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Abstain from killing, love and respect life

Abstain from Killing and Respect Life

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(Can you see my PowerPoint slides? Ok, I'll start.)

Venerable Shengmiao and Miss Deng good morning. My name is Ye Yushi, today I'd like to share with you the topic of 'Abstain from killing and respect life'. The presentation will be divided into five parts. First is the introduction, then I will tell you three stories. Besides, we will discuss the reason why so many people choose to be a vegetarian. After that, we will discuss the cause and effect principle. In the end is the conclusion.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, more and more British people become vegetarians, deciding not to eat meat and animal products. According to the NDNS survey, two per cent of adults and children are vegetarian in 2012. This amounts to over 1.2 million individuals of a UK population of 62.3 million.¹ Why do so many people choose to become vegetarians? What is the benefit of protecting animals? Are there any examples of cause and effect for it? Let's look at the following.

¹ Vegetarian Society, *Facts and figures*, <https://vegsoc.org/info-hub/facts-and-figures/>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

2. Three stories

First of all, I will share three true stories with you. The first story happened 6 years ago at a medical university where I studied. A group of students started to do an animal experiment in functional experiment class. When a student started to inject anaesthetic to a female rabbit cautiously, he found that the rabbit struggled strongly. When he hesitated what to do next, an astonishing scene occurred. The rabbit tried its best to climb to the edge of the table and gave birth to a little rabbit. Then the mother rabbit exhaustedly fell to the ground. In other words, the mother rabbit was struggling to resist protecting its child in a critical moment. To our relief, the mother rabbit was strong-minded to survive, then both sent back to the animal experiment centre.

The second story is what my classmate told me. She said, one day she saw a fish that was caught by a fisherman. Other fish may struggle for a while, but this fish struggled strongly for a long time. After a long walk, she can feel the fish is exhausted. At that time, the fish struggled again and jumped to a grass near the water, starting to ovulate. Then the fish did not move any more, only waiting to be taken away.

The third one is an ancient story in *Taishang ganying pian* (太上感應篇). Xu Xun (許遜) (239—374), also called Xu Zhenju (許真君). He was shot for living when he was young. One day he shot a fawn. His mother next to the fawn licked his wound all the time. But the fawn was still dead, then his mother died too. When Xu Zhenjun opened the doe's body, to his surprise, he found that the doe's intestines and liver

were split inch by inch, because she was so sad. Therefore, he stopped hunting and changed to learning Taoism.²

Taishang ganying pian says, being kind to animals' life (慈心於物).³ Did these three stories impress you? They moved me a lot, for I can feel the great mother's love of animals. Even in danger, they still do their best to protect their children. As human beings, none of us do not love our life, so are animals (人人愛命, 物物貪生).⁴ How can we have the heart to hurt them, making their mother heart-broken?

3. Reasons for being a vegetarian

Why do so many people choose to be vegetarians? Different people have different reasons, such as ethical reasons, health, environment, and even religious convictions.

Firstly, for ethical reasons, a lot of people cannot bear to kill animals only to satisfy personal appetite. For example, cut open animals' body, stab their heart, peel off their skin and scale, cut throats and open shells, even use boiling water to kill turtles and finless eel. (何得杀彼形軀。充己口腹。或利刃剖腹。或尖刀刺心。或剥皮刮鳞。或断喉劈壳。或滚汤活煮鳖鳝。) Most animals dying in fear, and we can really feel the great pain of them.

In the UK alone, over two million land animals are slaughtered daily and almost six hundred thousand tonnes of fish are killed each year.⁵ We need to eat, but we

² *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibian* 太上感應篇彙編 [The assembled annotations of Taishang Ganyingpian] (Taipei: Huazang Jingzong Xuehui, 2013), P.426.

³ Annotation by Li Changling 李昌齡傳, Commentary by Zheng Qingzhi 鄭清之贊, *Taishang ganying pian yuan keben* 太上感應篇 (元刻本) (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005), p.19.

⁴ *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibian*, p.159

⁵ Vegetarian Society, *Going veggie for animals*, <https://vegsoc.org/info-hub/why-go-veggie/animals/>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

can choose what kind of food. Therefore, people do not bear to hurt animals and want to protect their life.

Secondly, in the UK, 70 per cent of pigs are reared intensively, living in completely closed, cramped sheds. In addition, almost half of the fish we consume today are raised intensively on fish farms, suffering a lot.⁶ Like we have to isolate at home because of Covid-19, we do feel depressed. The environment will influence our emotions and health. So, if animals live in a bad environment, they feel unhappy. When we eat their meat, doesn't these meats affect our bodies?

Besides, according to the Vegetarian Society, a meat-free diet could help reduce the risk of certain cancers and the possibility of heart disease, as well as other health problems such as obesity and high blood pressure.⁷ Some may worry that a vegetarian diet is not nutritious. To be honest, a vegetarian diet could also be varied, including fruits, vegetables, whole grain product, nuts, pulses, and starchy foods such as pasta, rice, bread, and potato. According to the American Dietetic Association, appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful and nutritionally adequate.⁸

Thirdly, eating a vegetarian diet can benefit the environment to help stop climate change. Because a vegetarian diet means 2.5 times less carbon emissions than meat diets. If we eat vegetarian food for one year, we could save the same number of emissions as taking a small family car off the road for six months.⁹ Therefore, when

⁶ Vegetarian Society, *Going veggie for animals*, <https://vegsoc.org/info-hub/why-go-veggie/animals/>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

⁷ British Council, *Vegetarian UK*, <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/read-uk/vegetarian-uk>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

⁸ Harvard health Publishing, *Becoming a vegetarian*, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/becoming-a-vegetarian>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

⁹ Vegetarian Society, *Eat to Beat Climate Change*, <https://vegsoc.org/info-hub/why-go-veggie/environment/>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

we go to a British supermarket, we can find that there are a wide range of vegetarian food.¹⁰ Vegetarian and vegan have become a common dietary mode.

4. Cause and effect principle

The Tripitaka says, if people can protect life from killing, even release animals and give food to them, they will be rewarded with longevity (大藏經曰：人不殺生，愛護物命，及放生施食，得長壽報。)¹¹ First of all, from the point of view of cause and effect, when we protect people and animals and extend their life span, naturally our life span will increase. It is the law of nature. Secondly, it can help people not to kill animals from an early age and help them to develop compassion. When they grow up, they can get along with others well, and treat others with a tolerant and forgiving heart.

Here is a brief historical story for you. One day in World War II, Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, was driven back from France to his headquarters for an emergency military meeting. It was a cold, snowy day. On the way, he saw an old French couple sitting by the roadside. Despite the urgency of time, Eisenhower chose to help them, or they might freeze to death. Then Eisenhower drove the old couple to their son's house in Paris before heading back to headquarters.

Then information afterwards shocked the whole entourage. That day, the German Nazi snipers had already been ambushed in advance on their way. Hitler thought that

¹⁰ British Council, *Vegetarian UK*, <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/read-uk/vegetarian-uk>, accessed in 6 April 2021.

¹¹ *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibia*, P.155

Eisenhower would die that day. But to his surprise, in order to save the old couple in danger, Eisenhower changed the route. Historians commented that because Eisenhower's kind thought, he survived in an assassination, otherwise the history of World War II would have been changed.

What is more, there is another opposite story. A man went up to a mountain and caught a little monkey. The mother of the monkey followed him. Then the man tied the little monkey to the tree. Although the monkey's mother begged with her head, for she could not speak, the man never let the little monkey go. Finally, he killed the little monkey and the mother monkey died of grief. Within half a year, the man's entire family died from an epidemic.¹² To be honest, killing is bad for morality, and it will endanger life and even the whole family.

Through the above two stories, we can realize that good comes with good, and evil comes with evil. Killing the life of animals will eventually hurt us, and helping others is helping ourselves. This is the truth of cause and effect.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, everyone hopes that they can live a long life and their children can be happy. This is what everyone desires. So, in the face of hunting, the animals are still running as fast as they can. In the rain, the ants know to move house quickly for surviving (是故逢擒則奔……將雨而徙，螻蟻尚且貪生。).¹³ Modern hunting methods are fearful. Because animals have to face the pain of mother and child separation, have to be confined in a narrow area, and finally be brutally killed. Master Lianchi said, the most important thing in the world is life, and the most

¹² *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibia*, p.555.

¹³ *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibia*, p.567

miserable thing is killing (蓋聞世間至重者生命，天下最慘者殺傷)¹⁴. Therefore, protecting life can achieve longevity and family happiness.

Because of humanity, environment, health and other reasons, more and more people are choosing vegetarian diet for food. Perhaps, not everyone will adopt vegetarian diet as the only dietary mode. But we hope that everyone can respect and love people's and animals' life, and we can do our best to protect them.

This is all for my presentation. Any feedback and suggestion would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

6. Bibliography

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¹⁴ *Taishang Ganyingpian Huibian*, p.567