

Interfaith Vegan Coalition

HINDUISM: GAUDIYA VAISHNAVA / CHAITANYA VAISHNAVA / HARE KRISHNA / KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS



Demonstrating the Hare Krishna Ideals of Harmlessness and Universal Lovingkindness: Six Steps

These are 6 steps that could be introduced at your temple either one at a time or all together.

1. Include at least one prayer each week (or month) for animals in the temple program. Join the [Worldwide Prayer Circle for Animals](#) as a congregation.
2. Include reverence for and kinship with all Krishna's creatures in the temple's mission statement. Include language such as "guardian" rather than "owner" when referring to companion animals. (See In Defense of Animals' Guardian Campaign, [idausa.org](#)). Use "he" or "she," rather than "it," when referring to animals.
3. Help develop a policy to remove or repel insects, mice and others without harming them and to protect birds from hitting large windows.
4. Encourage education and discussion about how the temple can help animals by hosting films, speakers, and book studies about doing no harm to animals.
5. Begin purchasing recycled paper products, compostable plates, bowls, and utensils, as well as non-toxic cleaning products, candles, etc. that are ecologically sustainable, fair-trade, and certified cruelty-free.
6. Certainly the most challenging step, but the most dramatic in its message of compassion, will be for the temple to offer only dairy-free prasadam. Sharing plant-based meals as a community acknowledges our commitment to the health of the earth and the hungry of the world (since a plant-based diet uses far fewer resources than a diet including dairy does), and the right of all animals to be protected and live their own lives free from human exploitation and violence.



RESOURCES

The Hindu religion mostly sees killing animals for food as sacrilegious. Vegetarianism (eating no flesh of any animal including no fish and eggs) is commonly essential to the Hindu faith and sadhus and swamis of ancient India recognized animal suffering and the importance of protecting all living beings. Vedic texts describe incarnations of God in various animal forms and ahimsa, meaning “non-harming” or “non-violence” is a key tenant in much of Hindu Philosophy. One survey shows that 42% of Indian households are vegetarian¹, and another commonly cited figure places over 30% of Indians as vegetarian². This is largely due to Hinduism.

In the book *Animals and World Religions*, Lisa Kemmerer writes, “Eating cows is particularly base for Hindus, but flesh eating in general remains spiritually abhorrent. In light of reincarnation, eating hens and ducks, goats and Kangyan cattle is ‘foolish’ for it is “like eating the flesh of one’s own son.” (citing Chapple, “Ahimsa,” 114)” .

Vegetarianism is an essential teaching of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition (also called Chaitanya Vaishnavism or Hare Krishna) in particular. The tradition’s principal Guru of the modern age, Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, made being vegetarian one of the four requirements for initiation into the faith. In the 1960’s and 70’s, the Hare Krishna movement was influential in the spread of vegetarianism in the United States with their vegetarian restaurants– usually called Govinda’s, another name for Krishna as a cow protector– in many major U.S. cities. They were often the only vegetarian restaurants in the area. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada believed so deeply in vegetarianism that he felt that until one stopped eating animal flesh, one couldn’t even begin to advance spiritually. He felt it was one of the first, most important steps in a spiritual life to be protectors of cows and all animals.



The Gaudiya Vaishnava’s Supreme God is Krishna. Krishna grew up in the pastoral paradise of Vrindavana where he loved, played with, and protected the cows and all animals of the field and forest. We see reference to the importance of preserving all life in the major texts of the faith. For example, the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* tells us that we must befriend all beings (sarva bhūta-suhṛt, SB 6.9.39, 5.10.8, 7.13.3, 8.8.21, 11.7.12, etc.) in the same affectionate manner that Krishna shows to all beings in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (suhṛdaṃ sarva-bhūtānāṃ, BG 5.29). This is because “all the living beings...are equally part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead” (SB 11.2.52). The *Gītā* instructs us to treat all beings with a sense of equality (BG 5.18), especially since Krishna is situated in the heart of all living beings (BG. 18.61). Practitioners must become sensitive to the suffering and wellbeing of other living beings if they are to follow religious principles (SB 6.10.9), and advanced spiritual practitioners are those who “delight in the welfare of all beings” (sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ, BG. 5.25).

Furthermore, the *Gītā* advocates what we might consider to be “social activism” when Krishna tells us that we must always be engaged in “working for the welfare of all living beings” (BG 5.25, 12.4), and behave in such an exemplary way that other people will follow our example (BG 3.21) so that we might protect the world (loka saṅgraham, BG 3.25).

The Gita, encourages eating plant-foods that are in the mode of goodness, or are Sattvic (17.8). We can understand these foods as those that must be procured in adherence to the religious principles

¹ *Growth and Concentration in India*, section 2.3, published in “Project on Livestock Industrialization, Trade, and Social-Health-Environment,” FAO Corporate Document.

Repository, citing the National Sample Survey (NSS), retrieved June 29, 2017: <http://www.fao.org/wairdocs/lead/x6170e/x6170e09.htm>

² [Nutritional profile of Indian vegetarian diets](#) – the Indian Migration Study (IMS) Nutrition Journal, 201413:55.

described above (and others), including the sattvic principle of non-violence (ahimsā, BG. 17.14), since these are considered sattvic behavior (sāttvikam paricakṣate, BG 17.17).

However, the problem for animals with the Gaudiya Vaishnava traditions, like in most Hindu traditions, is the issue of dairy consumption. In the mystical land of Vrindavana, the cows were worshiped as one of our mothers; no harm ever came to her or her offspring, and the dairy was eaten freely. Many Hindus, as well as the mainstream public, think that no harm comes to cows in modern dairy production. This is not the case.

The unfortunate reality in all commercial dairy, no matter the label or size of the farm, is that cows and their calves suffer terribly in the dairy industry. The cow is sexually violated with artificial insemination, then, after giving birth, her calf is taken from her causing severe emotional distress and she will go to a brutal slaughter in a fraction of her natural lifespan. Much of the ground beef at the store and in fast food is from dairy cows bodies. The female calves, frightened and alone, are chained or penned in a small area and bottle feed till they are old enough for forced insemination. The baby males are useless to the dairy industry and are sold and slaughtered for veal or beef. In our modern society, there is no difference between the meat and dairy industries since a large portion of the profit in dairy production relies on the slaughter of cows, which are then consumed as hamburger meat.



Some might argue that dairy is important for spiritual development, but if the cow and her calf suffered, how can this be? Ahimsa Parmo Dharma means “Non-Violence is the supreme law of the universe” or “One’s highest duty is to be nonviolent.” Would you want your spiritual advancement to cause suffering? If one seeks spiritual advancement at the expense of another being, especially our dear mother cow, then this would be considered a “selfish motivation” (haituka). This is not in the spirit of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition which exclusively seeks the Loving Service of the divine with no selfish motives other than to serve Krishna and others in the cultivation of devotional love or Bhakti (e.g. Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam, verse 4, bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi).

Some Hare Krishna temples are aware of the suffering of cows in the dairy industry and limit their use of dairy to only “Ahimsa Dairy.” Ahimsa dairy is dairy from cows that are raised by devotees of Krishna on ashram farms and care deeply for the cows and let them live their lives out in peace. There are usually no more than around 15 cows on these farms. While this is a laudable effort, there can still be issues with Ahimsa dairy since there are not clearly defined standard that is enforced. For example, for a dairy product to be truly non-violent, the issue of “consent” must be taken very seriously in all endeavors. An animal must never be forced to engage in activities with which they have not explicitly and clearly consented. It is important to consider if the cow is willingly giving milk, or if it is being taken without her consent. This issue of consent is especially critical when it comes to the breeding of cows. We must ask: when a cow is bred, was she forced by a bull (raped) or did she know and like the bull and consent to the intercourse? Also, can those who receive the dairy product guarantee that the baby males are kept in protected, loving homes for their whole lives and not sold or given away to non-devotees who may not protect him for his whole life? We have found that some facilities that claim to be ahimsā have not taken the issue of consent or other issues into serious consideration. Therefore, if one is to follow the religious principles of non-violence and cow protection strictly, it is best to simply avoid the consumption of dairy products.



Small, Organic Farms Are No Better

In the book *The Ultimate Betrayal*, authors Hope and Cogen Bohanec do extensive research on small scale animal agriculture and what they found was disheartening. Farmed animals experience the same miseries endured in large operations and a brutal slaughter is still the end result. They found that organic dairies could be even worse than commercial dairy.

Cows regularly suffer from mastitis, a painful infection of the udder. Mastitis can cause the udder to swell, have open, oozing sores, and can make it extremely painful to be milked. Farmers often give cows antibiotics and other medications to reduce the painful effects of mastitis, but the organic standards don't allow for these substances to be used as they will be passed on to into the milk. If an organic farmer wanted to give his cow medicine to ease her suffering, he would have to take her out of production and couldn't sell her milk. Cows suffering from the most advances cases of mastitis in severe pain at milking are often on organic dairies, and organic dairy cows still have their babies taken away at birth and still go to a brutal slaughter at a young age. Unfortunately, labels like organic and certified humane can mean that the animals suffered even more than on larger operations.

Dairy is liquid meat. For meat, we kill the animal and steal her body parts. For dairy, we steal her milk, then kill her for meat. It is the same. Kill and steal or steal and kill, all animal products cause suffering. The only way to truly know that you are not causing harm to mother cow is to live vegan. Please don't support the suffering by eating or buying commercial dairy.

QUOTES

Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada³

“This is simply animal civilization. Taking the last drop of milk from the cow and immediately send it to the slaughterhouse...Mother-killing civilization. And they want to be happy. And periodically there is great war and wholesale massacre, reaction.” Conversation, Detroit, 14 June, 1976

“In the Kali-yuga [current age]...the cow stands with tears in her eyes, the *śūdra* milkman draws milk from the cow artificially, and when there is no milk the cow is sent to be slaughtered. These greatly sinful acts are responsible for all the troubles in present society.” SB 1.17.3 purport

“European and American civilization will be finished on account of this sinful activity of killing the cows.” Letter, Honolulu, 31 May, 1975.

“Those who are anxious to cultivate the human spirit must turn their attention first toward the question of cow protection.” *Light of the Bhagavata*, pg. 27

“He first asked him that ‘Cow is your mother. Bull is your father. Why you are killing father and mother? What is your religion? Is that very good philosophy, that you shall kill your father and mother and eat them?’ This was the first question. According to Vedic civilization, cow is to be given all protection. ... And Lord Christ is more liberal. He said, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ He does not name any animal’s name. Every animal. Every animal should be given protection. That is also the Vedic idea.”

“To be nonviolent to human beings and to be a killer or enemy of the poor animals is Satan’s philosophy. In this age there is always enmity against poor animals, and therefore the poor creatures are always anxious. The reaction of the poor animals is being forced on human society, and therefore there is always strain of cold or hot war between men, individually, collectively or nationally.”

“When Maharaja Pariksit saw a degraded man trying to kill a cow, he immediately drew his sword and said,

³ Credit to [Tukarama Das](#) for compiling and presenting some of this information.

‘Who are you? Why are you trying to kill this cow?’ He was a real king. Nowadays, unqualified men have taken the presidential post. And although they may pose themselves as very religious, they are simply rascals. Why? Because under their noses thousands of cows are being killed, while they collect a good salary. Any leader who is at all religious should resign his post in protest if cow slaughter goes on under his rule.”

Radhanath Swami, The Journey Home:

“I stared first at the meat chunks and then at the cows. At that moment, the mother cow leaned over to lick my leg. My heart cried. Why should a beautiful life be slaughtered to eat some meat? She loves her child. And this innocent calf loves his mother. Why had I blindly participated in this? Why are we all so blind and deaf to the horror in every slaughterhouse? How has human society become so insensitive to the cruelties inflicted upon these children of God? Although the meat I had been eating was not cow meat, this was the first time I had made the connection between my diet and the suffering of animals. Thinking of the thousands of animals killed every day in America, I lost my composure and dissolved into tears.”

DOCUMENTARIES

“**Cowspiracy**” and “**What the Health**” can be seen on Netflix

“**Earthlings**” is a very intense video that shows the unbelievable cruelty endured by animals at human hands. If you plan to show it, you need to give people fair warning. While it has caused many people to go vegan on the spot, it can be traumatic to watch, and viewers need to be given great compassion and care while watching it.

“**A Life Connected**” is a short, 11 minute, but powerful and uplifting video [online](#).

“**The Metaphysics of Food**,” by Will Tuttle.

“**Peaceable Kingdom**” and “**The Witness**” can be watched free [online](#).

“**A Prayer for Compassion**” by Thomas Jackson.

WEBSITES

[Vegan Hare Krishna Society](#)

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