Hinduism Is Vegetarianism
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Hinduism Is Vegetarianism

Ramaswamy, Melkote

I have repeatedly heard the statement "Hinduism is not so much a religion as a way of life." In my opinion, this has created and provided an umbrella under which many Hindus take their dharma lightly. In a nutshell, it is an excuse and a seeming justification for life styles that violate the basic tenets of Hinduism.

I strongly believe that any religion, if is to survive for centuries, must have a framework of solid and timeless principles. One of the most appealing principles of Hinduism is the respect for life in every form. I call this a principle of coexistence or universal harmony. This is at the heart of vegetarianism. And it is the love for animals more than a concern for the environment that is converting myriad Americans to vegetarianism.

Many Hindus use the idea of "a way of life" to avoid vegetarianism. They forget that by doing so they are destroying their very identity. Perhaps they need to be reminded that ancient rishis were so concerned about killing even plant life that had already fallen. For pure survival, it may become necessary to kill. In that case, we are advised to kill the lowest forms of life - plants - and not animals.

A survey of the eating habits of Hindus in America is startling. There are many household where only one of the parents is a vegetarian. And there are some parents who are vegetarian. And there are some parents who are vegetarians at home but do not mind eating meat outside. There are yet others who think they are almost vegetarians "except for a little chicken once in a while." What baffles me sometimes is how quickly and easily many Indians who are pure vegetarians in India change over to a non-vegetarian diet after coming over to America. What is also intriguing is that many parents who are vegetarians feed meat to their

children.

I prided myself on being a vegetarian, innocently eating MacDonald's French fries made of lard. Of course, I now need not worry since MacDonalds switched to vegetable shortening. It is comforting that in the name of health consciousness, vegetarians are benefiting indirectly - many food products boldly proclaim that they are made of vegetable oils.

In recent years, it is becoming easier to be a vegetarian while eating out. Many ethnic restaurants - Indian, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Greek and Mexican - offer vegetarian entr[?]es. I was somewhat taken aback when recently the waiter at a local Mexican restaurant assured me that there was no lard in their fried beans! Salad bars are becoming havens for vegetarians.

Let's face it: If we want to be real Hindus we cannot be part-time vegetarians. Vegetarianism is our trademark, out logo. It is high time we explode the myth that Hinduism is simply a way of life and one can live any kind of life including eating meat. There is absolutely no excuse in America - a land of abundant variety of food and ethnic lifestyles - not to be a vegetarian.

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