

VEGETARIANISM:

FOR YOUR BODY, YOUR MIND,
YOUR SOUL AND YOUR PLANET

H. H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

VEGETARIANISM

*For Our Bodies, Our Minds,
Our Souls & Our Planet*

By
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Swami Chidanand Saraswati, 2002

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ISBN: 978-0-9831490-1-9

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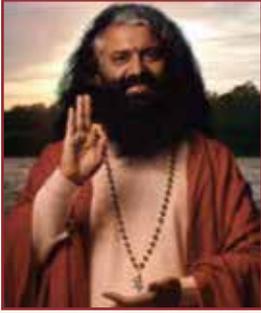
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Cover design by: Divine Soul Dawn Baillie, Los Angeles, California

Typeset by sevaks at Parmarth Niketan Ashram

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*Blessings From
Pujya Swamiji*

Dear Divine Souls,

This book on vegetarianism has been prepared as an offering – an offering to the values of peace, non-violence, compassion and environmental preservation.

In today's day and age, we are faced daily with vivid and disturbing news reports of starvation, environmental destruction, global warming, irreversible pollution and the untold suffering of billions of our brothers and sisters around the world.

In 2006, the United Nations prepared a report titled "Livestock's Long Shadow" in which it made a clear and convincing case that in order to minimize global warming, we should focus less on our minimal contributions through our cars and water usage, and more on our enormous contribution through the food we eat.

It is becoming clearer that vegetarianism is one of the main and irrefutable aspects of living a dharmic life – regardless of our religious or cultural backgrounds.



I believe, fervently, that the human race is made up of good people who want to lead good lives. The mistakes we make are usually made due to ignorance and confusion. If that ignorance and confusion can be eliminated, I believe that humans will generally make choices for the betterment of not only themselves but for the planet and their fellow brothers and sisters.

I pray that this book may serve as a guide for eliminating any ignorance and confusion regarding the truly crucial role our food choices play in the preservation of our species and our planet.

With love and blessings to you all,
In the service of God and humanity,

Swami Chidanand
ॐ

Swami Chidanand Saraswati

** Note: The UN report can be downloaded as a PDF document in part or in its entirety from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM> or email us at parmarth@parmarth.com and we'd be happy to email you a copy.*



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Foreword

At the age of fifteen, I sat in the home of a close friend in a small, quaint village in Northern France, where I periodically spent my Christmas holidays. We gathered around a long, mahogany dining table elegantly decorated for the Christmas Eve meal. Our plates were lined with three different forks, four different spoons and two knives – each course would require its own cutlery.

From the kitchen came the piping hot meal, and my friend's mother gingerly placed a fresh roasted quail on each plate. The quail had been tenderly tied in thin string which bound its small body tightly, and the string was tied in a knot over the bird's chest. "Use this knife to cut the string," my friend instructed me, pointing to the delicate, sharp knife on the side of my plate. I suddenly was nauseous. It was as though someone had come and ripped – like a band-aid which had become stuck after too long – the veil off of my eyes. I had to untie my food before eating it? The illusion that meat was food was suddenly dispelled as drastically as if someone quickly turned on the floodlights in a previously dark room. How could this creature which now had to be freed from its ropes be my dinner? How could anyone even imagine it?

I knew, as I sat there folding and unfolding the cloth napkin on my lap, that not only could I not eat this dinner, but that I could never again eat the flesh of a living creature.

The decision to be vegetarian was, to me, as visceral as the decision anyone would make to refuse the dead, bloody body of a child killed in a concentration camp. Would anyone, possibly, ever consider feasting

on the body of a child who had been chained to its bed, tortured, kept under blazing lights twenty-four hours a day, and eventually skinned alive? Could we even imagine it? Of course not. Yet, every time we eat a hamburger, we do the exact same thing. The only difference is that the mother of that child is a cow, not a human.

I have, by the grace of God, never missed the taste of meat since the moment I made the decision to become vegetarian. In fact, I cannot even eat many of the meat substitutes made out of soy or gluten because the texture feels too much like meat in my mouth. My teeth automatically rebel against the idea of grinding or gnawing on such foods. If it even feels like meat, I cannot eat it.

As we go through life, trying to make our way on this frequently confusing and elusive path of spirituality, one of the primary aspects I have found is integrity. We should never engage in any act which makes us feel ashamed or which lowers us in our own eyes. No matter how many hours of japa I do, or how deep my meditation is, I do not feel right inside if I have acted against my conscience. To be truly spiritual we must be able to look at each minute and each moment of our lives and know that we have acted in accordance with truth, with morality, with integrity and with righteousness. Of course, even with the best of intentions, we all make mistakes, and it is God's grace that He is infinitely forgiving of our weaknesses and our ignorance.

But in my opinion, to eat meat is not a mistake of weakness, passion or ignorance. It is a mistake of blindly, yet consciously and deliberately, choosing to satisfy our sensual pleasures at the expense of other living beings. By eating meat we not only kill the animal who is now on our plate, but we are also responsible for the death of children who are malnourished and starving across the world. We would never take a piece of bread out of the hands of a starving child. Yet every time we eat meat, that is exactly what we are doing. By feeding the grain to livestock instead of people, we are imposing poverty, illness and starvation upon our brothers and sisters across the world. If we eat meat, we are also responsible for the death of all the animal species that live in the forests which are cut down for grazing. These animals are killed as their homes are cut down, or they die shortly thereafter

due to lack of food and shelter. We are also responsible for the deaths of all the animals who are killed merely as collateral damage of meat production (whether it's dolphins killed in tuna nets or male chicks suffocated to death for their "uselessness" in the eyes of the egg industry).

How can we consider ourselves spiritual people or even good people with that much blood on our hands?

The first edition of this book was aimed primarily at Westerners. Indians were, I believed, vegetarian by nature. Yet, Newsweek magazine published a study in 2007 that found that the number of chicken-eaters in India had doubled since the year 2000! In a mere seven years, the numbers of non-vegetarians in India doubled! For that reason, we have realized the compelling need to disseminate this information amongst the Indian community.

In this booklet you will find innumerable compelling reasons to become vegetarian. The reasons are ethical, spiritual, moral, environmental, scientific and universal. None of the reasons given by Pujya Swamiji rests on a particular religion or theology. He relies in this booklet on reasons which apply to everyone – regardless of one's religious, cultural or spiritual beliefs.

Pujya Swamiji's reasons are universal and applicable to all. His reasons tug at the very strings of our humanity. Throughout this booklet you will learn the detrimental effects of eating meat on not only your own health, but also on the health of our planet and on the health of all the people and other species with whom we share it.

Throughout this booklet, Pujya Swamiji explains how being a vegetarian is the only possible choice for people who care about themselves, their environment and their fellow brothers and sisters living in poverty across the world.

Sadhvi Bhagawati
Rishikesh, India

Introduction

“Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child as it is to the caterpillar.”

We make many choices in our lives without ever questioning why – choices like what religion we believe in, what our values are, and what we eat. Perhaps we simply continue to live in the way we were raised, automatically adopting our parents’ choices. Or perhaps we rebel against how we were raised – our parents made one choice, so we will make the opposite. In either case, we rarely take the time to truly see why we are living the way we do.

In this booklet, I want to take the opportunity to see why one of the most important choices we can make in life is what we eat. Do we choose to live as vegetarians or as meat-eaters? I want to talk about the deep meaning behind the choices we make – for ourselves, for our children and for our planet – each time we put food in our bodies.

So many Indian youth come to Pujya Swamiji and say, “But my parents can’t even give me a good reason to be vegetarian. They just say that the cow is holy. But if I don’t believe the cow is holy, then why can’t I eat hamburgers?”

The importance of vegetarianism far transcends a belief that the cow is holy. Although the importance of being vegetarian is more urgent than it was thousands of years ago, the reasons why have changed significantly over the last century. Some of the reasons are the same today as when our scriptures were written thousands of years ago, but many of the reasons are directly related to the world we live in now.

While vegetarianism has always been a correct moral and spiritual choice, today it is even more than that.

Today it is an imperative choice for anyone who cares about their personal health and about the health of Mother Earth and all the people who live here. Today, it is not simply a religious decision. Rather, it is the only way we can hope to eliminate hunger, thirst, rainforest destruction and the loss of precious resources. It is, in short, the most important thing that each man, woman and child can do every day to demonstrate care for the Earth and care for humanity.

In this booklet I address a few of the main reasons why being a vegetarian is the only possible choice for anyone who is concerned about living honestly, peacefully and dharmically in the present and about preserving a world for tomorrow. I have been very impressed with the response to the first printing of this booklet. I've heard that an entire monastery of 160 monks in Nepal was converted to vegetarianism through one divine woman who – while she lived in their monastery – xeroxed photocopies of this booklet for all of them.

So many people have written telling us that either they personally have become vegetarian or that they have converted others to vegetarianism through the message in this booklet. This means that you can do it! Read this book not only for yourself, but also for all those you know. Share it, distribute it, talk about it. Help bring the path of vegetarianism to as many of your friends and family as possible. This is one of the greatest gifts you can give to your loved ones and to our Mother Earth.

Section I:

Spiritual Aspects of Vegetarianism

Chapter 1: Ahimsa

Chapter 2: Integrity & Honesty

Chapter 3: The Taste of Fear

*"The greatness of a nation can be judged by the
way its animals are treated."
– Mahatma Gandhi*

Chapter 1: Ahimsa

“The life of an animal in a factory farm is characterized by acute deprivation, stress and disease. Hundreds of millions of animals are forced to live in cages or crates barely larger than their own bodies. Unable to groom, stretch their legs, or even turn around, the victims of factory farms exist in a relentless state of distress.” – Humane Farming Association

One of the most important guiding principles of a moral life is ahimsa, or non-violence. There is hardly anything more violent than taking the life of another for our mere enjoyment. If we cannot give life to others (other than one or two children through procreation), then how can we take the life of another? If we cannot give life, then we have no right to take life. It would be different if we were stranded in the jungle, starving to death, and we needed the food temporarily to survive. But, we live in a world where we can get all our calories, all our vitamins and minerals in other, less violent and less expensive ways. Hence, to continue to kill the animals is simply to fulfill our desires and our pleasures. It is simply selfish gratification at the incredible pain of another.

More violent than their day of death are the numerous days of the lives of these animals whom we eat for dinner. Animals raised for consumption are raised distinctly differently than animals raised as pets.

*Even more violent than their death
are the numerous days of their lives.*

Every minute, 14,000 chickens are killed for consumption in the USA alone.

How are chickens treated before they are killed?

Let's look at chickens. More than 14,000 chickens are killed every minute in the USA for our consumption, totalling over eight billion chickens each year. The life of a chicken is terribly violent – they are crammed together in large warehouses, frequently with as many as 40,000 chickens in one building.

Chickens – like humans – have natural territory and space needs. Yet, these are unmet in chicken “farms.” Rather, these animals are packed together as closely as possible, so closely that they frequently cannot even move. The Department of Agriculture recommends that chickens should have a minimum of two square feet in which to live, but the biggest companies provide a mere 0.55 square feet for their chickens.

To have a true understanding of these conditions, picture yourself in an elevator which is so crowded that you can not even turn around, let alone move. Picture as well, that all the people in the elevator are confused and scared. They do not realize there is no way out. So they cry and bite and kick, in a true frenzy, attempting to free themselves from this claustrophobic terror. Next, imagine that the elevator is tilted, on a slant, so that everyone falls to one side, and it is nearly impossible to move back up. In this elevator, the ceiling is so low that your head is pushed down to your shoulders in order to stand. There is no way to straighten your neck. You are all barefoot on a wire floor that pokes and cuts your feet – ever so sensitive for you are probably only a few months old. Finally, imagine that this terror does not end when someone comes to open the door at the “lobby” floor. Rather,

“The biochemistry of physiological and emotional states (of stress and anxiety, for example) differ little between mice and men.”

– M. Fox, Returning to Eden

90% of chickens have cancer at the time they are slaughtered for consumption.

this is your whole life, every minute of every day, until you are fried up and served for dinner, with a side of mashed potatoes. If you can imagine this, you can begin to glimpse the life of a chicken.

The chickens raised to be eaten are fed an extraordinary and unnaturally large amount of food in order to put extra weight on them, thereby increasing profits. The chickens have been bred in such a way that they gain weight faster and faster. In today's chicken farms, 90% of the chickens are so obese by six weeks of age that they can't even walk, and 90% of them have the disease leucosis, otherwise known as chicken cancer.

Why do they develop cancer and other diseases at such an exorbitant rate? One reason may be their diet. Their manure is routinely recycled back into their feed and their water is frequently the liquid waste from manure pits.

The Turkey

300 million turkeys are raised and killed in the USA alone each year for consumption. The turkeys we eat are an incredible example of man upsetting the laws of nature. The turkeys are not only kept in despicable conditions paralleling those of the chickens, but they are also fed such an inordinate amount of food and are bred to be so fat that they cannot even mate. The turkey industry earns dollars for each pound of meat they sell, so it is in their best interest to make each turkey

“Every particle of factual evidence supports the contention that the higher mammalian vertebrates experience pain sensations as acute as our own... their nervous systems are almost identical to ours and their reactions to pain are remarkably similar.”

– Richard Serjeant, The Spectrum of Pain

as many pounds as possible. Thus, they are bred and raised to be so fat that the male and female turkey cannot get close enough to each other in order to procreate. Therefore, rather than discontinue their unnatural and harmful practices, the poultry industry has created a special turkey artificial insemination method. Today, 100% of turkeys in the United States and throughout most of the world are conceived through artificial insemination. We have managed even to disrupt some of the most basic laws of nature of survival and procreation.

Where do our pets go when they die?

Additionally, have you ever wondered what happens to the tens of millions of dogs and cats each year who are unclaimed in animal shelters? They are “put to sleep” and then their ground-up bodies are frequently mixed in with the feed for cows, pigs and chickens. Yet, not only are our future hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken nuggets ingesting ground-up dogs and cats, but they are also ingesting the medicine used to euthanize (compassionately kill) these dogs and cats. A medicine that is used to kill animals thereby gets recycled through our food chain and eventually ends up on our plates.

How are cows treated before they are killed?

Veal

Veal is considered a rare delicacy by people across the world. “Tender veal cutlets” are frequently the most expensive item on a menu. Yet, when we look at the way in which these animals become so tender and white, we realize that the true price of this dish is far more than what the restaurant charges.

Veal is the meat from baby cows who are separated from their mothers immediately at birth. Cows, as milk-giving/breast-feeding mammals, have very strong maternal instincts. It is not a simple coincidence that Hindus worship the cow as mother. A mother cow will keep her calf next to her long after he is born, nursing him, looking after him, protecting him, and teaching him to fend for himself. A typical calf will nurse at his mother’s breast for eight months after birth. However,

in the meat industry, these baby cows are wrested from their mothers less than twenty-four hours after birth. Why?

First, the dairy industry doesn't want the cows to suckle at their mother's breast, thereby drinking precious profits. It is much cheaper to feed the newborn liquid formula. Second, it is essential that the babies do not develop any muscle. If they stand near their mothers, suckling at the breast, their legs will develop muscle. Muscle is hard; fat is soft and juicy. Fat is tender. So, the only way to prevent muscle is to prevent the use of their limbs.

I have heard from people who have visited these places that – contrary to what the meat industry would like you to believe – the mother and baby cows cry in agony for hours after being separated. In fact, there are numerous stories of mother cows walking dozens of miles to find their babies.

But, these newborn baby cows, screaming for the warmth of their mother's breast, are chained into restraining stalls. Ninety percent of baby calves are taken from their mothers less than twenty-four hours after birth.

Additionally, people prefer "white" meat to "dark" meat, so the meat industries do everything they can to ensure that their meat is "white." But, how to make otherwise dark meat white? The best and cheapest way is through ensuring that the calves are kept anemic. Anemic tissue is significantly paler than normal tissue. Therefore, this sought-after "white" meat is actually the meat of anemic calves chained at the neck to stalls which serve as their life-long jail. So, what is the real price of this dish?

*"Which God has given, let not man take away. For I tell you truly,
he who kills himself and he who eats the flesh of slain beasts,
eats the body of death."*

– Jesus, as quoted in The Essene Gospel of Peace

Hamburgers and Steak

It is so easy for us to stop by a fast-food restaurant on the way home from school or work and pick up a quick meal. Yet, rarely do we think of the implications to the animals who were tortured and killed for our “quick” meal. Yes, we understand that a hamburger is made of cow, but do we go beyond that? Do we stop and think what that cow’s life was like? Do we imagine how it went from being a living, breathing, life-giving creature to the slab of meat on our buns? The violence inherent in a hamburger is much more vast than simply the taking of life. Newborn cows are removed from their mother at birth and chained at the neck into a stall measuring less than 22 inches by 58 inches. This is significantly smaller than if you locked a young cow in the trunk of a tiny, sub-compact car. In these stalls, the babies have neither room to take a step, nor move, nor lie down.

We would perhaps like to believe that animals killed for human consumption are killed mercifully and quickly. We’d like to imagine a scenario in which they live a nice, peaceful, healthy few years of life and then are swiftly killed in one quick stroke. Unfortunately, that is not the reality. In 2000 and 2001, national news networks in the USA showed videotapes of the world’s largest meat-packing company skinning, dismembering and torturing live, conscious animals. The tapes showed struggling, conscious cows hoisted upside down and butchered. Fully conscious cows were skinned alive, their legs cut off while struggling for freedom. Cows were shown being hit repeatedly with stunning devices that did not work. Other cows were tortured and repeatedly shocked with cattle prods and workers were shown shoving an electric prod into a cow’s mouth.

One of the employees of this world’s largest slaughterhouse was quoted as saying:

For every three hamburgers you eat, you can assume that at least one cow was alive and conscious while he went through the assembly line of torture to become your lunch.

"I estimate that 30% of the cows are not properly stunned [before being skinned and cut up]...I can tell these cows are alive because they're holding their heads up and a lot of times they make noises."

Another worker added, "Workers can open the legs, the stomach, the neck, cut off the feet while the cow is still breathing."

So, if 30% of the cows are still conscious and alive when they are skinned, bled and butchered, that means that for every three hamburgers we eat, we can assume that at least one of the burgers is from a cow who was conscious when he or she went through the assembly line of torture in order to become our lunch or dinner.

A famous meat and chicken company's training video says that there is a 5% acceptable error rate in "stunning" the cows unconscious before death. That means that for every one hundred cows who are skinned and dismembered, this company considers it acceptable if five are still conscious during the process. However, some sources claim the actual error rate is far higher than 5% and perhaps closer to 30%.

With 90,000 cows killed every day in the USA, somewhere between 4,500 and 27,000 cows (depending upon individual companies' error rates) are skinned, bled and cut into pieces while they are still alive, breathing and conscious every single day. Can't we say "enough" to this inhumane torture? Must we continue to let animals suffer so mercilessly for our own culinary enjoyment?

How Are Pigs Treated?

Hot Dogs, Pork Chops and Bacon

What about hot dogs and bacon? Does the pork industry do any

Each year, sixteen billion animals (not including fish) are killed mercilessly for our food consumption.

This is more than the total number of people on the planet.

better? Hardly. More than one hundred million pigs are killed for food each year in the USA alone, killing up to 1,100 pigs per hour. Pigs are crammed so tightly together in the farms that they cannot move. Thus, out of sheer frustration, pain and anger, they become violent and frequently bite each others' tails. The industry's solution to this problem is to remove the tails of the pigs. Without anesthesia.

Another videotape was acquired which portrays the truth of the factory farms:

"The videotape depicts sows [female pigs] being beaten with metal rods, kicked, stomped on and dragged, being killed by blows to the head with wrenches and cinder blocks, having their throats cut while fully conscious, being skinned alive and having their legs removed while still alive and moaning."

Couldn't we choose a different item on the menu? Can't we make a choice for mercy, for non-violence and for compassion?

How Many Animals Are Eaten Each Year?

Each year, sixteen billion animals (not including fish) are killed in the USA alone for our food consumption. If you add the rest of the world, it is significantly more than that. Over sixteen billion animals a year – that is more than the number of people on the planet. We devote millions of dollars in warfare to defending minorities across the world against the threat of genocide. We rally, we protest, we order sanctions and embargoes against governments that engage in the systematic killing of large groups of people. But, who is there to rally for the billions of animals slaughtered mercilessly each year? Who is there to say "enough" to this killing? Let us be the ones to stop this cruel murder.

It would be one thing if we were stranded in the jungle starving to death and we needed the food to survive. But, we live in a world where we can get all our calories, all our vitamins and minerals in other, less violent and less expensive ways. Hence, to continue to kill the animals is simply to fulfill our desires and our pleasures. There is no need or utility in it. It is simply selfish gratification at the incredible

pain of another.

The Myth of “Free-Range,” “Cage-Free,” and Organic Meat and Eggs

Today, many people justify the eating of meat by claiming it is from organically-raised and/or free-range animals. They feel that the animals are raised in a good way, being allowed to roam freely and not being forced to take loads of antibiotics and unnatural hormones. However, the fair treatment of free-range animals is often an illusion. Aside from the fact that all these animals are living, breathing, feeling creatures who want to live, there are many reasons why eating “free-range,” “cage-free,” or organic meat or eggs is not any better than eating conventionally-raised animals.

Many organic and free-range farms squeeze thousands of animals together into sheds or mud-filled lots, just as factory farms do. While they are not kept in individual cages or pens within these structures, they are still forced to live in cramped conditions for their entire lives, forced to live in their own filth. “Cage-free” chickens and turkeys are often allowed to “roam free,” as long as they do so within the confines of these sheds. On rare occasions, they are let out for very short periods of time, but only into an outdoor enclosure that is small, cramped, and muddy.

As a result of living their lives in complete squalor, organically-raised and “free-range” animals often suffer from higher mortality rates than non-organic animals, as they are not given any antibiotics to treat the different illnesses they develop. If animals become sick, many farmers will deny them medicine in order to be able to sell the milk, eggs, or meat as organic. For example, “cage-free” chickens often suffer from the same lung lesions and ammonia burns and blisters as hens in cages from sitting on urine- and feces-covered floors. If they are being

*Each year, sixteen billion animals (not including fish) are killed
mercilessly for our food consumption.*

This is more than the total number of people on the planet.

raised organically, they will never receive medicine for these lesions. Many animals die in these conditions, and their bodies are left for long periods with the living animals as the sheds are rarely cleaned.

In addition, “free-range,” “cage-free” and organically-raised animals often suffer the same bodily mutilations as animals on factory farms. Because of the crowded conditions, chickens are de-beaked, cows are dehorned and castrated, and pigs have their tails chopped off and rings forced through their sensitive noses (to keep them from rooting in the ground) – all without painkillers in order to keep them “organic.”

Finally, towards the end of their tragic lives, animals being raised for meat are often force-fed to make them bigger, just as is done on factory farms. Many “organically-raised” cows are sent to factory-farm feedlots in order to be fattened (with organic feed); thus, they are forced to live in the same squalid conditions as regular factory-farmed animals.

The animals that don’t die on these farms are shipped on trucks in all sorts of weather extremes, forced to stand for hours without food or water. They are slaughtered in the same filthy slaughterhouses used by factory farms, where they are often cut apart while still fully conscious. Furthermore, their flesh is then exposed to the same potential bacterial contamination as all “non-organic” meat.

The lives of so-called “free-range,” “cage-free,” and organically-raised animals are no better than conventionally-raised animals. In some cases, like when they develop illnesses from their squalid living conditions, these animals are worse off. It is a complete illusion that these animals are raised in good conditions and live happy lives before their slaughter. The myth surrounding these farming practices is simply that – *myth* – and in no way justifies the eating of meat or eggs coming from these animals.

Chapter 2: Integrity and Honesty

Why is it considered dishonest to eat meat?

Most of us consider ourselves honest people. We like to believe that we do not tell lies. We like to believe that we are righteous, honest people and that we are passing these values onto our children. Yet, if we eat meat, we can not say that we do not tell lies. In fact, our life is a lie. If we wanted to be honest and still eat meat, we would have to go outside, chase down a live cow, and bite right into it. We would have to go to a chicken “farm,” take the animal while it was still alive, tear its head off, pull out its feathers and eat it raw. Of course, we do not do that. Instead, we order a hamburger. We cannot even call it what it is, let alone kill it ourselves. So, we call it “beef,” instead of cow. We call it “pork” instead of pig. We call it “poultry” instead of chicken. Then, we eat it packaged in nice, neat ways that allow us to forget what we are eating.

How many people stop and think that the thing between the tomato and the bread on a hamburger used to be a living, breathing creature? That it was someone’s child? How many of us would eat our cats or dogs between a piece of tomato and a slice of bread? We wouldn’t. And that is why it is a lie. We cannot even admit to ourselves what we are doing. How then, can we consider ourselves honest people if we are lying every time we eat? These are not lies that only cause misunderstanding; these are not “little white lies.” These are lies that are killing our planet, our animals and ourselves.

These are lies that are killing our planet, our animals and ourselves.

Chapter 3: The Taste of Fear

Why do I feel anxious, restless and aggressive in my life?

Eating meat is violent not only to the animal whose life we are wresting out, but it is also violent to ourselves and our planet. We will discuss in future chapters about the devastation being wrought on our planet – to the environment and to other, less fortunate people – through our meat consumption, but here I want to talk about a different violence. Let us talk about the relationship between our diet and the rising rates of crime, violence and unrest in the world. When animals (humans included) are threatened, we secrete large amounts of hormones. These numerous hormones are frequently referred to as adrenaline. Their purpose is to prepare our body to fight, to save our lives. Have you ever noticed that when you get scared, a lot of things happen inside you? Your heart beats quickly, your digestion stops, your palms sweat and your physical impulses become very good and sharp. These are the result of the hormones. They prepare us to either fight or run away, and thus are sometimes referred to as the “fight or flight” hormones.

When an animal is about to be killed, its body is flooded with these stress hormones which remain in the animals’ tissues. When we eat those tissues, we are ingesting those hormones. Thus, our own bodies become flooded with adrenaline and other “fight or flight” chemicals,

*“To become vegetarian is to step into the stream
which leads to Nirvana.”
– The Buddha*

making us even more prone to simple survival instincts. When we have hormones in our blood that tell us our life is in danger, it is no surprise that we are angry, restless and anxious.

Our world is becoming more violent each day. More and more people are simply out to get ahead, to protect themselves, even at the sake of others. These are the same characteristics that the stress hormones prepare our bodies for. Hence, is it not possible that the increase in these characteristics world-wide is directly a result of our increase in meat consumption and the subsequent ingestion of stress hormones? I think it is.

Every day people come to Pujya Swamiji and complain, “Swamiji, I am restless. I cannot sleep at night. I get angry for no reason. I cannot control my temper.” When we ingest hormones that send messages to our body that we are in danger, naturally we will become alert, restless, anxious, and angry. Slowly, over time, these hormones change the very nature of our beings and we become tense, stressed, and uncontrollably angry.

Perhaps, if we treat this temple that is our body as a temple, it will behave and think like a temple. When we treat it like a battleground, how can we wonder that it acts like a battleground?

If we want to reduce the violence and hate in this world as well as live peaceful, calm, centered lives, we should stop flooding our bodies with hormones that create stress, violence and the “fight-or-flight” mentality.

Section II:

Fish and Eggs: The Controversy

- **Fish: Health Issues**
- **Do Fish Feel Pain?**
- **Environmental Effects of Fishing on the Ocean**
- **Are Fish Farms Better for the Environment?**
 - **Eggs: Are They Vegetarian?**
 - **Treatment of the Egg-Laying Hen**
 - **Murder of the “Useless” Roosters**
- **Seeing A Developing Chick Inside the Egg**

Fish

Fish and eggs seem to be the two most controversial issues of vegetarianism. So many people tell me that they are vegetarians; yet they eat eggs or they eat fish.

There are several issues with eating fish: personal health issues, environmental issues, and the issue of pain felt by the fish themselves.

Health Issues: Toxicity and Poisoning

Tragically, our oceans and lakes are the greatest storehouses of waste in the world. Unable or unwilling to develop adequate alternative sources of disposal, many communities around the world resort to dumping their waste into the water, misled perhaps by the “out of sight, out of mind” concept.

Even developed and developing nations frequently dump large quantities of toxic and otherwise hazardous waste into their waterways. Fish flesh is particularly adept at storing contaminants in its tissues. Further, as everyone learns in basic biology classes, the food chain in our oceans and lakes is simple: small fish feast on that which floats in the water, falls to the river bottom, or gets caught by coral reefs; medium-sized fish eat the smaller fish; large fish eat the medium-sized fish; and humans typically eat the large fish.

Therefore, by the time the flesh is ingested by humans, it is a veritable storehouse of toxins and chemicals. Fish flesh absorbs and retains contaminants, such as PCBs, which cause damage to the liver and other organs as well as to the entire nervous system. The flesh

frequently contains dioxins, which are linked to cancer, in addition to radioactive substances and other dangerous toxins such as cadmium, mercury, lead, chromium, and arsenic. These toxins have been shown conclusively to cause a wide range of ailments, including kidney damage, impaired mental development and cancer.

How do these toxins and other dangerous contaminants get into the flesh of the fish on our plate at dinnertime? They get there through the dumping of chemical, industrial and toxic waste by factories and industries, pollution by ships and naval vessels, as well as simply through the sewage which pollutes our waterways – both human as well as animal feces. This sewage waste contains dangerous bacteria which may not affect the fish, but certainly affect us when we eat the fish. By eating fish, we expose ourselves to the unnecessary risk of contracting serious bacterial illnesses that can lead to organ failure, nervous system damage, and even death.

Perhaps we think though that we couldn't possibly ingest enough of these toxins to harm us. However, a study by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that women who ate fish even just twice a week had blood mercury concentrations seven times higher than women who hadn't eaten fish in the previous month. Studies have also shown that a 140-pound woman will have 30% more mercury in her blood than the EPA deems safe, simply by eating one small can of white tuna fish every week.

Mercury poisoning leads to heart problems, including heart disease and heart attacks, as well as brain damage, memory loss, personality change, tremors, spontaneous abortion, and damage to a developing fetus.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are synthetic chemicals that are used in hydraulic fluids and oils and electrical capacitors and transformers. PCBs are dangerous because they act like hormones, wreaking havoc on the nervous system and contributing to a variety of illnesses, including cancer, infertility, decreased mental function and other problems.

These chemicals are frequently found – in extraordinarily high amounts – in the flesh of sea life ranging from small fish to dolphins!

Salmon

Due to the overfishing of salmon in the wild, extensive fish farms have been established where salmon are raised like a commodity. However, lest we think that the farmed fish are safer, it is important to note that the diet of farmed salmon is the flesh of wild-caught fish! It takes five pounds of commercially, wild fish to create one pound of farmed fish, due to the fact that it has to be continually fed to the salmon in the farms in order for them to grow nice and fat.

All the commercially-netted fish come with heavy doses of toxins, which then concentrate in the flesh of farmed fish, making it potentially the most toxic thing humans put into their bodies. Farmed salmon also have twice the fat of wild salmon, and this fat collects and stores even more toxins.

The “pink” color that everyone loves about salmon comes from the wild plankton that wild salmon eat. Yet, there is no plankton in the farms, so in order to give the same pink color, artificial food dye is added into the farmed salmon’s feed! This dye has been shown to cause retinal damage.

Do Fish Feel Pain?

While it may seem obvious that fish are able to feel pain, like every other animal, some people still think of fish as swimming vegetables. In fact, regarding the ability to feel pain, fish are equal to dogs, cats, and all other animals. Dr. Donald Broom, scientific advisor to the British government, explains, “The scientific literature is quite clear.

“Scientists estimate that fish endure up to fifteen minutes of excruciating pain before they lose consciousness.”

– PETA

Anatomically, physiologically and biologically, the pain system in fish is virtually the same as in birds and animals.” (PETA)

Fish have nerves and connections to the brain that sense and process pain very similarly to the way all other animals – including humans – do. Their nervous systems resemble our own in many ways, leading neurologists to conclude that they absolutely have the capacity to feel pain and to suffer. “The pain a fish feels when she’s hooked is like dentistry without Novocaine [anesthesia],” says Dr. Tom Hopkins, Professor of Marine Science, University of Alabama, USA.

Many times, amazingly, the fish are still alive when they reach the deck of the boat, after being trapped in nets, dragged for long distances with the strings of the net tearing at their gills or dragged, bloody, hooked onto metal hooks. The typical procedure, upon pulling the fish up into the boat, is to immediately slit their gills and disembowel them. Every fish that is still alive is therefore conscious and aware (and quite able to experience pain) while its gills are slit, thereby suffocating the fish, and its organs are removed. Smaller fish are typically just dumped – after being pulled up out of the ocean, onto sheets of ice where they slowly freeze to death or are crushed/suffocated to death as thousands of their schoolmates are dumped on top of them. “Scientists estimate that fish endure up to fifteen minutes of excruciating pain before they lose consciousness.” (PETA)

The Environmental Effect of Fishing on the Ocean

Eating fish is not simply violent to our own bodies and to the fish themselves. Rather, it is also violent to the entire marine ecosystem. Commercial fishers kill hundreds of billions of animals every year – far more than any other industry – and they’ve decimated our ocean ecosystems. The U.S. fishing industry kills more than six billion fish

“The pain a fish feels when she’s hooked is like dentistry without Novocaine [anesthesia].” – Dr. Tom Hopkins, Professor of Marine Science, University of Alabama, USA

each year, while sport-fishing and angling kills another 245 million fish. More than 90% percent of large fish populations have been completely exterminated in the past fifty years. In fact, a report published by the academic journal *Science* estimates that by the year 2048, our oceans will be completely depleted (PETA). This is the fastest rate of extinction anywhere on the planet due to any cause.

It is not only the fish they are aiming to catch which are killed by fisherman. Rather, nearly 1,000 other marine mammals, such as dolphins, whales, and porpoises, die every day by being caught “accidentally” in fishing nets. Some scientists have estimated that the boats and fishermen who catch shrimp actually discard 85% of their catch, due to the fact that it is not shrimp. That means for every fifteen pieces of shrimp which make it on to our plate in the restaurant, a full eighty-five other types of fish were killed unnecessarily.

It is not only shrimp fishing that is to blame for decimating our oceans. Every year, commercial fishers dump more than twenty million tons of non-targeted fish alone – most of them dead or dying – back into the oceans. That’s one-fourth of all the fish of all types caught worldwide. This figure doesn’t even take into account the other marine animals – turtles, sea birds, seals, etc. – who have been caught in the boats’ massive nets.

The following is a vivid description of the mass destruction caused by fishing:

“Long-lining is one of the most widespread methods of fishing. Ships unreel as much as seventy-five miles of line bristling with hundreds of thousands of baited hooks. The hooks are dragged behind the boat at varying depths or are kept afloat by buoys and left overnight, luring any animal in the area to grab a free meal. Once hooked, some animals drown or bleed to death in the water, and many others struggle for hours until the boat returns to reel them in. Large fish such as swordfish and yellowfin tuna, weighing hundreds of pounds each, are pulled toward the boat by the baited line. Fishermen sink pickaxes into the animals’ fins, sides, and even eyes – any part of the fish that will allow them to haul the animals aboard without ripping out the hook. Many of the fish are still alive, and they are clubbed to death or slowly bleed

to death when their gills are sliced open.” (PETA)

Long lining is not only violent to the fish they are looking to catch. Billions of fish, sharks, sea turtles, dolphins, birds, and other marine animals are injured and killed by long-lines each year. For example, a study at Duke University found that more than 300,000 turtles are killed by fishermen’s nets every year.

Is Fish-Farming Better for the Ocean Environment?

According to the Norwegian government, the salmon and trout farms in Norway alone produce roughly the same amount of sewage as New York City. In some cases, the massive amount of fish excrement settling below fish cages has actually caused the ocean floor to rot. Dead fish carcasses and uneaten antibiotic-laden fish feed also pollute the coastal areas that surround these farms. The sludge of fish feces and other debris can be toxic for already-strained ocean ecosystems.

In Canada, the sewage from the fish farms is equivalent to a city of 500,000 people. If you can imagine the effects on the ocean and marine life that the raw, untreated sewage of 500,000 people being dumped daily into the coastal waters would have, then you can imagine the effect of fish farms.

Further, just as cows and chickens who are raised in factories are significantly more susceptible to disease than their wild counterparts, so are farmed fish significantly more susceptible to illness than those in the open sea. For this reason, fish farmers dump massive amounts of antibiotics into the fish food. However, the problem for those who say, “Oh, I only eat wild fish” is that the fish farm cages are open. Therefore, the molecules of disease as well as the antibiotics float easily from within the farm to the “wild” ocean outside. Entire coastal areas where fish farming takes place are becoming veritable storehouses of illness, disease, parasites and antibiotic-laden feed.

Eggs

What about eggs? So many people say that they are vegetarian, but they eat eggs. An egg is a chicken about to be born. If left to Nature, and if given warmth, that egg will hatch into a hen or rooster. I often ask people: If we were to remove the baby chick from the egg a day before it hatched, would that be vegetarian? They all agree that it would not. "What about a week before it hatches?" I ask them. They agree that still it is not vegetarian. Whether that egg is cracked and eaten a day, a week or several weeks prior to hatching does not change the nature of the food. It is a chicken which is going to be born. Just because hens lay their eggs outside their bodies, rather than reproducing the way humans do with the baby growing inside the body, does not mean that we can take these about-to-become-chickens and eat them and consider ourselves vegetarians.

Egg-Laying Hens

280 million hens are used for their eggs each year. The life of an egg-laying hen is as bad as the chickens and cows, perhaps even worse. Up to 100,000 of them are frequently squeezed into one building, in crates of 18 inches by 20 inches with five to eleven hens per crate! These miserable conditions give each hen the amount of space it would have if you stuffed several of them into one small office filing drawer. They never have the space to even lift up a wing during the course of their lives. Naturally in situations like these the hens become frustrated, anxious, and panicked. So, they peck each other, causing death and injury to other hens, leading to a loss of profits for the company. The solution? Their beaks are cut off to prevent injury to other hens.

Rather than simply give them enough space in which to live, the egg producers mutilate the hens' beaks, frequently preventing the hens from being able to eat, often causing them to starve to death.

In addition to their beaks, hens frequently have their toes and claws cut off (without any anesthesia) so that these do not become stuck in the metal wires of their crates.

These crates are piled high on top of each other. In this way, not only are they denied space to move, let alone roam around, but when one chicken goes to the bathroom, it falls through the crates onto the chickens below. The crates are never cleaned and the chickens never see the sunlight; the light from the artificial bulbs is enough to keep them functioning.

Additionally, if egg production decreases, the hens are forced into a process called "forced molting." In forced molting, the hens are deprived of food and water in order to start a new cycle (for those who survive the starvation). The hens are given no food for approximately fourteen days and no water for three days. During this time they lose up to one-third of their body weight and their feathers fall off. After this period of starvation, their egg-laying capacity receives a temporary boost (unless of course they die in the process). Often, the eggs produced in these factories are called "concentration camp eggs."

Murder of the "Useless" Roosters

Naturally, in these hen farms, not all of the eggs can be sold off to supermarkets and other companies because the farm must ensure that the production rate continues. Therefore, depending on the size of the farm, a large number of these eggs are actually allowed to hatch so that new hens can be born to become egg-layers. However, at least

Whether an egg is cracked open and eaten a day, a week or several weeks before its contents hatch does not change the fact that its contents are not vegetarian!

50% of the chicks will be male. There is little use for roosters in the egg business since they cannot grow up to lay eggs. These males cannot be sold to chicken farms to become broiler chickens (chickens raised for meat), as the breeds of chickens used on egg farms are distinctly different than those used on broiler chicken farms. Therefore, with no use for them, these egg farms systematically execute every one of the baby male chicks by suffocating them in garbage bags or throwing them alive into large meat grinders. Then, they become recycled feed for the hens and other livestock.

More chicks are killed this way every year in the USA than there are people in the entire country.

Seeing A Developing Chick Inside The Egg

There is an exhibit at the Los Angeles Museum of Science that I wish everyone could see. The exhibit includes a very large, high-powered microscope set up over a huge microscope slide which has six or seven specimens on it. With the naked eye, without the microscope, each of the specimens looks identical. They look like the tiny, slimy, white piece of mucus-like material that sticks out of every egg yolk. If you've ever cracked open a raw egg, you see there is a yellow yolk in the middle, white surrounding the yolk, and then this ever-so-tiny thing sticking out of the yolk. It is so small that most people don't pay any attention to it.

However, when the microscope gets moved over the slides so that we can see, that tiny little white mucus-like thing is actually a chicken fetus! Even from day one of its gestation period, one can make out a skull and a backbone. As the days of gestation progress in the exhibit, arms, legs and a complex nervous system become visible. It is amazing to realize that this tiny sliver which we usually just ignore or scramble

More than 300 million baby male chicks are systematically, senselessly and needlessly murdered every year by the egg industry, because – as males – they are “useless” at laying eggs.

up into our eggs is actually a developing chicken fetus. In fact, the yolk and white of the egg are the food which the developing chick will eat prior to hatching. Unlike human babies, who are fed in utero through the placenta and umbilical cord, chicken fetuses must take their nourishment from within the egg itself.

I believe that if everyone could see the chicken fetus as it exists in the egg, we would never again be able to scramble this egg up into an omelet. Further, we would never be able to doubt that this egg is truly a living being and eating it is just as much murder as killing the hen who laid it.

Section III:

Vegetarianism and Ecology

As a vegetarian, you will help to solve problems of:

- **World Hunger**
- **Deforestation & Environmental Destruction**
 - **Global Warming**
 - **Poverty**
 - **Water Wastage**

*“The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives.”
– Buddhist Proverb*

Aside from all the compelling moral and spiritual reasons, one can now say that vegetarianism is the only responsible choice in terms of waste and ecology. The natural resources of our planet are diminishing at terrifying rates. More than a third of the world goes to bed hungry each night. And we wonder what we can do. Being a vegetarian addresses almost each and every ecological issue.

Why does eating meat deprive starving children of food?

- It takes sixteen pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. This grain is fed to the cows who are later killed to make beef. However, it takes only one pound of grain to produce one pound of bread. So, if we used our grain to produce bread rather than feed it to cows in order to make hamburgers, we could feed sixteen times as many people.
- Every day, 40,000 children starve to death. Every day we produce enough grain to provide every person on Earth with more than two loaves of bread. However, this grain is not being fed to people; rather, it is being fed to livestock.
- Across the world, an average of 40% of the grain produced is fed to livestock.
- 1,400,000,000 people (1.4 billion) could be fed by the grain which is given to U.S. livestock.
- One acre of fertile land can grow 40,000 pounds of potatoes. That same acre can provide only 250 pounds of beef if it is used to grow grain for cattle-feed.

We could feed ten billion people a year if everyone were vegetarian. Not one person on Earth would have to go to sleep hungry at night.

- If you take 2.5 acres of land and use it to grow potatoes, you can feed twenty-two people. If you use it to grow rice, you can feed nineteen people. But, if you use it to produce chicken (including the food for the chicken and raising the chickens), you can only feed two people. Even worse, if you use it to produce eggs or beef (including the food for the hens or cows and the factory itself), you can only feed one person. With so many people starving in the world, how can we take our land and use it so irresponsibly?
- If meat-eaters reduce their intake of meat by only 10% (it means they would still eat 90% as much meat as they do now), we could feed every one of the people who die of starvation and hunger-related diseases every day across the world.
- We could feed ten billion people a year if we were all vegetarian. This is more than human population. There is no need for anyone to go hungry in the world – the only reason is the selfishness of the choices we make.

Why is meat eating bad for our environment?

- The damage done to our rainforests due to the production of beef is enormous. It is estimated that for every hamburger made from rainforest beef, fifty-five square feet of rainforest land is destroyed. More than 2.9 million acres of the Brazilian rainforest (as well as all the animals that inhabit that rainforest) were destroyed in the 2004-2005 crop season alone.
- More than 260 million acres of U.S. forest has been cleared to grow grain for farmed animals.
- According to the Smithsonian Institute, the equivalent of seven football fields of land is bulldozed worldwide every minute to

Every day 40,000 children starve to death, while the US alone produces enough to give every person on Earth two loaves of bread a day. Instead, this grain is being fed to livestock, not people.

create room for farmed animals.

- For one hamburger, seventy-five kilograms of carbon dioxide (one of the main gases leading to the global warming problem) are released into the air. If you drove your car all day long, it would only release three kilograms!
- 25% of the methane produced in the world, another leading gas causing global warming, is produced by livestock.
- The animal industry produces more than 65% of worldwide nitrous oxide emissions, yet another main gas leading to global warming.
- The leading cause of deforestation and species extinction across the world is livestock grazing.
- 50% of the planet's land is used for grazing! Imagine what good uses we could put that land to if we gave up our meat addictions.
- The world's petroleum resources would last only thirteen years if everyone ate a meat-based diet, but it would last 260 years if everyone ate a vegetarian diet.

Why is meat-eating hurting the poor?

- A pound of protein from meat costs \$15.40, but a pound of protein from wheat costs \$1.50.
- So, meat costs ten times as much for the same nutritional value.
- Could we not use that money for such better causes? Is there no more important use for that money than to kill animals?

For each hamburger made from rainforest beef, seventy-five kilograms of carbon dioxide are released into the air. This is the equivalent of driving your car all day long for twenty-five days!

How does meat eating relate to water wastage?

- The production of one pound of beef takes 2,500 gallons of water. This water is used to grow the food for the livestock, to water them and then to wash their bloody bodies and turn them into beef. The production of one pound of wheat or potatoes takes twenty-five gallons of water.
 - So, we would waste one hundred times less water if we ate wheat instead of meat.
- The production of chicken takes 815 gallons of water. So, if you eat chicken, you are wasting thirty-three times as much water as if you ate a vegetarian diet!
- In an average shower of seven minutes, every day, you would use approximately 2,600 gallons of water in six months. That means that the same amount of water is used in the production of one pound of beef as in showering every day for six months!
- *Newsweek* magazine is quoted as saying, "The amount of water that goes into a 1,000 pound steer [male cow who will become beef] could float a Naval destroyer ship." Imagine how much water would be needed to keep a Naval destroyer ship afloat! That same amount of water is used to produce beef from just one cow!

The amount of water used in bathing daily for six months is the same amount of water that is needed to produce one pound of beef! Thus, in order to compensate for the wastage of water in a hamburger, we would have to refrain from bathing for many months.

Section IV:

Health Issues

- Cancer
 - Heart Disease
- Resistance to Antibiotics
 - The Hormone Effect
 - The Fecal Stew
- Bacteria and Pathogens
 - The Protein Myth

“In regions where...meat is scarce, heart disease is unknown.”
– Time Magazine

Cancer

Every medical text, every health book in every bookstore or library talks about the undeniable link between high-fat diets and heart disease or cancer. It is well known that people who eat meat-based diets have anywhere from two to twenty times higher rates of death from heart disease and cancer than vegetarians. According to a major 2006 Harvard study of 135,000 people, those who frequently ate grilled, skinless chicken had a 52% higher chance of developing bladder cancer than those who didn't (PETA). Additionally, it has been shown that 60-70% of cancer can be prevented by not smoking, staying physically fit, and eating a vegetarian diet rich in vegetables, fruits and legumes (like dal). A report by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research states, "Vegetarian diets decrease the risk of cancer." (Robbins 2001). One British study found that vegetarians had a 40% lower risk of cancer and a 20% lower risk of death from any cause than meat-eaters and that on average they outlive the rest of the human population by six to ten years.

Heart Disease

Heart disease is the disease most clearly linked to dietary intake. The relationship between saturated fat intake, cholesterol and heart disease is one of the strongest links in medical science. And what is the greatest contributor of saturated fat in our diet? Meat. The cholesterol levels of lacto-ovo-vegetarians (those who don't eat meat but do eat eggs and dairy) are on average 14% lower than non-vegetarians, while the cholesterol levels for vegans (those who also don't eat eggs or dairy) is 35% lower than non-vegetarians. In fact, vegetarians have the lowest rates of heart disease of any group.

Every hour hundreds of people die of heart disease. Dr. Dean Ornish, M.D. a cardiac specialist in California, USA is the first allopathic

Vegetarians have the lowest rates of heart disease. In the UK, vegetarians outlive the rest of the population by an average of six to ten years.

doctor ever to be able to “cure” heart disease. Others have slowed the process but never before has it been truly reversed. His “cure” consists of a pure vegetarian diet, yoga, meditation and walking. However, we might think that it was the meditation, yoga or walking which made people less “stressed” and therefore maybe reversed heart disease. But, the truth is that the truly significant factor is the low-fat, vegetarian diet. Other studies have been done since then which have shown similar results of reversal of heart disease by using *only* the strict vegetarian, low-fat diet, such as a twelve-year study conducted by Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr. “In this study, patients become virtually heart attackproof,” Dr. Esselstyn showed.

Resistance to Antibiotics

A health issue less frequently discussed is the antibiotics factor. The animals are loaded up with antibiotics in order to prevent the diseases that their poor treatment causes. For example, more than 20% of the cows and pigs in these farms die prematurely due to disease and infection; 70% of pigs have pneumonia at the time they are slaughtered. The environments are so unsanitary that the animals have a very great risk of developing infections. So, antibiotics are fed to them in great quantity in their feed. When we eat the animals, we ingest the antibiotics as well.

However, bacteria are resilient. Bacteria develop resistance and immunity to antibiotics, whether we take the antibiotics themselves or simply eat the meat of an animal who has taken them. So then, when we are sick and actually need antibiotics, they do not work as the bacteria in our bodies have already developed resistances and mutations to the antibiotics through so many years of ingesting them in meat.

Each year more and more antibiotics become futile and powerless; each

*“A vegetarian diet can prevent 97% of our coronary occlusions.”
– Journal of the America Medical Association*

year there are more and more resistant strains of bacterial infections. When Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, not even one strain of *staphylococcus aureus* (one of the main and most virulent strains of bacteria which causes a wide range of serious infections) was immune to it, but he warned that overuse of the drug would lead to immunity. However, no one paid attention and large doses of penicillin have been fed to animals for decades in their feed. Each year, 24.6 million pounds of antibiotics are fed to animals purely as routine, not as a treatment for any illness. Today, 95% of *staphylococcus aureus* strains are immune to penicillin as well as other, newer antibiotics.

Hormones

Another issue has to do with hormones. The animals are fed large doses of hormones to make them fatter, bigger, and “juicier.” This is similar to body builders taking steroid hormones to become stronger, even though these hormones are dangerous to their health. We have seen many cases where athletes have suffered serious health consequences and even death from over ingestion of steroids.

Further, there is substantial evidence that over-secretion of hormones within our own bodies leads to disease. For example, over-secretion of adrenaline and stress hormones can lead to heart disease. Oversecretion of estrogen has been associated with cancer in women. Yet, when we eat meat, we are ingesting the tissues of animals who have been frequently fed carcinogenic hormones. Between 90-100% of US beef cows receive hormones. The rates vary in different parts of the world. This means that we are not only eating meat, but we are also eating hormones that our bodies don’t need and that may be putting our lives and health in jeopardy.

The Fecal Stew

Between 90-100% of US beef cows receive hormones.

When you imagine hundreds and hundreds of animals being slaughtered *per hour* in a slaughter house, you can imagine the conditions: blood, feces, mucus. In many factories, the workers kill up to 330 cows per hour. Then, the cows are slit up the center in order for their organs to be removed. However, when you are trying to do 330 of them in one hour, that leaves you only 10.9 seconds per cow. At rates such as these, mistakes happen frequently and the cows' intestines are frequently cut open during this "gutting." When that happens, their feces spill into the rest of their body cavity, contaminating the meat we will later eat for dinner. Additionally, once they have been "guttled," the cow carcasses are put all together into cold water. By doing this, the feces from one cow spill into the water and contaminate all of the other meat in the water. This water bath has been referred to as a "fecal stew".

For chickens it is similar: they are transported to the slaughterhouse crammed so tightly together in trucks that feces, blood and urine frequently are found crusted on their bodies. Then, at the time of their death, the public conscience organization Public Citizen explains, "Individual chickens are gutted [have their internal organs removed] by a machine with a metal hook, which often breaks the intestine and contaminates the cavity of the bird. The chicken carcass is then left in a bath of cold water for one hour so it will become heavier [like a sponge]. This bath is one of the leading causes of fecal contamination and the spread of pathogens." However, the industries refuse to stop this "fecal stew" bath, because that extra water weight earns them millions of dollars each year.

The researchers and scientists who work with these animals and factory farms have no excuse for the deplorable conditions. In fact, a former Dietary Association microbiologist said of chicken today, "The final product is no different than if you stuck the chicken in the toilet and then ate it."

A Full Buffet of Bacteria and Pathogens

It is not only the issue of meat becoming "contaminated" by feces, urine and blood that should worry us. Inherent in the very nature

of meat-eating is the risk of bacterial infections. Food-borne bacteria is something that can cause everything ranging from mild stomach cramps and diarrhea to hallucinations and death. The most commonly found food-borne bacteria are those in meat and egg products, including *E. coli*, *listeria*, *salmonella*, and *campylobacter*.

E.coli bacteria can cause gastrointestinal ailments, internal hemorrhaging, respiratory failure, inflammation of the heart, and death. It has been found in 50% of US cattle carcasses and in 89% of packaged ground beef in restaurants and supermarkets! *Campylobacter* is found in approximately 70% of chickens and 90% of turkeys in the USA and can cause bloody diarrhea and fever as well as lead to a life-threatening paralysis disorder. Chickens are not only infected with *campylobacter*, but also frequently with *salmonella*, a pathogen that can cause abdominal cramps, fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In fact, a 2006 study by *Consumer Reports* found that 83% of chicken in grocery stores was infected with either *campylobacter*, *salmonella*, or both (PETA). *Salmonella* is a major problem in eggs, and more than 650,000 people in the USA alone are sickened from eating *salmonella*-infected eggs each year!

Another major pathogen found in meat, chicken, eggs and dairy products is *listeria*, a bacteria that causes hospitalization in 92% of those infected and death in 20%.

With such high rates of disease, bacteria and pathogen infection, the meat industry does not take any steps to reduce the actual cause of the problem (the despicably unhygienic conditions of the factory farms and slaughterhouses). Rather, their solution is to “irradiate” the meat before it is sold. This does not remove the blood, feces, urine and mucus from the meat, but rather it exposes the meat to such high levels of radiation that theoretically it kills the bacteria. However, as the Center for Science in the Public Interest said, “Consumers want safe food, not irradiated filth.” Additionally, food irradiation exposes the food to the radioactive equivalent of 2.5 million chest x-rays! And then we eat it for dinner!

The Protein Myth

“But what about protein?” So many people ask this of vegetarians. “How can you get enough protein? Don’t you have to eat a lot of beans?” The answer is several-fold: first of all, we don’t need nearly as much protein as the meat and dairy industries would like us to believe. Protein is used to build muscle and bone. Our building and growing needs are naturally greatest when we are very young. New babies are at their greatest need of protein. Yet, what is the perfect food for newborn babies? Mother’s milk. Mother’s milk is only 5% protein! Yet, the meat and dairy council would like us to believe that as fully grown adults we need between 30-40% of our daily intake from protein. This is absurd. It is nothing less than a marketing strategy.

In fact, if you look at the advice given by unbiased, scientific organizations, you will see that their recommended percentage of protein is significantly less than that suggested by the meat and dairy industry-sponsored “research.” For example, the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* recommends 2.5% daily intake of protein, the World Health Organization recommends 4.5%, and the Food and Nutrition Board (after factoring in safety margins) recommends 6%.

Second, plant food – vegetables, grains and legumes – all have sufficient protein for our daily requirements. If we eat a balanced diet, we are sure to get enough protein. Good sources of protein are lentils, tofu, low-fat dairy products, nuts, seeds, tempeh, and peas. Many grains such as whole grain bread, pasta, and corn also add protein to our diet. For example, lentils are 29% protein, split peas are 28%, spinach is 49%, cauliflower is 40%, lettuce is 34%, and even tomatoes are 18%. Nuts range from around 12-18%.

It is only if you are malnourished (either due to starvation or due to

If we eat a varied, balanced vegetarian diet, we are sure to get enough protein.

very poor dietary habits such as eating only candy) that you would not get enough protein. As long as we are eating enough calories to maintain our weight, and not merely eating candy and soda pop, we will get enough protein.

But what about food combining? Don't we need to carefully combine our food to get enough protein?

The myth about food combining was very popular a few decades ago, but has since been both scientifically refuted as well as publicly rescinded by the very authors who popularized it. If, throughout the course of our day we eat enough variety of vegetables, legumes, and grains, we will easily get enough protein. These items do not have to be eaten always at the same meal.*

But what about iron? Won't we become anemic if we are vegetarian?

There are many good iron sources in vegetarian foods including dried beans, spinach, chard, beet greens, blackstrap molasses, bulgur, prune juice, and dried fruit. To increase the amount of iron absorbed at a meal, eat foods containing vitamin C, such as citrus fruit or juices, tomatoes, or broccoli. Cooking food in iron cookware also adds to iron intake.

What about calcium?

In addition to milk, good calcium sources are: collard greens, broccoli, kale, turnip greens, tofu prepared with calcium, and fortified soy milk.

What about Vitamin B12?

* Note - For more information on this topic, see "Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets," JADA, November 1997 and A Vegetarian Sourcebook by Keith Akers, Vegetarian Press, 1993.

Vitamin B12 is the only nutrient which comes only from animal sources. The adult recommended intake for vitamin B12 is very low. A diet containing dairy products provides adequate vitamin B12. Fortified foods, such as some brands of cereal, nutritional yeast, soy milk, or soy analogs are good non-animal sources. Check labels to discover other products that are fortified with vitamin B12. Tempeh and sea vegetables may contain vitamin B12, but their content varies and may be unreliable. To be on the safe side, if you are one of the few people who do not consume dairy products, or fortified foods regularly, you can take a non-animal derived supplement. Much research still needs to be done on vitamin B12 needs and sources.

Children and Vegetarianism

According to The American Dietetic Association, vegetarian diets can meet all nitrogen needs and amino acid requirements for growth. A vegan diet should be well planned, balanced and perhaps include fortified soy milk. All over the world there are populations of children raised in vegetarian cultures who are just as strong and healthy (if not perhaps stronger and healthier) as their non-vegetarian counterparts.

Section V:

Leather & Fur

Every day, millions of animals are killed in the name of fashion. Wherever the animals come from – whether it be Indian leather slaughterhouses, Chinese fur factory farms, European mink farms, or the wilds of the USA – the violence is horrendous. Every piece of leather, every piece of fur is the result of an incredible amount of suffering and loss of life.

What about leather? Isn't it just an unintentional by-product?

Every year, more than a billion animals are slaughtered for the skins.* Leather is made from the skins of cows, pigs, and goats, as well as exotic animals like sheep, alligators, ostriches, and kangaroos. In China, even the skins of dogs and cats are used to make leather. Many people tragically use and wear leather thoughtlessly as they assume that it is just a natural by-product when the animal is killed for other reasons or dies a natural death. Unfortunately, this is far from true. The leather industry is one of the most insidious industries – both for the incredible violence it inflicts upon the animals themselves as well as for the enormous contribution it makes to the pollution of our earth.

Leather from the US

Each year, millions of cows and other creatures are killed in the US for their skins. Most leather comes from cows raised for both beef and milk. In fact, it is the most economically important by-product of the meat industry. Before they are slaughtered, these animals are raised in cruel factory farms, enduring extreme deprivation, extreme overcrowding--often only twenty square feet being allotted per steer - and neglect, as well as bodily mutilations such as castration, branding, tail-docking, and dehorning, all without painkillers.

* Note - All facts and figures in this section on leather and fur are graciously taken from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Log-in to www.peta.org for more information.

When their time comes for slaughter, cows are shipped long distances from the factory farms to the slaughterhouses, having to endure extreme weather conditions and overcrowding which leads to injury, hunger, and thirst. In winter time, cows are often found arriving at slaughterhouses frozen by their own feces and urine to the walls of the trucks they are shipped in. Many arrive already dead.

Once reaching the slaughterhouses, cows are dragged off of the trucks--often breaking their bones--and then are stunned, hung, bled to death, and skinned. Each year, millions of cows in the US being killed for their meat and skin are skinned and cut apart while still alive, crying out in pain and sheer terror.

It is important to note here that many animals in addition to cows are killed for leather. Goats, lamb, and even dogs and cats, as well as reptiles like snakes and lizards, are killed in hideous conditions around the world for their skin.

“Snakes and lizards are skinned alive because of the belief that live flaying makes leather more supple. Kid goats are boiled alive in order to make gloves, and the skins of unborn calves and lambs – sometimes purposely aborted, others taken from slaughtered pregnant cows or ewes – are considered especially “luxurious.” (PETA)

There is no law that states the source of the leather must be mentioned on a product. Hence the term “leather” could mean anything ranging from the skin of a baby calf to the skin of a dog.

Leather from India

In a country where the cow is considered holy, it is disheartening to know that India’s leather exports are one of the largest in the world and are ten times as much as its beef exports. Despite the push by animal rights groups for the Indian government to improve the conditions in which cows and other animals are transported and are slaughtered, virtually no improvements have occurred. Although laws now exist to protect these animals in India, the laws are blatantly ignored. Unlicensed, illegal slaughterhouses continue to operate and animals

continue to be abused in horrific ways.

Tragically, Constitutional laws that have been put in place to protect cows seem to be having the opposite effect. It is against the law in India to kill healthy cows. Therefore, they are deliberately injured or poisoned prior to being killed so that – should anyone check – it is clear that they were not “healthy”.

As there is not too much extra land in India for raising and grazing these cows, cows are collected from various places to be transported for slaughter. Their journey from place of residence to place of slaughter bears a chilling resemblance to that of the Jews to concentration camps during the Holocaust. These cows are forced on “death marches” for sometimes hundreds of kilometers, tied together with ropes through their noses. When they are fortunate enough to be transported by train, they are piled on top of one another, causing suffocation and sometimes fatal wounds, not to mention searing thirst in the Indian heat.

“During the marches, cattle collapse from hunger, exhaustion, injury and despair. Handlers force them along by snapping their tails at each joint and rubbing tobacco, chilies and salt into their eyes. Each snap brings pain analogous to that of breaking a finger. They are never offered food or even as much as a drop of water.” (PETA India)

India law states that not more than six cattle can be transported within one truck at a time, yet this is often blatantly ignored. Cows are routinely trampled and gored in these overcrowded trucks. By the time they reach the slaughterhouses, many are so sick and injured that they must be dragged inside. Those who make it to the filthy slaughterhouses still living are likely to have their legs snapped off, their skin removed and their throats slit while they are still fully conscious and in full view of one another--a horrifying sight for these loving, motherly creatures. No anesthesia is used.

Leather from China

China is world’s largest exporter of leather. Even “nice” leather

products such as Italian shoes or hand bags have their raw materials sent from China. Cattle, sheep and other animals, as well as approximately two million cats and dogs are killed each year in China for their skin. Leather is usually not labeled as to which animal the skin comes from, so when you wear leather, there is no way of telling whose skin you are wearing.

In China, there are no laws guaranteeing the humane treatment of these animals. Thus, these animals endure harsh lives and are then routinely cut apart and skinned alive.

The Effect of Leather on the Environment

First, raising animals for leather takes a lot of the earth's natural resources: pastureland for grazing, land to grow the food, water, and fossil fuels. Then, the amount of excrement from the animals is so much that the EPA has deemed livestock pollution to be the greatest threat to our waterways. The methane produced from livestock waste is now even said to be one of the greatest contributors to global warming.

Aside from the violence to the animals themselves, tanneries (factories which produce the final "product" of leather) are one of the greatest environmental polluters. To turn skin into leather, tanneries have to dump large amounts of dangerous chemicals such as mineral salts, formaldehyde, arsenic, coal-tar derivatives, and various oils, dyes, and finishes--some of which are cyanide-based--into the skins. In the U.S., leather is chrome-tanned; all wastes containing chromium are deemed hazardous by the EPA.

The production of leather is affecting people too. Rates of cancer, such as lung cancer and leukemia, and other diseases are much higher in those who work in or live by tanneries, as they are constantly exposed to the toxic chemicals used to make leather.

The tanneries on the banks of the holy Ganges river continue to dump literally tons of toxic waste into Her waters daily. The water of the Ganges downstream from the tanneries has been shown to have extraordinarily high levels of lead, cyanide and formaldehyde. Each

of these is a poison in its own right. Taken together they are a veritable cocktail of death for the fish in the rivers as well as the animals living along the banks who drink the water. Further, as tens of thousands of acres of farmland are irrigated by untreated water from the Ganges, untold millions of people are being exposed to vegetables and grains grown in a toxic soup. Rates of myriad diseases including cancer, asthma, birth defects, skin diseases and gastro-intestinal diseases are found at significantly higher rates among the people who drink the water and eat the food grown in these fields.

What About Fur?

Fur is perhaps one of the cruelest practices inflicted on animals in the world today. Whether it came from an animal trapped in the wild or from an animal raised on a fur farm, the animal who wanted to live was subjected to incredible pain before its death.

Fur Farms

85% of fur used for clothing comes from fur factory farms. Animals on fur farms are forced to live their entire lives in cramped, filthy wire cages which are never cleaned. In order to maximize profits, thousands are housed together in dark, filthy sheds, where they are infected with the same diseases that factory-farm animals face. Alternatively, they are lined up in cages outdoors with hardly any room to move about, forced to endure freezing cold, pelting rain, and scorching heat. Disease and parasites run rampant on fur farms, and most of the animals are never treated.

On fur farms, animals are often driven crazy, both from the rough handling they endure and their inability to do anything natural – walk, run, build homes, hunt, meet mates – because of their confinement. Often, mother animals, who have nowhere to hide while giving birth, kill their babies as soon as they deliver. Animals chew on their own limbs and skin, throw their bodies against the bars, frantically pace and circle their cages, and even attack and eat their own cagemates.

There are no federal humane slaughter laws for animals being raised

on fur farms, and fur farms continually refuse to stop practicing even the most horrendous, cruel killing methods. In order to keep the pelts of the animals intact, these animals are killed in incredibly violent ways, such as suffocation, neck-breaking, bludgeoning, hanging, electrocution, gas, and poison. Before they are skinned, animals are thrown to the ground and beaten. Many animals are skinned alive, kicking and fighting for life. One PETA investigation describes:

“When they begin to cut the skin and fur from an animal’s leg, the free limbs kick and writhe. Workers stomp on the necks and heads of animals who struggle too hard to allow a clean cut...When the fur is finally peeled off over the animals’ heads, their hairless, bloody bodies are thrown onto a pile of those who have gone before them. Some are still alive, breathing in ragged gasps and blinking slowly. Some on the animals’ hearts are still beating five to ten minutes after they are skinned. One investigator recorded a skinned raccoon dog on the heap of carcasses who had enough strength to lift his bloodied head and stare into the camera.”

Other methods of executing animals on fur farms are “genital electrocution,” a process in which animals either have clamps put on them or rods forced into their mouths and anuses and are then electrocuted, causing them to go into cardiac arrest while fully conscious, and poisoning with a chemical called strychnine, a poison that paralyzes the animals’ muscles with painful cramps, causing them to suffocate.

China is one of the world’s largest fur exporters, and more than half the fur in the USA comes from China. In China, there are no penalties for the abuse of animals. Thus, the animals on fur farms have absolutely no protection. Fur produced in Chinese fur farms is often deliberately mislabeled, thus when you wear fur, you may actually be wearing the skin of a dog, a cat, or some other beloved creature. In fact, PETA found, “Many of the animals [being sent to fur farms or slaughterhouses] still [have] collars on, a sign that they were once someone’s beloved companion, stolen to be made into a fur coat.” These animals are transported long distances in deplorable conditions from fur farms to their place of slaughter. Up to 8,000 animals are loaded into each truck, sometimes with up to twenty animals inside one cage alone. Cats and

dogs have to endure harsh weather conditions, lack of food or water, open wounds, disease, all the problems that come from confinement such as insanity, and of course death. Every year millions of dogs and cats in China are bludgeoned, hung, bled to death, and sometimes skinned alive for their fur.

Animals Caught in the Wild

Animals caught in the wild are often caught in torturous traps, dying slowly over a period of many days from loss of blood, shock, dehydration, frostbite, infection, and extreme weather conditions, as well as attacks from other predators whom they are not able to fight. Each year, millions of raccoons, coyotes, wolves, bobcats, opossums, nutria, beavers, otters, and other fur-bearing animals are killed by trappers.

To catch these animals, steel-jaw traps are used, slamming down on the animal's leg, cutting down to the bone. Animals, especially mother animals with babies, often panic from the incredible pain and attempt to chew off their own limbs to be free, eventually becoming exhausted and succumbing to exposure, frostbite, shock, and death. This trap, although deemed "inhumane" by the American Veterinary Medical Association and slowly being banned in many states in the USA as well as the entire European Union, is still the most widely-used in trapping.

Other forms of traps used are pole traps, underwater traps, and Conibear traps. Pole traps are a form of the steel-jaw trap, but are placed in a tree on a pole. Thus, when animals are caught, they are hoisted into the air, left to hang from their caught limb for hours or even days until the trapper comes back to kill them using incredibly methods such as strangling, beating, and stomping (in order to keep their pelt intact). Underwater traps are used to catch creatures like beavers, otters, muskrats, and nutria. These traps catch the animals underwater and force them to drown, a torturous process that can take more than nine minutes. Conibear traps catch animals by crushing their necks, applying ninety pounds of pressure per square inch,

forcing the animals caught to suffocate. This can take anywhere from three to eight agonizing minutes to happen.

Besides the animals being killed for their fur, many other animals – both wild animals like deer, birds, and even endangered species to domestic animals like dogs and cats – are killed each year by these traps. Trappers actually refer to these animals as “trash kills,” as they have no economic value and are thus useless to the trappers. Some states in the USA are beginning to have regulations on how these traps are used and how often they are checked, but these regulations range anywhere from every twenty-four hours to one week. Other states have absolutely no regulations at all.

In addition to these traps, the wild fur industry uses many other cruel methods to kill animals. Seals are bludgeoned repeatedly with clubs tipped with metal hooks, and bears are shot at point-blank range or caught in traps to die slowly, all because someone wants to wear their fur.

The Environmental Effect of Fur

Today, many in the fur industry are claiming that fur is “eco-friendly” and “natural.” However, when one looks at the effect the industry is having on the planet’s animals and environment, one can see that the fur industry is anything but “eco-friendly.” Thousands of animals are housed together in factory farms in order to maximize profits, and environmental regulations, especially on the farms in China, are often ignored.

First, there is the waste produced from the animals themselves. The amount of feces that comes out of fur factory farms is incredible. For example, one mink alone produces fourty-four pounds of feces in its lifetime, adding up to over one million pounds of feces produced annually by mink farms in the US alone. In Denmark, more than two million minks are killed each year, releasing more than 8,000 pounds of ammonia from their feces into the atmosphere.

After the animals are slaughtered, the process their fur undergoes to become a fur coat is extremely damaging to the environment. A dangerous combination of chemicals such as ammonia, formaldehyde, hydrogen peroxide, chromates, bleaching agents, and various salts are loaded into the furs in order to dye and preserve them, to keep them from rotting in the buyers' closets. Then, the waste from these chemicals are often dumped into our waterways.

Further polluting the earth, the left-over skinned carcasses of the animals are dumped into landfills, their bodies often full the poisons used to kill them.

In addition to polluting our planet, fur industries are also using much of the world's precious resources. For example, producing a fur coat from factory-farmed animals takes more than fifteen times as much energy as producing a faux-fur coat.

Let Us Stop the Cruelty

With innumerable synthetic alternatives to leather and fur for our clothes, shoes and bags, to continue to purchase leather or fur for our personal use is a clear act of violence. An online search for "vegan," "non-leather," or "faux fur" footwear, purses, belts, clothing, and other items turns up tens of thousands of options around the world. There is no product for which an equally suitable, non-leather, non-fur alternative is not available. It just requires an effort, a focus and a commitment to make the choice for non-violence and sustainability.

Section VI:

A Vegetarian of All the Senses

We tend to think of food as just that which enters our mouth. However, we also “eat” through our eyes, we “eat” through our ears, and we “eat” through our senses.

I frequently hear people tell me that they are vegetarian, that they don’t eat anything which is a product of violence. Then, they go out and they watch horror movies, or look at pornography, or sit and engage in idle, derogatory gossip about others. These actions and “food” enter us and affect us just as what we eat.

Close your eyes for a moment and just let the thoughts flow. You will notice that the thoughts which come are those related to our daily lives, the people we associate with, the things we’ve seen or heard, and the places we’ve been. Sometimes we think we can move about unaffected by what we see and hear. We say, “But it’s only a movie,” or, “It’s just harmless gossip.” Yet, these are the things which actually determine our entire mental state.

How often do we hear children repeating words, phrases, or songs that they hear on TV or in the movies? How can we possibly expect that they will memorize all the words and yet be unaffected by the violence?

Everything we experience, whether directly or vicariously (as in a movie or television), leaves a distinct impression upon our being. These impressions, or *sanskaras*, later dictate the way we feel, the choices we make, and the lives we live.

We would never dump mud – or even cheap-quality gasoline – in our brand new car. We would not feed heavy, greasy, poorly-cooked food to an athlete who was just about to run in the Olympics. So how can we so nonchalantly dump poison – through every organ – into our bodies?

There is a famous picture of Mahatma Gandhiji which used to be hung up all over India. It was Gandhiji sitting with three monkeys. One had its hands over its eyes; another had its hands over its mouth; and the third had its hands over its ears. The caption was, "See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil." I would add even a fourth monkey with its hands on its head: "Think no evil." Then, we will really be living a pure, divine life.

Section VII:

Conclusion

Across the industrialized world, everyone is talking about what we can do to save the planet. Ecological conservation has become a household word. There are thousands of programs dedicated to feeding the millions of starving children. Yet, while we may talk about wanting to save the planet or feed the hungry, these words are empty if our actions are in stark contrast. We may not be able to carry crates of food to the deserts of Africa. We may not be able to re-plant every tree that has been cut down in the forest. But, we can refuse to allow it to continue. We can refuse to partake of the cruelty. We can strive to make, at least our lives and our actions pure and divine.

Instead of a token donation to a hunger campaign or to an environmental organization, let us make our every day, every meal, one that protects not only our own health, but the health of our planet and the health of every person on it.

Famous Vegetarians

ACTORS

Hema Malini	Gwyneth Paltrow	Casey Affleck
Pamela Anderson	Imran Khan	Kate Winslet
Betty White	Joaquin Phoenix	Russell Brand
Debbie Arnold	Natalie Portman	Sonakshi Sinha
Rosanna Arquette	Amrita Rao	Jenna Dewan
Amitabh Bachchan	Jerry Seinfeld	Kristen Bell
Alec Baldwin	Brooke Shields	Alia Bhatt
Brigitte Bardot	Alicia Silverstone	Sonam Kapoor
Drew Barrymore	Liv Tyler	Demi Moore
Kim Basinger	Jacqueline Fernandez	Portia De Rossi
Angela Bassett	John Abraham	Anne Hathaway
Orlando Bloom	Lara Dutta	Toby Maguire
Kirk Cameron	Sarah Silverman	Olivia Wilde
Rachel Leigh Cook	Danielle Brooks	Kangana Ranaut
James Cromwell	Christine Applegate	Emily Deschanel
Ellen DeGeneres	Maggie Q	Anna Paquin
Madhuri Dixit	Edie Falco	Lea Michele
David Duchovny	Jessica Chastain	Chloe Grace Moretz
Michael J. Fox	Johnny Galecki	Kate McKinnon
Michelle Pfeiffer	Mayim Bialik	Esha Gupta
Richard Gere	Kristin Wiig	Anushka Sharma
Woody Harrelson	Josh Hutcherson	Ellen Page
Anne Hathaway	Liam Hemsworth	Evanna Lynch
Dustin Hoffman	Jared Leto	Bellamy Young
Shahid Kapoor	Ruby Rose	Ashley Judd
Tobey Maguire	Laverne Cox	Diane Keaton
Alyssa Milano	Jessica Lange	Daryl Hannah
Kevin Nealon	Peter Dinklage	Forest Whitaker
Brad Pitt	Aamir Khan	
Alec Baldwin	James Cromwell	

MUSICIANS

India.Arie	Prince
Joan Baez	Adele
Elvis Costello	Morrissey
Bob Dylan	Shakira
Melissa Etheridge	Grace Slick
George Harrison	Ringo Starr
Joan Jett	Alanis Morissette
Erykah Badu	Shania Twain
Anthony Kiedis	Carrie Underwood
Stevie Wonder	Ariana Grande
Ellie Goulding	Miley Cyrus
B.B. King	Colbie Caillat
Gladys Knight	Barry White
Lenny Kravitz	Moby
Madonna	Sia
John and Yoko Lennon	RZA
Bob Marley	Bryan Adams
Chris Martin	Thom Yorke
Paul McCartney	Travis Barker
Don McLean	Mya
Alanis Morissette	Dweezil, Moon, Ahmet, Diva
Sinead O'Connor	Zappa
Ozzy Osborne	

OTHER FAMOUS VEGETARIANS

Albert Einstein	Ellen DeGeneres
Bill Clinton (US President)	Russell Simmons
Al Gore (US Vice President)	James Cameron
Michael Eisner (CEO of Disney)	Ricky Gervais
Bill Ford (CEO of Ford Motor)	Christie Brinkley
Steve Jobs (CEO of Apple)	Venus Williams
Leonardo da Vinci	Gisele Bundchen
Kyrie Irving	

Reasons to Be Vegetarian

- If you have ever loved an animal
- If you believe in non-violence
- If you cannot give life,
- for then you have no right to take life away
- If you want to prevent heart disease
- If you want to prevent cancer
- If you want to avoid bacterial contamination
- If you have compassion for living beings
- If you don't want your pet to end up as cow food
- when he or she dies
- If you want to have inner peace and calm
- If you want to save water
- If you want to protect the rainforests
- If you care about the atmosphere
- If you want to conserve energy
- If you want to help the hungry
- If you want to help poverty
- If you want to eat sattvic food (meat is not sattvic)
- If you want to prevent diabetes
- If you want to prevent strokes
- If you want to prevent constipation and bowel diseases
- If you want to live a pure and clean life,
- both outside and inside
- If you want to live longer
- If you want to live an honest life
- If you want to have a clean ecological footprint
- If you respect sentient life

If you want to feel less aggression, anger or restlessness in your life
If you want to help feed starving children
If you want to have a healthy digestive tract
If you don't want to eat hormones and antibiotics
If you want to live a spiritual life
If you want to be a Yogi
If you want to lower your cholesterol
If you want to lower your blood pressure
If you want to lose weight
If you want future generations to have trees to climb in
If you want to live in accordance with human's natural systems
If you want to make fullest use of our human birth
If you have compassion
If you care about the future
If you want to help end world hunger
If you don't want to contribute to global warming
If you think it is wrong to cause pain to conscious, feeling creatures
If you have mercy
If you want to take a stand for the environment
If you don't want to financially support the factory farmers
who torture animals
If you want your body to be a true, pure temple for God
If you want to love and respect all of God's creatures
If you do not want to make your body a graveyard.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

His Holiness Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji's motto in life is, "In the Service of God and humanity." **Selflessly dedicated to the welfare of all, He leads, directs and inspires numerous, wide-scale service initiatives.** Touched by the hand of God at the tender age of eight, Pujya Swamiji left His home to live a life devoted to God and humanity, spending His youth in silence, meditation and austerities high in the Himalayas. At the age of seventeen, after nine years of unbroken, intense *sadhana*, He returned from the forest—under the orders of His guru—and obtained an academic education to parallel His spiritual one. Pujya Swamiji has master's degrees in Sanskrit and Philosophy as well as fluency in many languages.

Pujya Swamiji is President and Spiritual Head of Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, India, one of the largest interfaith, spiritual institutions in India. Under His divine inspiration and leadership, Parmarth Niketan has become a sanctuary known across the globe as one filled with grace, beauty, serenity and true divine bliss. Pujya Swamiji has also increased several-fold the humanitarian activities undertaken by Parmarth Niketan (www.parmarth.org). Now, the ashram is not only a spiritual haven for those who visit, but it also provides education, training, and health care to those in need.

He is the Co-Founder of Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA), the world's first-ever international interfaith initiative which brings together the world's faiths as allies in ensuring every child around the world has access to safe, life-giving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). (www.washalliance.org; www.facebook.com/washalliance)

He is the Founder of:

1. **Ganga Action Parivar (GAP)**, a global family dedicated to the preservation of the River Ganga and Her tributaries in their free-flowing and pristine state. GAP work includes everything ranging

from solid waste management to wastewater management as well as awareness and educational outreach to make this vision of a clean and free-flowing River Ganga and Her tributaries a reality for all. (www.gangaaction.org; www.facebook.com/gangaaction)

2. **Divine Shakti Foundation (DSF)**, which is dedicated to the holistic well being of women, their children, and orphaned/abandoned children, and to all of Mother Nature. DSF runs and sponsors free schools, women's vocational training programs, orphanages/gurukuls, frequent free medical camps, animal care programs, a rural development program, and innumerable other humanitarian projects. (www.divineshaktifoundation.org; www.facebook.com/divineshaktifoundation)
3. **Interfaith Humanitarian Network/Project Hope**, an organization dedicated to disaster relief which has been active in providing both short term, immediate relief as well as long-term permanent relief to victims of the 2004 Asian Tsunami, 2013 floods in Uttarakhand India and 2015 earthquake in Nepal (www.interfaithhumanitarian.org)
4. **International Yoga Festival** at Parmarth Niketan (Rishikesh) held annually from the 1st -7th of March. In 2018, we welcomed more than 2000 participants from over 100 countries from all over the globe and each year the festival draws countless NRI's back to India to the birthplace of yoga to truly imbibe its divine nectar at the source, on the holy banks of Mother Ganga, in the lap of the Himalayas. (www.internationalyogafestival.org)
5. **India Heritage Research Foundation (IHRF)**, an international, non-profit, humanitarian foundation which just say the launching the first-ever International Edition of the Encyclopedia of Hinduism (www.theencyclopediaofhinduism.com) as well as ashrams and medical clinics in the sacred land of Mansarovar and Mt. Kailash in Tibet. He is the founder and inspiration behind the famous Hindu Jain temple in Pittsburgh and the Minto Shiva temple in Sydney Australia and has played a crucial role in the founding of innumerable temples and Indian cultural centres all across the world.

He is a member of the Advisory Board of KAICIID (King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue), which is an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to promote globally the use of dialogue to prevent and resolve conflict and to enhance understanding and cooperation among different cultures and religions.

Pujya Swamiji's religion is unity, and he has been a leader in numerous international, inter-faith summits and parliaments, including at the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and the Parliament of Religions as well as with Religions for Peace, KAICIID, the Hindu-Jewish Summit in Jerusalem, the Hindu-Christian dialogue by the Vatican and so many others. He is also a leader of frequent world peace pilgrimages across the world.

Pujya Swamiji is the recipient of innumerable awards, including the **World Peace Ambassador Award, Mahatma Gandhi Lifetime Peace & Service Award** presented by the President of India, **Hindu of the Year Award, Prominent Personality Award** by Lions' Club, **Best Citizens of India Award**, the **Uttaranchal Ratan Award, Award for Extraordinary Service and Vision** by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, **Utkrishtta Samman Award, Surya Ratna National Lifetime Achievement Award, Devarishi Award, Bhaskar Award, Bharat Nirman Award, Award of Kentucky Colonel and Award of Key to the City of Louisville, KY, International Interfaith Harmony Award** by WorldWide Sikh Dharma Association, **International Peace Award**, and many more.

However, Pujya Swamiji seems unaffected by this incredible list of accomplishments and remains a pious child of God, owning nothing, draped in saffron robes, living a life of true renunciation. His days in Rishikesh are spent offering service to those around him. Thousands travel from across the globe simply to sit in his presence, to receive his "darshan." He travels the world, bringing the light of wisdom, inspiration, upliftment and the divine touch to thousands across the world.

www.PujyaSwamiji.org

   /PujyaSwamiji

 /ParmarthNiketan

PARMARTH NIKETAN ASHRAM RISHIKESH (HIMALAYAS), INDIA



H.H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji is the President of Parmarth Niketan Ashram in Rishikesh, India, a true, spiritual haven, lying on the holy banks of Mother Ganga, in the lap of the lush Himalayas.

Parmarth Niketan is the largest ashram in Rishikesh. Parmarth Niketan provides its thousands of pilgrims – who come from all corners of the Earth – with a clean, pure and sacred atmosphere as well as abundant, beautiful gardens. With over 1,000 rooms, the facilities are a perfect blend of modern amenities and traditional, spiritual simplicity.

The daily activities at Parmarth Niketan include morning universal prayers, daily *yoga* and meditation classes, daily *satsang* and lecture programs, *kirtan*, as well as full Nature Cure, and Ayurvedic treatment available on the premises.

The world-renowned Ganga Aarti held every night at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh draws people of all faiths from across the world to enjoy a serene sunset ceremony of song, inspiration and lights.

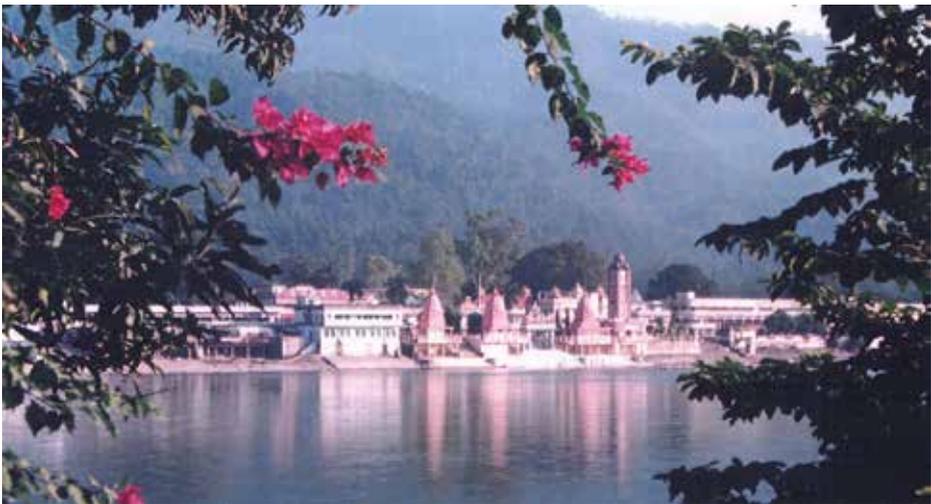
Additionally, there are frequently special cultural and spiritual programs given by visiting revered saints, acclaimed musicians, spiritual and social leaders and others.

Further, there are frequent camps in which pilgrims come from across the world to partake in intensive courses on *yoga*, meditation, *pranayama*, stress management, acupressure, Reiki and other ancient Indian sciences. Parmarth Niketan hosts the annual International Yoga Festival from the 1st-7th of March every year. (www.InternationalYogaFestival.org)

Parmarth Niketan's charitable activities and services make no distinctions on the basis of caste, color, gender, creed or nationality. Instead they emphasize unity, harmony, peace, global integrity, health, and the holistic connection between the body, mind and spirit.

**True to its name, Parmarth Niketan is dedicated to the welfare of all.
Everything is open and free to all.**

www.Parmarth.org
f t i y /ParmarthNiketan



INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL



Parmarth Niketan's world-famous International Yoga Festival is a beautiful time of seeing the world come together in the name of yoga, or union, on the holy banks of Mother Ganga.

In 2018, over 2000 people from 100 countries came to learn asana, pranayama, kriyas and meditation from over 80 presenters from 20 different nations.

Each year, International Yoga Festival provides participants with darshan, satsang and inspiring discourses by revered saints and yogis, who fill the atmosphere with *bhakti yoga* (devotion) and *gyan yoga* (wisdom).





*To learn more about International Yoga Festival,
please visit www.InternationalYogaFestival.org.*



GLOBAL INTERFAITH WASH ALLIANCE



Since the dawn of history, faith has provided a foundation from which social norms develop. It is to faith leaders that billions are drawn to in times of joy and sorrow, as well as in the search for inner meaning. As teachers to the masses, the words of faith leaders motivate, persuade and enable. Through their speech and actions, they can bring about change in ways that others, quite simply, cannot.

An estimated 5 billion people across the world are members of religious communities, underscoring the crucial role religious leaders can play in addressing seemingly intractable problems – such as access to safe water and sanitation.

The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (WASH) is the world's first initiative that is engaging the planet's many faiths as allies in efforts to create a world where every human being has access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and proper hygiene.

Launched at UNICEF World Headquarters in New York during the United

Nations General Assembly Meetings, under sponsorship of USAID and the Government of the Netherlands, GIWA was Co-Founded by interfaith leader, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, the Founder of Ganga Action Parivar, Divine Shakti Foundation and India Heritage Research Foundation, and President of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh.

GIWA's many programs include:

The Swachhta Kranti:

GIWA feels that nothing short of a behaviour change revolution is required in order to ensure healthy, sustainable WASH for nearly half of India's population. Our compelling faith-based *Swachhta Kranti* (Clean Revolution) campaign has been designed to do just that. Through the inspirational words of beloved faith leaders, populations that had never dreamed of building and using toilets are being motivated to embrace improved sanitation and more. As they do so, they join GIWA in expanding the *Swachhta Kranti* campaign amongst their friends, neighbours and others through their own endeavours and by participating in GIWA's grand processions, mass pledges, Sanitation & Hygiene Rallies and more.



World Toilet College: GIWA's World Toilet College offers classroom and outreach trainings that cover the entire range of sanitation topics. So far, our World Toilet College provided more than 3000 people with knowledge

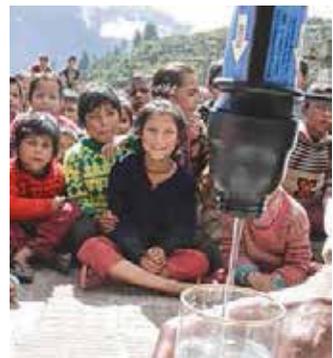
and skills to directly address India's most pressing sanitation needs. Courses offered included Toilet Building, Sanitation Ambassador Training



Programme, Hygiene in Schools, Student Led Total Sanitation, Healthy Homes and Families, Professional Toilet Cleaning, and various capacity building programmes on WASH for key stakeholders such as SHG members, grassroots-level volunteers and natural leaders of communities.

WASH on Wheels and Swachh Bharat Yatras:

Dedicated social workers, volunteers and performers are providing outreach in festivals, events, streets, slums and villages through GIWA's unique WASH on Wheels programme and Swachh Bharat Yatras. WASH on Wheels is an inspired mobile educational platform which features videos of foremost faith leaders promoting the use of toilets, as well as street theatre, puppet shows, sanitation walks and more. With two trucks in constant use, a full-fledged outreach team motivates people of all ages through interactive activities geared towards promoting lasting change.



WaterSchool: Providing classes within two schools a day, 6 days a week, GIWA's WaterSchool programme trains and motivates teachers and students to learn the principles of sustainable water, sanitation and



hygiene for becoming social change agents. WaterSchool also offers teacher's workshops, large-scale student programmes, and the provision of WASH needs including toilets, hand-washing stations, clean water and more. So far, thousands of teachers and students have been sensitized through our classroom programmes, workshops and practical demonstrations.



Women for WASH: GIWA's Women for WASH Initiative is enabling women from villages and slums to become WASH entrepreneurs. Together, they are assembling to wage their own local Revolution against

pollution, hardship and disease by helping to ensure their neighbours embrace, and have access to toilets, clean water, and more.

To enable disadvantaged women to become WASH entrepreneurs, GIWA officially launched special toilet building classes under its Women for WASH Initiative. This was accompanied by other capacity building trainings to enable these women to become more involved in making their communities Open Defecation Free.



www.WashAlliance.org

 /WashAlliance

 /Wash_Alliance

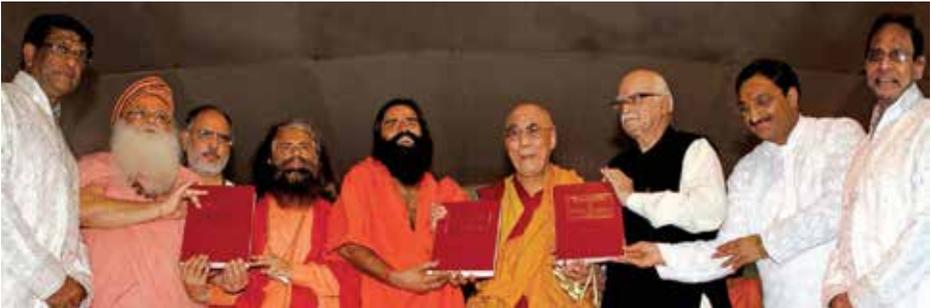
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HINDUISM



Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji conceived of the idea for an Encyclopedia of Hinduism in 1987 when He was in Pittsburgh, USA, after establishing the Hindu-Jain Temple there. In order to bring the vision to fruition, He founded and chaired the India Heritage Research Foundation (IHRF). Over the next 25 years, IHRF, with more than 1000 scholars from around the world, led by

Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, Late Dr. Pandit Vidya Niwas Mishra and Dr. Kapil Kapoor, compiled the first Encyclopedia of Hinduism in history.

Eleven gorgeous volumes, approximately 7000 entries and thousands of illustrations, comprise the recently-completed and launched encyclopedia. The *Encyclopedia* marks the first time that the urgent need was met for an authentic, objective and insightful well of information, capturing both the staples and the spices of Indian tradition and culture. It is a significant landmark, encompassing the entire spectrum of the land called Bharat.



The Encyclopedia was previewed and blessed in India by HH the Dalai Lama and many revered saints during the Maha Kumbh Mela in Haridwar in 2010. The academic launch of the international edition, published by Mandala Earth Publications of California, USA, was hosted by the University of South Carolina, Columbia, USA in the summer of 2013 in the presence of the Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley, and many other dignitaries and internationally-esteemed scholars. The first set in India was presented to the Hon'ble President of India in a grand function in June 2014 in the presence of revered faith leaders, national leaders, social leaders and celebrities.

The Encyclopedia was presented to the Hon'ble President of India HE Pranab Mukherjee at a glorious function in June 2014 by revered interfaith religious leaders, distinguished cabinet ministers, and dignitaries.

In October 2014, the Encyclopedia was officially launched in India by the hands of the Hon'ble Vice President of India Dr. Hamid Ansari & Mananiya Dr. Mohan Bhagwat with renowned religious leaders and dignitaries. On the 27 October 2014, the Encyclopedia was launched in London by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of England Mr. David Cameron.

For more information, visit www.theencyclopediaofhinduism.com.



DIVINE SHAKTI FOUNDATION

*"Do Divine! Be Divine! It is not enough to just BE divine,
one must also DO divine!"*

*"We must all spread the message that women and girls
are divine and worthy of worship."*

- Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, founder of
Divine Shakti Foundation

The Divine Shakti Foundation is dedicated to the holistic well being of women, their children, and orphaned/abandoned children, and to all of Mother Nature and Mother Earth. Our programs include free schools for children, women's vocational training programs, women's empowerment programs and international events bringing women (and men) together to discover and nurture their oneness with the Divine Feminine.



Schools, vocational training and empowerment programs: poverty, illiteracy and lack of training are tragically common in India. With in-

creasing population, basic education and marketable skills have become absolute necessities in order to subsist in even the smallest communities. Hence, those who lack this education and training go to sleep hungry each night. DSF is dedicated to providing them with the best chance possible to live a life free from destitution. The Divine Shakti Foundation's programs encompass children's schools for both girls and boys as well as computer centers where they learn practice and theory, as well as specialized vocational training and empowerment centers for girls and young women.





Animal Seva

Recognizing that the Divine does not just lie within our temples and our other holy places, but also in the Creation itself, Divine Shakti Foundation dedicated is to providing care and shelter to all of Mother Nature.

Cow Care: Plans are on to build *gaushalas* to provide proper veterinary care, shelter and food to the stray cows who currently roam the streets of India.



Street Dogs: Divine Shakti Foundation teamed with Karma Animal Trust of Siberia to bring healthcare to the street dogs of Rishikesh. For several months of the year, veterinarians and technicians offered their time, talent and technical expertise to sterilize primarily male dogs, vaccinate and treat street dogs and cats. As most street puppies and kittens die from significant diseases, motorbike accidents or hunger, it is very important to control the population so that they are healthy and happy.

www.DivineShaktiFoundation.org
 *[/DivineShaktiFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/DivineShaktiFoundation)*



GANGA ACTION PARIVAR

The holy, life-giving Ganga is one of the most at-risk rivers in the world. Every day, it is polluted by some three billion liters of sewage and chemical waste, threatening the health and lives of millions. Its ecology, containing some of the world's rarest plants and wildlife, is under similar threat.

On April 4th, 2010 by the hands of H.H. the Dalai Lama, H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati, former Deputy Prime Minister Hon'ble Shri L.K. Advani, former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand



Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Major General B.C. Khanduri and many revered saints and dignitaries, Ganga Action Parivar was officially launched at Parmarth Niketan Ashram in Rishikesh at a special "Sparsh Ganga" ("Divine Touch of Ganga") function, an event to raise awareness about the need for collective and holistic, solution-based action to address the crucial issues facing the holy river. Since then, hundreds of supporters and family members have been mobilized, coming together to find solutions to the problems facing Ganga and Her tributaries.

Activities of Ganga Action Parivar range from working with top government leaders and institutions to create and implement sustainable, environmentally-friendly solutions for the various, complex problems facing Ganga, to working at the grassroots levels.



GAP's 6T's Program

When Pujya Swamiji, Founder of Ganga Action Parivar, completed 60 years of life, everyone wanted to give Him birthday presents. He however declared that there is nothing He wants, nothing He needs, but only the gift of people committing themselves to the "6Ts" program, which signifies six-ty years of life.

Ganga Action Parivar's Six Ts program provides a foundation for a cleaner, greener, more sustainable Ganga River Basin. Through its comprehensive, interlinked initiatives, the people, animals and ecology of the watershed are enabled to not only survive, but thrive.



In so doing, GAP has identified six categories of outreach that are designed to complement each other: Toilets, Trash, Trees, Taps, Tracks and Tigers.

Toilets

Over 500 million people live near the Ganga River and its tributaries.

Many have no access to sanitary facilities. Populations are forced to use the Ganga as a toilet out of necessity, fouling its waters and potentially spreading disease. Our work includes both provision of toilets as well as wide scale awareness raising campaigns.

Trees

Trees are crucial to life. Yet, to meet the needs of rapidly-expanding populations, far too many trees have been cut down, robbing the Ganga River Basin of its key benefactor. GAP is planting and maintaining thousands of trees as a direct response.



Tigers

Under the Six T's program, "Tigers" represents all endangered animals inhabiting the Ganga River Basin. Working side-by-side with conservation groups, GAP provides education and awareness programs, enabling populations and visitors to become protectors of their own environments, enabling nature's creatures to flourish as they should.

Taps

Access to clean and safe drinking water is a basic human right. Yet, every year in India alone, 400,000 children die, and many more are sickened,

by water-borne diseases such as typhoid, dysentery and cholera. Adding to the problem are contaminated and shrinking ground water tables alongside untamed pollution in the Ganga. GAP works to provide taps to the rural poor, as well as water filtration systems, while also teaching skills in proper water use management.



Trash

In the Ganga River Basin, trash is often disposed of directly into or near the river, endangering wildlife, plants, and populations, while also spoiling the appearance of what should be pristine waters. GAP works with local populations, municipalities, and administrators to ensure proper trash disposal, including rubbish bins and recycling.

Additionally, GAP provides mass awareness campaigns, aimed at motivating populations and visitors as to how to properly dispose of their waste before it reaches the Ganga.



Tracks

The Indian train network is one of the most impressive in the world and also one of the dirtiest. GAP is providing the Ministry of Railways with concepts and ideas for new initiatives for cleaning and greening the land alongside the rail tracks. GAP also helps to advise regarding the improvement of sanitary facilities within India's trains and train stations.

www.GangaAction.org

  /GangaAction

MOUNT KAILASH/MANSAROVAR TIBET ASHRAMS

Under the guidance, inspiration and vision of Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, IHRF has built three ashrams and a medical clinic in the holy land of Lake Mansarovar and Mt. Kailash in Tibet.

Prior to this project, there were no indoor lodging facilities nor medical facilities for hundreds of kilometers. People frequently suffered from basic, treatable ailments due to lack of medical attention. Therefore, after undertaking a *yatra* to the sacred land in 1998, Pujya Swamiji took a vow that – by the grace of God – He would do something for the local people (who didn't even have running water) and for all the pilgrims who travel there.

In July 2003, we inaugurated the Parmarth Kailash-Mansarovar Ashram on the banks of Lake Mansarovar, the first ashram ever in this holy land. There are 20 rooms with 5-8 beds each. Additionally there are two large halls for katha, meditation and satsang, which can also serve as additional dormitories. In 2004, a team of nearly 40 doctors and medical assistants traveled from USA in the first free medical camp in Mansarovar and Mt. Kailash.



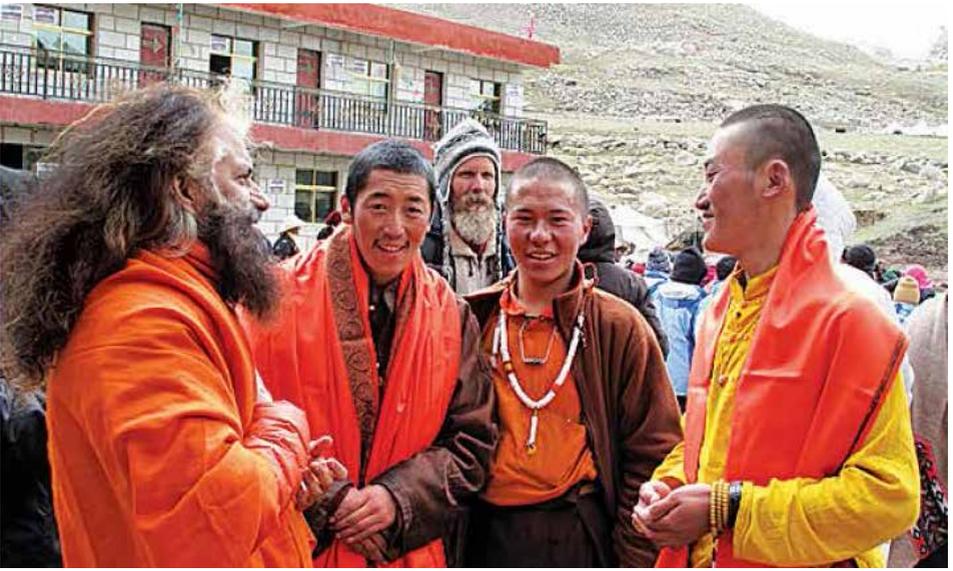


There are now three Parmarth Kailash-Mansarovar ashrams, on the banks of Lake Mansarovar, in Paryang, Tibet and in Dirapuk at a height of nearly 17,000 feet, on the sacred Mt. Kailash parikrama route. Dirapuk is the place where all yatris who are undertaking the parikrama spend their first night, 20 km

beyond the starting point. It is the location from which the darshan of Kailash is the closest, clearest and most spectacular. The ashram is double-storied with nearly 50 rooms, as well as a hall and dining facilities. All rooms face Mt. Kailash.

In September 2009, Pujya Swamiji officially inaugurated the Dirapuk ashram, with over 150 yatris from around the world, as well as local Buddhist monks and dignitaries & officials of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The ashram is already a great boon for the town, as we hired local people for the construction and trained them in masonry, carpentry and painting. The ashram is run and maintained by local Tibetans, and proceeds from the ashram go back into the community for education, health care and other projects.

Previously, in 2006, we inaugurated the Parmarth Mansarovar Ashram in



Paryang, Tibet, the place where all yaxis stay the night before reaching Lake Mansarovar. The ashram has more than 20 rooms -- singles, doubles & triples, and also two large halls for satsang, meditation or for use as dormitories.



INTERFAITH HUMANITARIAN NETWORK

Founded under the vision and leadership of HH Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, the Interfaith Humanitarian Network is a Trust to reduce the impact of natural disaster, build bridges to prevent conflicts, and respond in times of crisis.

IHN's work began as Project Hope, a project of the India Heritage Research Foundation, which was founded by Pujya Swamiji in 2004. Later, Project Hope combined forces with the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, giving rise to the Interfaith Humanitarian Network.

In light of the growing threat of disaster, the mission of IHN is turning to prevention-based capacity development, advocacy, and community building, so that local communities may be better enabled to prevent crises. When unfortunate circumstances do occur, our teams may be found on the scene to provide immediate- and long-term relief interventions.

Major interventions have included:

The Mass Himalayan Flood Disaster in Uttarakhand, India (2013):

- **Immediate Interventions:** through evacuation assistance via our convoys of 20 large buses at a time; mass distribution of relief supplies; multiple relief



camps within disaster zones and IDP transit points; the region's only comprehensive, computer-based family reunification services; the provision of clean water; medical assistance for 60,000 people; facilitation of dignified final rights for thousands of the deceased; and continual fact-giving consultations with governmental officials.



- **Medium-Term Interventions:** included the provision of food and supplies to 50 villages for three months; mobile medical assistance; and policy consultations for the sustainable redevelopment of the region, including a large policy conference with the region's foremost leaders and experts.
- **Long-Term Interventions:** included the rebuilding of schools and community facilities; the provision of vocational training and vocational centres for widows and disadvantaged women in

particular; installation of clean water systems and eco-friendly toilets within schools and pilgrimage centres; mass tree plantations to protect water resources while preventing soil erosion and landslides; regular medical camps and services, including for prosthetic limbs and physical rehabilitation; WASH training; policy consultations, and more.

The Nepal Earthquake (2015):

- **Immediate Interventions:** through medical teams, relief supply trucks, the provision of clean water, and other humanitarian measures.
- **Long-Term Interventions:** included direct rebuilding assistance; WASH consultations and education; women's and children's vocational training assistance; the provision of medical services; and the complete rebuilding of a temple.



Tsunami in South India (2004)

- **Short and Medium-Term Interventions Included:** the provision of direct humanitarian aid and medical assistance immediately after the crisis.



- **Long-Term Interventions Included:** construction of an orphanage, school, medical clinic, women’s vocational training centre, the complete construction of 100 homes, and the renovation of a residential centre for widows and disadvantaged women in Tamil Nadu.



The Muzaffarnagar Riots (2013):

- **Interventions Included:** a targeted Interfaith Unity March and Peace Programme at the peak of the riots, in the heart of the riot area, with participants including foremost Muslim, Hindu and Jain leaders; as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance.



Other Major Relief Interventions Included: the Gujarat, India Earthquake (2001), the Orissa, India Super-Cyclone Disaster (1999), the Chamoli, India Earthquake (1999) and the Uttarakashi, India Earthquake Disaster (1991), and more.

To learn more about all of Interfaith Humanitarian Network's projects, please visit www.interfaithhumanitariannetwork.org.

GURUKULS & ORPHANAGES

Simple shelters with food, beds and babysitters are not sufficient for the impoverished, orphaned and disadvantaged children of rural and mountainous India. All children need not only to be fed and sheltered -- they need to be educated and trained so they can be productive members of society. They need to be inculcated with values, ethics and spirituality which will make them torchbearers of Indian culture.

Our education initiative includes the following essential components: (1) a full, standard academic education, (2) training in the ancient Vedic knowledge and traditions, (3) a moral and value-based education which is crucially needed in modern society.

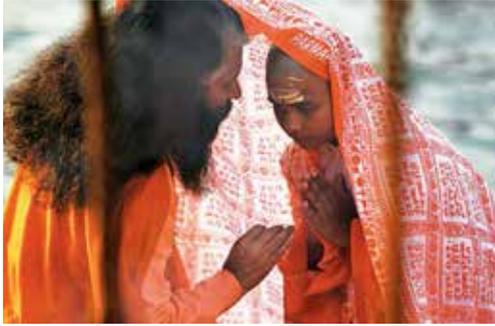


In the “Dust to Diamonds” program, our gurukuls/orphanages provide approximately 500 young, impoverished, disadvantaged boys with a basic academic education, as well as intensive Sanskrit and ancient Vedic texts. Their days are filled with yoga, meditation, Vedic chanting, reading of scriptures, mathematics,





seva and special programs designed to infuse their lives with essential values and ethics. They are not only getting a full academic education, but they are also being trained to be



cultural ambassadors, carrying with them -- wherever they go -- the deep values and culture of honesty, integrity, purity, piety, dedication and selflessness.

Once a child comes to the orphanage/gurukul, a rapid, divine transformation takes place. Looks of hopelessness become looks of great optimism and hope. Lightless eyes become bright shining eyes. Feelings of destitution and despair become feelings of pride, of faith and of enthusiasm.

The rishikumars travel on yatra to the Himalayas, perform yoga, yagna and prayers on the banks of Mother Ganga, study academics and computers as well as the scriptures, perform dramas based on Indian spiritual history and -- of course -- have time to run and play!



RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GREEN & SERENE LIVES

In different rural areas on the banks of Ganga and in the nearby hilly areas is our special Rural Development Program to enable eco-fiendly, self-sufficient lives.



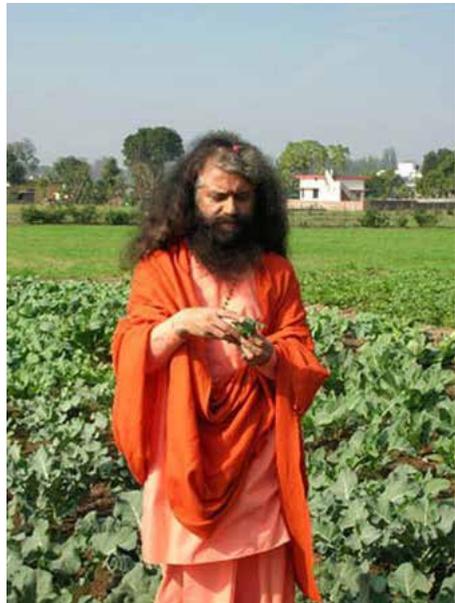
The Rural Development Program's components include:

- Solid waste management
- Sewage control and sanitation programs through laying of sewage lines in the village and construction of toilets for the villagers, so that no pollution goes into Ganga.
- Tree plantation program

- Construction of a proper road in the village
- Organic gardening program. We have brought in trained organic farmers and scientists to teach the local farmers alternative, chemical-free methods of farming. Further, we have our own organic farm.



- Spirituality and Culture – we have started an evening devotional ceremony at Veerpur on the banks of the Ganga, called Aarti. It is a way for the villagers to come together in a spirit of peace, culture and piety.
- Girl's Orphanage - Plans are underway to open an orphanage for abandoned young girls and babies in the beautiful, natural surroundings of Veerpur.



PROJECT GIVE BACK

We are committed to providing health care to those who would otherwise go untreated. To this end, we sponsor and support numerous health care programs and runs several annual free health care camps in Rishikesh as well as in other rural areas ranging from Mansarovar and Kailash to the



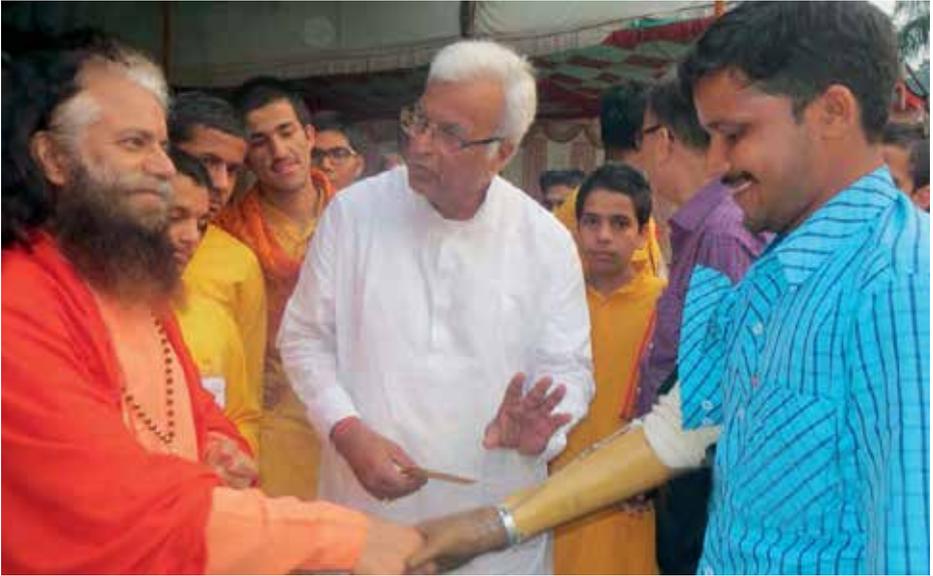
Himalayan region, a project of the Divine Shakti Foundation.

Each year, there are numerous free medical health care camps, ranging from urology camps to eye camps (including free cataract surgeries), and including nearly every discipline.



Hundreds of patients receive free testing, diagnoses, medicines and treatment for ailments that otherwise would go undiagnosed and untreated.

Every week, our caring volunteers travel to some of the most remote of the Himalayan villages, disaster zones and other areas to provide



compassionate medical care. Many of the men, women, and children treated by our team of medical professionals and sevaks have few to no opportunities to see doctors, and are thus overjoyed when our “Free Medical Camp” banner rises for all to see.

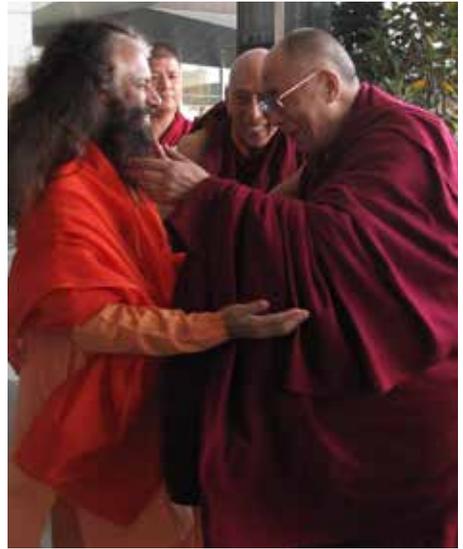
Beautiful medical camps are also held at Parmarth Niketan throughout the year, offering specialty services, including prosthetic limbs, eye care, physiotherapy and much, much more.

*To learn more about our medical services,
please visit
www.divineshaktifoundation.org.*



INTERFAITH HARMONY

Every year, as part of His mission of peace, Pujya Swamiji interacts with numerous world leaders – spiritual leaders, social leaders, and political leaders – in His international travels or when they come to the banks of Mother Ganga at Parmarth Niketan.



THE NATIONAL GANGA RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Founded by Pujya Swamiji, the National Ganga River Rights movement is a coalition of concerned citizens and organizations that are taking a stand on behalf of the Ganga River and its tributaries—while there is still time.

For far too long, people have said there is nothing that can be done. But all the while, the water that nourishes us has become so polluted that it has become a hot-spot for cancers and other deadly diseases, such as typhoid and cholera. The beautiful river that has inspired poets and sages has sadly become one of the most endangered rivers in the world.

As a coalition, we bring a new and strong voice, backed by the successes in nations such as Ecuador, New Zealand and the United States. But we need you to help us make the change.

Sign the petition for Ganga's rights at www.gangarights.org.



THE GREEN KUMBH INITIATIVE

Kumbh Mela is one of the most ancient, and yet still living, traditions of India's glorious past. The festival dates back to the pre-Vedic period, as even in the Vedas Kumbh Mela is described as a tradition that was already well established. The popularity of Kumbh Mela has only increased over the millennia, gathering millions together every twelve years at each of the four holy places, Prayag Raj- Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik, in which the auspicious event occurs and making it the world's largest gathering of people on Earth.

At every Kumbha Mela, you can likely find us rallying with beloved faith leaders and the masses for great and lasting change. From grand rallies to processions to mass events to live shows and community interactions through our WASH on Wheels and Education Stations, you will find us working to ensure Kumbha Melas result in a cleaner, greener and more sustainable world.



GREEN KATHAS FOR A CLEAN, GREEN & SERENE WORLD

Pujya Swamiji has inspired “Kathakar Social Responsibility” (KSR), like Corporate Social Responsibility, to utilize the immense power that Kathakars have in reaching their communities through their commentaries on religious scriptures to create positive change and green action amongst the masses.

He urges that the time has come that our festivals, our kathas and our holidays must be green and sustainable. He says, “through our respected Kathakars and their Kathakar Social Responsibility, we can be inspired and charged to make every moment and minute of our lives more green and more sustainable.”



PLEDGE TO BE A VEGETARIAN

YES! I care about the pain of animals.

YES! I care about world hunger.

YES! I care about Planet Earth.

YES! I want to live a life of non-violence.

For these reasons I pledge to eliminate the following foods from my diet:

Meat *Chicken* *Fish* *Eggs*

I know that my decision may be difficult, but I am proud to make my food choices a statement of love, care and compassion for the world and for all the living beings with whom I share this planet.

Name:

Address:

Email:

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Address:

Email:

TO:

Pujya Swami Chidanand Sarawatiji
Parmarth Niketan
P.O. Swargashram
Rishikesh (Himalayas)
Uttarakhand – 249 304
INDIA

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VEGETARIANISM:

FOR YOUR BODY, YOUR MIND,
YOUR SOUL AND YOUR PLANET



H. H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

Across the industrialized world, everyone is talking about what we can do to save the planet. Ecological conservation has become a household word. There are thousands of programs dedicated to feeding the millions of starving children. Yet, while we may talk about wanting to save the planet or feed the hungry, these words are empty if our actions are in sharp contrast. We may not be able to carry crates of food to the deserts of Africa. We may not be able to re-plant every tree that has been cut down in the forest. But, we can refuse to allow it to continue. We can refuse to partake of the cruelty. For, each time we eat meat, we are saying that we approve of the suffering in the world. Let us take the opposite stance. Let us -- each one of us -- make each meal an act of service to the world. Each time we eat grain instead of meat, let us realize that we are letting 16 times as many people be fed, that we are saving precious trees in the rainforest, that we are conserving Mother Earth's water. From now on, let our actions match our words!