

VEGETARIANISM AND WORLD PEACE

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As far back as 1734, Francois Mani Aruoet commonly known by the assumed name of Voltaire, after an intensive observation of the effects of meat diet, said that the flesh of animals excites the blood and provokes ferocity, irritability and hard heartedness. Antonio Coochi in Italy, also in the 18th century said that a flesh diet increases the passions of man.

Eustace Miles, that pioneer of Food Reform and the author of no less than eleven books on diet and kindred topics, who was one of the earliest to start a vegetarian restaurant in London, has given it as his considered view that a fleshless diet refines and elevates the mind and rids it of many unwholesome tendencies. This is what he says about the effect of diet on worry and depression in his book entitled **Prevention and Cure**:

“When I first gave up flesh food about seventeen years ago, I gave them up all in one day. My frequent depression and bad memory almost disappeared from the day I gave up flesh foods. On several occasions during the next few years I took flesh foods or meat extracts by mistake not knowing that I was taking them (kind friends gave them to me in soup etc.) and the first result was a return of the old depression, a return of the old desire for a stimulant and the return, by the way, of the old cramp in the muscles. And I have had a vast amount of evidence from my Health pupils to show that by giving up flesh foods, they have lost their tendency to depression and worry provided that they have found proper food-bases that agree with them instead of the flesh foods.”

James Henry Cook in an article entitled “Why I am a Vegetarian” appearing in an American Homeopathic Journal called **Heal Thyself** speaks thus:

“Flesh meat like alcohol is a stimulant. It stirs up both in men and animals, all that is pugnacious, selfish and cruel when they partake of it. This fact must be patent to all. Let my readers sum up in their minds all the different kinds of animals they can think of that are vegetarians and they will find that the cruelty is exceptional in them. Then consider the carnivorous animals and they will find cruelty is the rule with them. Whether in man or in animal these qualities are developed in like proportion to the animal food partaken of. And mark the difference in the two extremes – the gentle herbivorous deer and the cruel carnivorous tiger.”

This writer refers to the gentle herbivorous deer in proof of the softening effects of a fleshless diet. May I cite another animal in proof of the same softening effects. Consider the meek and mild goat who also feeds on a fleshless diet.

There are many writers who hold similar views. These views are not confined to food-reformers only. Alan Moyle, author of **Nature Cure Explained**, says that the testimonies of the advantages of a natural diet have come from various sources – from explorers, from London County Councillors and from scientists.

Referring to the effects of a fleshless diet on the mind, another writer, M.Gautier says:-

“It tends to soften the disposition to make us more calm, to make us less aggressive and less violent, to make us less agitated. It is practical and rational. It ought to be accepted if one follows on ideal for the establishment of an education for the races of men who are to be sweet-tempered, intelligent, artistic and peace-loving.”

Every being on earth has a right to live. Who has given man the right to kill? One of the Five Precepts observed by the Buddhists is the vow to abstain from taking away the life of any being. One of the Ten Commandments in Christianity is “Thou shalt not kill.” And St. Paul in one of his Epistles to the Romans has said: “It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak.”

To Hinduism also the eating of flesh is abhorrent. Further, there is the ancient Hindu view that the mind has three **Gunas** or qualities – **Sattwa** or purity, **Rajas** or passion and **Tamas** or inertia. While a preponderance of **Sattwa** elevates man and brings him in touch with the divine, a preponderance of **Rajas** drags him down. It is believed that thoughts of pure love coupled with a pure form of diet tends to increase the **Sattwa** in man; it is also believed that a meat diet tends to increase the **Rajas** in man with the result that there is a marked tendency to look into the faults of others, to intensify hatred and generate criminal tendencies. Thus from the point of view of every religion we see that vegetarianism is capable of generating perfect love. Universal Love which is the requisite for world peace.

How is it that the eating of the flesh of slaughtered animals appears to destroy man’s tranquility and tends to produce confusion, worry, fear and even anger in its stead as stated by so many? I have in my own mind often wondered whether it is not the fear created in the animals that in some mysterious way is transmuted into its flesh from the moment it becomes fearfully aware that it is to be slaughtered; and I was wondering whether this vibration of fear cannot in

some mysterious way travel towards or manifest itself again in the minds of those who taste of this fear-contaminated flesh.

We know that thought is a vibration of energy and the greater the intensity of thought, the more powerful is the vibration, but how far the effects of powerful thought-vibration can go we do not know. Science says that there are vibrations so high that even the most delicate instruments cannot register them. There are sounds which the human ear cannot receive. There are colours which the human eye cannot see. Similarly why cannot there be adverse vibrations from matter and mind which another can receive without being aware of their source however distant that other may be from the source of these vibrations? If you have seen the horrors and terrors of a slaughter house, if you have witnessed the last struggles of a bull that is being slaughtered you cannot but be impressed with the fact that the fear-vibrations emanating from that dying bull are most powerful, and I am inclined to think that these powerful vibrations can adversely affect the minds of those who eat the fear-contaminated flesh of this bull.

In this rough way of thinking I was trying to explain to myself why unwholesome states of man can arise in the meat-eater. I must say I was strengthened in my rough **belief** when I found Richard St. Barbe Baker expressing himself in almost the same way in his book, **Conquest of Sahara**. He tersely expresses his view thus: "It is now well known that the emotions of worry, fear and anger poison the blood and tissues. Animals before they are slaughtered are scared and angered. This vitiates their flesh, and this is what man eats."

From the opinions so far cited it is clear that a flesh diet tends to harden the heart. It is also overwhelmingly clear that the continued use of fleshless diet tends to refine the mind, make it more and more calm and more and more loving in its disposition towards all others. Is not this the very setting in which Universal Love can grow? Is not this good fertile ground where the seed of Universal Love can germinate and secure for itself a healthy growth? If this attitude of Universal Love can spread among the peoples of this world through the spread of true vegetarianism, World Peace cannot remain a dream. It must become a reality. But before this reality dawns, before Universal Love can arise and spread, there must be an individual internal revolution, a revolution within our own minds, a revolution which aims at the removal of the poisonous weeds growing in the field of the human mind and preventing the growth of Universal Love. May I explain what this is. The explanation is rather lengthy.

You will remember that I had referred to the very unfortunate circumstances that science is being prostituted to serve the ends of war. Can you suggest a reason for this tragedy? Can you point a finger at the fundamental cause? Let

me help you. Man through the aid of science has unlocked the secrets of nature and has brought into existence powerful forces like the atom bomb but man has not sufficiently advanced spiritually in order to enable him to put to good use these powerful forces of his own creation. In the result these powerful forces dominated him instead of his dominating them.

Professor Joad in an address to teachers at a vacation course at Bedford College said that the distinguishing feature of our civilization is the extent to which our powers have outgrown our wisdom. He further expresses the following view.

“Science has provided in abundance the means to the good life but it has not taught us how to live. It was this contrast which constituted the danger to our civilization – the contrast between the marvel of man’s powers and the imbecility which he brought to the use of these powers.”

This lopsided development of man, this absence of spiritual progress so necessary to keep pace with the rapid rate of material progress, the growth of industrialism which made a man mere cog-wheel in the world’s machinery of production, the consequent inordinate desire for wealth and power at any cost, the consequent inability to see the higher and nobler aspects of life being regarded as nothing more than part of an industrial process, the dangers of a fast increasing overpopulation of the world bringing in its wake a competition and an unbecoming struggle for existence between man and also a feverish desire for expansion and land-grabbing on the part of the nations of the world who can view one another only with the eyes of suspicion – these are some of the evils of modern civilization. The economic man has usurped the place and the rights of the full man – the man with a full appreciation of the value of life.

Consider, in all seriousness, the prophetic utterance of Ralph Waldo Emerson which appears in one of his Essays. This is the warning he gives: “The end of the human race will be that it will die of civilization.” Can there be a more seathing condemnation of modern civilization when it is regarded as a disease? Then see what the Chinese philosopher Lin Yutang in his book **The Importance of Living**, has said, “I do not believe that any civilization is complete until it has made a conscious return to simplicity.”

Then take the serious note of how thinkers like H.G. Wells and a few others have warned us that “the rate of material progress of modern civilization is so rapid, that the poor physical frame of man is utterly unable to resist it.”

Is it clear now that the present civilization is not elevating us but is dragging us downwards? The more we follow the path of material progress, the more we lose sight of spiritual values. We also lose sight of the power of the mind over

matter. We also lose sight of the grace and grandeur of simplicity. We also lose sight of the power of love over hatred. Then, what is needed to check this downward trend?

What is needed is a conscious return to nature, a conscious return to a natural mode of living which we have long since abandoned, a natural living free from the artificialities of modern life, a natural living not led astray by the allurements of material comfort, a natural where perfect simplicity and perfect love existing side by side are its guiding principles, a natural living where goodness is preferred to greatness, where honest toil and sweet contentment with little gain are preferred to dishonest exploitation and unconscionable bargains, a natural living which, while it abhors rush and tension, greatly values rest and quiet and calm.

These are the elements of a natural mode of living which you will see is a mode of plain living and high thinking. Now the break-away from the thought-habits that militate against this mode of living is that individual internal revolution that I said was necessary to clear the ground for the growth of Universal Love. This is that change of outlook, that change of ideals, that changed mode of living which can foster the growth and spread of Universal Love. It is just here that vegetarianism can play a useful part.

The foundation of vegetarianism being a profound love for all forms of life, this attitude of mind most easily predisposes the vegetarian to a natural mode of living. It is obvious that this natural mode of living appeals strongly to the vegetarian with his tender heart and not to the meat-eater with his hardened heart. It will thus be seen that vegetarianism promotes the natural way of living while a meat diet does not.

World Peace is not the mere absence of war. It is something positive. It is perfect love, Universal Love. This shameless habit of war among men will cease when the cowardly habit of waging war against poor defenceless animals ceases. I must again repeat that both man and animal are fellow passengers in the great journey of life. Man is the more developed of the two. The Sanskrit word for man is **manussa** which etymologically means “being with an uplifted or elevated mind.” Being the more developed fellow-passenger, man has a duty to look after the less developed fellow-passenger, not to kill it and eat its flesh. We must respect that sacred and mysterious thing called Life which all can take but none can give.

There are powerful and infinite capacities lying dormant within the human mind awaiting development, and when developed they blossom into powerful realities. One of these capacities is the capacity for Universal Love and we have just seen

how this capacity can be developed by a natural mode of living. May the fragrance of Universal Love waft far and wide into corners of the earth and usher in an era of permanent World Peace on earth for the benefit and happiness and glory of the countless millions of the world's population and for the countless millions yet unborn.

Peace is Calm and Calm is Peace
Nothing is greater, grander than these
Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.