

If religions are meant to promote peace

If The main goal of religions is directing humans to better living and promoting love! How can we promote love and peace in the world when we harm and oppress other living creatures? **Why in our prayers, we should pray for human beings only and disregard the other sentient beings? In general any statement, whether in the context of religion or tradition, should not be accepted blindly based on imitation and prejudice, but rather it should comply with science and intellect also and it should not cause violence, oppression, and antagonism. If in a religion or any belief cruelty to animals is excused but kindness to human beings is essential, the real meaning of justice and love should be questioned in this religion.**

Many people believe that God is the most righteous and supports righteousness and peace. If so, then how can this God permit people to torture other innocent sentient beings and destroy the world that God has created (refer to the section: harm of animal products on health of environment)? All religions endorse kindness to animals and if eating meat and wearing animal skin is not banned in a religion, intellectual conflict happens, that why even though there is talk of animal kindness in this religion, consuming animal products is not a problem! Are incarcerating, torturing, killing, eating, and wearing animals compliant with the meaning of the word kindness? **In this situation a wise and fair individual experiences doubt and uncertainty, and when uncertain, the safest choice is avoidance.** Also if in a religion consuming animal products has not been clearly mentioned, this cannot be an excuse for cruelty, and a wise individual should reference her/his powers of wisdom and conscience and must oppose all cruel customs no matter how deeply surrounded by a halo. Many rules that we follow today have not been mentioned by prophets but humans themselves have set and execute them, in order to create order and reduce chaos in society.

An interesting point: In some beliefs consumption of animal products is banned in certain days in order to cleanse the body and mind of the individual but after this period is passed, they start consuming animal products!

Now we go over statements from some religions and ethical movements that have been forgotten, in order to bring them back to life in our hearts so that maybe we realize the importance of such statements with a more humane view.

Jainism: an ancient religion that emerged in India. Its basis is victory over ego and is more than 5000 years old. This religion has become more comprehensive with the teaching of Mahavira, the 24th teacher. Mahavira lived in 6th century B.C. and was born into a wealthy and dynast family. At age of 30 he left home and wealth behind to find the truth and kill his ego. After twelve years he reached enlightenment and started to promote Jainism and his own thoughts and became known as a big spiritual leader of this belief. He promoted vegetarianism, equality between man and woman, and cleansing of the body and soul from the physical world. **A symbol of Jainism is the palm of the hand in the form of a “stop sign,” which it means before taking any action, stop and think to make sure there is no violence in it.**

Quotes from Mahavira:

- * Nonviolence is the highest religion.
- * Live and let live.
- * Kill not. Cause no pain.
- * Nonviolence and kindness to living beings are kindness to oneself. For thereby one's own self is saved from various kinds of sins and resultant sufferings and is able to secure her/his own welfare.
- * All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain or treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.

Zoroastrianism: is considered one of the most ancient religions and appeared in Iran. The follower of this religion is also called Parsi. The goal of Zoroaster was replacing the many ancient Gods with one God (Ahura Mazda) and believed that this world is the battlefield between goodness and badness (Ormuzd and Ahriman). In his view the gifts to God should be clean and pure, and he was against sacrificing animals and ceremonial sacrifices and admired fire, a symbol of truth. In this religion in the month of Bahman (good purpose) vegetarianism is considered honorable. Also when we look at the tradition of the people of this country, we realize that nature and life has a special value, but unfortunately these values are forgotten. Zoroaster **speaks of seven elements that should be kept clean: earth, water, sky, fire, human, animal, and plant.** God has predicted that Ahriman will attack these seven elements and will cause pollution in the world. In the book of Zoroastrians it has been mentioned that if an individual harms and kills an animal, he will upset Bahman (good purpose) and Ahura Mazda will also be dissatisfied with him and that will put him in the wrong path of nature as a result, which means he is following Ahriman, the devil opposite to Ahura Mazda. In Ferdowsi's "Shahnameh" it has been mentioned many times that Ahriman introduced meat for the first time through the evil king (Zohak).

- * When in doubt, abstain.
- * Turn yourself not away from three best things: Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed. (Is torturing, killing, and eating animals a result of good thought?)
- * Disturbing animals, even for play, is sin. (Gathas hymns)
- * Violence must be put down. Against cruelty make a stand.
- * Eating vegetarian food is the best way to nurture our body.
- * Doing well to others is not a duty; it is a joy, for it increases our own health and happiness.

Buddhism: is also considered an ancient religion which believes in nonviolence, and appeared around Nepal. Some of the principles of this religion are similar to Zoroastrianism. Meditation, which is very popular today, is a principle of Buddhism, teaching how thought and intelligence can be used to solve daily problems. Buddhist living is living with peace, kindness, intelligence, and tactfulness, and emphasizes having positive thoughts which are sources of happiness while negative thoughts cause problems and discomfort. Buddhism affirms the unity of all living beings and all can become Buddhas that is to become enlightened. Humans are not superior to other animals and the world is not for the benefit of human beings. Harming or killing sentient living beings is prohibited because they love their lives, escape from death and don't want to die even the smallest animals and insects.

- * Fill your mind with compassion.
- * The most elusive title is to be free of self.
- * The eating of flesh extinguishes the seed of great compassion.
- * Do not ever surrender, do not pay attention to what happens around you, and nurture your heart (Dalai Lama)
- * If a human can control his body and mind and thereby refrains from eating animal flesh and wearing animal products, I say he will really be liberated.
- * One must not deliberately kill any living creature by either committing the act oneself, instructing others to kill, or approving of or participating in acts of killing. To completely abstain from the act of killing directly and indirectly, eat only pure vegetarian food.
- * How can one practice true compassion when he eats the flesh of an animal to fatten his own flesh?
- * If one is trying to practice meditation and still eats meat, he would be like a man closing his ears and shouting loudly, and then asserting that he heard nothing. (Ancient Buddhist text by Surangama Sutra)
- * People who eat flesh are destroying the seed of great compassion of their own, thus the people who practice spirituality should not eat flesh. (Lankavatara sutra)

Judaism:

In this religion there are many strong and decisive messages about treating animals:

- * A righteous man respects the life of his animal. (Verse 12:10)
- * The Lord is good to everyone and has compassion for everything that has made. (Psalm 145:9)
- * Thou shall not plow with an ox and an ass together (Actual 22:10 Deuteronomy)
- * You shall not allow for two animals to work together. The weaker animal will endure more pressure compared to the stronger one.
- * Animals, like humans, suffer emotionally. We must strive to cause them neither physical pain nor emotional anguish.
- * And God said, Behold, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. (Genesis 1:29)
- * Man's fate is like that of the animals. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who know of the spirit of man rises upward and in the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth? (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21)

Christianity:

- Jesus was against eating flesh and wine.
- * Whatever you do unto the least of these brothers of mine, you did it unto me. (Matthew 25:40)
- * Not to hurt our humble brethren (animals) is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission: to be of service to them whenever they require it. If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men. (Francis of Assisi)
- * Animals have done us no harm and they have no power of resistance... There is something so very dreadful...in tormenting those who have never harmed us, who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power. (Cardinal John Henry Newman)
- * Animals are God's creatures, not human property... they are precious beings in God's sight. (Reverend Andrew Linzey)

* I do not delight in the blood of

bulls, or of lambs or goats,... When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you even when you offer prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood, wash and clean yourselves. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. (Isaiah) * Not by

shedding innocent blood, but by living a righteous life shall ye find the peace of god,... Blessed are they who keep this law for god is manifested in all creatures. All creatures live in god and god is hid in them,... (Gospel of the holy twelve).

* And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little boy will lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

Today, it may seem unacceptable that wolf and lamb will become friends, but with the progress of humanity, justice among all living beings will be observed, and humans will even make some changes in wild animals so that they will not be willing to kill other animals and eat flesh.

Islam: this religion has strong directives about treating animals which are signs of God's strength and greatness, but I wonder why "Festival of Sacrifice" is a tradition in this religion!

* Be kind to animals. (Muhammad)

* All creatures on earth are sentient beings. There is not an animal on earth or a bird that flies on its wings - but they are communities like you. (Quran 6:38)

* It is a great sin for man to imprison those animals which are in his power.

* A good deed done to an animal is as meritorious as a good deed done to a human being, while an act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as an act of cruelty to a human being. (Muhammad)

* Allah will not have mercy on anyone, except those who have mercy on other creatures. Where there is an abundance of vegetables, a host of angels will descend on that place. (Muhammad)

* Only ride animals when necessary for your needs and do not use them as fluid beds.

* Don't let your stomach become a grave yard for animals. (Hadith)

* Be obedient to God, considering the possessions at your disposal for which you are responsible, even for survival of animals. Avoid carrying heavy loads on animals beyond their power, and if an animal tires, let it rest. (Ali Ibn Abu Talib)

Baha'i: appeared about 165 years ago in Iran. In this religion there are strong statements regarding humane treating of animals and not eating meat, especially in the book of GHAMOOS KETAAB AGHDAS (in the section about avoiding cruelty to animals) but because this faith has not been explicitly mentioned that eating meat is forbidden, most Baha'i people continue to eat meat.

I will point to another interesting point about human characteristics: if in a religion something is directly banned (you should not do this), people say "what a hard and dictatorial religion!" But if something is banned softly (not doing this is desirable) then people do not pay attention to it.

* **Religion must be in accord with science and reason. (Bahauallah)**

* Unless ye must, bruise not the serpent in the dust, how much less wound a man, and if ye can, no ant should ye alarm, much less a brother harm.

* Animals, like humans, are dear to true believers. Therefore human should be kind to both human and animal and try to comfort and support the animal as much as possible. (Abdu'l Baha)

* If dissecting an animal has a medical benefit and helps human and animal health, sacrificing that one animal is valid. But it must be with a level of attention and the animal should be unconscious.

* For in all physical respects, and where the animal spirit is concerned, the selfsame feelings are shared by animal and human ... The feelings are one and the same, whether ye inflict pain on human or on a beast. There is no difference here whatever. And indeed ye do worse to harm an animal, for human hath a language, can lodge a complaint, can cry out and moan; if injured he can have recourse to the authorities and these will protect him from the aggressor. But the hapless beast is mute, able neither to express its hurt nor take its case to the authorities ... Therefore it is essential that ye show forth the utmost consideration to the animal, and that ye be even kinder to animals than to your fellow humans.

* Train your children from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals.

* Most people are sinners and most animals are innocent. Of course the innocent should be shown pity and kindness more.

* But human food is not meat, as at creation no meat eating tools were given to human. God has made human the noblest of creatures, not a bloodthirsty predator. (Abdu'l Baha)

* Human has no sharp teeth, sharp nails, claws, or teeth like metal sickles. It is obvious that human foods are grains. If one avoids meat, she/he will live with most happiness and strength. If one can rely on grains, oils, pistachios, and almonds, it is of course better and more pleasing.

As humanity progresses, meat will be used less and less for the teeth of human are not carnivorous. The human teeth, the molars are formed to grind grain.

The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. (Bahau'llah)

An ounce of practice is worth more than seventy years of preaching.

Is God an omnivore?

One common way to show affection is giving valuable gifts, but especially in religious contexts, this tradition became very violent and turned into sacrificing and killing innocent animals and human beings. Sacrificing animals is approved in most religions because **the belief is that by taking the life of a creature and spilling its pure blood, God will be happy and satisfied, will give its blessings, and will drive away disasters and diseases.** Sacrificing humans usually took place after a bridge or a place of prayer was built, a natural disaster took place, or a king died (so that he does not travel to the next world alone). But sacrificing people became less common after a while because the families of the sacrificed protested, and animals who could not talk or protest against humans became the symbol of sacrifice. We see that this tradition still exists today in different parts around the world under different names. In some parts killing animals with the intention of eating them causes remorse in people and so in order to change the perception regarding their death, they use the phrase "sacrifice." Unfortunately, there is a misconception about the phrase "sacrifice" among people, as it is considered a sort of a gift. Normally an act is considered a sacrifice when a creature willingly gives its life in order to save another's.

The spiritual meaning of sacrifice must be to disregard personal desires, to sacrifice destructive worldly pleasures in order to reach human perfection. The best gift to God is to avoid inhumane acts and cruelty to others, and to help promote peace in the world. Instead of realizing that loving God is more important than loving ourselves or our loved ones, people look at the surface of the issue and consider taking a living creature's life sacrifice and only pay attention to killing the animal, and then roasting its meat, and eating it. Does the animal become sacrificed willingly? Does the sacrificing of an animal have any humane or spiritual benefit?



Of course not!

Now let me give you some examples of sacrifice or animal killings in different part of the world:

In Nepal, there is a ritual of killing innocent farm animals like cows, sheep, and chickens, every five years for a duration of two days, in the name of tradition and a gift to Gods. In the latest of such events, about 200,000 to 300,000 animals were killed. In these two days people kill as many innocent animals as they can because **they believe that by doing so evil spirits will leave their lives, but they don't think that their actions are the real evil and that they should sacrifice their own evil thoughts, not the innocent animals.** The main profit from these events goes in the pocket of the owners of the animal market and the organizers of the event, because just before the rituals they increase the price of the animals and benefit a lot from stimulating people's interest to buy and sacrifice for the Gods. **The interesting point is that at the end of these rituals, people take back the gifts (the murdered animals) from Gods and eat them! This method of sacrifice has been taking place for thousands of years but the devil has not left the human life, and not only that, but it has become bigger and more powerful.**

The Qurban "Festival of Sacrifice,"

It was narrated that Ibrahim was willing to sacrifice his son Ismail to show to God that he is willing to pass on his loved ones, but God sent him a sheep to sacrifice instead. On this day every year, people murder domestic animals in the name of sacrifice. **The main purpose of such rituals was to financially take advantage of people in the name of religion and god because sacrificing animals equals buying and selling them!** On the day of the festival, and also in rituals such as "hajj," animals are killed in groups and in front of each other. In Islam, animals must not be put under stress or killed in front of each other, but in such rituals these religious rules are ignored.

In the United States Thanksgiving day is in a way a day of sacrifice. Every year about 40 million turkeys are raised and killed for this day. The root of this tradition goes back to the year 1621, when colonists, after a long drought, gathered their first crops and celebrated for three days to thank God for the harvest. It is said that in the first of such celebrations turkey meat was not consumed and that this tradition came about later, especially after Benjamin Franklin (American scientist and politician)

who considered turkey a symbol of royalty and wanted it to be the national bird of the country instead of the bald eagle. I wonder what the connection is between eating turkey and thanking God!

In countries like Spain **bullfighting** day is also a type of festival of sacrifice. Bulls are released in the city, and people harass them, throw spears at them, and in their minds, by torturing and killing the innocent animals, they are worshiping. They say to dissidents: **“How can we abandon this thousand-year-old tradition?”**

Capturing, sacrificing, and killing human beings were also a tradition until a short time ago, so why was that abandoned? For example, in ancient Rome they left a living human being alone with a hungry lion so that they could enjoy watching him get torn apart and eaten by the lion. Why can't such a tradition take place in today's world anymore?

Every year in **Denmark**, thousands of pilot whales are crowded into a bay and barbarically attacked by people, mostly immature teenagers, when they come to the shore to play and make friendly connections with people. The delicate bodies of these intelligent animals are sliced by large hooks. They are immersed in their own blood (so much so that the water turns completely red) and die slowly and in extreme pain. At the end of these bloody ceremonies, their meat is eaten. Do teenagers want to prove that they have grown and became adults by committing such acts? Is killing a defenseless animal a sign of maturity and intellectual growth, or a sign of ignorance, cruelty against the weak, and a desire for destruction? **If killing an animal is a sign of maturity, then why are those who kill humans considered lowly and are punished, when should be the best role models in courage, bravery, and physical and intellectual maturity for teenagers?** Harassing a weaker creature is not bravery; confronting the powerful oppressors and defending the rights of the weak is a sign of courage and intellectual growth.

How can prayer and violence be put together? A righteous and thoughtful person opposes all kinds of violence, whether in traditional or in a religious frame. Sacrificing animals in the name of God cannot be considered humane. Boundaries cannot be set for humanity, boundaries that humans set based on personal profit and pleasure. If there really is an admiration for God in people's souls, why do they show it with violence? Killing animals and eating them do not show affection for God. **God is not matter and does not eat meat, so why should it be given meat? Does sacrificing an animal for God does not prove God's materialism and dependency?** The only way to make God happy, is to sacrifice bad traits, try to reach human virtues, support the weak, and abstain from all kinds of selfishness and abuse. Unfortunately the opposite of this belief has been established in people's minds.

Blood and good luck

Sacrificing animals, especially in Eastern countries such as where I grew up, has taken a different shape to itself and is common among people of different beliefs. When a bad event takes place, like an argument between parents, an accident, sickness, or any other problem, or when a good event takes place, like marriage, birth of a child, or any other happy event, people take an animal's life in the name of sacrifice, and believe that this sacrifice and spilling of blood prevent future disasters and calamities from their lives, and God will show them its grace. **How can we expect God to show us its grace when we do not show ours to innocent animals?** There are still people found around the world who have this belief, except they prefer sacrificing humans, because they believe they will be more validated by God. These sacrifices normally take place in secret because nowadays most people

believe that killing human being is inhumane (it will probably take another couple of a hundred years before people realize that killing animal is also inhumane.) For example, in some parts of Africa based on traditional medicinal practice, children are killed so that their death can bring health, power and wealth to the living.

Why are disasters still common in countries that sacrifice so much for God?

Sacrificing flowers instead of sacrificing blood: Recently in some countries, caring people are trying to substitute bloody ceremonies and traditions with humane ones, and many welcome this idea. For example in an Asian country in which pigs are sacrificed based on religious traditions, they build a giant statue of a pig from flowers and put it on display in ceremonies.