

To Eat or Not to Eat: (Non)Vegetarianism in Indian Knowledge System

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Hindu consciousness through the lens of non-dualism (*Advaita*), contrasting it with Abrahamic theological frameworks regarding non-violence, vegetarianism, and animal sacrifice. Central to Hindu philosophy is the identification of the self (*Atman*) with the universal divine (*Brahman*), as articulated in Upanishadic verses like: *bahu syām prajāyeyeti* (“He desired to be many.” *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2.6.1), *eko devah sarva bhuteshu* (“The One dwells in all beings.” *Shwetashvataropnishad* 6.11), *sarvam khalvidam brahm* (“All this is Brahma.” *Chandogya Upanishad* 3.14.1), *aham brahmasmi* (“I am Divine.” *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.4.10), *tat tvam asi* (“That Thou Art.” *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.8.7) and *ayam atma brahma* (“This Self (Atman) is Brahman”, *Mandukya Upanishad* 1.2). Hence, there is “no other” for a traditional Hindu – neither in the human world nor in the non-human world. This ontological unity fosters universal compassion (*ahimsa*), extending equal reverence to all beings—human, animal, and ecological—since all are manifestations of Brahman. The text cites extensive Vedic and post-Vedic scriptures (*Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Mahabharata*, *Manusmriti*) condemning meat-eating and animal sacrifice, emphasizing that violence against any being violates cosmic harmony. In contrast, Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) position humans as divinely ordained stewards with dominion over nature, permitting animal consumption and ritual sacrifice. It is argued that Hinduism’s ethical framework, predating Buddhist/Jain influences, inherently advocates vegetarianism as a moral, ecological, and spiritual imperative. Debates around historical practices like *Ashwamedha* (horse sacrifice) are addressed through reinterpretations of terms like *medha* (purification) rather than literal killing. Ultimately, the text positions Hinduism’s non-anthropocentric worldview as a corrective to modern ecological crises, advocating universal welfare (*sarva-bhuta-hite-ratah*) as the highest dharma.

Keywords: Hindu Consciousness, Animal Sacrifice, Non-dualism (*Advaita*), *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), Brahman-Atman Unity, Vegetarianism, Scriptural Reinterpretation, Universal Compassion, Ecological Ethics.

“And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.” Max Müller (14-15)

HINDU CONSCIOUSNESS

Hindus consider themselves (irrespective of gender) to be “Brahma”: “I am Brahma/ Divine” or “I’m the eternal part of the *Supreme*”¹ (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.4.10) and “This Self (*Atman*) is

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Brahma”² (*Mandukya Upanishad* 1.2). The Hindus do not discredit “The Other” as devil/ Satan or of his party; on the contrary, they grant them an equal and same status: “Thou art that”³ (*Chhandogya Upanishad* 6.8.7) for the Hindus believe that God pervades everywhere and in every being: “All of this is Brahma”⁴ (*Chhandogya Upanishad* 3.14.1). Hindus believe both visible and invisible is nothing else but Brahma for it is all a manifestation of Brahma (God): “I am one; let me become many” (*Chhandogya Upanishad* 6.2.3)⁵, “Gaining the vision of Enlightenment, perceive the world as Brahman” (*Tejobindu Upanishad* 1.29)⁶; and “All this that is in front is but Brahman, the Immortal. Brahman is at the back, as also on the right and the left. It is extended above and below, too. This world is nothing but Brahman, the Highest” (*Mundakopanishad* 2.2.12)⁷. Since there is no “other” for the Hindus they feel empathy for all: “all living beings in God and God in all living beings” (*Bhagavadgita* 6.29)⁸. The belief “oneness of all”—“I am the only one, there is none other”⁹, a non-anthropocentric concept in *Sanatan Dharma*, is popularly known as the principle of non-dualism¹⁰.

The Hindus believe in the oneness of beings. The idea finds manifestation in the following verse of *Yajurveda* (40.7)¹¹: “Those who see all beings as souls do not feel infatuation or anguish at their sight, for they experience oneness with them.” Jagdis Chunder Bose has proved this through his scientific experiments described in his *Plant Autographs and their Revelations* (1927). He writes:

... when animal, plant and metal have been subjected to the same questioning shocks they have in all cases given similar replies. They exhibit similar fatigue and show similar exaltation under stimulants. ... We have thus examined the autographic records of the living and non-living. How similar are the writings! So similar, indeed, that we cannot tell one from the other. (pp. 59-60)¹²

In contrast to this, in the Abrahamic religions the manifestation of the One is not there in all forms. God in the Abrahamic religions is a separate entity from his creations. The objects of nature like (Day/ Night, Firmament, Dry Ground, grass, yielding seed herbs, fruit yielding trees, Sun, Moon, Stars, Fish and Birds, cattle, creeping thing, and beast of the earth) along with a human being are all creations of God, but are not the manifestation of God Himself. All objects of nature were created prior to the creation of man (in his own image). (Genesis 1: 1-31) God bestowed human species with special rights and privileges. Adam was given a “dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Genesis 1: 26). God instructed Adam, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1: 28) God commanded Adam to use herbs that yield seeds, trees that bear fruits with seeds, green herbs as food. Every beast of the earth, every bird of the air, and everything that creeps on the earth was also declared to be used as food. (Genesis 1: 29-30) Another book of Old Testament, allows one to eat meat of one’s livestock. (Deuteronomy 12:15-17) However, even the restrictions imposed on consuming unclean food in the Old Testament (Leviticus 11.3 and Deuteronomy 14:2-21) are removed in the New Testament (1 Timothy 4:3-5, 1 Corinthians 10:25-27, Mark 7:18-19). So for a large number of Christians, non-vegetarianism has Biblical sanction. However, in the sixth book of the New Testament, non-vegetarianism has not been appreciated: “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Romans 14:21) and “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man.” (Isaiah 66:3).

In contrast to this, in Hinduism the rights of all living beings are equal. A Hindu practices the religion of universal compassion; he keeps his lust, wrath, and cupidity under control; all these are not limited to the human world only but are extended to all creatures. It was because of the compassion

for a crying bird on the death of its companion that the first couplet in Sanskrit is said to have been uttered spontaneously¹³ in a fit of rage and grief by Valmiki, the first seer poet. The one who, for the motives of his own happiness, harms other harmless creatures, is condemned for the same. Similarly, one learns about King Shibi¹⁴ who offered his own flesh to save a dove that sought refuge in his lap, seeking protection from a pursuing hawk (Van Parva, Chap 197). Brahma, as manifests in the human-beings, dwells in animals too. In the *Mahabharata* (13.113.5)¹⁵ it is written that the person who regards all creatures as his own self, and behaves towards them as towards his own self, laying aside the rod of chastisement and completely subjugating his wrath, succeeds in attaining happiness. It has been enjoined upon a Hindu to save the life of an animal that has fallen into the hands of a butcher by purchasing it. (*Vishnudharmottar Purana* 3.302.24-25)¹⁶ The Hindu scriptures forbid killing of animals because all living beings want to live, no one wants to die; all living beings love their age, happiness is favourable, sorrow is unfavourable. One may refer to the following verse in *Rigveda* (1.114.8) where it has been prayed that violence of all sorts be shunned and no animals be killed: “Harm us not, Rudra, in our sons or grandsons, or other male descendants, nor in our cattle, nor in our horses; inflamed with anger, kill not our valiant men, for we, presenting clarified butter perpetually invoke you.”¹⁷

If oneness is felt with other beings (human/ animal/ bird etc.), one cannot think of killing them. There are couple of mantras from Vedas which unambiguously restrain killing animals for food. For example, *Rig Veda* (10.37.11)¹⁸ says: “Bestow, gods, felicity upon both (classes) of our living beings, bipeds and quadrupeds; let them be strong and healthy by eating or drinking; Save us from hurt all our days, O Powers! Grant us happiness and freedom from sin.” *Rigveda* (10.87.16)¹⁹ says, “One who feeds on human flesh, the flesh of a horse or of another animal, and deprives others of milk by slaughtering cows, O King, do not hesitate to punish such a person severely if such a fiend does not desist by other means.” Similarly, in *Yajur Veda* (12.32)²⁰ it has been prayed that the bodies of those subjects (human, animal or whatever) that deserve protection should not be destroyed. The person who seeks to increase his own flesh by eating the flesh of others is described as a sinner in *Manusmriti* (5: 52)²¹ in contrast with the Buddhist idea of eating flesh²². In *Manusmriti*, the idea of sin on account of non-vegetarianism is not confined only to the consumer but it also includes all those associated with the process: “He who approves, he who cuts, he who kills, he who buys and sells, he who cooks, he who serves and he who eats meat are ‘slayers’” (*Manusmriti* 5: 51)²³. *Atharvaveda* (6.140.2)²⁴ prays that that all those capable of being parents should survive: “O teeth! You eat rice, you eat barley, you eat gram and you eat sesame. These are specifically meant for you. Do not kill those who are capable of being fathers and mothers.” Another mantra in *Atharvaveda* (10.1.29)²⁵ says, “It is definitely a great sin to kill innocents. Do not kill our cows, horses and people.”

Now the question arises if the Hindus love animals so much and they practice compassion, why the animals are sacrificed in some of the Hindu temples and why so many Hindus are non-vegetarians despite determined and univocal instructions against non-vegetarianism. The question why does one eat meat has also been asked in *Mahabharata* and Vyas spells out two reasons: to build muscles (*Mahabharata* 13.115.12, 34, 13.116.7, 13.116.7)²⁶ and for gratifying the sense of taste. According to the taste, three types of meat are consumed: that cooked with all types of spices, that cooked with salt only and that cooked without salt. (*Mahabharata* 13.114.14)²⁷ So taste is one issue why meat eating is not given up by a large number of people. The Jain practice of non-violence also needs a mention here.

The Jain sadhus consider earth, water, fire, air and vegetation to be different creatures and therefore give them the same respect and treatment as to any living being. They shun even the green vegetables because they believe that the person who pierces the green vegetation is going to punish his soul; by harming other beings, he ultimately harms his own soul.

One may also see a lot of debate about the non-vegetarianism in Vedic society and different kinds of animal sacrifices in sundry *yajñas*. Whatever be the cause or influence, the Hindus respect animals and birds unlike the believer in an Abrahamic faith. This leads us to ponder over another related issue of animal sacrifice on religious grounds.

ANIMAL SACRIFICE

Before having a detailed discussion on the issue, a mention of the following three general observations will not be out of place:

- a) That animal sacrifices on account of individual and collective religious faith are a reality.
- b) That there is a sanctity for animal sacrifice across the world religions.
- c) That the history of humans is the history of a shift from non-vegetarianism to vegetarianism.

Daniel Ullucci²⁸ holds that animal sacrifice was one of the most pervasive and socially significant practices of Graeco-Roman religion. There are many references to animal sacrifice in the *Old and New Testaments*.²⁹ Similarly, a Muslim's celebration of 'Id al-Adha' is incomplete unless a cow, goat, camel, buffalo or sheep is sacrificed on the sacred altar. It is commemorative of Abraham's readiness in offering the life of his son Isma'il. (*Surah As-Saffat* 102-111) A Mahomedan holds that Ramadan cannot be celebrated in accordance with the injunctions of the *Holy Quran* without an animal-sacrifice. Accordingly, the meat of animals like camels, cows, sheep, chickens, fish is approved (*halal*) in Islam, and that of animals like horse, donkey, mule, elephant, pig, predators with fangs and birds that hunt with claws is forbidden (*haram*). (*Quran, Surah* 2:173 and 16:115, *Surat Al-Ma'idah* 5:3, *Sahih Bukhari*, 7. 67. 436). One finds a parallel to this injunction in the *Manu Smriti* where a list of birds and animals whose meat is not to be consumed has been mentioned (*Manu Smriti* 5: 11-19)³⁰. This prohibition is interpreted by some scholars as a sanction for non-vegetarianism. The roots of non-vegetarianism in Hindu society are often traced to religious sacrificial rituals like *Ashwa-Medha* (horse sacrifice), *Go-Medha* (cow sacrifice), *Aja-Medha* (hornless ram or goat sacrifice), *Gaja-Medha* (elephant sacrifice), *Nar-Medha* (human sacrifice), and several others that find a mention in the scriptures.³¹ Most of these sacrifices were held while performing a *yajña*.

Some of the verses in the *Mahabharata* and the *Vishnu Purana* hint at the scriptural debate on the issue whether animal sacrifice is mandatory in a *yajña*. In the *Ashvamedhik Parva* of the *Mahabharata* there is a dialogue between Janmejaya and Vaishampayana. (*Mahabharat, Ashvamedhik Parva*, Ch. 91, Gita Press) From this dialogue, one learns that some unnamed Rishis taking pity on the animals collected to be sacrificed in the *yajña* organised by Indra, objected to animal sacrifice on the authority of certain unnamed texts and advised the king to perform the *yajña* by offering some grains and not the animals. Since Indra did not pay heed to the advice, the sages, among themselves, started a heated debate if animal sacrifice was needed or the *yajña* could be performed with food grains only. The issue is raised before King Uparichar who unmindfully replied, "with whatever is available." It is mentioned that for his unmindful pronouncement he had to go to hell. As Uparichar didn't reply mindfully, it may safely be presumed that the issue of the debate remained unresolved and a stop on the practice of animal sacrifice could not be put. From this episode in the *Mahabharata*, it may safely be concluded that i) animal sacrifice was a reality up to the time of King Uparicher, and ii) a counter thinking of not sacrificing animals in the *yajñas* by Uparicher's time

had emerged. As the date of King Uparicher is yet to be ascertained, its historicity cannot be established.

Those who are against animal sacrifice but don't dare to go against the authority of the Vedic texts advance a very weak argument saying: "Sacrificial violence mentioned in the Vedic texts is no violence"³². The *Manu Smriti* (5:55) explains the meaning of Sanskrit word 'Maans' as: "Me he (mām-sa) will devour in the next world, whose meat I eat in this'—this is the 'meatness' (māmsatva) of the 'meat' (māmsa), as the wise ones declare."³³ In this light it appears that meat-eating has been condemned in the text. *Vishnu Purana* says: "If mighty demons, you cherish a desire either for heaven or for final repose, desist from the iniquitous massacre of animals (for sacrifice), and hear from me what you should do. Know that all that exists is composed of discriminative knowledge." (*Vishnu Purana* 3.18.15)³⁴ In the same Purana after a few verses an argument against animal sacrifice is also presented though it is called the "heretical argument of the foes of the gods (Asuras)": "If an animal slaughtered in religious worship is thereby raised to heaven, would it not be expedient for a man who institutes a sacrifice to kill his own father for a victim?"³⁵ (*Vishnu Purana* 3.18. 26) I am highlighting this to prove that the debate between the proponents of animal sacrifice (or non-vegetarianism) and those opposed to it (i.e. the vegetarians) cuts across several Hindu sacred texts.

Certain translations of the verses from Hindu scriptures about *Ajmedha* (*Rig Veda* 1. 162. 2-5)³⁶ and *Ashvamedha* (*Rig Veda* 1.162.2-3³⁷, *Rig Veda* 1.162.9-10³⁸ and 1.163, *Rig Veda* 10.91.14-15³⁹ and *Satapatha Brahmana* 11.2.5.4⁴⁰, *Yajur Veda Taittiriya Sanhita Kanda* II.1.1.2-5⁴¹ and *Krishna Yajur Veda* 5.5.1.3-4⁴²) are often cited to justify sacrificial violence. However, different translators/commentators like Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Devi Chand, Acharya Shri Ram Sharma, Swami Satya Prakash Saraswati and Tulsi Ram have offered altogether interpretations of these verses. For the limitations of space let me cite a few examples from Devi Chand and Satya Prakash Saraswati. Regarding *Nar-Medha* (human sacrifice), Devi Chand makes the following comment:

Western scholars like Griffith, Colebrooke, Weber, Wilson, Muir, Oldenberg, and Max Muller consider this (Chapter XXX) and the next chapter (Chapter XXXI) meant for human sacrifice. This is an erroneous idea.

Just as *Ashvamedha* does not mean Horse sacrifice, but the Improvement of land for growing more food, so *Puru-hmedha* does not mean human sacrifice, but the perfection of man for spiritual and worldly advancement. This interpretation put upon these two words by Rishi Dayananda is highly logical and rational. 'Tis pity the western scholars, following Mahidhar and Sayana, have miserably failed to understand the true purport of these words. (Chand footnote, XXX.1, p. 296)⁴³

Regarding verse numbers 47-50 of chapter 13 of *Yajur Veda*, Satya Prakash says that in "this and the next four mantras a prayer has been made to save some animals."⁴⁴ If a prayer is being made in these verses (*Yajur Veda* 13: 47-50) not to kill a horse, cow, milch or otherwise useful animals, sheep or goat, and biped and to protect the gregarious deer, the practice of sacrificing them does not seem to fall in line. Elsewhere⁴⁵ too in the text (*Yajur Veda*), prayers for the safety and protection of bipeds and quadrupeds⁴⁶, happiness and welfare of a cow, horse, and remedy for man and relief for ram and ewe are being made. In this light, the arguments of several scholars⁴⁷ who hold that the word, "bali", is wrongly translated as "killing" and that the practice is misinterpreted as "animal sacrifice" seem to hold good; and, the claim that one is expected to sacrifice one's own animalistic tendencies seems plausible. If one pursues this line of thought, one realises that the word "*medha*" means purification; the *dhatupatha* by Panini defines the root "*medha*"⁴⁸ as synergizing the energy to

perform something fruitful. If this interpretation of the word “medha” is taken, the killing of different animals for any kind of sacrifice is neither intended nor desirable. The changing shades of meaning of animal sacrifice over the years have been noted even by Wendy Doniger who writes: “Sacrifice is central to Hinduism throughout its history, ... though it has meant very different things to different Hindus at different times” (Doniger 221)⁴⁹

No discussion on the issue will perhaps be over without the mention of a cow⁵⁰ which is considered to be a divine creature by Hindus. There are several words that have been used for a cow that indicate that it is not to be slaughtered, viz. *Aghnya* (the one that ought not to be killed), *Ahi* (the one that must not be slaughtered), and *Aditi* (the one that ought not to be cut into pieces). In *Rigveda* (7.56.17)⁵¹ cow-slaughter has been declared to be a heinous crime equivalent to human murder and it has been said that those who commits this crime should be punished. *Rigveda* (10.87.16)⁵² clearly says that cows and bulls always deserve to be protected and are not to be killed. The verse also seeks punishment for those who feed on human, horse or animal flesh and those who destroy milk-giving *Aghnya* cows. Again, *Rigveda* (1.164.40)⁵³ says that the cows, which are *Aghnya* (not to be killed under any circumstances) may keep themselves healthy by use of pure water and green grass, so that we may be endowed with virtues, knowledge and wealth. *Yajurveda* (13.49)⁵⁴ forbids killing of cows, for they provide energizing food for human beings. If the Vedic injunction is that a cow is not to be killed (*Yajurveda* 8:43)⁵⁵, the question of sacrificing a cow does not arise.

Swami Dayananda, who started Arya Samaj, says the Vedas have been misinterpreted and mistranslated to justify animal-sacrifice. In his *Light of Truth*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati writes:

[*Vaama Margis*] interpolated these and similar other verses into the works of the seers, and also wrote books in the name of many great sages and savants, and thus introduced such sacrifices as Gomedha... . They declared that by slaughtering these animals and offering them as a sacrifice both - the animals sacrificed and the Yajamaana – went to Heaven. This evil practice seems to have originated on account of their ignorance of the true meanings of such words as Ashwamedha, Gomedha, and Narmedha that occur in the Braahmans, for had they understood them, they would not have committed such blunders. ...

Wherever in the authentic books of the sages the sanctions of such a sacrifice is found, it should be understood that the verse or the passage has been interpolated by the *Vaama Margis*. Now mark! What the *Shathapatha Braahmana* says on the subject: ‘A king governs his people justly and righteously. This is called Ashwamedha.’ ‘A learned man gives a free gift of knowledge to the people. This is also called Ashwamedha.’ Again, ‘the burning of clarified butter and odoriferous and nutritious substances in the fire in order to purify the air is also called Ashwamedha.’ (*Shathapatha Braahmana* 13: 1.6.3)⁵⁶

‘To keep the food pure or to keep the senses under control. Or to make a good use of the rays of the sun or keep the earth free from impurities (clean) is called Gomedha.’ ‘The cremation of the body of a dead person in accordance with the principles laid down in the Vedas is called Narmedha.’⁵⁷

Acharya Shri Ram Sharma of Gayatri Parivar fame explains that there is no mention of sacrificial violence in the sacred Hindu texts and the meaning of certain words has wrongly been derived and deciphered because of which such a situation has occurred⁵⁸. This seems quite plausible; in my limited reading of the Vedic texts, I have not come across any god/ goddess who asks for animal/human sacrifice unlike the case in the Old Testament⁵⁹. On the other hand, *Atharva Veda* (8.6.23)⁶⁰ implores death for those who ingest eggs, embryos or flesh after slaying animals. There are a few verses in *Manu Smriti* (5: 45-56)⁶¹ where nonviolence has not only been propagated but also glorified. Further, Indian epics and religious and secular literature are replete with conflict

between the sages and the *asuras/ rakshasas* who splash pieces of meat and blood to disturb the *yajnas* of the *rishis*. This is the most common technique in these narratives to create hurdles in the ways of the *rishis*. If the sages were non-vegetarians, they would enjoy the situation of getting the edibles without going to ask for the alms rather than be unhappy. On the contrary, none of the sages is shown enjoying the situation. This proves that the sages were vegetarians or at least they took the source of the meat into account.

Non-violence and Non-Vegetarianism:

Questions such as “Is non-vegetarianism a matter of practice or is it just a compassionate vision?” are generally asked when one believes that the needs all human beings are alike. The physical (gross) needs may be similar among human beings (and similar to those of an animal) in the tangible terms but not in intangible terms. Hindus believe that various social groups have different (in)tangible needs and so is the case with the individuals. The differences among them emerge on account of their *prakriti* (*sattvic/ rajasic/ tamasic*) and other such factors. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (17.2-10), Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that human beings have three kinds of innate nature — *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic* and diet too is of three kinds, viz., *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*. One likes/ consumes food according to one’s disposition. It is also noteworthy that the duties of a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Dasa are different. What is desirable for a group/ *varna* may not be desirable for another *varna*. Prohibition on eating meat is there only for those engaged in penance. (*Mahabharata* 13.114.10)⁶² Further, non-violence as a creed has been suggested for a person who wishes to be away from the triple faults of attachment, pride and greed and one who wishes to control his lust and anger. (*Mahabharata, Anushashan Parva* 13.114.3-4)⁶³

Further, some scholars believe that non-violence and vegetarianism as Hindu thoughts are a later development, under the influence of Jain and Buddhist philosophies⁶⁴. There is contrary internal evidence to this belief in the *Mahabharata* (13.114.2); Yudhishtira’s following words in the *Anushasan Parva* (114.2)⁶⁵ suggest that *ahimsa* is a Vedic thought: “On the authority/ evidence of the Vedas, *rishis*, *brahmins* and *devas* applaud *ahimsa* as a characteristic of *Dharma*.” *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) has been used in very wide terms in Hinduism. It includes not committing any violence in thought, action, deed and shunning meat altogether. If even one of these is missing, it is said that the *Ahimsa Dharma* has not been followed properly. *Ahimsa* in Hinduism is considered to be quite a comprehensive *dharma*/concept that encapsulates every other *dharma* in it. (*Mahabharata, Anushashan Parva* 13.115.2-3, 6)⁶⁶ Therefore, non-violence (*ahimsa*) for a Hindu is the ultimate duty and creed: *ahimsā paramo dharma* (*Mahabharata* 13.116.1)⁶⁷. The word “*ahimsa*” (= abstaining from causing harm or injury) occurs in *Rig Veda* at several places (1.141.5; 5.64.3; 10.22.13)⁶⁸. Non-violence is one of the five *dakshinas* in *Chhandogya Upanishad* (3.17.4)⁶⁹. It (*ahimsa*) is one of the ten restraints in *Shandliya Upanishad* (Chapter 1)⁷⁰ and one of the five mentioned in *Yogasutra* (2.30)⁷¹. Moreover, the meaning of non-violence is very wide in the *Upanishad* as it includes causing no pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one’s mind, speech, bodily actions. The thought continues even in the *Mahabharata* (13.114.4)⁷². At several places in the *Mahabharata* (13.116.28–29)⁷³ it has been reiterated that non-violence is the ultimate *dharma*/ cardinal duty.

The idea of not killing animals for food and not eating flesh for survival finds a mention not only in the Sanskrit texts but is prominently present even in the classical Tamil text *Tirukkural*⁷⁴. In Part I of the text, entitled “Virtue”, there is one chapter entitled “The Renunciation of Flesh” (verses 251-260) and another entitled “Non-Killing” (verses 321-330). These chapters may be summarised as

the sum of all virtuous where conduct is never to destroy life, and destruction of life leads to every evil.

Non-violence (*Ahimsa*) is the first *yama*⁷⁵ (restraint). Nonviolence⁷⁶ does not refer to the shunning of violence alone but it always includes the absence of malice (in mind, speech and action) towards all beings⁷⁷. It is said that on being firmly established in non-violence, all beings coming near him cease to be hostile. The result of practicing the *yama* of *Ahimsa*⁷⁸ is that the enmity goes away and with the departure of enmity, the instincts of lust, anger etc. are stopped. This is one of the reasons why India has not attacked any country in its history.

In the *Markandeya-Samasya Parva* (of *Vana Parva*) of the *Mahabharata* (Vol 2, Gita Press), there is a dialogue between a “virtuous Fowler” and a Brahmin about sustaining one’s life by killing animals and consuming meat in the light of the concept of non-violence (see chapters 207 and 208). These chapters also form a part of *Vyadh Gita*. There are three chapters (nos. 114, 115 and 116)⁷⁹ devoted to condemnation of non-vegetarianism, drinking and violence and in the *Anushasana Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. They highlight the love and respect that Hindus have for the lives of animals and birds. The most common form of violence against animals daily is in the form of slaying them for obtaining flesh which cannot be had from grass or wood or stone. The man, who slaughters living creatures, kills them for the sake of the person who eats flesh. The sage, therefore, argues that if flesh-eaters are not there, nobody will be required to kill the living creatures. If flesh were regarded as inedible, there would then be no slaughter of living creatures. It is for the sake of the eater that the slaughter of living creatures goes on in the world. Vyas concludes, hence, the fault lies in eating meat. Diverse kinds of demerit, ills, vices and punishments have been associated with eating meat (including taking honey) in the text.

On the basis of the above discussion, one should not presume that nobody consumed meat and all the people of the yore were vegetarian in nature. As meat/ flesh is considered to be tamasic in Vaishnav tradition, it is not offered to Vaishnav gods. However, it is offered to the deities in the *Shakti*/ Tantric cults (e.g. Kalighat in Kolkata and Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati). The following note in *Vaikrutikam Rahasyam* (a part of *Durga Saptshati*) should also be taken into consideration:

“The goddess is worshipped with arghya etc., with ornaments, scents, flowers, incense, incense, lamps and various kinds of food items, blood sacrifices, meat and alcohol. (Rajan! The worship of sacrifices and meat etc. is not meant for Brahmins. There is no mention/ provision of a worship with meat and wine for them.” (*Waikritikan-rahasyam* 28)⁸⁰ This explanation is quite democratic and practical too. Only Brahmins are expected to be Sattvic in their living and approach to life. One is expected to offer to god(ess) whatever one has or whatever one enjoys. Since non-brahmins were non-vegetarians, they were expected to offer the same to the god(ess).

In the Buddhistic *Eightfold Path* it is forbidden for laymen to take up a trade like dealing in meat. Though killing of an animal is not acceptable in Buddhism, consuming meat is acceptable in certain sects of Buddhism. “In regard to meat eating, [Buddha] said it was not the act of eating meat itself that counted; it was whether the person acting intended harm and pain that counted. Killing is not to be condoned, but eating meat by itself is not proscribed.”⁸¹ The Buddha is quoted as saying, “I have allowed fish and meat that is pure in the three aspects, when it is not seen or heard or suspected to have been killed for one personally.”⁸² This approach is quite in contrast to what has been preached in *Rigveda*⁸³, *Yajurveda*⁸⁴, *Atharvaveda*⁸⁵, *Ishavasya Upanishad*⁸⁶, *Chhandogya Upanishad*⁸⁷ and *Manusmriti*⁸⁸. Non-violence (*Ahimsa*) is the first *yama*⁸⁹ (restraint). Nonviolence⁹⁰ does not refer to the shunning of violence alone but it always includes the absence of malice (in mind, speech and

action) towards all beings⁹¹. It is said that on being firmly established in non-violence, all beings coming near him cease to be hostile. The result of practicing the *yama* of *Ahimsa*⁹² is that the enmity goes away and with the departure of enmity, the instincts of lust, anger etc. are stopped. This is one of the reasons why India has not attacked any country in its history. One may refer to the following verse in *Rigveda* (1. 114. 8) where it has been prayed that violence of all sorts be shunned and no animals be killed: "Harm us not, Rudra, in our sons or grandsons, or other male descendants, nor in our cattle, nor in our horses; inflamed with anger, kill not our valiant men, for we, presenting clarified butter perpetually invoke you."⁹³

Vegetarianism

The *Vishnudharmottar Purana* (3.302.23)⁹⁴ enjoins upon a Hindu to be a vegetarian like a deer or a bird which survive on trees, plants and creepers. Any action taken involves three steps: desire, opportunity for fulfilling a desire and action taken to fulfil the desire. In case of non-vegetarianism too the following are the three steps: desire (man's desire to eat meat), words (exhortation for eating meat) and taste (consuming meat); any person associated with any of these three is called a non-vegetarian and shall have retribution accordingly. Non-vegetarian food includes meat coming from a slain (by self or others) or dead animal/bird for free or by a purchase; therefore, a vegetarian needs to discard meat in any form, irrespective of its source and in action, word and thought. (*Mahabharata* 13.115.38-39) A person who is a vegetarian in his eating habits but helps in spreading non-vegetarianism by way of recommending meat or running a business that promotes non-vegetarianism (like running a piggery farm or an abattoir, or a restaurant etc), is also ordained as a sinner. (*Mahabharata* 13.115.39, 42-43) The text also encourages a person to turn vegetarian at any stage of one's life. (*Mahabharata* 13.115.44, 53, 55-57) However, some verses seem to make an exception for sacrificial meat, but all these verses can also be interpreted in different meaning as has been done by Acharya Shri Ram Sharma [see supra]. In contradistinction to such verses stands the following verse that condemns animal sacrifice in the name of Vedic rituals: "The flesh-greedy, foolish and wretched person who commits violence against living beings in the name of Vedic rituals like Yagya, Yaga etc. goes to hell." (*Mahabharata*, 13.115.43)⁹⁵ This settles the matter and it can be said with authority that Hindus are all for seeing animals and birds as equals and do not see them as sacrificial creatures. Since the Vedic period and the Mahabharata period precede the Buddha and Jain period, it can safely be presumed that the ideas of non-violence and vegetarianism are an integral part of the Hindu/ Vedic texts.

A catalogue of vegetarian kings and those who were partially vegetarians is also found in the *Mahabharata* (13.115.58-67) Thus, it is very clear that during the Mahabharata Age too vegetarianism had come into existence and people shunned non-vegetarian edibles. The *Mahabharata* approves of vegetarianism and disapproves any kind of association with any act that actively or passively encourages non-vegetarianism. However, taking a very practical view of things, the *Mahabharata* makes an exception for the gaming of animals and birds for the princes and the kings. Gaming is slightly different from slaying animals for eating. In gaming the animal/ bird is given a chance for self-defence by running away or by way of making a counter-attack.⁹⁶ In this way, the gamer also practices the art of archery as it will help him defend his kingdom during the period of an attack.

In

very unambiguous terms *Skand Purana* (4.1.3.51-53)⁹⁷ instructs a person never to eat meat:

"If a person deluded by sins cooks meat for his own sake, he shall remain in hell for as many years as there are hairs on his body. Those evil-minded persons who nourish their own lives through the lives of other living beings suffer the tortures of hells⁹⁸ till the end of the Kalpa. Thereafter, they will be preyed upon by them. *Even if the vital breaths come up to the throat*

(i.e. on the point of death) no one should eat flesh. If it becomes essential, then one should eat one's own flesh and not that of others." (emphasis added)

During the rainy season so many insects find their home on the leaves. Hindus by and large do not consume leafy vegetables in those days. A large number of creatures live in the roots of various plants. Some Hindus (but a large number of Jains) therefore avoid root-vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, radish, turnip etc. This is how a Hindu works for the welfare and well-being of all the beings (not of human beings alone) as has been suggested in the *Bhagvadgita* (12.4)⁹⁹: "engaged in the welfare of all beings." The last line of the *Garud Puran* (2.35.51)¹⁰⁰ prays: "May welfare of all the beings take place; May all the beings be blissful; May no one suffer from any kind of illness; May all see what is auspicious; May no one suffer!" It may be noted that it is not a prayer only for the welfare of Hindus or only for human beings (Anthropocene) but for every being (*Bhuta*). Likewise, Hindus after every religious congregation pray: "May righteousness be victorious, may unrighteousness be destroyed, let there be goodwill among living beings, may welfare of the world (all flora and fauna) take place!"¹⁰¹

Two tenets emerge from the above discussion: i) vegetarianism is a moral, social, medical and ecological advancement over non-vegetarianism and ii) the Hindus, unlike so many other religious communities and/ or social groups, are ready to improve their ways in the light of moral and educational advancement. In this manner a Hindu protects animals and plants and contributes positively to improve ecology. The development of the societies based on Abrahamic religious wisdom and those based on Hindu wisdom have taken shape accordingly.

Conclusion

The text establishes Hindu consciousness as fundamentally rooted in non-dualistic theology, which perceives all existence as an interconnected manifestation of the divine (*Brahman*). This worldview engenders a radical ethic of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and universal compassion, positioning humans not as masters of nature but as participants in a sacred continuum. Through rigorous scriptural analysis—from the Vedas to the Mahabharata—the author demonstrates that Hinduism's core teachings unequivocally condemn meat-eating and animal sacrifice, framing them as violations of cosmic order (*rita*). Even contested practices like Vedic sacrifices are reinterpreted as symbolic acts of self-purification rather than literal violence, aligning with the principle *ahimsa paramo dharma* (non-violence is the highest duty).

In stark contrast, Abrahamic traditions are characterized by anthropocentrism, granting humans dominion over nature and sanctioning animal consumption and ritual sacrifice. The text argues that this divergence has profound implications: Hinduism's reverence for all life fosters ecological sustainability, while Abrahamic doctrines have historically facilitated exploitation. The author further contends that Hindu vegetarianism is not a later borrowing from Buddhism or Jainism but an indigenous Vedic ideal, evidenced by scriptural prohibitions against harming *Aghnya* (inviolable) cows and other creatures.

Ultimately, the text presents Hindu philosophy as offering a transformative vision for global ethics—one that transcends speciesism and advocates for the welfare of all beings (*sarva-bhuta-hita*). By emphasizing oneness with nature, it challenges contemporary societies to reject violence and embrace a path of harmony, positioning Hindu wisdom as a vital corrective to

ecological and existential crises. The legacy of figures like Valmiki (moved by a bird's grief) and King Shibi (sacrificing his flesh to save a dove) exemplifies this ethos, affirming that true spirituality lies in recognizing the divine in every living entity.

Endnotes:

- ¹ अहं ब्रह्मास्मि Aham Brahmasmi
- ² अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म ayam ātmā brahma
- ³ तत् त्वम् असि tat tvam asi
- ⁴ सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म sarvam khalvidam brahma
- ⁵ एकोहम् बहुस्याम् Ekoham bahusyam
- ⁶ दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् drishtim jñānamayim kritva pashyed brahmamay jagat
- ⁷ ब्रह्मैवेदम् अमृतं पुरस्तात् ब्रह्म पश्चात् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण // अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् || Brahmeivedam amritam purstat brham pashchat brahm dakshinatashchottaren/ adhschordhavam cha prsartam barhmaeivedam vishvamidam varishtham"
- ⁸ आत्मानं सर्वभूतानि atmanam sarva bhutani
- ⁹ एकोहं द्वितीयो नास्ति Ekoham dwitiyo nasti
- ¹⁰ अद्वैतवाद Advaitvad
- ¹¹ यस्मिन्त्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ // Yasmintsarvaani bhutaanyaatmaivaabhuudvijanatah, Tatra ko mohah kah shoka ekatvamanupasyatah, (Yajurveda 40.7).
- ¹² Bose, Jagdis Chandra. Plant Autographs and their Revelations. London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1927.
- ¹³ मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः । यत्क्रौंचमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ॥ mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhā tvamagamah śāśvatīḥ samāḥ yat krauñcamithunādekam avadhīḥ kāmamohitam Tr.: You will find no rest for the long years of Eternity/ For you killed a bird in love and unsuspecting.
- ¹⁴ <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/compilation/puranic-encyclopaedia/d/doc241955.html>
- ¹⁵ अहिंसकानि भूतानि दण्डेन विनिहन्ति यः । आत्मनः सुखमन्विच्छन्न स प्रेत्य सुखी भवेत् ॥ ५ ॥ ahiṁsakāni bhūtāni daṇḍena vinihanti yah | ātmanah sukhamanvicchanna sa pretya sukhī bhavet || 113.5 ||
- ¹⁶ वधकस्य हस्तगतं पशुं क्रीत्वा नरोत्तमः ॥ नाकलोकमवाप्नोति सुखी सर्वत्र जायते ॥ २४ ॥ यावन्ति पशु रोमाणि तावदवर्षाणि मानवः ॥ स्वर्गलोकमवाप्नोति यश्च त्राणं करोत्यसौ ॥ २५ ॥ https://sa.wikisource.org/wiki/विष्णुधर्मोत्तरपुराणम्/खण्डः_३/अध्यायाः_३०१-३०५
- ¹⁷ मा नस्तोके तनये मा न आयौ मा नो गोषु मा नो अश्वेषु रीरिषः । वीरान्मा नो रुद्र भामितो वधीर्हविष्मन्तः सदमित्वा हवामहे ॥ mā nas toke tanaye mā na āyau mā no goṣu mā no aśveṣu rīrīṣaḥ | vīrān mā no rudra bhāmito vadhīr haviṣmantah sadam it tvā havāmahe || (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830241.html>)
- ¹⁸ अस्माकं देवा उभयाय जन्मने शर्म यच्छत द्विपदे चतुष्पदे । अदत्तिबदूर्जयमानमाशितं तदस्मे शं योररपो दधातन ॥ asmākaṁ devā ubhayāya janmane śarma yacchata dvipade catuṣpade | adat pibad ūrjayamānam āśitaṁ tad asme śaṁ yor arapo dadhātana || www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc838936.html
- ¹⁹ यः पौरुषेयेण क्रविषा समङ्कते यो अश्व्येन पशुना यातुधानः । यो अघ्न्याया भरति क्षीरमग्ने तेषां शीर्षाणि हरसापि वृश्च ॥ yah pauruṣeयेṇa kraviṣā samāṅkte yo aśvyena paśunā yātudhānaḥ | yo aghnyāyā bharati kṣīram agne teṣāṁ śīrṣāṇi harasāpi vṛśca || English translation: "The Yātudhāna, who fills himself with the flesh of man, and he who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals, and he who steals the milk of the cow -- cut off their heads with your flame."
- ²⁰ www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc839549.html
- ²⁰ प्रेदग्ने ज्योतिष्मान्याहि शिवेभिरर्चिभिष्टवम् । बृहदभिर्भानुभिर्भसन्मा हिंसीस्तन्वा प्रजाः ॥ Tr. O King, the preacher of knowledge, just as the sun, resplendent with its auspicious flames of fire, and shining with mighty beams of light, works in the universe, so attain to happiness, and destroy not the bodies of the subjects (human, animal or whatever) deserving protection. (<https://vedicscripture.com/yajurveda/12/32>)
- ²¹ स्वमांसं परमांसेन यो वर्धयितुमिच्छति । अनभ्यर्च्य पितृन् देवांस्ततोऽन्यो नास्त्यपुण्यकृत् ॥ ५२ ॥ svamāṁsaṁ paramāṁsena yo vardhayitumicchati | anabhyarcya pitṛn devāṁstato'nyo nāstyapunyakṛt || 52 || If a man, without worshipping the gods and Pitṛs, seeks to increase his own flesh by the flesh of others, —there is no s inner greater than that person. (Manusmriti (5: 52). <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200428.html>.
- ²² A reference to the following Jatakas is in my mind: 1) Bhallatiya Jataka - The Bodhisattva himself as King goes hunting for pork and venison 2) Vessantara Jataka - as prince eats meat 3) Mahasutosoma Jataka - tells a reformed prince he could

return to enjoying meat. Kshatriyas, or rulers, are allowed meat. 4) Gahapati Jataka eats beef 5) Maccha jataka eats fish 6) Mahaummaga Jataka throws parties with meat kabobs 7) Nigrodha Jataka - eats chicken 8) Sabbadattha Jataka - animal takeover averted, tons of meat from animals for the kingdom. Teaches to learn how to dry and cure meat!

²³ अनुमन्ता विशसिता निहन्ता क्रयविक्रयी । संस्कर्ता चोपहर्ता च खादकश्चेति घातकाः ॥ ५१ ॥ anumantā viśasitā nihantā

krayavikrayī | saṁskartā copahartā ca khādakaśceti ghātakāḥ || 51 || (Manusmṛiti 5: 51)

www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmṛiti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200427.html.

²⁴ व्रीहिमतं यवमतमथो माषमथो तिलम् । एष वां भागो निहितो रत्नधेयाय दन्तौ मा हिंसिष्टं पितरं मातरं च ॥ २२ ॥ Breehimattam

yavamattamatho maashamatho tilam, Esha vaam bhaago nihito ratnadheyaaya dantau, maa hinsistham pitaram maataram cha, (Atharvaveda 6.140.2) "O teeth! You eat rice, you eat barley, you eat gram and you eat sesame. These are specifically meant for you. Do not kill those who are capable of being fathers and mothers."

²⁵ अनागोहत्या वै भीमा कृत्ये मा नो गामश्वं पुरुषं वधीः । यत्रयत्रासि निहिता ततस्त्वोत्थापयामसि पर्णाल्लघीयसी भव ॥ anaagohatyaa vai bhiimaa kRRitye maa no gaamashva.m puruSha.m vadhiH. yatrayatrasasi nihitaa tatastvotthaapayaamasi parNaallaghiyasii bhava . (Atharvaveda 10.1.29) The slaughter of an innocent is a heinous deed. Do not hit, do not kill cow, horse, or men of ours. <https://vedicscripture.com/bhashya/23/atharvaveda/10/1/0/29>

²⁶ स्वमांसं परमांसेन यो वर्धयितुमिच्छति । नारदः प्राह धर्मात्मा नियतं सोऽवसीदति ॥ १२ ॥ svamāṁsaṁ paramāṁsena yo vardhayitumicchati | nāradaḥ prāha dharmātmā niyataṁ so'vasidati || 115.12 || स्वमांसं परमांसेन यो वर्धयितुमिच्छति ।

उद्विग्नवासे वसति यत्रतत्राभिजायते ॥ ३४ ॥ svamāṁsaṁ paramāṁsena yo vardhayitumicchati | udvignavāse vasati yatrataṭrābhijāyate || 115.34 || स्वमांसं परमांसैर्यो विवर्धयितुमिच्छति । नास्ति क्षुद्रतरस्तस्मान्न नृशंसरो नरः ॥ ७ ॥

svamāṁsaṁ paramāṁsairyo vivardhayitumicchati | nāsti kṣudrataraṣṭasmānna nṛśaṁsataro naraḥ || 13.116.7 ||

²⁷ असंस्कृताः संस्कृताश्च लवणालवणास्तथा । प्रजायन्ते यथा भावास्तथा चितं निरुध्यते ॥ १४ ॥ asaṁskṛtāḥ saṁskṛtāśca

lavaṇālavaṇāstathā | prajāyante yathā bhāvāstathā cittam nirudhyate || 14 ||

²⁸ Ullucci, Daniel. "Before Animal Sacrifice, A Myth of Innocence". *Religion and Theology* 15.3-4 (2008): 357-374.

<https://doi.org/10.1163/157430108X376582> Web.

²⁹ Kindly see Genesis (4:4; 22: 1-13), Hebrews (9:13, 9:22), Luke 2: 24, Acts 14:13, Ezekiel 45:18, Hosea 12:11, Numbers 7:88, Leviticus (4:35, 5:10, 12:8, 16:15, 16:15, 17:11) etc.

³⁰ क्रव्यादान् शकुनान् सर्वान्तथा ग्रामनिवासिनः । अनिदिष्टाश्चैकशफान् टिट्ठिभं च विवर्जयेत् ॥ ११ ॥ कलविड्कं प्लवं हंसं चक्राहवं ग्रामकुक्कुटम् । सारसं रज्जुवालं च दात्यूहं शुकसारिके ॥ १२ ॥ प्रतुदाञ्जालपादांश्च कोयष्टिनखविष्किरान् । निमज्जतश्च मत्स्यादान् सौनं वल्लूरमेव च ॥ १३ ॥ बकं चैव बलाकां च काकोलं खञ्जरीटकम् । मत्स्यादान् विड्वराहांश्च मत्स्यानेव च सर्वशः ॥ १४ ॥ यो यस्य मांसमश्नाति स तन्मांसाद उच्यते । मत्स्यादः सर्वमांसादस्तस्मान् मत्स्यान् विवर्जयेत् ॥ १५ ॥ पाठीनरोहितावाद्यौ नियुक्तौ

हव्यकव्ययोः । राजीवान् सिंहतुण्डाश्च सशल्काश्चैव सर्वशः ॥ १६ ॥ न भक्षयेदेकचरानजातांश्च मृगद्विजान् । भक्षयेष्वपि समुद्विष्टान् सर्वान् पञ्चनखास्तथा ॥ १७ ॥ श्वाविधं शल्यकं गोधां खड्गकूर्मशशास्तथा । भक्ष्यान् पञ्चनखेष्वहुरनुष्टांश्चैकतोदतः ॥ १८ ॥ छत्राकं

विड्वराहं च लशुनं ग्रामकुक्कुटम् । पलाण्डुं गृञ्जनं चैव मत्या जग्ध्वा पतेद् द्विजः ॥ १९ ॥ kravyādān śakunān sarvāntathā

grāmanivāsinah | anirdiṣṭāṁścekaśaphān ṭiṭṭibhaṁ ca vivarjayet || 11 || kalaviṅkaṁ plavaṁ haṁsaṁ cakrāhvaṁ

grāmakukkuṭam | sārasaṁ rajjuvālaṁ ca dātyūhaṁ śukasārike || 12 || pratudāñjālapādāṁśca koyaṣṭinakhaviṣkirān |

nimajjataśca matsyādān saunaṁ vallūrameva ca || 13 || bakaṁ caiva balākāṁ ca kākolaṁ khañjarīṭakam | matsyādān

viḍvarāhāṁśca matsyāneva ca sarvaśaḥ || 14 || yo yasya māṁsamaśnāti sa tanmāṁsāda ucyate | matsyādān

sarvamāṁsādaṣṭasmān matsyān vivarjayet || 15 || pāṭhinarohitāvādyau niyuktau havyakavyayoh | rājivān

siṁhatuṇḍāśca saśalkāścaiva sarvaśaḥ || 16 || na bhakṣayedekacarānājñātāṁśca mṛgadvijān | bhakṣyeṣvapi

samuddiṣṭān sarvān pañcanakhāṁstathā || 17 || śvāvidhaṁ śalyakaṁ godhāṁ khaḍgākūrmaśaśāṁstathā | bhakṣyān

pañcanakheṣvāhuranuṣṭrāṁścaikatodataḥ || 18 || chatrākāṁ viḍvarāhaṁ ca laṣunaṁ grāmakukkuṭam | palāṇḍuṁ

grājīnaṁ caiva matyā jagdhvā pated dvijah || 19 || (Manu Smṛiti 5: 11-19) Tr.: He shall avoid all carnivorous birds, and

also those living in villages, the one-hoofed animals not specified, and also the Ṭiṭṭibha. (11) The Sparrow, the Plava, the Hamsa, the Cakravāka; the village-cock, the Crane, the Rajjudāla, the Dātyūha, the Parrot and the Starling. (12). Those birds that feed by striking with their beaks, those that are web-footed, the koyaṣṭi, those that scratch with their nails, those that dive and eat fish, slaughter-house meat, and dried meat. (13) The Baka, the Balākā, the Kākola, the Khañjarīṭa, the fish-eaters, and village pigs; as also fish always. (14) He who eats the flesh of an animal, is called the 'eater of its flesh'; he who eats fish is the 'eater of all kinds of flesh'; hence one shall avoid fish. (15). The 'Pāṭhina' and the 'Rohita' are fit to be eaten when used as offerings to gods or Pitṛs; the 'Rājīva', the 'Siṁhatuṇḍa' and the 'Saśalka,' (one may eat) on all occasions (16) He shall not eat solitary animals, nor unknown beasts and birds, even though indicated among those fit to be eaten; nor any five-nailed animals. (17). Among five-nailed animals they declare the porcupine, the hedge-hog, the alligator, the rhinoceros, the tortoise and the hare, as fit to be eaten; as also all animals having one line of teeth. except the camel. (18) The mushroom, the village-pig, garlic, the village-cock, onions and leeks, — the twice-born man eating these intentionally would become an outcast. (19). <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmṛiti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200394.html>

³¹ "It is explicitly stated in Brahmanic texts that five creatures were suitable for sacrifice in Vedic India, in descending order man, horse, cattle, sheep, and goat." Jaan Puhvel. "Victimal Hierarchies in Indo-European Animal Sacrifice", *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 354-362. www.jstor.org/stable/293746.

³² वैदिकी हिंसा, हिंसा न भवति Vaidiki himsa himsa na bhavati. Also see the following verses of Manu Smriti (5: 31, 44): यज्ञाय जग्धिर्मांसस्येत्येष दैवो विधिः स्मृतः । अतोऽन्यथा प्रवृत्तिस्तु राक्षसो विधिरुच्यते ॥ ३१ ॥ yajñāya jagdhirmāṁsasyetyeṣa daivo vidhiḥ smṛtaḥ | ato'nyathā pravṛttistu rākṣaso vidhirucyate || 31 || 'The eating of meat for sacrifices'—this is declared to be the divine law; but behaviour contrary to this is described as 'demoniacal practice' (31).

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200408.html>

या वेदविहिता हिंसा नियताऽस्मिंश्चराचरे । अहिंसामेव तां विद्याद् वेदाद् धर्मो हि निर्बाहः ॥ ४४ ॥ yā vedavihitā himsā niyatā'smiṁścarācare | ahimsāmeva tāṁ vidyād vedād dharmo hi nirbabhau || 44 || Tr. That killing which is sanctioned by the Veda has been eternal in this world of mobile and immobile beings: it is to be regarded as no killing at all; since it was out of the Veda that the Law shone forth. (44). <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200420.html>

³³ मां स भक्षयिताऽमुत्र यस्य मांसमिहाद् म्यहम् । एतन्मांसस्य मांसत्वं प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ॥ ५५ ॥ māṁ sa bhakṣayitā'mutra yasya māṁsamihād myaham | etatmāṁsasya māṁsatvaṁ pravadanti manīṣiṇaḥ || 55 || (Manu Smriti 5: 55). <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200431.html>

³⁴ स्वर्गार्थं यदि वो वाञ्छा निर्वाणार्थमथासुराः । तदलं पशुघातादिदुष्टधर्मनिबोधत ॥ १५ ॥ https://sa.wikisource.org/wiki/विष्णुपुराणम्/तृतीयांशः/अध्यायः_१८

³⁵ निहतस्य पशोर्यज्ञं स्वर्गप्राप्त्यर्थदीप्यते । स्वपिता यजमानेन किन्नु तस्मान्न हन्यते ॥ २६ ॥

https://sa.wikisource.org/wiki/विष्णुपुराणम्/तृतीयांशः/अध्यायः_१८ A similar verse appears in Krishna Mishra's Prabodh

Chandrodayam (2.20): निहतस्य पशोर्यज्ञे स्वर्गप्राप्त्यर्थदीप्यते । स्वपिता यजमानेन तत्र कस्मान्न हन्यते ॥ प्रबोधचन्द्रोदयम् २.२०

<https://sa.wikipedia.org/wiki/प्रबोधचन्द्रोदयम्> The verse in a slight variation has been quoted in Satyarth Prakash (XII

Samullas) also, as a verse from the Philosophy of Charvak: पशुश्चेन्निहतः स्वर्गं ज्योतिष्टोमे गमिष्यति । स्वपिता यजमानेन तत्र कस्मान्न हिंस्यते ॥ ३ ॥ (Atha Satyarthaprakashah, Ajmer: Vedic Pustakalaya, 2005, p. 486.)

³⁶ https://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0039/_P4I.HTM

³⁷ <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830709.html>

³⁸ <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830715.html>

³⁹ <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc839629.html>

⁴⁰ <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/satapatha-brahmana-sanskrit/d/doc1056849.html>

⁴¹ <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/yv/yv02.htm>

⁴² <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/yv/yv05.htm#:~:text=the%20form%20of%20man,he%20does%20not%20depart>

⁴³ Devi Chand, *The Yajur Veda*, Hoshiarpur: All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, 1959, p. 306.

⁴⁴ Swami Satya Prakash Saraswati (Tr.), *Yajur Veda* <https://vedicscriptures.in/yajurveda/13/47>. The concerned verse are:

इमम्मा हिंसीद्विपादम्पशुं सहस्राक्षो मेधाय चीयमानः । मयुम्पशुम्मधमग्ने जुषस्व तेन चिन्वानस्तन्वो निषीद । मयुन्ते शुगृच्छतु यन्द्विष्मस्तन्ते शुगृच्छतु ॥ 47 ॥ इमम्मा हिंसीरेकशम्पशुश्चक्रिद्वैवाजिनैवाजिनेषु । गौरमारण्यमनु ते दिशामि तेन चिन्वानस्तन्वो निषीद । गौरन्ते शुगृच्छतु यन्द्विष्मस्तन्ते शुगृच्छतु ॥ 48 ॥ इमं साहस्रं शतधारमुत्संव्यच्यमानं सरिरस्य मध्ये । घृतन्दुहानामदितिञ्जनायग्ने मा हिंसीः परमे व्योमन् । गवयमारण्यमनु ते दिशामि तेन चिन्वानस्तन्वो निषीद । गवयन्ते शुगृच्छतु यन्द्विष्मस्तन्ते शुगृच्छतु ॥ 49 ॥ इममूर्णायुर्वरुणस्य नाभिन्त्वचम्पशूनान्द्विपादाञ्चतुष्पदाम् । त्वष्टुः प्रजानाम्प्रथमञ्जनित्रमग्ने मा हिंसीः परमे व्योमन् । उष्ट्रमारण्यमनु ते दिशामि तेन चिन्वानस्तन्वो निषीद । उष्ट्रन्ते शुगृच्छतु यन्द्विष्मस्तन्ते शुगृच्छतु ॥ 50 ॥

(Yajur Veda 13: 47-50) These verses are available <https://vedicscriptures.in/yajurveda/13/47> and also at <https://sa.wikisource.org/s/1zdc>. These verses have been translated by Devi Chand as: "47. O King, born as man, and wide-awake, possessing thousandfold vision, progressing for the attainment of happiness, don't destroy the bipeds and quadrupeds, and useful denizens of the forest; but protect them. 48. O King, don't destroy -this one-hoofed beautiful horse, soon agitated and writhing with pain in battlefields. I point out to thee the forest rhinoceros. With his protection add to thy prosperity and physical strength. Let the wild and uncontrolled rhinoceros be put to grief by thee. Let thy enemy, whom we detest, be put to grief. (48. I :-God. A king should protect the useful, and tame beasts of the forest, and subdue the wild and ferocious ones. One hoofed:- Having one hoof in each foot), 49. O sagacious King, in this world, don't harm this bull, the giver of thousands of comforts, the source of immense milk, and worthy of protection. Harm not in God's creation, the cow, the giver of milk for mankind, and innocent in nature. I point out to thee the forest cow. With her destruction add to thy prosperity and physical strength in the midst of vast space and under God's guidance. 50. O learned King, don't kill the two-footed men and birds, and four-footed cattle, the source of comforts. Don't kill the sheep that covers our bodies with blankets, and is foremost worthy of protection amongst God's creatures. I point out to thee the forest camel. With his protection add to thy prosperity and physical strength. Let the wild, uncontrollable camel be put to

grief by thee. Let thy foe, whom we dislike be put to grief.” (Yajur Veda 13: 47-50) Devi Chand, *The Yajur Veda*, Hoshiarpur: All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, 1959, pp. 142-143. <https://archive.org/details/yajurveda029670mbp>.

⁴⁵ Here are some of the examples: भेषजमसि भेषजङ्गवे श्वाय पुरुषाय भेषजम् । सुखम्मेषाय मेष्यै ॥ (Yajur Veda III: 59) ये वाजिनम्परिपश्यन्ति पक्वैर् इमाहुः सुरभिर्निर्हरेति । ये चार्वतो मांसभिक्षामुपासतऽतो तेषामभिगूर्तिर्न इन्वतु ॥35॥ (Yajur Veda XXV: 35) English Tr.: “O God, Thou art the healer of the physical, mental and spiritual maladies. Heal, Thou the sufferings of cow, horse and all mankind. Grant happiness to ram and ewe. (Yajur Veda III:59); They who crave for the meat of a horse, and declare the horse fit to be killed should be exterminated. They who keep the fast horse well trained and disciplined, deserve to be praised by us for the strength of their character and perseverance.” (Yajur Veda XXV.35, 277/371) Translation is by Devi Chand, *The Yajur Veda*, Hoshiarpur: All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, 1959, p. 44, and p. 267 respectively. <https://archive.org/details/yajurveda029670mbp>

⁴⁶ प्राणम्मे पाहि अपानम्मे पाहि व्यानम्मे पाहि चक्षुर्मऽउर्व्या विभाहि । श्रोत्रम्मे श्लोकय । अपः पिन्वौषधीर्जिन्व द्विपादव चतुष्पात्पाहि दिवो वृष्टिमेरय ॥ (Yajurveda XIV: 8) <https://vedicscriptures.in/yajurveda/14/8> Tr. Devi Chand: “8. O husband, guard thou my pran, guard my apan. Guard my vyan through different nice devices. Illumine my eye. Fill my ear with religious sermons. Strengthen my vital breaths. Get medicinal plants. Protect bipeds. Protect quadrupeds. Manage well the household affairs, as sun, with its brilliance pours the rain.” (Yajur Veda XIV.8) Translation is by Devi Chand, *The Yajur Veda*, Hoshiarpur: All India Dayanand Salvation Mission, 1959, p. 148. <https://archive.org/details/yajurveda029670mbp>.

⁴⁷ “Thus the nineteenth Śloka when referring to the sacrifice of various animals and of man himself intends according to the subtle sense the six great sins for which they stand, ranging from Lust (goat) to Pride (man). It is these which must be sacrificed by the knowers who are worshippers of the Mother the age of material sacrifice, so universal throughout the world, having passed away.” *Hymn to Kali*, by Arthur Avalon (Sir John George Woodroffe), [1922], <https://sacred-texts.com/tantra/htk/htk03.htm>. Kindly also see: Swami Purnachaitanya, “Animal Sacrifice in the Vedas?: Lost in Translation” <https://www.swamipurnachaitanya.com/animal-sacrifice-in-the-vedas/>, Acharya Shri Ram

⁴⁸ Panini, *bhavadī gāṇa, dhatu sankhya* 1.611, *Dhatupatha*, Sonipat: Ramlal Kapur Trust, 2014.

⁴⁹ Doniger, Wendy. “Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual Mystification and Mythical Demystification in Hinduism”, *On Hinduism*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.

⁵⁰ Kamdhenu, a divine bovine-goddess, emerged from the churning of the cosmic ocean; she is also treated as the daughter of the creator god Daksha, and as the wife of the sage Kashyapa. All the gods are believed to reside in her body. Her four legs are the scriptural Vedas; her horns are the Trimurti of Brahma (tip), Vishnu (middle) and Shiva (base); her eyes are the sun and moon gods demonstrating balance and light; her shoulders the fire god Agni (Fire) and the god Vayu (Wind) and confer strength; and her whole body is thought to depict all principal Hindu gods.

⁵¹ आरे गोहा नृहा वधो वो अस्तु सुम्नेभिरस्मे वसवो नमध्वम् ॥१७॥ āre gohā nrhā vadho vo astu sumnebhīr asme vasavo namadhvam || May the butcher and the murderer be far from us. May the weapon of death be far from you and from us. O givers of peace and settlement in joy and prosperity turn to us with happiness and well-being.

⁵² यः पौरुषेयेण क्रविषा समङ्क्ते यो अश्वेन पशुना यातुधानः । यो अघ्न्याया भरति क्षीरमग्ने तेषां शीर्षाणि हरसापि वृश्च ॥१६॥ Yah paurusheyena kravishaa samankte yo ashvena pashunaa yaatudhaanaah, Yo aghnyaayaa bharati ksheeramagne teshaam sheershaani harasaapi vrishcha (Rigveda 10.87.16) Whoever feeds himself upon the flesh of humanity, whoever prospers by animal wealth at the cost of animal wealth by destroying it, whoever carries off the milk of the inviolable cow and destroys the fertility of the earth, O Agni, strike off their heads with light and passion for truth. <https://vedicscripture.com/rigveda/10/87/16>

⁵³ सूयवसादभगवती हि भूया अथो वयं भगवन्तः स्याम । अद्धि तृणमघ्न्ये विश्वदानीं पिब शुद्धमुदकमाचरन्ती ॥४०॥ sūyavasād bhagavatī hi bhūyā atho vayam bhagavantah syāma | addhi tṛṇam aghnye viśvadānīm piba śuddham udakam ācarantī || (Rigveda 1.164.40) “Cow, may you be rich in milk through abundant fodder; that we also may be rich (in abundance); eat grass at all seasons, and, roaming (at will), drink pure water.” <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830783.html>. This verse also appears twice in Atharva Veda (7.73.11 and 9.10.20)

⁵⁴ घृतं दूहानाम् अदितिं जनायाग्ने मा हिंसीः Ghrtam duhaanaamaditim janaayaagne maa himsiheeh (Yajurveda 13.49)

⁵⁵ इडे रन्ते हव्ये काम्ये चन्द्रे ज्योतेऽदिते सरस्वति महि विश्रुति । एता तेऽ अघ्न्ये नामानि देवेभ्यो मा सुकृतं ब्रूतात् ॥

शुक्लयजुर्वेदः/अध्यायः ०८: ४३, <https://sa.wikisource.org/s/1zev>, Tr. “Aghnya, one that never deserves violence, a cow, which should never be killed. A wife, who should never be beaten, insulted or humiliated (Daya.). Aditi, indivisible; also, अदीना, not poor. Mahi, O great one. Ma sukrutam brūtat, tell them of me as a righteous person.”

<https://vedicscriptures.in/yajurveda/8/43> Tr. “विभिन्न दैवी गुणों से सुशोभित हे धेनु! आप सब के द्वारा प्रशंसनीय, रमणीय, यज्ञ के लिए उपयोगी, दूध-घी देने वाली दैवी गुणों को बढ़ाने वाली, दूध का प्रवाह देने वाली, महिमामयी, सुप्रसिद्ध और वध न करने योग्य हैं। इस प्रकार हमारे द्वारा आवाहित आप, देवताओं के प्रति समर्पित इस श्रेष्ठ यज्ञ के प्रति देवताओं से कहें, जिससे वे हमारे निवेदन को स्वीकार करें।” A cow is being described as “aghnya” (never deserving violence); so a cow is not to be killed. Acharya Shri Ram Sharma’s tr. (book details????)

⁵⁶ राष्ट्रं वा अश्वमेधः राष्ट्र एते व्यायच्छन्ते येऽश्वं रक्षन्ति तेषां य उदहं गच्छन्ति राष्ट्रेणैव ते राष्ट्रं भवन्त्यथ ये नोदहं गच्छन्ति राष्ट्राते व्ययच्छद्यन्ते तस्माद्राष्ट्रयश्वमेधेन यजेत परा वा एष सिच्यते योऽबलोऽश्वमेधेन यजते यद्यमित्रा अश्वं विन्देरन्यजोऽस्य विच्छिद्येत पापीयान्तस्याच्छतं कवचिनो रक्षन्ति यज्ञस्य संतत्या अव्यवच्छेदाय न पापीयान्भवत्यथान्यमानीय प्रोक्षेयुः सैव तत्र प्रायश्चित्तिः (शतपथब्राह्मणम् १३.१.६.३) *rāṣṭram vā aśvamedhaḥ rāṣṭra ete vyāyacante ye 'śvaṃ rakṣanti teṣāṃ ya udrcam gacanti rāṣṭreṇaiva te rāṣṭram bhavantyatha ye nodrcam gacanti rāṣṭrāte vyavacyante tasmādrāṣṭryaśvamedhena yajeta parā vā eṣa sicyate yo'balo'śvamedhena yajate yadyamitrā aśvaṃ vinderanyajño'sya vicidyeta pāpīyāntsyācatam kavacino rakṣanti yajñasya saṃtatyā avyavacedāya na pāpīyānbhavatyathānyamāniya prokṣeyuḥ saiva tatra prāyaścittih (Satapatha-brahmana 13.1.6.3)*

⁵⁷ Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati. *The Light of Truth (The Satyārtha Prakasha)*. Tr. New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1984. Ebook, page 222/484.

⁵⁸ One may look for the details at the following link: <http://literature.awgp.org/akhandjyoti/1992/November/v2.15>

⁵⁹ Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you..." (Genesis 22:1-2)

⁶⁰ य आमं मांसमदन्ति पौरुषेयं च ये क्रविः। गर्भान्खादन्ति केशवास्तानितो नाशयामसि ॥२३॥ *ya aamam maamsamadanti paurusheyam cha ye kraviḥ | garbhaankhaadanti keshavaastaanito naashayaamasi . 23. Ya Amam Mansamdanti Pauruseyam Ca Ye Kraviha || (Atharva Veda 8.6.23) Tr. Devi Chand: "Those who eat flesh uncooked, and those who eat the bleeding flesh of man, feeders on babes unborn, long-haired impostors, far from this place we banish them."* <https://vedicscripture.com/atharvaveda/8/6/0/23>

⁶¹ यो बन्धनवधक्लेशान् प्राणिनां च चिकीर्षति । स सर्वस्य हितप्रेप्सुः सुखमत्यन्तमश्नुते ॥ ४६ ॥ यद् ध्यायति यत् कुरुते रतिं बध्नाति यत्र च । तदवाप्नोत्ययत्नेन यो हिनस्ति न किं चन ॥ ४७ ॥ नाकृत्वा प्राणिनां हिंसां मांसमुत्पद्यते क्व चित् । न च प्राणिवधः स्वर्ग्यस्तस्मान् मांसं विवर्जयेत् ॥ ४८ ॥ समुत्पत्तिं च मांसस्य वधबन्धौ च देहिनाम् । प्रसमीक्ष्य निवर्तेत सर्वमांसस्य भक्षणात् ॥ ४९ ॥ न भक्षयति यो मांसं विधिं हित्वा पिशाचवत् । न लोके प्रियतां याति व्याधिभिश्च न पीडयते ॥ ५० ॥ अनुमन्ता विशसिता निहन्ता क्रयविक्रयी । संस्कर्ता चोपहर्ता च खादकश्चेति घातकाः ॥ ५१ ॥ स्वमांसं परमांसेन यो वर्धयितुमिच्छति । अनभ्यर्च्य पितृन् देवांस्ततोऽन्यो नास्त्यपुण्यकृत् ॥ ५२ ॥ वर्षे वर्षेऽश्वमेधेन यो यजेत शतं समाः । मांसानि च न खादेद् यस्तयोः पुण्यफलं समम् ॥ ५३ ॥ फलमूलाशनैर्मध्येर्मुन्यन्नानां च भोजनैः । न तत् फलमवाप्नोति यत्मांसपरिवर्जनात् ॥ ५४ ॥ मां स भक्षयितामुत्र यस्य मांसमिहाद् म्यहम् । एतत्मांसस्य मांसत्वं प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ॥ ५५ ॥ न मांसभक्षणे दोषो न मद्ये न च मैथुने । प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां निवृत्तिस्तु महाफला ॥ ५६ ॥ *yo bandhanavadhaklēśān prāṇināṃ na cikīrṣati | sa sarvasya hitaprepsuḥ sukhamatyantamaśnute || 46 || yad dhyāyati yat kurute ratiṃ badhnāti yatra ca | tadavāpnotyayatnena yo hinasti na kiṃ cana || 47 || nākṛtvā prāṇināṃ hiṃsām māmsamutpadyate kva cit | na ca prāṇivadhaḥ svargyastasmān māmsam vivarjayet || 48 || samutpattim ca māmsasya vadhabandhau ca dehinām | prasamīkṣya nivarteta sarvamāmsasya bhakṣaṇāt || 49 || na bhakṣayati yo māmsam vidhiṃ hitvā piśācavat | na loke priyatām yāti vyādhibhiḥśa na pīḍyate || 50 || anumantā viśasitā nihantā krayavikrayī | saṃskartā copahartā ca khādakaśceti ghātakāḥ || 51 || svamāmsam paramāmsena yo vardhayitumicchati | anabhyarcya pitṛn devāmstato'nyo nāstyapunyaḥkr̥t || 52 || varṣe varṣe'śvamedhena yo yajeta śataṃ samāḥ | māmsāni ca na khādet yastayoḥ puṇyaphalam samam || 53 || phalamūlāśanairmedhyairmunyannānām ca bhōjanaiḥ | na tat phalamavāpnōti yatmāmsaparivarjanāt || 54 || māṃ sa bhakṣayitā'mutra yasya māmsamihād myaham | etatmāmsasya māmsatvaṃ pravadanti manīṣiṇaḥ || 55 || na māmsabhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune | pravṛtṭireṣā bhūtānāṃ nivṛttistu mahāphalā || 56 ||* Tr. He, who does not seek to inflict sufferings of capture and death on living beings, is the well-wisher of all and obtains perfect happiness. (46). He who does not injure anything obtains, without effort, what he thinks of, what he undertakes, and what he fixes his heart upon. (47) Meat is never obtained without having encompassed the killing of animals; and the killing of animals does not lead to heaven; hence one should avoid meat. (48) Having duly pondered over the origin of meat, and over the fettering and killing of living beings, one should abstain from the eating of all meat. (49) He who does not eat meat like a fiend, disregarding the proper method, becomes popular among men and is not afflicted by disease. (50) He who approves, he who cuts, he who kills, he who buys and sells, he who cooks, he who serves and he who eats it are 'slayers' (51). If a man, without worshipping the gods and Piṭṛs, seeks to increase his own flesh by the flesh of others, — there is no s inner greater than that person. (52). If a man performs the Aśvamedha Sacrifice every year, for a hundred tears, and another does not eat meat, the merit and reward of both these are the same. (53) By subsisting upon sacred fruits and roots, and by eating the food of hermits, one does not obtain that reward which he does by abstaining from meat (54). 'Me he (mām-sa) will devour in the next world, whose meat I eat in this' —this is the 'meatness' (māmsatva) of the 'meat' (māmsa), as the wise ones declare. (55). There is no sin in the eating of meat, nor in wine, nor in sexual intercourse. Such is the natural way of living beings; but abstention is conducive to great rewards. (56). <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200432.html>

⁶² न भक्षयन्त्यतो मांसं तपोयुक्ता मनीषिणः ॥ १० ॥ *na bhakṣayantyato māmsam tapoyuktā manīṣiṇaḥ || 10 ||*

⁶³ हन्त निःश्रेयसं जन्तोर अहं वक्ष्याम्य अनुत्तमम अहिंसाप्राश्रयं धर्म यः साधयति वै नरः ॥ तरीन दोषान सर्वभूतेषु निधाय पुरुषः सदा कामक्रोधौ च संयम्य ततः सिद्धिम अवाप्नुते ॥ *hanta niḥśreyasaṃ jantor ahaṃ vakṣyāmy anuttamam ahiṃsāpāśrayaṃ*

*dharmam yaḥ sādhayati vai narah || trīn doṣān sarvabhūteṣu nidhāya puruṣaḥ sadā kāmakrodhau ca saṃyamya tataḥ
siddhim avāpnute ||* (<https://sacred-texts.com/hin/mbs/mbs13114.htm>)

⁶⁴ Both are Indian belief-systems and not the imported ones.

⁶⁵ ऋषयो ब्राह्मणा देवाः प्रशंसन्ति महामते । अहिंसा लक्षणं धर्मं वेदप्रामाण्यदर्शनात् ॥ २ ॥ *rṣayo brāhmaṇā devāḥ praśaṃsanti mahāmate | ahiṃsālakṣaṇam dharmam vedaprāmāṇyadarśanāt || 2 ||* (Mahabharata 13.114.2, Gita Press edition)

⁶⁶ ऋषयो ब्राह्मणा देवाः परशंसन्ति महामते, अहिंसा लक्षणं धर्मं वेद प्रामाण्य दर्शनात् ॥ कर्मणा मनुजः कुर्वन् हिंसां पार्थिव सतम, वाचा च मनसा चैव कथं दुःखात् परमुच्यते ॥ *rṣayo brāhmaṇā devāḥ praśaṃsanti mahāmate, ahiṃsā lakṣaṇam dharmam veda prāmāṇya darśanāt || karmaṇā manuṣaḥ kurvan hiṃsām pārthiva sattama, vācā ca manasā caiva katham duḥkhāt pramucyate || yathā nāgapade śnyāni padāni padagāminām, sarvāṇy evāpidhiyante padajātāni kauñjare, evaṃ lokeṣv ahiṃsā tu nirdiṣṭā dharmataḥ parā ||* (<https://sacred-texts.com/hin/mbs/mbs13115.htm>)

⁶⁷ <https://sacred-texts.com/hin/mbs/mbs13116.htm>. This idea appears at several places in the Mahabharata (1.11.12; 2.207.74; 6.60.18 etc. These references are from the Gita Press edition of the Mahabharata).

⁶⁸ आदिन्मातृराविशद्यास्वा शुचिरहिंस्यमान उर्विया वि वावृधे । अनु यत्पूर्वा अरुहत्सनाजुवो नि नव्यसीश्ववरासु धावते ॥ *ād in mātṛ āviśad yāsv ā śucir ahiṃsyamāna urviyā vi vāvṛdhe | anu yat pūrvā aruhat sanājuvo ni navyasīśvavarāsu dhāvate ||* Tr. “Therefore has the brilliant Agni entered the maternal (quarters of space), amidst which pure, and unharmed, he had evolved into magnitude, so that he mounted (the bushes) plural ced before him, as he had (consumed others) prior to them, and runs rapidly among the more recent and inferior branches.” (Rigveda 1.141.5) यन्नूनमश्यां गतिं मित्रस्य यायां पथा । अस्य प्रियस्य शर्मण्यहिंसानस्य सश्चिरे ॥ *yan nūnam aśyāṃ gatim mitrasya yāyām pathā | asya priyasya śarmaṇy ahiṃsānasya saścīre ||* Tr. “That I may now pursue the (right) direction, may I proceed by the path of Mitra, for all (good things) are aggregated in the happiness, (the gift) of that beloved and benignant (deity).” (Rigveda 5.64.3) अस्मे ता त इन्द्र सन्तु सत्याहिंसन्तीरुपस्पृशः । विद्याम यासां भुजो धेनूनां न वज्रिवः ॥ *asme tā ta indra santu satyāhiṃsantīr upasprśaḥ | vidyāma yāsāṃ bhujo dhenūnāṃ na vajrivah ||* Tr. “May these our (praises) reaching you, Indra, be successful, doing no detriment (to you), so that,thunderer, we may obtain the benefits derivable from them, as (a cowherd enjoys those) from the kine.” (Rigveda 10.22.13).

⁶⁹ अथ यत्पो दानमार्जवमहिंसा सत्यवचनमिति ता अस्य दक्षिणाः ॥ ३.१७.४ ॥ *atha yattapo dānamārjavamahimsā satyavacanamiti tā asya dakṣiṇāḥ || 3.17.4 ||* Tr. 4. Next, austerility, charity, straightforwardness, nonviolence, and truthfulness — these are his dakṣiṇā. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/chandogya-upanishad-english/d/doc239029.html>

⁷⁰ तत्राहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यदयाजपक्षमाधृतिमिताहारशौचानि चेति यमादश । तत्र हिंसा नाम मनोवाक्कायकर्मभिः सर्वभूतेषु सर्वदा क्लेशजननम् । (Shandliya Upanishada Chapter 1) Tr. Under yama (forbearance) are ten: *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya* *brahmacharya*, *daya*, *arjava*, *kshama*, *dhṛti*, *mitāhara*, and *saucha*. Of these, *ahimsa* is the not causing of any pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one's mind, speech, or body. Non-injury (*ahimsā*), Truthfulness (*satya*), Nonstealing (*asteya*), Sexual Austerity/ Purity (*Brahmacharya*), Patience (*Kṣamā*), Steadfastness (*dhṛiti*), Compassion (*dayā*), Honesty (*Ārjava*), Moderate Diet (*Mitāhāra*) and Physical Purity (*Śaucha*).

⁷¹ अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरग्रहाः यमा ॥ *Yogasutra* (2.30) The following are the five restraints (*yama*): Non-injury (*ahimsā*), Truthfulness (*satya*), Nonstealing (*asteya*), Sexual Austerity/ Purity (*Brahmacharya*) and non-stealing (*apragraha*).

⁷² कर्मणा मनुजः कुर्वन् हिंसां पार्थिवसतम । वाचा च मनसा चैव कथं दुःखात्प्रमुच्यते ॥ ३ ॥ *karmaṇā manuṣaḥ kurvanhiṃsām pārthivasattama | vācā ca manasā caiva katham duḥkhātpromucyate || 3 ||* चतुर्विधेयं निर्दिष्टा अहिंसा ब्रह्मवादिभिः । एषैकतोऽपि विभ्रष्टा न भवत्यरिसूदन ॥ ४ ॥ *caturvidheyam nirdiṣṭā ahiṃsā brahmavādibhiḥ | eṣaikatopi vibhraṣṭā na bhavatyarisūdana || 4 ||* tr. What I ask thee is: how does a man, who has perpetrated acts of injury/ violence to others in word, thought and deed, succeed in cleansing himself from misery? There are four kinds of compassion or abstention from injury/ violence. If even one of those four kinds (viz. thoughts/ mind, words actions, and not consuming flesh) is not observed, the duty of compassion, it is said, is not observed.

⁷³ अहिंसा परमो धर्मस्तथाहिंसा परो दमः । अहिंसा परमं दानमहिंसा परमं तपः ॥ २८ ॥ अहिंसा परमो यज्ञस्तथाहिंसा परं फलम् । अहिंसा परमं मित्रमहिंसा परमं सुखम् । ॥ २९ ॥ *ahiṃsā paramo dharmastathāhiṃsā paro damaḥ | ahiṃsā paramam dānamahiṃsā paramam tapaḥ || 28 || ahiṃsā paramo yajñastathāhiṃsā paramam falam | ahiṃsā paramam mitramahiṃsā paramam sukham || 29 ||* (Anushasana Parva 116.28–29) In some texts one also finds an additional line: अहिंसा परमं सत्यमहिंसा परमं श्रुतम् *ahiṃsā paramam satyamahiṃsā paramam śrutam*. Tr. Ahimsa is the highest Dharma, Ahimsa is the highest self-control, Ahimsa is the greatest gift, Ahimsa is the best practice, Ahimsa is the highest sacrifice, Ahimsa is the finest strength, Ahimsa is the greatest friend, Ahimsa is the greatest happiness, Ahimsa is the highest truth, and Ahimsa is the

greatest teaching. अहिंसा परमो धर्म इत्युक्तं बहुशस्त्वया । *ahimsā paramo dharma ityuktaṁ bahuśastvayā* ||(13.115.1) अहिंसा परमो धर्मस्तथाहिंसा परं तपः । अहिंसा परमं सत्यं ततो धर्मः प्रवर्तते ॥२३॥ *ahimsā paramo dharmastathāhimsā param tapah* । *ahimsā paramam satyam tato dharmah pravartate* ||23|| (Anushasana Parva 115.23)

⁷⁴ Pope, G U et al. (Trs.) Tiruvallur, W.H. Allen, & Co, [1886], Rpt. Madras: The South India Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society, 1982.

⁷⁵ अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ॥३०॥ *ahimsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ* ॥30॥ (Patañjali Yoga Sutra 2.30) Tr. Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, moving in the Brahman and non-accumulation are the five yamās. Yamās means “restraint” in Sanskrit. The five yamas (social ethics) primarily focus on our actions in community; they may be described as rules for good social conduct. Religious texts of Hinduism and Jainism outline five social restraints and moral codes known as the yamas. यम्यन्ते उपरम्यन्ते निवर्त्यन्ते हिंसादिभ्य इन्द्रियाणि यैस्ते यमाः ‘अर्थात् जिनके अनुष्ठान से इन्द्रियों एवं मन को हिंसादि अशुभ भावों से हटाकर आत्मकेन्द्रित किया जाये, वे यम हैं’ । In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, yamas are the first limb of yoga in the Ashtanga yoga system—also called the eight-limbed path. The yamas are considered to be universal: जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सार्वभौमा महाव्रतम् ॥३१॥ *jātidēśakālasamayānavacchinnāḥ sārvaḥaumā mahāvratam* ॥31॥ (Patañjali Yoga Sutra 2.31) The great vows are universal and are not limited by life state, country, time or circumstances.

⁷⁶ अहिंसा परमो धर्मः सर्वप्राणभृतां वरः । (Mahabharata आदिपर्व- 11:13) - किसी भी प्राणी को न मारना ही परमधर्म है । नाऽकृत्वा प्राणिनां हिंसां मांसमुत्पद्यते क्वचित् न च प्राणिवशः स्वर्गं यस्तस्मान्मांसं विवर्जयेत् ॥ (मनुस्मृति 5:48) किसी दूसरे जीव का वध किया जाये तभी मांस की प्राप्ति होती है इसलिए यह निश्चित है कि जीव हिंसा से कभी स्वर्ग नहीं मिलता, इसलिए सुख तथा स्वर्ग को पाने की कामना रखने वाले लोगों को मांस भक्षण वर्जित करना चाहिए।

⁷⁷ अहिंसा सर्वथा सर्वदा सर्वभूतानामनभिद्रोहः Yogasutra-Vyasbhashya 2.302.30

⁷⁸ अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः ॥२.३५॥ *ahimsapratisthayaṁ tatsannidhau vairatyagah* ॥2.35॥ (Patanjali Yoga Sutras 2.35)

⁷⁹ Kindly see: <https://sacred-texts.com/hin/mbs/mbs13114.htm>

⁸⁰ रुधिराक्तेन बलिना मांसेन मुरया नृप । (बलिमांसादिपूजेयं विप्रवर्ज्या मयेरिता ॥ तेषां किल सुरामांसैर्नक्ता पूजा नृप क्वचित् ।) प्रणामाचमनीयेन चन्दनेन सुगन्धिना ॥२८॥ (<https://www.durgasaptashati.in/2022/02/waikritikan-rahasyam.html>)

⁸¹ Irons, Edward A. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2008, p. 249.

⁸² Ibid, p. 544.

⁸³ विश्वं समिन्त्रिणं दह विस्वाम सम अत्रिणाम दधा (Rigveda 1/36/2/14) सर्वभक्षी रोगाग्नि में जलते हैं

⁸⁴ अघ्न्या यजमानस्य पशून्पाहि (यजुर्वेद 1:1) - हे मनुष्यों ! पशु अघ्न्य हैं - कभी न मारने योग्य, पशुओं की रक्षा करो

⁸⁵ य आमं मांसमदन्ति पौरुषेयं च ये क्रविः । गर्भान् खादन्ति केशवास्तानितो नाशयामसि !! (अथर्ववेद 8:6:23) जो कच्चा मांस खाते हैं, जो मनुष्यों द्वारा पकाया हुआ मांस खाते हैं, जो गर्भ रूप अंडों का सेवन करते हैं, उन के इस दुष्ट व्यसन का नाश करो !

⁸⁶ ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् । तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥ *īśā vāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyāṁ jagat | tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam* || 1 || In the Lord is to be veiled all this—whatsoever moves on earth. Through such renunciation do thou save (thyself); be not greedy, for whose is wealth? *Ishavasya Upanishad with Shankara’s Commentary*, Verse 1, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/ishavasya-upanishad-shankara-bhashya/d/doc143810.html>.

⁸⁷ तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ततेजोऽसृजत ततेज ऐक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति तदपोऽसृजत । तस्माद्यत्र क्वच शोचति स्वेदते वा पुरुषस्तेजस एव तदध्यापो जायन्ते ॥ ६.२.३ ॥ *tadaikṣata bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti tattejo’srjata tatteja aikṣata bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti tadapo’srjata | tasmādyatra kvaca śocati svedate vā puruṣastejasa eva tadadhyāpo jāyante* || 6.2.3 || That Existence decided: ‘I shall be many. I shall be born.’ He then created fire. That fire also decided: ‘I shall be many. I shall be born.’ Then fire produced water. That is why whenever or wherever a person mourns or perspires, he produces water. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/Chhandogya-upanishad-english/d/doc239262.html>.

⁸⁸ अनुमता विशसिता निहन्ता क्रयविक्रयी । संस्कर्ता चोपहर्ता च खादकश्चेति घातकाः ॥ (मनुस्मृति 5:51) मारने की अनुमति देने, मांस के काटने, पशु आदि के मारने, उनको मारने के लिए लेने और बेचने, मांस के पकाने, परोसने और खाने वाले - ये आठों प्रकार के मनुष्य घातक, हिंसक अर्थात् ये सब एक समान पापी हैं ।

⁸⁹ अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ॥३०॥ *ahimsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ* ॥30॥ (Patañjali Yoga Sutra 2.30) Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, moving in the Brahman, non-accumulation are the five yamās. Yamās means “restraint” in Sanskrit. Religious texts of Hinduism and Jainism outline five social restraints and moral codes known as the yamas. यम्यन्ते उपरम्यन्ते निवर्त्यन्ते हिंसादिभ्य इन्द्रियाणि यैस्ते यमाः ‘अर्थात् जिनके अनुष्ठान से इन्द्रियों एवं मन को हिंसादि अशुभ भावों से हटाकर आत्मकेन्द्रित किया जाये, वे यम हैं’ । In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, yamas are the first limb of yoga in the Ashtanga yoga system—also called the eight-limbed path. The yamas are considered to be universal:

जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सार्वभौमा महाव्रतम् ॥३१॥ jātideśakālasamayānavacchinnāḥ sārvaḥbhaumā mahāvratam ॥31॥ (Patañjali Yoga Sutra 2.31) The great vows are universal and are not limited by life state, country, time or circumstances.

⁹⁰ अहिंसा परमो धर्मः सर्वप्राणभृतां वरः। (Mahabharata आदिपर्व- 11:13) - किसी भी प्राणी को न मारना ही परमधर्म है। नाऽकृत्वा प्राणिनां हिंसां मांसमुत्पद्यते क्वचित् न च प्राणिवशः स्वर्गं यस्तस्मान्मांसं क्विर्जयेत् ॥ (मनुस्मृति 5:48) किसी दूसरे जीव का वध किया जाये तभी मांस की प्राप्ति होती है इसलिए यह निश्चित है कि जीव हिंसा से कभी स्वर्ग नहीं मिलता, इसलिए सुख तथा स्वर्ग को पाने की कामना रखने वाले लोगों को मांस भक्षण वर्जित करना चाहिए।

⁹¹ अहिंसा सर्वथा सर्वदा सर्वभूतानामनभिद्रोहः Yogasutra-Vyasbhashya 2.302.30

⁹² अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः ॥२.३५॥ ahimsapratishthayam tatsannidhau vairatyagah ॥2.35॥ (Patanjali Yoga Sutra 2.35)

⁹³ मा नस्तोके तनये मा न आयौ मा नो गोषु मा नो अश्वेषु रीरिषः । वीरान्मा नो रुद्र भामितो वधीर्हविष्मन्तः सदमित्वा हवामहे ॥ mā naḥ toke tanaye mā na āyau mā na goṣu mā na aśveṣu rīriṣaḥ | vīrān mā no rudra bhāmito vadhīr haviṣmantāḥ sadam it tvā havāmahe || (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc830241.html>)

⁹⁴ पशूनाञ्च मृगाणाञ्च पक्षिणाञ्च तथा द्विजाः ॥ तृणद्रुमलतानाञ्च त्राणाद्भवति नाकभाक् ॥ २३ ॥ https://sa.wikisource.org/wiki/विष्णुधर्मोत्तरपुराणम्/खण्डः_३/अध्यायाः_३०१-३०५.

⁹⁵ इज्यायज्ञश्रुतिकृतैर्यो मार्गैरबुधो जनः । हन्याज्जन्तुं मांसगृद्धी स वै नरकभाइनरः ॥ 13.115.४३ ॥ ijjāyājñasrutikṛtairoyo mārgairabudho janah | hanyājjantun māṁsagrddhī sa vai narakabhānnarah || 13.115.43 || जो मांस लोभी मूर्ख एवं अधम मनुष्य यज्ञ याग आदि वैदिक मार्गों के नाम पर प्राणियों कि हिंसा करता है वक् नरकगामी होता है।

⁹⁶ Pratap Chandra Roy, The Mahabharata, Vol XI, Anusasana Parva, Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Co, 1944, p. 255, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.68946/page/n261/mode/2up>.

⁹⁷ यः स्वार्थं मांसपचनं कुरुते पापमोहितः । यावन्त्यस्य तु रोमाणि तावत्स नरके वसेत् ॥ ५१ ॥ परप्राणैस्तु ये प्राणान्स्वान्पुष्णं ति हि दुर्धियः । आकल्पं नरकान्भुक्त्वा ते भुज्यन्ते तैः पुनः ॥ ५२ ॥ जातुमांसं न भोक्तव्यं प्राणैः कंठगतैरपि । भोक्तव्यं तर्हि भोक्तव्यं स्वमांसं नेतरस्य च ॥ ५३ ॥ yaḥ svārthaṁ māṁsapachanaṁ kurute pāpamohitaḥ | yāvanṭyasya tu romāṇi tāvatsa narake vaset || 51 || paraprāṇaistu ye prāṇāṁsvānpuṣṇaṁ ti hi durdhiyaḥ | ākalpaṁ narakānbhuktva te bhujaṁtetra taiḥ punah || 52 || jātumāṁsaṁ na bhoktavyaṁ prāṇaiḥ kaṁthagatairapi | bhoktavyaṁ tarhi bhoktavyaṁ svamāṁsaṁ netarasya ca || 53 || <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/skanda-purana-sanskrit/d/doc766669.html>

⁹⁸ The names of the different Narakas (hells) are as follows: Raurava, Śūkara, Rodha, Tāla, Viśasana, Mahājvāla, Taptakumbha, Lavaṇa, Vimohana, Rudhirāndha, Vaitaraṇī, Krimīśa, Krimibhojana, Asipatravana, Kṛṣṇa, Lālābhakṣa, Dāruṇa, Pūyavāha, Pāpa, Vahnijvāla, Adhośīras, Sandansa, Kālasūtra, Tamas, Avīchi, Śvabhōjana, Apratiṣṭha, and Avīchi (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 2.6.2-6) see this for different kinds of punishments awarded for raising / killing animals.

⁹⁹ सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ 12.4॥, sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ (Bhagavadgita 12.4)

¹⁰⁰ सर्वेषा मंगलं भूयात्सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभागभवेत्॥ (गरुड पुराण २.३५.५१). <https://archive.org/details/garudapurana/page/n435/mode/2up?view=theater>
Its slightly varied form is said as a prayer at the end of every Hindu congregation: सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभागभवेत्॥

¹⁰¹ धर्म की जय हो, अधर्म का नाश हो, प्राणियों मे सद्भावना हो, विश्व का कल्याण हो dharm kee jay ho, adharm ka naash ho, praanion me sadbhaavana ho, vishv ka kalyaan ho

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