for silence, meditation, and study. Leading the itinerant life, he covered thousands of miles on his bare feet, and in twenty-eight years as a monk, became a beloved figure to his countrymen. Through talks in villages and towns, he inspired people to experience the miracle of their life and to lift their vision to a global purpose.

A contemplative who believes in translating humanitarian dreams into action, Shree Chitrabhanu founded (in 1964,) the Divine Knowledge Society in Bombay where he initiated social welfare projects, disaster relief work, animal shelters, and children's homes. He and his colleagues brought about an agreement with the legislators and butchers of Bombay to close the slaughterhouses each year on eight holy days celebrated by people of all faiths. In visits to Kenya, he has inspired the Indian community to raise funds to help fellow Africans who are handicapped and crippled, and those suffering from eye ailments. They opened free clinics and eye camps where volunteer Indian doctors removed cataracts from people who had believed themselves incurably blind.

Through talks, books, and meditation centers, Shree Chitrabhanu is helping people worldwide to appreciate the sanctity of all life and to uproot the causes of war. For the sake of our children and all of planetary

life, we seek to create a new dawn in human consciousness. We want to bequeath to all not only a planet and ecosystem free from man-made suffering, bloodshed, and war, but also the positive legacy of Reverence for All Life. It is our hope that this series of questions and answers will add to the momentum for peace in the world and contribute to it the clarity and harmony of the Jain approach.

—*Clare Rosenfield*

WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE

More than twenty-five hundred years ago, Mahavira made a simple yet profound statement, based on the absorption of Non-Violence into the fabric of his consciousness. He realized, "All of life is just like me. I want to live. So do all souls, all living beings. The instinct of self-preservation is universal. Every animate being clings to life and fears death. Each of us wants to be free from pain. So let me carry out all of my activities with great care not to be harmful to any living being."

The philosophy of Non-Violence is a living practice. More than refraining from violence, it is a deep Reverence for All Life. It starts by cultivating a genuine respect for oneself—one's consciousness or life force, and for each of its supportive elements—the body, mind and emotions. We come to realize that our life force is precious and that we are here to respect and reveal its innate wisdom. It is a process of taking care of both our inner being and the material envelope in which it dwells. Like a mother nurturing the development of her child, we do what is healthful and helpful for our spiritual growth.

* * *

Most of us are not used to treating ourselves with gentleness and love. It requires a conscious decision. The practice of Reverence for All Life begins with a decision not to take any hurtful influence into our body or mind. This is called *samvara*, stoppage, or stepping apart from the rat race, discontinuing pain-creating habits, and re-evaluating one's life.

The automatic and mechanical aspects of living cease to rule us when we activate our faculty of observation and self-inquiry. We take time to notice the universal law of cause and effect and how it is functioning as a precise computer in our lives. There is a real connection between the vibration we send out and the pain or pleasure we receive. When we radiate loving-kindness, joy, and friendliness, that multiplies and comes back to us. Violent thoughts are as real as the tangible world. They, too, return to us. When anger, jealousy, or unfulfilled ambitions goad us, the one whom we damage first is our own self. This is equally true of harsh, slanderous, or critical speech. It works like a matchstick; before it ignites something else, it burns its own mouth.

Through the practice of self-respect, we recognize that our peace is the most precious thing in the world. Before hating, judging, or treating anyone as an inferior, we check ourselves. Before buying or using any product, we ask, "By my action, am I causing any living being to pay a price in pain? Directly or indirectly, am I causing a life to be lost?"

We take the help of meditation to know and remember what we really are. In our natural state, our soul is nothing but love, energy, peace, and bliss. Gradually we glide to a peak of realization and joy, exclaiming, "I am life! I am a living conscious energy! I feel my life force moving in all my limbs and awakening all my cells with awareness!"

* * *

At the heart of the experience of self-reverence, we realize that the same energy which is pulsating in us is also vibrating in all living beings. When this

awareness dawns, we see through a new set of eyes. We feel an uninterrupted connection from our innermost being to the soul force alive in all.

This experience enables us to recognize, in Shree Chitrabhanu's words, "that the universe is not for man alone. It is a field of evolution for all of life's forms. Jainism teaches that life is life, not only in people of all lands, colors, and beliefs, but is of the same sacred quality in all creatures, right down to the tiny ant and humble worm. Consciousness exists in everything which grows, regardless of the size of its form. Though different forms are not the same in mental capacity and sensory apparatus, the life force is equally worthy in all."

From the moment this awareness becomes a part of our daily life, we find that traits and habits which used to limit us fall away naturally. We are no longer able to invite pain and disease to our bodies through uninformed eating habits. The vegetarian way of life becomes a natural outcome of inner understanding.

At the same time, it becomes imperative for our well-being and continued evolution to forgive, drop, and forget those painful vibrations we may still be carrying in our mind. With courage and compassion, we can remove them. It is a gradual process. If we realize that the hurts and scars from the past came to us by our own invitation, we can stop focusing on blaming and retribution. Once we take responsibility for our own pain, we can transcend it. We can see its purpose—to act as compost, breaking open the harsh outer shell of our heart and helping the soft flower of compassion and kindness to blossom.

In this way, the trials of life become fuel for our

growth, and we come closer to our goal, Self-Realization. As an instrument tuning itself to the right key, we tune ourselves to Reverence for All Life. By doing everything we can to minimize violence and pain to life, we enjoy living with a cleansed consciousness and a light heart.

WHAT IS THE JAIN APPROACH TO LIFE'S ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION?

Jain masters hold that in each living being there is a partnership between the energy of matter which has no consciousness and that of soul, which is conscious. Without the latter, the former would be inanimate. Because of the dynamic impact of soul force in the body, it grows and evolves. Both energies, *attam* (atom) and *atma* (soul) are considered to be the permanent constituents of the universe, without beginning or end in the sense that matter continually changes, regroupes its molecules, and decomposes but never disappears, and soul keeps on evolving until it reveals its true identity and becomes fully liberated from the gravitational pull of matter and mind. The idea of creation is not a question here. Matter is, was, and will be, in one form or another, and soul is, was, and will be, dwelling in a body until its ultimate release.

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When Jains speak of evolution, it is primarily of consciousness, an unfolding of the divine potential through loving-kindness and awareness. It is experienced as an ascension to merge with those who have already reached the pinnacle and whose fragrance of universality perfumes the entire cosmos everlastingly.

Our physical evolution follows according to this inner refinement. Just as milk and water becomes indistinguishable in a mixed form, so soul and matter seem to be inseparable while they are participating mutually in a continuous process. When we become aware that we have been journeying from beginningless time from one form of life to another, from one lifetime to another, our life's purpose becomes clearer. Also, our compassion for less developed life forms is increased. We realize that we too, had to pass through those stages. Once we were among them; one day they will be among us.

When we discover that as humans, we are now at the highest rung of the evolutionary ladder, a new gratitude overwhelms us. We are no longer helpless. We can take charge of our lives and take the last step of evolution consciously. For that, we work toward freeing ourselves from remnants of previous instinctive stages—ignorance, anger, greed, fear, competitiveness. We stop generating pain and start regarding each other with reverence and respect. Prosperity-consciousness replaces emotional aridity, and an appreciation of the universe's bounty erases the feeling of poverty and lack.

HOW CAN WE LIVE IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT TAKING LIFE AND CAUSING VIOLENCE?

In Jain philosophy, the answer lies in taking care to minimize the harm one does and to direct one's actions with the intention to revere life. This requires vigilance, awareness of motives, and fearlessness to live in tune with nature's laws. The underlying

feeling is not to inspire fear in any living being; it is opening one's heart to life.

Intention is what counts. Living in reverence means not condoning or consenting to any form of violence, even if someone else is willing to be the active perpetrator. It also means trying to prevent it before it happens, and trying to stop it once it has begun. Throughout history, Jain monks have tried to stop priests from other religions from dragging animals to altars to be sacrificed. Under Mahavira's gentle influence, many kings abolished in their lands slavery the caste system, degradation of women, hunting, butchering, and sacrificing of animals, and many people were inspired to live in *Ahimsa* and Non-Violence.

* * *

It is true that just by breathing, using water, treading on earth, and taking plants as food, we are causing lives to be lost. The emphasis lies in reducing to a minimum the harm we do in order to survive.

We have to make a choice. Rather than take the flesh and blood of animals who have already evolved all five senses and a highly developed brain, whose nervous system and emotional life are so similar to ours, and in whose veins blood runs, as in our own, we sustain our bodies with the help of the bloodless plant kingdom, which has not yet developed any of the senses of taste, smell, seeing, or hearing.

The more sensory apparatus, the more a life form can be sensitive to pain. Since fish, birds, and animals are equipped in this way, we refuse to be a cause to their agony and pain. Also, when we observe how dearly animals cling to life and struggle to survive,

how much they are dominated by fear, we drop any notions of using or exploiting them. We feel for their helplessness in the face of man's gluttony, greed, and callousness; we want to see them live unmolested.

* * *

Most vegetables are harvested at the end of their natural life cycle. Many of them, such as berries, melons, beans, peas, squash, okra, pumpkins, nuts, and fruit from trees can be picked without uprooting the whole plant. Nevertheless, we realize with humility that every fruit, leaf, grain that we find on our plate had to lose its life in order to give us life. Without the plants to whom we are helplessly bound, we would not be able to survive, and therefore, to evolve. That is why Jain Monks recite this blessing before the daily meals:

*Aho Jinehim asavvajja vittisahuna desiya
Mukkha sahana heoosa sahu dehassa dharana.*

*O Jinas! What a wonderful teaching
you have given us!*

*You have taught us to take only that food which is
innocent, benign, and healthy, because it has not
been procured through causing bloodshed.*

*You have taught us to know why we eat—to sustain
the body, and to do so for one main reason—to
unfold our life and reach ultimate liberation.*

With this sense of appreciation, we eat with respect and restraint, without taking more than we need. And we say, as the native Americans did, "Dear plants, some day our bodies will return to you, to become food for the nourishment of your roots."

WHAT DO VEGETARIANS EAT ?

The staples of a vegetarian diet are grain, legumes, vegetables, fruit, nuts, and seeds. Protein complementarity is achieved easily through a wide variety of combinations, in particular grains and legumes. Legumes such as lentils, split peas, chick-peas, soy, kidney, black, white, and mung beans can be turned into soups, baked preparation, and veggieburgers, and served with whole grains such as rice, barley, corn, wheat, millet, oats, and others. The nutrition-minded mother can create nut and seed butters from sunflower, sesame, cashew, almond, and other sources for school lunches on whole wheat bread. Sandwich spreads made from soy tofu, avocado, and hummus, for example, also go a long way as dips or as salad dressings. The above-mentioned foods are high-quality proteins which supply a wide range of vitamins and minerals.

We do not need as much protein as we have been led to believe. In fact, too much, as found in a meat-centered diet, creates excessive uric acid, a burden on the system and a breeder of disease.

Many raw vegetables—cabbage, carrots, beets, squash, celery—can be grated or sliced and added to mixed greens with fresh tomatoes, peppers, sprouts, and sunflower seeds. Avocado has been lauded as a complete food. Iron-rich green leafy vegetables, squashes, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes are among the most nutritious vegetables to be baked or steamed. Fruits in season are nature's vitamin supplements and for some people, the staple of their diet.

* * *

When plants are the direct source of nourishment, they provide the most efficient fuel for maintaining the body in a state of well-being. Witness the elephant, bull, gorilla, and horse, along with many other of the strongest animals; all are vegetarians, gaining their nutrients from plants; we can also. Plants receive energy directly from the sun, air, water, and soil, which gives them the capacity to transmit vitality and energy to us. By the time plants have been digested by animals, their original energy has already been used up by the animal. Humans who ingest flesh foods are therefore taking in a second-hand, devitalized form.

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DO VEGETARIANS EAT DAIRY PRODUCTS AND EGGS ?

Vegetarians who use dairy products are called lacto-vegetarians. Butter, milk, yogurt, and cheeses made without rennet (inner lining of the stomach of a calf or pig used to harden cheeses) are used in a supplemental way, not as a basic staple of the diet. Most vegetarians do not want to use fur, leather, cosmetics, silks, and other products derived from animal exploitation; those who do not use dairy products or eggs either are total vegetarians, or vegans. In particular, vegans believe that cow's milk is meant for calves, not humans. In affluent countries where dairy foods are produced in excess to the demand for them, there are many injustices and cruelties which vegans refuse to support. Calves, for example, are separated within forty-eight hours from their mother , never having a chance to suckle

or know their mother's love. A deep pain is carved in both mother and calf. Tears and endless mooing bear witness to this.

Male calves born in a dairy herd are relegated to the veal industry to spend sixteen weeks in nearly total darkness, confined in small indoor pens and fattened on iron-deficient gruel which deliberately renders them anemic and listless so as to produce white, tender meat.

In nations where cows, buffalos, and goats are not separated from offspring and where milking is done humanely, milk products are accepted by many vegetarians willingly.

Vegetarians who eat eggs are called lacto-ovo-vegetarians. To avoid taking life, such vegetarians would not eat fertile eggs. As a symbol of potential life, eggs are not a part of the diet of strict vegetarians. In countries where factory farming methods confine twenty thousand or more laying hens in one single warehouse, the resultant suffering, neurotic behavior, unsanitary and diseased conditions make most vegetarians shun even the infertile egg.

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WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF A VEGETARIAN DIET ?

More and more doctors throughout the world are finding that those who eat a high-fiber, plant-based diet are automatically eating less cholesterol and fat, and are less likely to become victims of heart attack, cancer, high blood pressure, hypertension, and other diseases. Studies reveal that the lower one eats on the food chain, the less pesticides and chemicals one

ingests and retains. Highly toxic concentrations of sodium nitrites, arsenic, antibiotics, and growth stimulants (DES, for example, which has been banned in thirty-two countries) which are added to feed grains are retained in the flesh of cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, and others. New breeds of antibiotic-resistant bacteria which are created present another human health hazard. Synthetic chemicals, mercury, and toxic wastes from industrially polluted waters are found to be highly concentrated in fish and shellfish.

Even in one's senior years, health and clarity of mind can be enjoyed when the body is nourished with pure and bloodless food. These results are the rule, not the exception. An old age lived in sickness, senility, and boredom is *not* inevitable in human life. If we live properly, respecting the body's need for enough water, rest, fresh air, and exercise, and if we tune in to which foods are best assimilated and most nutritious for us, we can remain healthy and energetic till our last days. When we live in vitality and reverence, our body becomes our temple, radiating well-being and harmony.

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HOW DOES THE VEGETARIAN WAY BENEFIT THE MIND AND EMOTIONS ?

The right nutrition nourishes not only physical health, but mental, emotional, and spiritual health as well. Shree Chitrabhanu points out, "Whatever we eat permeates in all our cells, including the brain cells. If the body is sustained by flesh which retains the vibrations of fear and terror from the moments

of slaughter, how can one have a serene and clear feeling of peace of mind? How can we develop a tender and compassionate heart if we are indifferent to the spilling of blood?"

Not that those who eat with compassionate awareness automatically become peaceful; vegetarianism complements efforts to rid thought and deed of the power struggle and subtly unloving attitudes. For most people, one look into the eyes of a mother cow being dragged away from her baby would be enough to melt their hearts. It would be impossible not to think of one's own loved one being snatched away, violated, and killed. Concentration camp survivors cannot help being reminded of human torture when they see animal exploitation.

By choosing foods which entail the least possible harm, we reverse the desensitization process which numbs feelings. Just knowing that in some small way, we are enabling thousands of animals to be spared makes us feel buoyant and happy; we find, too, that we also are spared unnecessary suffering and subconscious guilt. In Shree Chitrabhanu's view, those who are lending their protection to animals are themselves receiving their blessings and strength continuously.

Ultimately, it is the quality of our consciousness that remains with us. What it is that will allow us to close our eyes for the last time with a smile of peace and inner ecstasy? Is it not a special kind of inner knowing, a deep contentment with one's life? We need to explore this question for ourselves. From the Jain standpoint, that contentment can blossom into fullness when, throughout our lives, we do our

best to live in harmlessness, without being cruel or callous to anyone, and honoring our interconnectedness with all.

* * *

DO VEGETARIANS CARE ABOUT PEOPLE TOO ?

Vegetarianism is a natural outcome of a feeling of self-reverence. The reverence which begins with oneself gradually extends outward to include one's family, friends, the whole human race, and all living beings. Ethical vegetarians are aware of the vast range of suffering, whether it happens to humans or animals. It does not make sense to be working to end discrimination against minority groups, for example, while neglecting the right to live of animals, a majority treated as a minority. We want our voices to be heard when we call out for peace; at the same time, we have no right to condone the bloody business of slaughterhouses through our eating habits.

Because animals are helpless and voiceless, without recourse to courts of law, many vegetarians speak out for them. "We are Nature's eldest sons and daughters," says Shree Chitrabhanu. "It can be our joy to care for other forms of life as we would care for our own younger brothers and sisters."

If more people knew how listless, neurotic, and diseased animals become in overcrowded factory farms, without access to fresh air, sunlight, space, or exercise; and how much physical and psychological pain they suffer at the slaughterhouse, they would be more understanding of this point of view. Rather than avoid the issue, we need to become educated as to the realities of food production.

The choice of a vegetarian diet is an expression of a sincere consideration for the ecology of the planet as well. It suggests a more equitable means to produce, share, and distribute food among all nations. The growing of plants produces more food per person on less land. It takes seven acres of grazing land and ten pounds of vegetable protein to end up with one pound of meat, whereas only one acre of land can harvest four hundred fifty pounds of soy protein.

Millions of acres of land throughout the world could be brought under the plough and tilled while the practice of breeding animals diminishes. Then, soil erosion due to overgrazing can be halted, and high-quality foods such as corn, wheat, rye, and soybeans which are forced fed to cows and pigs in an effort to fatten them quickly could be used directly to feed starving people.

Even the amount of water needed to produce one pound of meat is at least twenty times and sometimes one hundred times as much as is needed to produce one pound of wheat or rice. Slaughtering animals requires hundreds of millions of gallons of water everyday. The wastes in these places, estimated at about two billion tons a year, mostly end up in waterways, polluting and killing thousands of fish, and creating a human health problem.*

The Jain practice of *Aparigraha* or non-hoarding is part of the way of Reverence for All Life. It encourages

*The information on ecology and health hazards was gleaned from *Vegetarianism A Way of Life*, by Dudley Giehl, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1979.

people to think of other people's needs, to place a limit on their own, to treat planetary resources with respect and frugality, to end habits of profiteering and consumer greed, and to develop ways for everyone to receive adequate nutrition.

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HOW CAN REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE AND VEGETARIANISM LEAD US CLOSER TO WORLD PEACE ?

Meat-eating is the small print; war is the blown-up picture," Shree Chitrabhanu points out. In the seemingly small arena of animal exploitation, the seeds of war are growing. Why? Because each time we refuse to consider where our dinner has come from and at what cost to life and the environment, we are causing pain and devaluing life. As soon as something—profit, the tastebuds, muscle power, a concept—is more important to us than life itself, we are supporting and perpetuating a mentality which can lead to war.

The mentality which can treat other sentient beings as if they were feelingless machines* is the same as that which can conceive of dropping bombs on whole populations and sending its own sons to carry

*In the U.S. alone, about 134 million mammals and 3 billion birds are slaughtered each year for food. Almost all are subjected to an assembly-line process. Chickens, turkeys, and other birds hang by their feet from a moving conveyor belt as their throats are slit, the blood drained out, and the feathers removed. Cattle are branded with a red-hot iron, dehorned, and castrated before being sent to feedlots. Millions die before ever reaching the slaughterhouse due to

it out. What is to prevent those who close their eyes to the pain of helpless creatures from closing their eyes to the pain and loss of human lives? Once we become used to claiming no responsibility for such events, our minds become weak and spineless, and we allow—someone else to do the slaughtering, someone else to die for us, someone else to push the nuclear war buttons.

But we need to claim responsibility, at least in part, for whatever we do, whether it brings good or painful results. In this way, we will remove the blinders from our eyes. We need to see clearly that the misery we are inflicting on others by default is already coming back to us like a boomerang, individually and collectively. Then we will not be afraid to acknowledge that indeed, the causes of war are in us, and that the greatest cause is this: ignorance of the preciousness of all life.

It takes courage to take a long look at our weaknesses, at our callousness, at our desire to avoid, shirk, and postpone responsibility. But the secret is that once we look at it, we are no longer in ignorance. The thorn in our consciousness is removed, and with it, the cause of our pain. This is what it means

stress, the trauma of overexposure to heat or cold while being transported without food or water for one to three days, disease, or brutal handling. Cows, calves, sheep, and pigs are killed either with a sledgehammer (still the most primitive and widely used method) which may take several blows, a knife (used on fully conscious animals who are hoisted up onto a conveyor belt by one leg so as not to fall in the blood of a previously slain animal), or electric bolt pistol.

to experience the dignity of our own life. Then we cannot bear to cause pain to anyone and we stop violating the laws of life. The seeds of war cannot grow in such a gentle and aware consciousness.

Vegetarianism helps to initiate this new perception, because it jolts us out of seeing other lives through the cold eyes of the intellect as objects to be annihilated, dominated, or used. According to the Jain teaching, enemies do not exist. There are no opponents, no one lesser or higher. There are only fellow living beings. Each one of us is beloved to someone; none of us wants to be tortured or killed. If we can teach this to our children through our living example, the world will come closer to the peace it longs for.

* * *

Rather than waiting for others to change, we start with ourselves. When we diminish the violent vibrations accumulated in body and mind, we start releasing our own healthy and positive energy. This creates a magnetic field around us which attracts vibrations of health, peace, loving kindness, and balance to us.

To those who disagree with us, we listen with understanding and unconditional friendship, honoring the life in each individual. Rather than be dogmatic or argumentative, we live and allow others to live. They have a right to their own thoughts and opinions. But we remain free from creating wars in the name of some patriotic, economic, religious, or other ism; peace will come in time by our valuing life above and beyond all other priorities. With this conviction, we plant seeds of loving kindness and trust nature to take care of them.

The liberty and equanimity of our spirit will make ultimately the greatest contribution to both our personal peace and peace on earth. As more of us realize and revere the intrinsic sanctity of all life, the collective power of our lovingkindness can reach into all corners of the universe and heal it with its peaceful balm.

* * *

Based on the Jain Philosophy and on the
Teachings of Pujya Shree Chitrabhanuji

शिवमस्तु सर्वजगतः परहितनिरता भवन्तु भूतगणाः ।
दोषा प्रयान्तु नाशं सर्वत्र सुखी भवन्तु लोकाः ॥

Śivam astu sarva jagatah

Parahita niratā bhavantu bhūtaganā

Doshāh prayāntu nāśam

Sarvatra sukhi bhavantu lokāha

Blessings be to the entire cosmos.

May everyone be completely engrossed in each others' well-being.

May all weaknesses, faults, illnesses, and karmas be removed and evaporated.

Everywhere let everyone be in peace, prosperity, health, and bliss.

COMPASSIONATE APPEALS

Animals cannot speak, but can you and I not speak for them and represent them? Let us all feel their silent cry of agony and let us all help that cry to be heard in the world.

—*Rukmini Devi Arundale*

Non-violence and kindness to living beings is kindness to oneself. For thereby one's own self is saved from various kinds of sins and resultant sufferings and is able to secure his own welfare.

—*Mahavira*

The time will come when men will look on the murder of animals as they now look on the murder of men.

—*Leonardo da Vinci*

Until we extend our circle of compassion to include every living creature we cannot enjoy 'WORLD PEACE'.

—*Albert Schweitzer*

'Thou shalt not kill' does not apply to murder of one's own kind only, but to all living beings and this commandment was inscribed in the human breast long before it was proclaimed from Sinai.

—*Leo Tolstoy*

We should be able to refuse to live if the price of living be the torture of sentient beings.

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

The highest religion is to rise to universal brotherhood; aye to consider all creatures your equals.

—*Nanak*

Let us pray that our food should not be coloured with animal blood and human suffering.

—*Chitrabhanuji*

Animals are our younger brothers and sisters, also on the ladder of evolution but a few rungs lower. It is an important part of our responsibilities to help them in their ascent, and not to retard their development by cruel exploitation of their helplessness.

—*Lord Dowding*

The misery we inflict on sentient beings slackens our human evolution.

—*Dr. Annie Besant*

Sympathy for the lowest animals is one of the noblest virtues with which man is endowed.

—*Charles Robert Darwin*

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

—*Jesus Christ*

Cruelty is the obvious cancer of modern civilization.

—*Rev. A. D. Beldon*

I think that sacrifices of animals in the name of religion are barbarous and they degrade the name of religion.

—*Jawaharlal Nehru*

Kindness multiplies fast and brings tremendous dividends.

—*Hope Sawyer Buyukmihei*

Anything that can feel pain should not be put to pain.

—*R. M. Dolgin*

No nation is truly free until the animal, man's younger brother is free and happy.

—*T. L. Vaswani*

If we wish for mercy ourselves, we must show mercy to all dumb animals.

—*Joyce Lambert*

Our enlightened posterity will look back upon us who eat oxen and sheep, just as we look upon cannibals.

—*Winwood Reade*

Which religion gives the greatest joy to God? That which inspires human-beings to practice Ahimsa and compassion to all creatures.

—*Vallabha Acharya*

Your feasts and your ceremonials which are marked by animal sacrifices are a gateway to direct hell.

—*Bankey Behari*

When a man wants to murder a tiger, he calls it sport; when the tiger wants to murder him, he calls it ferocity.

—*George Bernard Shaw*

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SONG OF PEACE

"We are the living graves of murdered beasts,
Slaughtered to satisfy our appetites,
We never pause to wonder at our feasts,
If animals, like men, can possibly have rights,
We pray on Sundays that we may have light,
To guide our foot-steps on the paths we tread.
We're sick of war, we do not want to fight,
The thought of it now fills our hearts with dread
And yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead.
Like carrion crows, we live and feed on meat,
Regardless of the suffering and pain
We cause by doing so. If thus we treat
Defenceless animals for sport or gain,
How can we hope in this world to attain
The PEACE we say we are so anxious for?
We pray for it, o'er hecatombs of slain,
To God, while outraging the moral law,
Thus cruelty begets its offspring—War."

—George Bernard Shaw