

Some of the Positive Feedback for the Vegan Article

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2349>

Director: Hi, Sundari. Congratulations on the thoughtful and well-written article about food in the most recent newsletter. You covered numerous difficult topics with constant grace and thoughtfulness, quite an accomplishment in such a contentious arena. Honestly, it was the best article I have ever read on these issues.

Apart from the many hundreds of items that were extremely edifying, there were a couple of items that made me wish for more clarification.

One was the lack of reference to nuts and seeds when highlighting the limits of a vegetarian diet. It was stated that it was not possible to be healthy as a vegetarian "eating grains and beans (and maybe eggs)." I agree, if those are the limitations one imposes. However, it seems quite easy to be healthy with the simple addition of dairy, nuts and seeds to this diet. June and I have lived like this for 40 years and seem to be far healthier than most people we know our age. In the last couple of years we have added sustainably-killed (supposedly) fish to our diet, and that has been easy to integrate.

I think it might also be helpful to incorporate the issue of "degrees of harm" into our calculations. We currently "destroy" massive acreage to produce grains exclusively for livestock consumption, apart from grains and other vegetable for humans. In the factory farm system (which I understand you are NOT advocating at all and which is not going to change in the short term), we actually ruin more of nature for meat consumption than we would if these areas grew food for direct human consumption. All diets take their toll on our Mother Earth, but some produce more harm than others. This gradient of harm seems worth taking into account.

Please understand that these are not at all criticisms of your article. I truly LOVED it. In fact I plan to incorporate it into the readings for one of my classes this semester. Thanks for all you do to improve our understanding.

I know you are very busy with so many things, so please don't feel you have to take the time to write back. My life has already been blessed by your work and that of James. Warmest greetings to you both and my sincere gratitude for the good fortune of knowing you.

~ Love and best wishes from Florida, Department of World Languages & Cultures, Director of Latin American Studies Program

Sundari: Thank you for the positive feedback, much appreciated. The document is really aimed at knowledge-seekers, so presupposes that personal opinions or beliefs will be seen in the light of independent facts and not my opinions. It does not tell the *jiva* how to relate to *vyavaharika*. All the same, *vyavaharika* works the way it works regardless of one's interpretations and projections.

I agree totally that I could have expanded on the diet info: it is possible to have a balanced diet as a lacto-vegetarian, especially if you eat organic eggs and wild fatty

fish, not only for high-quality protein for omega-3 and zinc, which means you are really not a true vegetarian. Organic eggs are a near-perfect food, provided they are not overcooked, as that oxidizes the cholesterol in the yolk which produces the only cholesterol that is harmful. You are what is now called a “flexitarian.”

Nuts and seeds also contain lectins and phytates, but ideally, if they are presoaked and roasted, they are fine to eat. There is much more I could say about diet, but I did not want to go into it too much, as that topic is huge and was not the point of the document. I could add though, the importance of fermented foods and a few other things.

The main aim of the article was to elucidate how the *dharma* field works and how the *jiva* fits into it. As a sub-issue, the morality aspect was aimed mostly at vegans who believe they are taking the high road and vegetarians who are lazy and uninformed about how to eat well. The comment on beans and rice was to highlight that although there is seemingly a lot of food, as in calories, available through mono-crop farming, and many vegans believe that is the answer to world hunger, it is not. Not only because of industrial farming practices destroying eco systems but because that is actually a starvation diet, lacking so much that is needed for health.

Kent: Hi, Sunadri. I was delighted to read your essay and discover that we are on the same page, so to speak.

This is a long-time interest of mine, and I would like to share a couple of items that have greatly influenced my thoughts recently.

One is an article regarding a Scripps Institute study about limiting food intake to within a 12-hour period each day: Telegraph.co.uk.

The other is a similar article from *Scientific American*, which references a *TED* talk on the benefits of daily fasting: Scientific American.

Charles: Dear Sundari, I’ve written to Ramji a few times and met you briefly at Berkeley. I’m writing to you today because I’ve just finished reading your *e-satsang* on vegetarianism. Thank you! What an incredible piece of writing. I’ve never been a vegan or vegetarian, but as someone exposed to all the usual tropes in the spiritual world, I did have some residual guilt over eating meat. At the Berkeley seminar, it was immensely helpful to hear James summarize all this as, “Life eats life. Life cannot eat death!”

Your *satsang* expands on this in superb detail and (if you will pardon the terrible pun) carries much food for thought. I do completely agree that the way in which animals are raised is horrible, and I therefore try to stick with organic foods when possible, grass-fed beef, cage-free chickens and so on.

I also wanted to mention that you might be interested in the work of Temple Grandin, the famous autistic savant whose empathy with animals led her to create a more humane environment for cattle being led to slaughter. There is a very good film (*Temple Grandin*) starring Claire Danes that beautifully illustrates how it is possible to implement far more humane husbandry practices. Eating meat does not need to involve unnecessary suffering by animal *jivas*.

Anyway, thank you again for the wonderful essay – I’m sure it will generate a lot of

response, both pro and con. 😊

~ Charles

Lana: How exciting of you to share this fantastic knowledge that only few of us seem to be aware of. I would be curious to find out what your response has been among the ShiningWorld community. A bold step forward. I love it!

I love it because Vedanta cuts through the bullshit AND by this knowledge you step into *maya* holding high the natural laws for all to see, revealing the deceptive shadow of ignorance clinging to it for dear life..

In the age of information, there is too much for the average person to wade through. With the help of passionate people like yourself, sharing through experience and research, the laws of our environment - *Isvara* - ignorance does not stand a chance. By simple reasoning, there is no other truth but God's.

Such an incredible ride! 😊

Love you, love you!

David: Thanks for this great article. I know why I have not been 100% vegetarian even if I am enjoying eating vegetarian food sometimes. 😊

I have always loved eating eggs and some meat, chicken and lamb, for instance. Great links about sources including books. This is really great knowledge and I appreciate it a lot!

Marc: Hi, Isabella. This is just a small message to let you know how much I appreciate your very interesting text on vegetarianism and food in general. It's a topic about which I also wanted to know your point of view, and that of James. It's not only well-supported with scientific evidence, but also is just plain common sense. And it fits perfectly in the Vedanta teachings (the natural laws of the *dharma* field).

I guess that many people, especially the ones who are not interested in Vedanta, or the like, would be very surprised when reading your text (because many of them have the prejudice that all people interested in "Eastern stuff" are fanatic vegetarians).

Maggie: Before I go, I would like to say that the article on vegetarianism is brilliant! I chuckled at the reaction of some as they read it. In the West we have too much food at our disposal, it's obscene. I sometimes feel a good war would sort us out, eh? My generation just don't know they are born!!!

~ Much love to you, James and all at Trout Lake, Maggie xxx