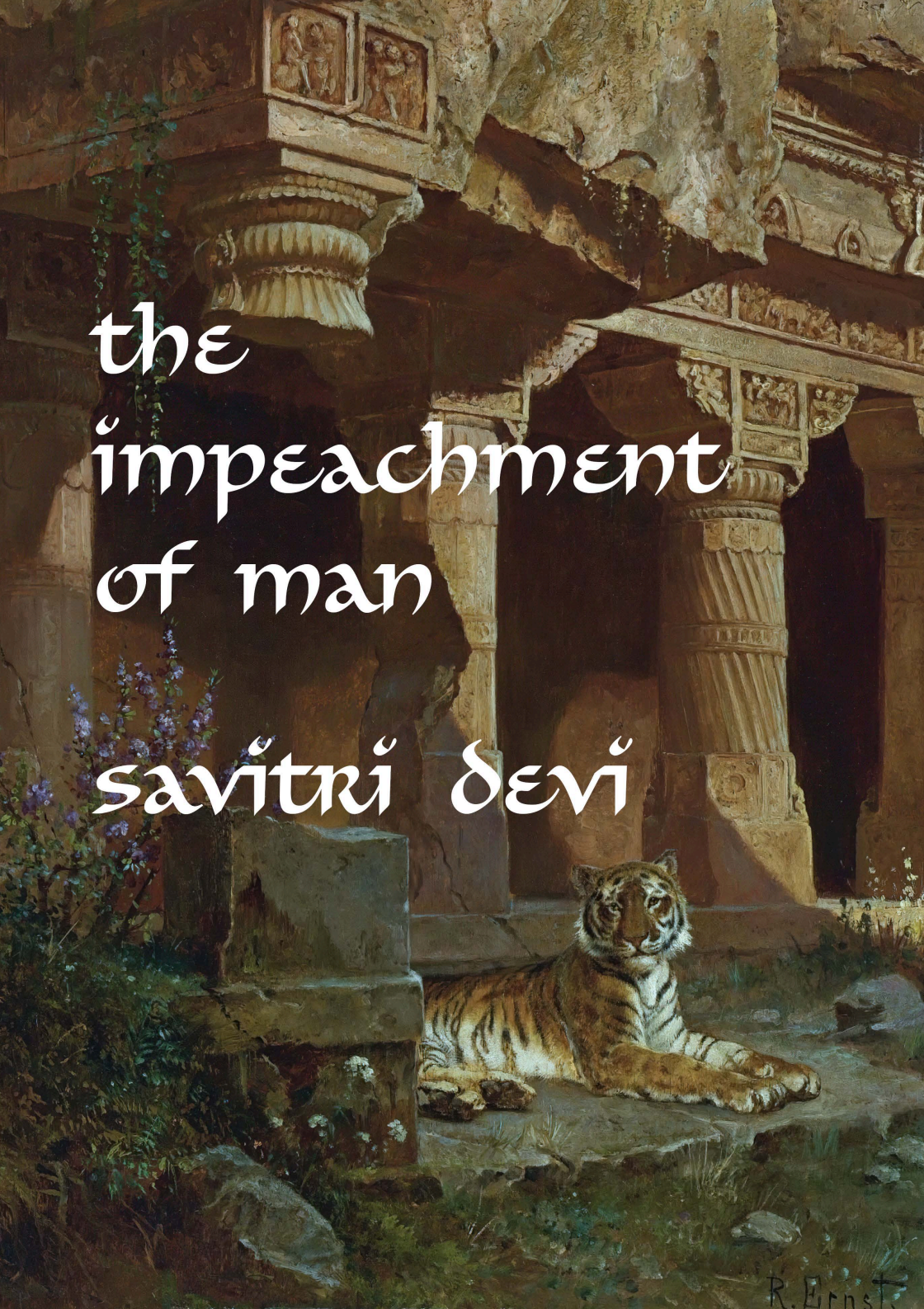
the impeachment of man

savitri devi



The Impeachment of Man

by

Savitri Devi

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TRADITION

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To ZOBEIDA KHATUN

a poor beggar woman who yet saved many distressed animals and fed them, day after day, for years.

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An extended chapter of our talk was devoted by the Führer to the vegetarian question. He believes more than ever that meat eating is wrong. Of course he knows that during the war we cannot completely upset our food system. After the war, however, he intends to tackle this problem also. Maybe he is right. Certainly the arguments that he adduces in favour of his standpoint are very compelling.

— Dr. J. Goebbels
Goebbels' Diaries
(entry, of April 26, 1942),
published in 1948.

Thou shalt love God in all living things, animals and plants.

— Alfred Rosenberg
(Instructions discussed at the
Nuremberg Trial 1945-46,
and quoted by Maurice Bardèche
in his book *Nuremberg II ou
les Faux Monnayeurs*, p. 88).

Animal Aristocracy

Preface

This book — only now printed for the first time — was written in 1945-46, *i.e*., fourteen years ago. It expresses the views which I have had all my life concerning animals in particular and living nature in general, and my no less life-long protest against their ruthless exploitation by man: an attitude rooted, in both cases, in a pre-eminently *aesthetic* and *life-centered* outlook on the world, in complete opposition to that utilitarian and man-centered one, which is accepted nearly everywhere. It was inspired by the events and general atmosphere of the atrocious months during which it was written, namely, of the months immediately following the Second World War; of the time during which, even if one deliberately refused — as *I did* — to open any newspaper or magazine, or to listen to any propaganda on the wireless, one could not but hear, wherever one turned, more or less cleverly presented tales of "crimes against humanity" alleged to have been committed, sometimes, admittedly, by or at the orders of the Japanese so-called "war-criminals," but mostly, — practically always — by the German so-called such ones.

Every effort was exerted, every ability, every capacity of imagination mobilized, to make those tales as blood-curdling as possible — the more gruesome, the better! — in order to shock the "decent people" of all "civilized" countries, and to "put them off" National Socialism and the like (if *like* there could be!) for ever, and even to impress such men and women as might have (and perhaps often did) call themselves National Socialists up till 1945 without being aware of the full implications of that title, and to "reeducate" them, — for the good of their souls, and of their fellowmen.

Those tales, intended to shatter the world, failed, however, to impress *me* — at least in the sense that the "reeducators" desired. They failed to change my attitude towards National Socialism, first,

because I never was a "decent person" and then, also, because I was no sheep, and knew exactly — had always known — what I stand for and what I want. They even failed to appear "bloodcurdling" to me. Indeed, I already knew too much of the atrocities of Antiquity — from those of the Chinese to those of the Assyrians and Carthaginians, to say nothing of those of the Jews, so masterfully evoked in the Holy Bible[1] — not to find the alleged German "crimes against humanity" clumsy, hopelessly amateurish, in comparison, even if the various reports about them *had* all been true to fact. And in addition to that, I had heard or seen too much of all forms of exploitation of animals by man — from the daily brutalities one witnesses in the streets of Southern Europe, not to speak of the Orient, to the appalling deeds perpetrated in the secrecy of vivisection chambers, but fully described in certain scientific publications — not to feel more than indifferent to the fate of human beings, save in the rare cases these happen to be my own brothers in faith.

But the tales — and the whole atmosphere of the "reeducation" days — definitely *would have* "put me off" every religion, every philosophy centered around an inflated sense of "human dignity" and of the "value of many as such," had I not already years and years before weighed these two concepts and found them decidedly wanting.

The one thing the propaganda did, — instead of stirring in me the slightest indignation against the supposed-to-be "war criminals" — was to rouse my hatred against the hypocrisy and cowardice underlying every man-centered attitude; to harden me in my bitter contempt for "man" in general; and . . . to prompt me to write this book: the answer to it, the spirit of which could be summed up in a few lines: "A 'civilization' that makes such a ridiculous fuss about alleged 'war crimes' — acts of violence against the actual or potential enemies of one's cause — and tolerates slaughterhouses and vivisection laboratories, and circuses and the fur industry (infliction of pain upon creatures that can never be *for* or *against* any cause), does not deserve to live. Out with it! Blessed the day it will destroy itself, so that a healthy, hard, frank and brave, nature-loving and truth-loving élite of supermen *with a life-centered faith*, — a natural human aristocracy, as beautiful, on its own higher level, as the four-legged kings of the jungle — might again rise, and rule upon its ruins, for ever!"

[1] In the book of I Samuel, 15, 33, to mention only one instance.

When, at the end of 1945, I reached that nightmarish postwar Europe in which the last part of this book was to be written, I noticed in the "tubes" of London, side by side with picturesque advertisements and silly propaganda, a series of unexpected posters with red and yellow letters on a black background: "Justice towards animals must *precede* peace among men."

This showed me that there still were — in spite of all — people worth sparing in that misled England of Nordic blood which Adolf Hitler had, in 1940, (with an insight that the world will take a long time to understand and to appreciate) refused to crush.

I asked which organization had had the courage of setting up such revolutionary posters and soon found out that it was not an organization at all but a single, isolated individual: Mrs. Saint-Ruth, of East Horsely, near London; a noble woman, whom I had, since then, the honor of meeting several times, and in whom I discovered with immense joy, even more in common with myself than her solicitude for animals (and in particular for felines). After all these years, I wish to express to this lady — the first person who read this book, and liked it — my unaltered friendship. I also most heartily thank Miss Veronica Vassar for having retyped a hardly legible copy of the book — the only one I had left, after the original manuscript and all the better typed copies I had taken of it myself had been lost (stolen, along with my suitcase, at the Saint-Lazare railway station, in Paris, on the 16th of August, 1946) — and thus for having saved my work.

— Savitri Devi Mukherji
Calcutta, June 22, 1959

CHAPTER I

Man-centered Creeds

Of all moral ideas, that of our positive duties towards creatures of other species (animals, and even plants) is perhaps the slowest to impress itself upon the human mind. It seems as though it were alien to the spirit no less than to the letter of all successful international religions, save Buddhism. And one who is fully conscious of its importance — one who recognizes in it the expression of a fundamental moral truth — may as well wonder in amazement how creeds that omit to mention it altogether (let alone to stress it) have yet been able to secure themselves such numerous followings, and, what is more, how their narrow conception of love is still claiming to be "the highest," and how that claim rouses no protest on behalf of the better men. This is, no doubt, enough to lead him to gloomy conclusions concerning the inherent coarseness, selfishness and ugliness of human nature in general.

The known religions of the Ancient World were centered around the family or tribe, or the city, or at most the nation. The philosophies that slowly grew out of them, be it in the classical West or in China, were strictly centered around human society, human intellect, or the individual human soul. Only in India were things definitely different, for there, the immemorial belief in the successive incarnations of the one same soul, and in the fruit of works, reaped inexorably from life to life, presupposed an unbroken continuity throughout the whole scheme of existence, an organic unity among all species, from the simplest to the most elaborate. In Greece, the Pythagoreans (and, much later on, the Neo-Pythagoreans) accepted that view of the unity of all life, witch all its practical consequences, along with the dogma of birth and

rebirth, an essential feature of their school. Apart from them — and centuries before them — a truly beautiful but unfortunately long-forgotten religion, a particularly philosophical solar cult originating in Egypt in the early fourteenth century B.C., of which we shall speak in a further chapter, seems to be the sole exception to the general trend of thought, the one life-centered religion[1] of non-Indian origin west of India. The pity is that its very excellence proved fatal to its expansion, nay even to its survival as an organized religion.

We can thus state, with fairly great safety, that there are today two main ways of looking upon our relations with nonhuman living beings: the Hindu way (of which the Buddhist and the Jain outlooks are merely particular expressions) and the other, the man-centered way, of which the Christian, the Islamic, the nineteenth-century "humanitarian," the twentieth-century "socialistic," and the Chinese way of all times (if we take Chinese thought apart from Taoism in its purest aspect) are various forms.

Theoretically, the man-centered creeds and philosophies sway the whole world minus the greater part of India, Burma, Ceylon, and the countries of the Far East to the extent that these have actually come under the influence of Buddhism. That does not mean that there are no individuals in England and America, in Germany and Russia, who look upon all life as sacred, and to whom the infliction of pain upon animals is even more odious that that upon human beings. That does not mean, either, that all people who, in India and elsewhere, are catalogued in the census reports Hindus, Buddhists or Jains are, in fact, paragons of active kindness towards all living creatures. Far from it! We only drew this rough geographical sketch stressing the unequal distribution of man-centered and life-centered creeds over the map of the world in order to show how little progress has been made as yet in the way of universal love — which is the way of true morality — from the time of the alleged apelike man of the Neanderthal period down to the present day.

Naturally enough, our sketch can be exploited against our current of thought. Many will no doubt say: "If the majority of mankind still believes in the right of man to exploit other creatures

[1] I have not mentioned the old (pre-Christian) religion of Germanic Europe, which was also life-centered — life-centered *and* "sacrificial," as Vedic religion is in India. It is not well-known enough to be discussed here.

for his profit; if the idea of universal brotherhood (of man and all living creatures) is so slow to assert itself; if, moreover, as we see, it is daily losing ground among most "advanced" young men and women in the countries where it was once upheld, then we should admit that the man-centered creeds express the right attitude towards the moral problem of life." But we answer that "majorities" decide nothing as to what is true or false, right or wrong. Those who think they do might as well say that Socrates was wrong, in his day, and the Athenians right, on the ground that he was one and they twenty thousand. They may as well also say that cannibalism and slavery were legitimate whenever and wherever they happened to be widespread and looked upon as "normal." But we notice that, from those very civilizations in which cannibalism was generally admitted, sprang, now and then, a few individuals — an infinitesimal, powerless minority — whom the custom disgusted. And from amidst a world in which slavery was considered as a necessary evil by respectable people, sprang a few individuals who condemned it, either openly or secretly, in the name of human dignity. And we see that it is the opinion of those better individuals that finally triumphed. One of the best among the ancient Mexicans, King Nezahualcoyotl,[1] tried in vain, in the fifteenth century A.D. to put a stop to human sacrifices within his realm.[2] But today, the murder of a man, be it even as an offering to a deity, is considered a criminal offence and would be punished by law nearly all over the world. The minority, in Mexico, became a majority — and would have become so, apparently, anyhow, even if no Christian adventurers had ever landed there. Minorities often do, with time, become majorities.

To those to whom the age-old exploitation of animals seems normal just because it is practically universal and as old as man, we shall say that there are today people who strongly disapprove of it — never mind if they be but a handful scattered among millions of human beings still at a more barbaric stage of evolution. There are today a few men and women, far in advance of our times, who keenly feel the revolting injustice of all exploitation of living

[1] King of Tescuco, born in 1403, died in 1470; well-known as warrior, administrator, engineer and poet.

[2] Ixtlilxochitl. *Histoire des Chichimèques* (French translation) Vol. I., chap. 49. Quoted by Brasseur de Bourbourg: *Histoire de Nations Civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique Centrale.* Vol. III., p. 297.

creatures, whether two-legged or four-legged, the horror of all gratuitous infliction of suffering, the value of all innocent life. There are men and women — and the author of this book is one of them — who, at the sight of one of their contemporaries eating a beefsteak in a restaurant or a chicken sandwich in a railway carriage, feel no less a disgust than some rare Mexicans of old possibly did when they saw the cooked limbs of a prisoner of war served up on gold and silver plates at State banquets. There are men and women today, few indeed as they may be, who are as much saddened when they see a tired horse drawing a cart as certain other "queer" people might have been once, when they met a slave cutting wood or grinding corn for his owner under the supervision of a merciless taskmaster.

Those few are now "dreamers," "eccentric folk," "cranks" — like all pioneers. But who can tell whether their opinion will never become that of average man, and their principles the law of the world? If there is any hope that it might one day be so, then we believe it is still worth while struggling to keep civilization alive. If not — if the low level of love which the majority of the globe has reached really be the limit of its capacity; if the outlook expressed in the man-centered creeds and philosophies really be its final outlook — then we believe that the human race is not worth bothering one's head about at all.

* * *

According to the religious creeds which we have characterized as "man-centered," man, alone created "in the likeness of God," is God's most beloved child, perhaps even his only child on this earth. The heavenly Father of the Christian Gospels no doubt loves the sparrows. But he loves man infinitely more. He loves the lilies too; he has clothed them more beautifully "than Solomon in all his glory"; yet, man is the main object of his solicitude, not they. Among all the living beings that are born in the visible world man alone is supposed to be endowed with an immortal soul. He alone was created for eternity. The transient world was made for him to enjoy and exploit during his short earthly life, and creatures of several species were appointed — both quadrupeds and birds — as meat for him to eat. And that is not all. A whole scheme of salvation was worked out for him by God himself, so that man might still reach everlasting bliss in spite of his sins. God raised prophets to urge rebellious humanity to repentance and to point out the way of righteousness. And according to the Christian

belief, he even sent his only Son to suffer and die, so that his blood might become the ransom of all sinners who put their faith in him. All the splendor of the material world; all the grace, strength and loveliness of millions of beasts, birds, fishes, trees and creepers; the majesty of the snow-clad mountains, the beauty of the unfurling waves — all that and much more — is not worth, in God's eyes, the immortal soul of a human imbecile — so they say, at least. That is why the hunting of tigers and deer, the butchering of innocent woolly lambs, so glad to live, the dissecting of pretty white guinea pigs or of intelligent dogs, are not "sins" according to the man-centered faiths — not even if they imply the most appalling suffering. But the painless chloroforming of worthless human idiots is a "crime." How could it be otherwise? They have two legs, no tail, and an immortal soul. However degenerate they be, *they are men*.

I cannot help here recalling the answer of a French medical student, a member of the "Christian Federation of Students," whom I has asked, twenty-five years ago, how he could reconcile his religious aspirations with his support of vivisection. "What conflict can there be between the two?" said he; "Christ did not die for guinea pigs and dogs." I do not know what Christ would actually have said to that. The fact remains that, from the point of view of *historical* Christianity, the boy was right. And his answer is enough to disgust one forever with all man-centered creeds.

* * *

Man-centered creeds do not even enjoy that minimum of inner consistency which forces one sometimes to recognize a certain strength in a bad system of thought. Those who believe in them and who happen not to be by nature too irredeemably irrational, try to justify their point of view by saying that man, as a whole, *is* superior to the dumb beasts. He can speak, and they cannot. That is certain. He can speak, and subsequently he can define and deduce, and pass from one deduction to another. He can transfer to other people the conclusions of his reasoning and the results of his experience. He becomes more aware of his own thoughts by expressing them. In a word, he can do all that is only possible by means of a conventional system of symbolical sounds, which we call language and which beasts and birds do not possess. His very being is raised above the immediate needs of everyday life, and his mind rendered capable of evolution, by the use of such a system.

Anyone will agree that this is true to a great extent, though all may not necessarily see what relation there is between this human

advantage of speech and the exploitation of dumb animals by man. It is more difficult to understand the privileged place which religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam give to man, when one remembers that the sacred books of those three famous creeds admit the existence of heavenly creatures far more beautiful and more intelligent than he, mainly of angels — creatures who need not wait for the day of resurrection to acquire a "glorious" body, but who are, here and now, in their raiment of light, free from disease, decay and death. They, and not the clumsy sons of Adam, should have been the ones for whom nature and man were made, for it would seem, from whatever one can gather about them in the holy Scripture, that angels are as much above men as the most brilliant men can claim to be above animals, and even more so. Still, apparently God loves man the best. All human sinners can expect to be saved by his grace; while those poor angels who once, at the dawn of time, rebelled against their Maker under the leadership of Lucifer, have no other alternative but to remain damned forever. No Redeemer was ever sent to pay the ransom of *their* sin. No hope of salvation was ever given to them. No repentance of theirs, it seems, would be of any avail. Why? Goodness knows. They are not *men*, not God's spoilt darlings. That is the only explanation one can give, if any can be given of old Father Jehovah's strange justice and queer tastes. They are not men. Intelligent and beautiful as they may be, and full of endless possibilities for good no less than for evil if only they were given a chance, they are apparently not worth, in God's eyes, the repentant drunkard who weeps aloud at the end of a Salvation Army meeting. God's ways cannot be discussed. But then, don't tell us that his love for man is "justified" by man's superiority, and that the right he gave the chosen species to exploit the rest of his weaker creatures is founded on a reasonable basis. It is not. For, if it were, there would have been, in Paradise, a place for the repentant fallen angels, and at least as much joy for one of them as for the souls of ten thousand drunkards from the East End of London.

The real reason for this continual stress upon the welfare of man alone, in this world and in the next, seems to lie in God's incapacity to transcend a certain puerile partiality — we speak, of course, of the personal God of the man-centered faiths rooted in Judaism, and not of that impersonal Power behind all existence, in which *we* are inclined to believe. The God of the Christians, the God of Islam, and the God of most of those later Free Thinkers who are not out

and out atheists, never succeeded in shaking off completely the habits he once had when he was but the patron deity of a few tribes of desert wanderers, slaves in the land of the Pharaohs. He was able to raise himself from the rank of a national god to that of a God of all humanity. But that is all. His love seems to have been spent out in its extension from the "chosen People" of Israel to the Chosen Species of mankind. He had not in him the urge to broaden his fatherly feelings still beyond those narrow limits. It never occurred to him how narrow they were in fact and how irrational, how mean, how all-too-human that childish preference for man was, in a God that is supposed to have made the Milky Way.

The bloodthirsty national gods of West-Asian Antiquity — once his rivals; now all dead — were more consistent in their narrowness. They limited their sphere to a town, or at the most to a country, and in cases of emergency accepted — some say: asked for — human victims as well as burnt offerings of animal flesh. Grim gods they were, most of them. But there was something outspoken and reassuring in their very limitations. One knew, with them, where one stood. One was not carried away in their name by prophets and saints who took one right along the path leading to universal love, only to leave one in the middle of it. The prophets of Jehovah might call them "abominations," but they were consistent. So was Jehovah, as long as he remained merely the tribal god of the Jews. But when later Jews proclaimed him to be the God of all mankind; when he crept into Christianity as the Heavenly Father of Christ and the First Person of the Holy Trinity; and into Islam as the One God revealed to man through his last and definitive mouthpiece, the Prophet Mohammed; and finally, when he colored the ideology of the humanitarian theists — and even atheists — as the unavoidable remnant of a tradition hard to die, then the conception of him became more and more irrational. There was less and less any reason for his solicitude to stop at mankind. Yet it did stop there. There was, more and more, every reason for him to evolve into a truly universal God of all life. Yet he did not evolve that way. He could not drop the long-cherished propensity of picking out a fraction of his creation and blessing it with a special blessing, to the exclusion of the rest. That fraction of the great Universe had once been the Jewish people. It was now the human race — a trifling improvement, if one ponders over it from an astronomical (that is to say, from what we can imagine to be the only truly divine) angle of vision.

The great creeds of the world west of India remained man-centered, it would seem, because they never could free themselves entirely from the marks of their particular tribal origin among the sons of Abraham. The Jews never were a race that one could accuse of giving animals too great a place in its everyday life and thoughts. Christ, who came "to fulfill" the Jewish law and prophecies (not to introduce into the world a different, more rational, and truly kindlier trend of thought) appears never to have bothered his head about the dumb creatures. We speak, of course, of Christ as the Christian Gospels present him to us. *That* Christ — we have no means whatsoever of finding out whether a "truer" one ever lived — never performed a miracle, never even intervened in a natural manner, in favor of any beast, as his contemporary, Apollonius of Tyana, not to speak of any more ancient and illustrious Master such as the blessed Buddha, is supposed to have done. He never spoke of God's love for animals save to assert that He loved human beings *a fortiori*, much more. He never mentioned nor implied man's duties towards them, though he did not omit to mention, and to stress, other duties. If the Gospels are to be taken as they are written, then his dealings with nonhuman sentient creatures consisted, on one occasion, of sending some evil spirits into a herd of swine, that they might no longer torment a man,[1] and, another time, of making his disciples, who were mostly fishermen by profession, as every one knows, catch an incredible quantity of fish in their nets.[2] In both cases his intention was obviously to benefit human beings at the expense of the creatures, swine or fish. As for plants, it is true that he admired the lilies of the fields; but it is no less true that he cursed a fig tree for not producing figs out of season and caused it to wither, so that his disciples might understand the power of faith and prayer.[3] Fervent English or German Christians, who love animals and trees, may retort that nobody knows exactly all that Jesus actually said, and that the gospels contain the story of only a few of his numberless miracles. That may be. But as there are no records of his life save the Gospels, we have to be content with what is revealed therein. Moreover, Christianity as an historical growth is centered around the person of Christ *as the Gospels describe him*.

[1] *Luke*, 8.32, 33.
[2] *Luke*, 5. 4-11.
[3] *Mark*, 11. 12-14 and 20-23.
[4] Norman Douglas: *How About Europe?* Chatto & Windus, London, 1930, p. 242.

And, as Norman Douglas has timely remarked,[4] it remains a fact that the little progress accomplished in recent years in the countries of North western Europe and in America, as regards kindness to dumb beasts, was realized *in spite of Christianity, and not because of it*.

To say, as some do, that every word of the Christian Gospels has an esoteric meaning, and that "swine" and "fishes" and the "barren fig tree" are intended there to designate anything but real live creatures, would hardly make things better. It would still be true that kindness to animals is not spoken of in the teaching of Jesus as it has come down to us, while other virtues, in particular kindness *to people*, are highly recommended. And the development of historical Christianity would remain, in all its details, what we know it to be.

* * *

That people whose outlook is conditioned by biblical tradition should put a great stress upon the special place of man in the scheme of life; that they should insist on *man's* sufferings, and on the necessity of man's happiness, without apparently giving as much as a thought to the other living creatures, one can understand. They follow the Book to which they may or may not add some secondary scriptures based upon it. They cannot be expected to go beyond what is prescribed in it or in those later scriptures.

But there are, in the West, ever since the Middle Ages, increasing numbers of people who dare to do without the Book altogether; who openly reject all divine revelation as unprovable, and who see in their conscience the only source of their moral judgments and their only guide in moral matters. It is remarkable that these people, free from the fetters of any established faith, still retain the outlook of their fathers as regards man's relation to animals and to living nature in general. Free Thought, while rightly brushing aside all man-centered metaphysics; while replacing the man-centered conceptions of the Universe by a magnificent vision of order and beauty on a cosmic scale — a scientific vision, more inspiring than anything that religious imagination had ever invented, and in which man is but a negligible detail — Free Thought, we say, omitted entirely to do away with the equally outdated man-centered scale of values, inherited from those religions that sprang from Judaism. Sons of Greek rationalism, as regards their intellectual outlook, the Westerners who boast of no longer being Christians — and the few advanced young men of

Turkey and Persia, and of the rest of the Near and Middle East, who boast of no longer being orthodox Musulmans — remain, as regards their scale of moral values, the sons of a deep-rooted religious tradition which goes back as far as some of the oldest fragments of the Jewish Scriptures: the tradition according to which man, created in God's own image, is the only living being born for eternity, and has a value altogether out of proportion with that of any other animal species.

There has been, it is true, in the West, in recent years — nay, there *is*, for nothing which is in harmony with the Laws of Life can ever be completely suppressed — a non-Christian (one should even say an anti-Christian) and definitely more than political school of thought which courageously denounced this age-old yet erroneous tradition, and set up a different scale of values and different standards of behaviour. It accepted the principle of the rights of animals, and set a beautiful dog above a degenerate man. It replaced the false ideal of "*human* brotherhood," by the true one of a naturally hierarchised mankind harmoniously integrated into the naturally hierarchised Realm of life, and, as a logical corollary of this, it boldly preached the return to the mystic of genuine nationalism rooted in healthy race-consciousness, and the resurrection of the old national gods of fertility and of battle (or the exaltation of their philosophical equivalents) which many a Greek "thinker" and some of the Jewish prophets themselves had already discarded — politely speaking: "transcended" — in decadent Antiquity. And its racialist values, solidly founded upon the rock of divine reality, and intelligently defended as they were, in comparison with the traditional man-centered ones inherited, in Europe, from Christianity, are, and cannot but remain, whatever may be the material fate of their great Exponent and of the regime he created, *the* only unassailable values of the contemporary and future world. But it is, for the time being, a "crime" to mention them, let alone to uphold them — and their whole recent setting — in broad daylight.

The opposite ideologies, more in keeping with the general tendencies of modern Free Thought from the Renaissance onwards, have only broken off apparently with the man-centered faiths. In fact, our international Socialists and our Communists, while pushing God and the supernatural out of their field of vision, are more Christian-like than the Christian Churches ever were. He who said, "Love they neighbor as thyself has to-day no sincerer and more thorough disciples than those zealots whose foremost

concern is to give every human being a comfortable life and all possibilities of development, through the intensive and systematic exploitation by all of the resources of the material world, animate an inanimate, for *man's* betterment. Communism, that new religion — for it is a sort of religion — exalting the common man; that philosophy of the rights of humanity as the privileged species, is the natural logical outcome of real Christianity. It is the Christian doctrine of the labor of love for one's neighbors, freed from the overburdening weight of Christian theology. It is real Christianity, minus priesthood — which Christ thoroughly disliked — and minus all the beliefs of the Church concerning the human soul and all the mythology of the Bible — which he surely valued far less than a single spontaneous movement of the heart towards suffering mankind. Christ, if he came back, would probably feel nowhere so much "at home" as in the countries which have made love for the average man as such the very soul of their political system.

And that is not all. Even Christian theology will perhaps not always remain as totally worthless to them as our Communist friends often think. It may be, one day, that they will bring themselves to use it. And, if ever they do, who will blame them but those nominal Christians who have forgotten the out and out "proletarian" character of their Master and of his first disciples? The myth of the God of mankind taking flesh in the son of the carpenter of Nazareth may well be interpreted as a symbol foreshadowing the deification of the working majority of men — of the "masses"; of man in general — in our times.

In other words, the rejection of the belief in the supernatural, and the advent of a scientific outlook upon the material world, has not in the least broadened the Westerners' moral outlook. And, unless they be consistent Racialists, worshippers of hierarchised Life, those who today openly proclaim that civilization can well stand without its traditional Christian (or Muslim) background, stick to a scale of values that proceeds, either from a yet narrower love than that preached in the name of Christ or of Islam, (from the love of one's mere individual self and family) or, at most, from the same love — *not from a broader one*; not from a true universal love.

The generous "morality" derived from modern Free Thought is no better than that based upon the time-honored man-centered creeds that have their origin in Jewish tradition. It is a morality centered — like the old Chinese morality, wherever true Buddhism and Taoism have not modified it — around "the dignity of all men" and human society as the supreme fact, the one reality that the

individual has to respect and to live for; a morality which ignores everything of man's affiliation with the rest of living nature, and looks upon sentient creatures as having no value except inasmuch as they are exploitable by man for the "higher" purpose of his health, comfort, clothing, amusement, etc. The moral creed of the Free Thinker today *is* a man-centered creed — no less than that of Descartes and Malebranche and, later on, of the idealists of the French Revolution, and finally of Auguste Comte.

We believe that there is a different way of looking at things — a different way, in comparison with which this man-centered outlook appears as childish, mean and barbaric as the philosophy of any man-eating tribe might seem, when compared with that of the Christian saints, or even of the sincerest ideologists of modern international Socialism or Communism.

CHAPTER II

Pessimistic Pantheism

Besides this man-centered outlook of more than half the world, which we have just endeavoured to define, there is the entirely different view of the Hindus and of the main religions that have sprung from Hinduism, namely Jainism and Buddhism. We should, for the sake of convenience, call this view the Indian view, as opposed to the formerly described Jewish view, for the only great international religion which has inherited it — Buddhism — is as essentially indebted to earlier Indian thought as Christianity and Islam are to Jewish tradition, and even more so.

The Indian view can be summarised in one sentence: it consists of seeing, in all forms of life, manifestations of the selfsame divine Power at play on various levels of consciousness. It is centered around the fundamental idea of the everlastingness of the individual soul — not merely of its immortality — and of its life in millions and millions of bodies, through millions and millions of successive births. It proclaims the continuity of life in time and space, which is the logical corollary of the dogma of birth and rebirth, and denies the breach between man and the rest of the animal world. Such a breach, according to it, is artificial. Man's tendency to believe in its existence is either the product of superficial observation, badly interpreted, or else the result of an arbitrary valuation, rooted in human pride, and hardly less ridiculous than that of those rabid nationalists who, without any justification, hold their own people to be "objectively" the most gifted on earth and the most precious to the world.

Nobody knows when and where the dogma of birth and rebirth originated. It may well be as old as mankind, and it was perhaps put forth simultaneously in different parts of the world during the long

unrecorded centuries of prehistory. But it is undoubtedly in India that it found its most elaborate expression, and rose from the status of a spontaneous animistic belief to that of a consistent explanation of the universe — a philosophy. And that philosophy, one can say, is not only the one of *the* mighty subcontinent which stretched from the Himalayas to Ceylon — the basis that all *Indian* schools of thought accept as a starting point — but it seems also, to be the one common element in all the various tendencies of Asiatic thought which India has influenced, directly or indirectly, through Buddhism. And the success of all attempts at extending the influence of Indian thought to the West depends — and cannot but depend — primarily upon the widespread preaching of that one fundamental belief in successive reincarnations.

That belief is, as we have said, incompatible with any theory that pretends man to be different *by nature* from the rest of living creation, and that concedes special "rights" to him on that assumption. The endeavour of some Theosophists[1] to maintain an irreducible breach between humanity and animalhood by introducing in their explanation of the hereafter the idea of animal "group-souls" appears to us as nothing more than a subtle reaction of the many centuries-old Christian that lies half-asleep but fully alive — and unexpectedly assertive at times — below the superficial layer of Indian thought in most of those strange neo-Hindus from the West. The Bhagawad-Gita makes no mention whatsoever of group-souls; nor does, as far as we know, any recognized Hindu "shastra" in which the question of birth and rebirth is discussed. On the contrary, it would seem that, in the eyes of the Indian sages, authors of the Scriptures, as well as in those of the ordinary Hindu, every soul is endowed from all times (and not merely from the day it enters a human body) with an individuality that persists through all its successive incarnations, whatever be the different species in which these might take place.

The same can be said of the theory that, once a soul has reached its first human incarnation, it cannot but always take birth henceforth in a human or superhuman form, never in a subhuman one, whatever be its deeds; the theory that the admission of a soul on the human plane is "like its passing an examination," and that the sort of "diploma" thus acquired is irrevocably granted, whether the candidate remains worthy of it or not. There is nothing to confirm this view in the traditional beliefs of the Hindus. On the contrary,

[1] Such as Leadbeater.

there are, in Hindu (and Buddhist) legend, instances of men reborn as animals for some time at least. King Bharat (often called Jadabharat) is said to have been reborn as a deer; and good King Asoka, the most powerful patron of Buddhism — an undoubtedly historic figure, whose dates are known to every Indian schoolboy — was reborn, for a week or so, as a boa-constrictor, in punishment for a temporary lack of equanimity, according to an assumption, the Buddhist tradition has recorded.[1]

In other words, a believer in the doctrine of reincarnation can never be quite sure that the mangy dog that he sees lying in the slush is not one of his deceased relatives or friends expiating some unsuspected yet grievous offence in that miserable garb — some offence perhaps unknown to the sinner himself; perhaps venial in the eyes of human justice, but serious enough, when judged from the standpoint of the divine, immanent laws of cause and effect, to give its author a canine body, to starve him, to afflict him with mange, and to send him to die in the gutter. And similarly it may be that a particular man's human enemy is none but the hungry dog that lay at his door some thirty years before, and which he did not care to feed. It may be that a woman's son, source of joy and pride to her, is none but the abandoned kitten that she once picked up in the street, and that purred in her hand as she brought it home. No one can tell and as soon as one admits the possibility for the same everlasting individual soul to pass from one body to another-from a lesser species to a more evolved one, or vice versa, according to its deeds — one can, logically, be expected to have, on the whole scheme of life, an entirely different outlook from that implied in the religions that teach that man alone has a soul, and, moreover, an immortal but not an uncreated, *everlasting* one. One can be expected to feel the majestic unity of life which underlies the endless diversity of the visible world, and to look upon animals (and plants) as potential men and supermen, and to treat them with all the loving kindness with which the Christians, Mohammedans, and humanitarian Free Thinkers are taught to treat the people of the inferior human races (and the inferior men of their own race), potential saints of heaven or, at least, potential useful citizens in a better earthly social order, according to the respective man-centered creeds.

And that is not all. The Hindu teaching, inherited by Jainism and Buddhism, and practically all the life-centered schools of thought

[1] See the Ceylonese *Mahavamsa*.

drawing their inspiration from India, does not merely imply the identity of each individual soul, throughout all its successive incarnations. It stresses to the utmost the fundamental identity of all the individual souls, be they incarnated in many or any stratum of the living world, at the same time or at different times. Not only is every soul now embodied in an earth-worm "on its way" to earn superior consciousness after millions and millions of births and to become, in course of time, an all-knowing, liberated sage, a "tirthankara" as the Jains say, but the soul of very individual earthworm, of every individual snail or toad, ass or pig, man or monkey — of every living creature — is by nature, *substantially*, identical to that of the god-like sage. In only differs from it in broadness and clearness of consciousness, that is to say, in *degree* of knowledge. It *can* reach the glorious goal that the sage has reached. And the sage himself, before being what he is, has lived through untold millenniums of ignorance and unrest, haltingly striving towards supreme peace as an average man, as an inferior man, as an ape, as a donkey, as an earth-worm; as a jelly-fish in the midst of the sea.

It would seem, at first sight, that nothing can prepare a man to love all living nature better than that grand vision of universal evolution, physical and spiritual, provided by Hindu Pantheism — that knowledge that every individual body, whether fitted with only two legs or with four, with six or with eight, or many more, or with none at all, *has an everlasting soul*, and that every soul, be it of a man, of an animal or of a plant, is an actual spark of the Divine, just as his own soul is, only at a somewhat lower or more advance stage of consciousness; farther from or nearer to the ultimate goal of liberating knowledge and of supreme peace than he is himself. And when one reads the words addressed to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, in the Bhagawad-Gita: "In the learned Brahman, in a cow, an elephant, a dog, and in the man who eats dog's flesh, the wise one discerns the Identical . . ."[1] one is inclined, at first to wonder how it is that dogs — and Sudras — are not better treated to-day in the blessed Land in which the seers of old evolved the most beautiful of all living religions.

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The answer appears to be that a profound pessimism, and undervaluation of finite life as such, pervades the whole of Hindu thought.

[1] Bhagawad-Gita, V, verse 18.

To those whose traditional philosophy is rooted in the doctrine of birth and rebirth, it happens that individual life presents itself not as a blessing but as a curse. The reward a creature gets for its credit of good deeds, i.e., rebirth on a higher plane, is but a temporary lesser evil. It still implies the separateness and, therefore, the limitations of all individuality. To merge into the infinity of non-personal Life; to return, retaining the painfully acquired knowledge of endless years of experience, to that non-differentiated Oneness from which all sparks of finite consciousness originally sprang, and to look back unto the transient world and its turmoil from a state of universal consciousness — fortress of unassailable peace from which evil and suffering appear as mere surface ripples upon the unchanging ocean of ultimate Reality — that is the aim of all life. To the Hindu, to the Jain, to the Buddhist, individual life itself is sorrow, with, at the most, a few flashes of passing joy. Bliss, the joy of total knowledge that nothing can perturb, belongs, not to it, but to that state of super-individual existence, in perfect harmony with the eternal Essence of things, which sages occasionally reach in the course of their earthly experience, but which is the normal state of those alone who, having departed, be it from the human, be it from a higher plane, are never to be born again. To be reborn among the gods is still a burden. To break the iron cycle of birth and rebirth, and never again to enter a womb, is the goal of every true Hindu[1] and of all those who have based their philosophy of life upon the Hindu point of view. The obsession of the transience of earthly joy, the burdensome realization that "all personality is a prison,"[2] and the consequent craving for "liberation" from the necessity of successive finite existences, are traits inseparable from Hindu thought.

Those traits are compatible with wordly action of the most various types — with the destruction of one's enemies on a battlefield, as urged by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, in the Bhagawad-Gita; with the constructive reforms of such a saintly ruler as King Asoka, to promote creatures' welfare. But in spite of whatever one may say, quoting sacred texts, they are not generally *congenial* to action. It may be that the selfless, emotionless, detached action urged in the Bhagawad-Gita is the ideal action — the only kind of

[1] One knows the much quoted words of Sankaracharya: "Jabat jananam, tabat maranam..."
[2] Aldous Huxley: *After Many a Summer*.

action which a sage can do, and which man in general *should* do. But in ordinary everyday life, it is not the type of action which men generally *do*. In fact, without the impulse of interest of passion — of personal love, fear or hate — they generally do nothing. And the deep-rooted belief that individual life has little value, that the sooner it is overcome the better, and that creatures' suffering in this world is nothing but the unavoidable result of their own bad deeds in past lives, that belief, we say, is the least capable of rousing in average people any personal feeling for the welfare of men or beasts. It is the least capable of prompting them to do something positive, whether it be to make human society more comfortable for the majority of its members, or to make the world at large a better place for all living beings, including animals and plants.

To the Christians, animals are supposed to have "no souls." Hindu Pantheism, on the contrary, sees not only a soul, but *the* One, eternal Soul — the supreme Soul, Paramatma — in every living individual, human, animal or vegetable. The man-centered creeds have no place for beasts and plants, except as creatures over which man was given "domination," and which he may enjoy or exploit as he pleases. To the Hindus, man is nothing but a part and parcel of living nature, and it would seem, at first sight, that no philosophy suggests the brotherhood of all creatures more than the one we have just described. But the fact that an eminently pessimistic outlook on life is attached to it makes matters different. If individual life is but a temporary trial; if the sooner one is out of its iron grip, the better it is for him or her, then what is the good of any struggle, save that one which will bring the soul to its final "liberation?" And there, man's soul is alone concerned, for animals have to be reborn as men before they can reach the stage at which liberation is possible.

It is a fact hardly ever pointed out that, while a Western vegetarian (provided he be not a dyspeptic) abstains from flesh solely out of a feeling of sympathy for animals, the Hindu vegetarian does so mainly on account of the conception he has of his *own* spiritual interest. He believes that, by avoiding meat, fish and eggs, sand all food considered to be "exciting," he secures himself an easier progress along the path that leads to "liberation," i.e. to the final stage after which one is not compelled to be reborn. Of course he may also — and he often does — to some extent, consider the suffering of the meat-eater's prey: of the goats and sheep, sacrificed in the Shaktas' temples in the name of religion, or

killed in the public slaughterhouses, more frankly in the name of gluttony. But the idea of that suffering — primordial in the eyes of the true Jain or the Buddhist — does not seem to be, to the average Hindu, as important as that of his own bodily purity, regarded as an indispensable help to spiritual progress. A systematic vegetarian, in Europe or America, is generally a lover of animals. When he refuses to take liver extracts as a medicine, or to adopt a meat diet, even if threatened by his physician that he will die if he does not do so, he places the interest of the animal before his own just as a sincere Christian would doubtless place the interest of another human being, his brother in God, before his. A strict Hindu vegetarian may or may not also be a lover of animals. His diet is regulated mainly by the interest of the *eater*, not of the *eaten*. And when he refuses to take to a meat diet even if it is supposed to save his life, he just puts the interest of his soul before that of his body — or the purity of his body before its conservation. It is still *his ow*n interest that he primarily seeks.

We do not deny that, in a number of individual cases, consideration for animals also enters the mind of the Hindu vegetarian. And one could point out that the reverence shown all over Hindu India for the Cow, as a symbol of universal motherhood, covers a widespread feeling of respect for all life. But as we have said, along with that feeling lies the equally fundamental consciousness that individual life, human *or* animal, is of little value. And the consequence is a no less widespread callousness, an indifference to suffering, which amazes any foreign lover of animals who happens to have read something of the Hindu Scriptures before coming to India. It is as though life, when known to be everlasting, loses its value in the eyes of the average man, and as though suffering, when thought to be a punishment, ceases to move the casual witness of it to pity.

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But one must admit that, whenever faithful to their traditional philosophical outlook, the Hindus are at least impartial in their good or bad treatment of living creatures. We have just noted the indifference to suffering that too often appears as a consequence of the general belief in the eternity of life, and in an immanent, mathematical justice, working through the law of birth and rebirth. But that indifference is applied to the sick beggar child lying in the filth no less than to the famishing street dog. It is applied to the overworked “coolie” no less than to the overloaded ass, or to the tired, thirsty buffalo drawing a heavy cart under the merciless

whip. A hungry human "untouchable" would be turned out of an orthodox Hindu kitchen no less ruthlessly than a hungry animal considered unclean. And among the true Hindus who believe in the efficacy of animal sacrifices, there are possibly still some who would not shrink, on principle, before the idea of human sacrifices, were such to be sanctioned by religious authority.

On the other hand, in the "Buddhist period," and in the days when genuine Buddhist influence was still powerful in the country; when, thanks to the efforts of one or two absolute monarchs who were, at the same time exceptional men, kindness was made the keynote of Indian life for some time at least, it was not the one-sided solicitude of the Christians and Christian-like Free thinkers for man alone; it was not even a preoccupation with man's welfare *first*, and then also with that of other creatures. It was real, universal kindness, extended to all that lives, irrespective of species. Good King Asoka built hospitals and rest houses for sick and homeless men *and* animals. And nine hundred years later, in Harshavardhana's glorious India, cruelty to animals was punished by death, as well as any major crime against human beings.

It is only in recent years that pernicious influences from the West and from the North — outcome of the silent and subtle, but undeniably efficient efforts of both Christians and Communists: the missionaries of man-centered creeds, whether religious or purely social — have begun to distort the mind and vitiate the feelings of a number of Hindus, especially of the so-called "educated" ones. It is only now that partiality in favor of man is creeping into India, in defiance of India's professed Pantheism, and that the noisiest representatives of the Hindu people (and therefore the most well-known abroad) often seem to forget the outlook on life implied in the age-old philosophy of which they are outwardly so proud, and speak and act as if they were Christians.

But the pessimistic Pantheism in which the Indian soul found expression for centuries cannot be judged from these folk. Even if one day the whole of India were to denounce it, it would still remain one of the historic philosophies of the world, and — what is more — the only life-centered philosophy that has, from time immemorial, set the moral standards of a whole sub-continent.

As we have said, it implies no fundamental difference in the treatment of men and of animals. To superior individuals, such as Asoka and Harshavardhana, or Lord Buddha himself, it inspires loving kindness towards both. But the average men — especially with men already inclined to apathy by temperament — it results,

more often than not, in indifference to the sufferings and death of both. It may, at the most, urge such people to avoid becoming the *direct* cause of any creature's suffering or death; to be "harmless" — in order not to lengthen the record of bad deeds for which they are bound to pay the penalty sooner or later, in this life or in another. It does not, however, in general, urge them to go out of their way in order to help creatures *actively*.

CHAPTER III

Joyous Wisdom

Pessimistic Pantheism, rooted in the doctrine of birth and rebirth — which seems to be the essence of Hindu thought — is definitely an otherworldly philosophy. So are the man-centered creeds that sprang, in the West, from Judaism (creeds based upon the belief in transcendent Godhead cannot but be so). Western Free Thought, in all its different forms, has, as we pointed out, retained Christian ethics while doing away with Christian metaphysics. It is not other-worldly at all, but it has never preached or even conceived a love more comprehensive than that of humanity. And every one of its aspects, from Descartes to Karl Marx, is as man-centered as any philosophy can be.

On the other hand, the immemorial social and ethical wisdom of the Chinese, centered around the sacred continuity and expansion of the human family —that one, real, everlasting religion of China, more solidly established in the subconscious mind of her millions than either the popular indigenous nature cults or any of the great imported faiths — is, as far as we know, eminently man-centered. Its outlook is human —social, not cosmic. It is *the* rational religion of humanity, if ever there was any. But *no more* than a religion of humanity.

And as for that aspect of Indian religion which seems to have escaped the general pessimistic trend of Hindu thought while accepting the idea of the oneness of life, or which flourished before that general trend of pessimism had appeared; as for that outlook expressed, for instance, in those old Vedic hymns in which the conquering Aryans asked their Gods for numerous male descendants, for herds of cows, and for the strength to destroy their enemies in battle, it can surely not be accused of having an

otherworldly tint. But it has equally very little to do with universal love, as good King Asoka understood it (if we take the beautiful archaic scriptures *as* they are written). It is the product of a healthy, warrior-like, animal-sacrificing race, much akin, in spirit, to the Achaeans of the Homeric epics — one of the most intelligent and aesthetically-minded among the sturdy races of Antiquity, no doubt, but surely not of a race endowed with the softer virtues of the Indians of the "Buddhist period." And it seems fair to notice that something has survived of that outlook in India at nearly all epochs, more or less.

In other words, there have been, and there still are philosophies "faithful to this earth" and centered around something narrower than mankind (around a nation, for instance, or a class, or a family). There are and there have been philosophies equally devoid of any human welfare. There are and there have been religions and philosophies with a background of otherworldly faith or speculation, of which some are centered around man and others around life in general.

But we know of no historic civilization based upon a joyous earthly wisdom, implying active love towards all living creatures; upon a religion of this world and of this life in flesh and blood, which would be *neither man-centered nor pessimistic, nor lacking truly universal kindness in the Buddhistic sense of the word*. We only know of a very few individuals who have put forward such a philosophy, professed such a religion — consciously or unconsciously — from time to time; a few individuals of whom the most ancient and the most illustrious seems to have been Akhnaton, King of Egypt, and Founder of the Religion of the Disk in the early fourteenth century B.C. — perhaps the one man who ever dreamed of building a world civilization upon the basis of a joyous wisdom like that to which we have just alluded.

The basis of his "Teaching of Life" was extremely simple. It was, first of all, the enthusiastic admiration of an artist for the beauty of our Parent Star. It was also the assertion that from this visible shining Father of ours — the Sun — comes all life and power on earth and that, if we need to worship anything, the best is to worship Him, or rather, His "ka" or soul: the energetic Principle at the root of all existence. And it seems to have been scientifically unshakable, for it implied that idea of the equivalence of heat and light and of all different aspects of energy, no less

than — ultimately — of energy and of that which appears to our senses as matter; the equivalence of the "Heat-and-light-within-the-Disk" (Akhnaton's One, everlasting, impersonal God) and of the fiery Sun-disk itself. The worship of the Sun-disk meant, in reality, the worship of immanent, cosmic Energy.

No code of ethics was explicitly attached to the Religion of the Disk, as far as we know. But Akhnaton's creed, while fully accepting the fact of God-ordained diversity, and upholding the separation of races on religious grounds,[1] certainly did imply the broadest and most impartial love, not merely towards man, irrespective of race or nationality, but also towards all living creatures, irrespective of species. It looked upon them all as children and co-worshippers of the one universal "Father-and-Mother" — the Sun; and in the two surviving hymns from which can be gathered our only direct knowledge of its spirit, the marvel of birth and growth, the joy of being alive in the beautiful sunlit world, and the religious rapture of creatures all adoring the Sun, each one in its way, are emphasized, both in the case of men, of quadrupeds, of birds, of fishes, and even of plants, in the same breath.

And though, unfortunately, nothing had remained of that happy cult of light and tangible beauty, one can say with hardly any risk of making a mistake that, had it endured, it would have been perhaps the one joyous creed of worldwide scope, making it impossible not to claim for animals (and plants) a right to our full active love in everyday life. Whatever might have been Akhnaton's personal views regarding death-views which he appears never to have preached — it is certain from his hymns that he valued the beauty of this ever-changing world, and more than all the beauty of any living organism, masterly sample of what divine heat-and-Light can produce under favorable conditions. Individual life, finite and brief as it surely is, was precious in his eyes *because it is beautiful*. And without any speculation about the intimate nature of life, or about its alleged "higher purpose"; without any theory about the soul of creatures and its ultimate destiny, a man filled with the young king's love would be bound to be disturbed at the idea of any creature's suffering — especially of its physical suffering. He would be bound to interfere in favor of the hungry street dog, of the homeless kitten, of the overloaded horse, ass, camel or buffalo he

[1] "Thou hast put every man in his place, Thou hast made them *different* in shape, in speech and in color; As a divider, Thou hast divided the foreign people (from one another)." (From Akhnaton's *Longer Hymn to the Sun*.)

meets on his way, and to do for each of them all that a sincere Christian would do for a hungry man, a homeless child, and ill-treated and overworked human slave.

The man-centered creeds, based upon the assumption of man's special value without, apparently, any thought for other living creatures, tell us to love all men as ourselves. The existing creeds of universal love, centered around the idea of "liberation" of creatures from the prison of finite individuality, can be interpreted in both ways; they lead only a few men to actually universal charity (extended to all living beings) and remain, more often than not, for the others, an excuse for general indifference to suffering. The creed based solely upon the full consciousness of the beauty of daylight and of the sweetness of life as such, apart from any metaphysics; upon the filial worship of the subtle Essence of Life — Energy — through the resplendent Star, origin and regulator of our planetary system, that creed, we say, logically implies active sympathy — a warm sort of fellow feeling — for all that lives. If, indeed, one realizes to the full the brotherhood of all creatures in the father-and-motherhood of the life-giving Sun, and if one is happy to be alive and to see His beauty, then one cannot, it seems, but do one's utmost to help all bodies endowed with life to live and enjoy their span of years; one cannot but contribute one's best to give them, in every daily circumstance, whatever is necessary for them to be, and to remain, what the intimate finality of their nature intended them to be: beautiful living hymns of joy to the splendor of Him Whose radiance and movements ordain all life on earth.

It is this joyous wisdom that we profess to follow, to the extent it is compatible with the natural struggle for survival, the laws of which rule Life at all levels. It may not be possible-it may not even be essential-that all men should adhere to it out of love and reverence for the great historic figure who first preached it and lived up to it. But its spirit seems to be the only spirit worthy of a future society, better than ours; of a society in which increasing intellectual agnosticism — already apparent among the scientifically-minded people of today — would exclude hasty metaphysical assertions, but in which increasing consideration for the right of all sufferers (especially of all the exploited) would logically bring man to include all sentient creatures within the range of his active sympathy.

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The cornerstone of all arguments put forward by believers in man-centered creeds (be those creeds religious, or merely

philosophical ones) seems to be that, of all living creatures, man alone is endowed with possibilities of rational thought. And when one tries to point out that those possibilities often materialize only to a very little extent — or not at all — or when one remarks that, to base our specific behaviors toward human beings in general upon their "rational" faculties implies that we should also treat different individual men and groups of men in a thoroughly different manner (for nature has *not* granted every person, or even every race, equal potentialities of rational thought), then the believers in man-centered creeds appeal to another argument. They grant us that all men do not think rationally; nay, that one can doubt, at times, whether some of them even think at all. But they tell us that all are useful, or, at least, that all could be useful, in a well-planned society.

We say that if the most mediocre of men is to be given priority over all beasts on account of his capacity for devising tools and for making syllogisms, then, surely in time of famine, the relief workers should feed a clever, promising child before a dullard — which they do not — and at all times, a man with a brilliant personality (and all the more a man of genius) should be, when wounded or sick, better looked after than an average man-which is not the case. They reply that any man, even far below the average, should be given preference over all the subhuman, living world because, whatever he be, he is, or can be more useful to other men than a beast — even if he has no more of an immortal soul than they have.

One may doubt, at least in the present state of society, whether all the uncreative idlers of the cafes and fashionable avenues rolled into one are as useful to mankind as a single milch cow, a single beast of burden, or a single watchdog. But our opponents retort that, in spite of all, they are "human beings." Though in the present state of society they be useless idlers, they remain potential fathers and mothers of human babies. Their descendants, if not themselves, can still be offered, within the frame of a more rationally organized collectivity, the means of contributing to the common welfare of their fellowmen as teachers, peasants, nurses, blacksmiths or scientists. All human energy is utilizable, if not always utilized, for the common good of humanity. Not a particle of it should be allowed to go to waste. While what can one do with animal energy — apart from that which is used to feed man or to draw his carts for him? What are the "possibilities" of a puppy, of a kitten, of a tiger cub, of a young swan, of a young snake? None

which can interest the human world. And the "useful" animals themselves are being replaced, more and more, by mechanical devices.

One can indeed imagine a type of society in which animals would be of no practical use at all to man — not even as food; a society in which man's intelligence alone would keep things going through the invention of appropriate machines and of synthetic foodstuffs, and in which every individual would have to work under compulsion. But even if such a society does one day come into existence, and if it includes the whole of the human race, still animal life would lose nothing of its value in our eyes, and the preoccupation of animals' welfare would remain one of man's greatest duties, at least in the case of all those beasts that depend more or less upon him for their subsistence.

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With regard to animals-and plants-the believers in man-centered creeds seem to be governed by the mere consideration of gain and loss. They seem to be people for whom living things have a price in connection with some purpose for which they can be used, not a value in themselves. And the highest purpose they can dream of is the "service of humanity." Why? Goodness knows. Probably because they themselves happen to be human beings. To admit the existence of something higher and more precious than "man" — and having more "rights" than he to health and enjoyment — would be to concede that man (i.e., themselves) can be justly used in the interest of that thing. And they do not want to reach such a conclusion-surely not. They are willing to exploit living nature; but they shrink from the possibility of being themselves exploited in their turn, even in the interest of such superior beings as, for instance, inhuman Gods, or for the greater welfare of the less exalted but more tangible master races that might appear on the international stage. The result is that the only God they can think of, if any, is a man-loving God who created no master race save mankind itself, to which he gave as a birthright domination over the whole scheme of life. To them, as we have already said, the species that can invent tools and draw one proposition out of another — the species to which they belong — is the only really lovable one; the only one, at any rate, for which one can sacrifice oneself. And the rest of the living are just "useful" or "harmful," or harmless but of no use to man and therefore of no interest.

We cannot think of anything more disgusting, more vulgar, more mean, than this attitude.

We would not call it "a shopkeeper's attitude," for shopkeepers are respectable folk, often honest, and generally endowed with common sense. We would not call it a "selfish" attitude, for some selfish people at least are frankly and openly so, and have, at times the courage to go to the extreme limits of whatever their selfishness leads them to. Profit-seekers can understand other profit-seekers, though they do not necessarily love them, especially if they be their rivals. Selfish people understand other selfish people, though they might detest them. They find it *natural* for them to be as they are. But our votaries of man-centered faiths are the last people to understand the believers in the right of the superior or more efficient races to exploit the inferior or less efficient ones. Our philanthropists, burning with partial, fanatical love, who would willingly destroy the whole of the animal world in order to save one human idiot, are the last people to understand the ardent nationalist who would, with a smile, sacrifice mankind to his own country's pride, or even the shameless opportunist who would no less easily betray both country and humanity for his personal benefit. Their attitude is one of untruthfulness and hypocrisy. Instead of honestly admitting that they are not bold enough to be mere self-seeking opportunists (for fear of what the devils might one day do to them in hell); nor fanatical enough to be aggressive nationalists, nor intelligent — and selfless — enough to be true racialists, and not to care what "modern" liberal-minded folk might think of them in society; instead of telling us in plain language that they are able to raise themselves from personal selfishness to a sense of human solidarity, but that they can go no further; instead of confessing that they have an altogether illogical yet undeniable fondness for human beings, but none at all or very little for other animal species, even for other mammals — as others have a vital fondness for their own countrymen but do not care a jot for the rest of mankind — instead of admitting *that*, we say, they try to justify their narrow love with spurious arguments. They try to make what is a matter of taste — and more often then not, of bad taste — pass off for a matter of reason. They fail. And of all their arguments, none betrays the fundamental meanness of their feelings more than that one which puts forward man's possibilities to be "of greater use to his fellowmen" than any beast can be.

* * *

To try to justify the exploitation of animals on the ground that man is, or is supposed to be, the only creature on earth endowed with reason, is foolish. Every form of exploitation rests, as soon as it ceases to be backed by mere physical force, upon the cleverness of the exploiters. To say that to exploit *men* is to crush "possibilities" and is therefore "wrong," leads nowhere. For what do the exploiters care if the possibilities of other men are thwarted? And why should they care? Because their victims would be more "useful to humanity" if allowed free development? But the exploiters do not necessarily bother their heads about the interest of humanity. They care for their own immediate advantage, and are as little impressed by the "human values" exalted in the man-centered creeds as the mere humanitarians are themselves by those which we hold sacred.

If, on the other hand, a man feels for humanity in general and for every one of his human neighbors in particular, why should he stop there? If he feels it is "wrong" not to treat other men as he would himself like to be treated, why does he not feel the same with regard to all sentient creatures? Reason and "utility" are surely not the only things that make mankind lovable, if it be at all so. Why should they become the justification of any sort of partiality towards human beings? What is there, after all, to make such a fuss about in man's capacity for devising instruments, or imagining arguments, or bettering his surroundings and working for other men? Cannot a creature be infinitely lovable without possessing any such "possibilities" at all? We believe it can be. We know that it actually is. And anyone who has picked up a kitten or a puppy, or a young bird, and felt it live in his hand for a while, will understand what we mean, unless he himself be coarser than the coarsest of beasts. A soft, warm, fluffy ball of purring fur that stretches its velvet paws with pleasure, while its two deep greenish-blue eyes express confidence in the friend who is carrying it home; a creature that wags its trail for joy and licks one's hand as soon as it feels one loves it; a tiny feathery body, with wings that flutter, and a frightened heart that one feels beating between one's fingers;, and all the other creatures of the earth, wild or tame, are lovable in themselves, without it being necessary for them to be either "reasonable" or "useful." They are lovable just because they are alive. No theory concerning God, or the nature of the soul; no opinion about the unknown, no metaphysics of any sort — no

"scientific" theories either — are necessary to prove them to be so. Any living individual is, in itself, infinitely precious, as a masterpiece of Nature — as the supreme work of art. Any beautiful form, even inanimate, is precious in itself. So much more so if it be endowed with sensitiveness; if it enjoys the daylight and can respond to kindness. In our eyes, the mere possibility of being healthy, beautiful and happy is sufficient to establish the right of every living creature to be well fed and well treated until the moment it dies a natural death. The "reason" of an animal (or of a plant) lies in the deep immanent logic that rules its physical life — and its emotions, also, in the case of an evolved beast. Its "usefulness" lies in its potentialities of physical beauty. It is a type of reason and of usefulness that the better human beings — the disinterested ones, the true artists — alone can understand.

As for ordinary syllogistic and practical reason and immediate usefulness, the least said about them the better. They are supposed to be the discriminating factors between man and beast. Let them be first taken into consideration, if at all, as the basis of desirable distinctions between human beings. The followers of man-centered creeds never think of that. They speak of human "rationality" and of the usefulness of human beings; yet they never ask whether the person whom they are about to help has actually made use of his capacity to better his surroundings or to work for others. They just help him — even if he be the most consummate imbecile, suffering the result of his own foolishness; even if he be the most useless, self-centered old bachelor, having never cared for anybody. Hospitals and asylums are open to all. And in bad times food is distributed indiscriminately to all the distressed, without any enquiry into the life history of each one. It is not even the consciousness of that possibility of the sufferers to be "useful" which prompts the humanitarian to care for his fellow beings. It is just the fact that they are beings, outwardly at least, more like himself than others — specimens of the *human race*. The humanitarian is a fellow who has rejected the logic of racialism, but has kept all the sentimental partiality attached to every form of group loyalty. He has done away with the "white man's burden," and discarded the pride of the master races as too unchristian-like or too "unscientific" for him. But he still clings — or tries to cling — to that elemental blood solidarity which is the essence of all racialism. He clings to it, after having distorted it and broadened it to such an extent that it loses all that was vital and stimulating in it, in its earlier stages, without it generously merging into the higher

solidarity of all life. *Un raciste manque*, that is what the humanitarian is, and nothing more, so long as he fails to transcend his man-centered ideology.

We — who *are* racialists, and remain so in defiance of savage persecution[1] — proclaim, thanks precisely to our faith in divine order and hierarchy, the brotherhood of all living creatures on the sole ground that they are alive — products, at different degrees of evolution, of the play of that selfsame immanent Energy that created the greatest ones among us; children of the One, life-giving Sun, glad to see His light and to feel His warmth, like ourselves — and like him who once made the joy of life the center of a rational religion of worldwide scope, if not, unfortunately, of worldwide fame.

And we believe that, as long as man refuses to feel his duties towards the whole of living creation and even tries to justify his reluctance to fulfil them, he will remain nothing more than the most efficient animal on earth — an animal that might dominate others, and use them for its own ends more systematically and more ruthlessly than any species of the jungle can do, but whose emotional horizon is as narrow, and whose purpose is as selfish as that of any gregarious beast. Cleverer, we admit, than bees or ants, wild elephants or migratory birds; more cunning than the most socially-minded monkeys; but prompted to action, at the most, by the interest of its species — by love for its own kind and no more; an animal that can create gods, but in its own image — like the "Great Horse in heaven" which horses worship, if there be any truth in one of Anatole France's most charming tales,[2] an animal that lies to itself and pretends that its God made it, and it alone, in his own likeness — a thing that the malicious apes would surely assert also on behalf of their species, with a little extra intelligence and a much greater supply of perversity than that which nature granted them. Yes, man is potentially reasonable. But, up till now, he has put his reason to the service of the selfsame purpose as any gregarious animal would have pursued in his place: the welfare of his own species, and nothing more.

And it is precisely in the capacity of a few men to go beyond that ideal, instead of justifying it and exalting it in its limitations; it is in

[1] This book was written in 1945-46.

[2] *Les Juges Intègres*, in *Crainquebille*, etc. Edition Calmann-Lévy, 1930, pp. 198-199.

the capacity of an élite to transcend that sort of fellow feeling restricted to two-legged mammals, and to struggle for the welfare of other species as well as, and sometimes more than, their own; it is in the readiness of the truly better human beings to love creatures of a different size and of a different shape *as* themselves, and sometimes more than themselves, that we see the real superiority of man. That superiority has never yet asserted itself on a broad scale. But some inconspicuous people, whom one meets here and there, tend to prove it. And it shines in all its glory, from time to time, in handfuls of inspired men, founders or active followers of life-centered religions or philosophies, conscious of and consistent with the principles of eternal truth and real love.

CHAPTER IV

Action Precedes Theory

We have spoken of several philosophies corresponding to different human outlooks on living creatures in general and on animals in particular. We must speedily add that a person's professed philosophy (or religion) is not always — is not even generally — that which guides him in his everyday dealings with living creatures of other species. It may of course influence him to some extent; and he may refer to it, in some cases to justify his conduct — like those good Christians who tell us that they can see "no harm" in eating meat, for "God created certain animals on purpose to be man's food." But he will never follow the logic of his creed consistently and to the bitter end if it be definitely going against the grain of his deeper nature. And when he does abide by its principles, it is, in most cases, less because he sees in them the outcome of "God's will' or of "reason" or of "social interest" than because they are the natural and adequate expression of his own deeper attitude towards life.

A man who has always felt an unsurmountable, physical disgust for animal slaughter, and to whom the very sight of meat is nauseating, is hardly likely to force himself to become a flesh eater just because the books he was taught to consider as sacred or infallible (be they religious scriptures or "scientific" works) seem to encourage such a diet rather than forbid it, or because the founder of his faith, or the geniuses he reveres the most, obviously ate meat. He may not always have the courage to denounce the man-centered religion or philosophy in which he was educated, on the sole ground that its ethics are not high enough for him (in fact, shockingly below his own natural ethics.) But he will not bring himself to *live* as do the majority of those who outwardly profess the same creed as himself.

In the same way, a man brought up in one of the life-centered creeds of the East may well *act*, all through his life, as though he believed man to be the only creature on earth worth loving. He might admit that all living creatures have an immortal soul of the same nature as his own, because he has learnt to respect, nay to admire, sages who have expressed this view, books that have popularized it. But no teaching can bring him to *feel* for the emaciated dog or the overloaded buffalo he encounters in the street, if the sheer sight of their distress be not sufficient to move him spontaneously. No exalted example from history or mythology, no saint, no religious leader, no incarnation of the divine can force him to throw the remnant of his dinner to a hungry animal, or to interfere in favor of an ill-treated beast of burden, if his kind heart fails to command him to do so.

There are many outlooks on life, many philosophies, many religions according to which our relation to other living creatures appears in various lights. But from the point of view of practical behavior, there are, properly speaking, only two kinds of people: those who really love animals (and plants) and those who do not. And one might, in turn, divide the first of these two groups into people who love all living nature consistently, and people who love it but partially or occasionally, the latter being the immense majority of the so-called animal lovers and nature lovers.

* * *

There is more to be said. Not only does a man seldom wait for inspiration from the faith or philosophy he professes to determine his course of action towards animals in daily life, but, whatever be his professed faith or philosophy, he generally manages to justify his actions in its name, if he be himself sophisticated enough to feel that they need a justification. And the practical conclusions which different people actually reach, on the apparent basis of the same belief, are often each one equally defendable, though contrary.

We are, for instance, all acquainted with the belief, shared by many, that animals (and, *a fortiori*, plants) have “no soul,” or that if they have, their soul is of a nature entirely different from ours, in particular that it is not immortal. We all know that Christianity enjoins us to “love our neighbors,” including our enemies, “as ourselves,” but is completely silent about our duties towards subhuman creatures. Still it is a fact that there are animal lovers brought up in the Christian faith who feel that Christ’s commandment to love one’s enemies *implies* most naturally love

towards all creatures. They have told us so. And there is indeed nothing illogical or anti-Christian in their attitude. And we know well that, were we personally followers of any form of Christianity, we would undoubtedly link up our natural solicitude for all that lives with that particular religion by saying that, if one is to "love" a man who has murdered one's parents, committed atrocities upon one's countrymen, or robbed one of one's livelihood, then it appears obvious that one should, *a fortiori*, love the lamb, the kid, the cow, and all innocent irresponsible creatures enough, at least, not to encourage the butcher's hideous industry; and that one should love harmless frogs and guinea pigs enough to protest against the use of them in scientific experimentation. And it is also a fact that if we believe the human soul alone to be immortal, that belief, far from prompting us to pay more attention to distressed human beings than to animals, would have exactly the contrary effect. For an immortal creature can well afford to wait; one whose only life is contained in the span of a few brief years cannot. Consequently, if we were to become convinced that man alone has an immortal soul, we would feed the hungry dog before the hungry child, nay, we would let the latter die if there were not enough food for both-a specimen of a species so cocksure that death is but the gate to a broader and better life should not mind dying. And this course of action of ours would be perfectly logical; far more logical, in our eyes, than the usual course.

We have already seen how a life-centered doctrine like that of reincarnation can be — and is, in fact — used to justify entirely different practical attitudes towards living things. The great Indian Masters, pondering over the glorious unity underlying all life (which the hypothesis of birth and rebirth implies) concluded that we have to consider all creatures as our fellow beings and to be kind to them — at least to do them no harm; and that it is our duty to feel for them. But the millions of Hindus who easily throw away the surplus of their food without thinking of the starving animals lying at their door, and who would never interfere to prevent a child from kicking a sleeping dog, or from knocking down a bird's nest; the thousands who beat their overloaded bullocks and buffalos, horses and donkeys; who mercilessly twist the animals' tails to make them walk faster; who carry unwanted newly born kittens away from their houses (or tell a servant to carry them away) and leave them on the roadside to "fend for themselves," that is to say, to starve; who have organized countless public meetings in protest against political injustices and a few, sometimes, against blood

sacrifices in Hindu temples, but not one in order to stop the tortures inflicted upon animals in the name of science, or the killing of cattle in the municipal slaughterhouses, generally in the most barbaric manner; who have not shown a sign of indignation, not,. raised a voice of protest at such news, for instance, as that of a butcher from Calcutta being condemned to one month's rigorous imprisonment *only* for having flayed two goats alive in 1943; those millions, we say, and those thousands would, if asked why they show such callousness, merely reply that it was so planned that every living individual should suffer the fate determined by the sum of its deeds, and that the animals which undergo hardships or tortures doubtless deserved it by sinning in their previous lives, though no one knows how.

And if the joyous Wisdom which we have tried to describe in the preceding chapter has succeeded in retaining a nominal hold upon men; if the worship of eternal Energy, through the tangible beauty of light and life, as preached by Akhnaton, had remained the official religion of any organized society, the hereditary cult of even a few hundred thousands of people, it is highly probable that its logical implications concerning man's behavior towards other living beings would have been overlooked by the majority of its professed adherents. It is probable that nearly all of these would have, by this time, long ceased to be different from other men and that, while bowing down to the Sun morning and evening, and paying an outward homage to him who once sang the joy and beauty of all life, they would have tolerated the various cruelties of our age as easily as the believers in any man-centered creed. And when one comes to realize how even the most perfect creeds seem incapable of inspiring, for long, a kindlier and more rational conduct to any but a 1 very few of their followers, one is inclined to be almost glad that the beautiful old solar philosophy never developed into a widespread popular doctrine; that it never yet became the basis of a Church, the nominal foundation of a civilization.

We must say, however, that with all the power of distortion that characterizes the human mind, it would have been very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to *justify* any indifference to suffering in general,, and in particular any sort of callousness towards helpless animals or even plants, in the name of that happy creed stressing the joy of all creatures to see and feel the Sun, and centered mainly around this tangible world and this short life.

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The fact is that, as we have remarked above, action precedes theory, and does not proceed from it. Whenever it can be, the prevailing theory is used in order to justify action. Originally, it became prevailing precisely because it was, or seemed to be, the one that justified the best sort of action which people spontaneously did. Whenever it cannot be actually used, action continues to take place without its support; and finally, it is theory that is changed to suit action, not action to suit theory.

The gap that exists between the ethical ideals of some creeds (especially of life-centered ones) and the daily conduct of their average followers is generally all the more shocking as the creeds are more lofty. And the high standards of behavior that those ideals imply can often be, it seems, counted among the factors responsible for a creed's complete worldly failure. Up till today, no creed obviously implying consistent active kindness towards all sentient beings has ever succeeded in imposing itself upon the practical life of any human society. And wherever such a creed is officially accepted, and even exalted (as in Hindu India and in the countries that profess Buddhism) the people's conduct towards living creatures in everyday life falls hopelessly short of the ideals set forth by the masters to whom they pay an outward homage.

Man's practical behavior towards creatures of other species depends, in reality, not upon what he believes, nor upon what he worships, nor what he knows, nor what he might think of animals and plants in general. It depends, first and foremost, upon what he spontaneously *feels* in the presence of the individual specimens of the different species he meets on his way; upon his instinctive reaction at the sight of a cat, a dog, a buffalo, a pig, a tree, a blade of grass.

It depends also to a great extent upon his power of imagination. A great many of the town-bred meat-eaters we know, in Europe at least, are animal-lovers at heart. Even if they be hungry, they are the last people to feel, at the sight of a sheep, a cow or a calf grazing in a meadow, the murderous propensity that would possess a famishing tiger in the same circumstance. On the contrary, they are capable of going up to the animal to stroke its head, or of plucking some grass and flowers and offering them to it, just for the pleasure of seeing it eat out of their own hands. They love to watch it gambol through the sunlit fields, its tail in the air, or to see it ruminating in an attitude of calm and comfortable

repose in the shade of some tree. If a man suddenly came along and started ill-treating it, they would surely rush to its defense, and that, probably in a vehement manner. Yet they go home and eat a slice of mutton, beef or veal without the slightest sense of guilt. Although they well know that some beast, just as alive, just as innocent and beautiful, just as willing to respond to man's kindness and to eat out of a human hand as the one in the meadow, died a premature and violent death so that a piece of flesh might appear on their table; although, nine times out of ten, they would rather starve than kill the lovely creature themselves; although they generally express a sincere horror after reading or hearing a vivid description of a slaughterhouse, yet they do not spontaneously connect all the ghastliness of animal killing with that particular chunk of meat they see before them in a dish with roast potatoes and onions all around it. They do not automatically picture to themselves, at the sight of it, the agony of a sheep, of a bullock, of a young calf, once enjoying the taste of fresh grass and the light of heaven, then suddenly drawing its last breath in a pool of blood . . . and for what? — for them to have some mutton, beef or veal on their menu. If they did actually imagine *that*, half of them would shrink in horror, and not only eat no more meat themselves, but also despise all those who refuse to give up that habit as one despises the accomplices in some hideous murder case. But they do not. The custom of feeding on flesh and the knowledge that "men have always done so from the beginning of the world" — the reaction of daily repeated misdeeds upon one's true sense of values — have blunted, if not completely obliterated, their power of visualizing at once that which they wish to forget. They are not obsessed by the unavoidable connection between an appetizing roast with potatoes around it and the sickening reality of the death struggle of a slaughtered beast, as we would be. A whole series of associations of ideas has been suppressed in them by an obnoxious "education," and they have not enough imagination to revive it of their own accord.

The same could be said about all those inconsistent animal lovers who would not refuse the present of a fur coat, nay, who would not hesitate to buy one if they could afford it; who take medicine (preventive and curative) prepared at the cost of the suffering of many guinea pigs and white rats; and who hire a carnage when they are in a hurry (in places where taxis are not available) without making sure that the horse is not tired, sometimes even without paying attention whether the driver beats it or not.

A natural, spontaneous feeling of sympathy for any individual living creature, allied to a sufficiently vivid imagination, is a rare quality. And consequently real animal lovers — not merely those who keep pets, or those who burst into indignation at the thought of one form of cruelty and tolerate or even encourage another — are very few. Real plant lovers who feel for the trees themselves, and not merely for the shade, fruit or flowers they give, are equally rare. And that, both in the east and in the West — both among the people who profess to believe in the great brotherhood of all life, and those whose explicit faiths and philosophies give an undue place to man within the scheme of creation.

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One may also wonder whether any substantial progress has ever been made in that line, from the beginning of historical times. One may even wonder whether organized society has not deliberately worked to destroy such spontaneous brotherly feelings towards beasts as might have existed in some of the better human beings living outside its pale.

Enkidu, whom the Gods destined to be the companion and friend of Gilgamesh, king of Erech, who lived some seven or eight thousand years ago — or more — was, at first, the companion and friend of the wild beasts, with whom he dwelt alone. He used his human intelligence to help them, and taught them how to outdo the hunter's cunning and to avoid death. But, says the old Sumerian epic, once he experienced the charm of woman he began to side with the hunter against his former friends and playmates, until soon he consented to forsake his dwelling among the beasts and let himself be taken to the town, thus becoming a confirmed member of human society.

This strange and sad story of a half-mythical figure of early humanity is perhaps the story of many of the best among primitive men — enthusiastic lovers of all nature, spontaneously aware of the fact that the beasts of the forest are their brothers, until the influence of society, exercised through woman, curtails their glorious freedom, stems their indiscriminate generosity, and cuts down their broad outlook to an all-too-human one. If so, it is the most eloquent condemnation of organized human society as it stands from the far-off days of Enkidu to our own times. It points out — without, probably, the authors of the archaic tale having intended it to do so — one of the main charges than can be brought against organized collective life as it has been conceived up till

now. It shows at the very origin of society a tremendous gregarious selfishness, connected with sex, and soon expanded from the family to the tribe and to the species, *but never beyond*; and it makes us see, in the organization of the human race itself, an increasing effort to place for all times the domination of the world in the hands of man, for man's benefit alone. It illustrates the well-known conviction of the average man of primitive societies no less than of the average socially-minded man of today, both in the East and in the West: the conviction — stronger even than the traditional religious belief in the unity of all life, wherever that belief exists — that the exploitation of all living nature, and particularly of animals, in the interest of man, is normal and desirable, and that the enemy of the hunter (as well as of the butcher, of the scientist who experiments on living creatures, etc.) is an enemy of mankind, while he who, on the contrary, approves of killing animals for man's food, or of inflicting pain upon them for man's ultimate welfare — he who at least does not love them enough to be perturbed by the thought of such atrocities — is a "normal" man, a "sane" man, and a friend of man.

Whatever some of the great religions and philosophies of the y world might be, *this* seems indeed to be the outlook of most people in all countries — their real outlook, if not also the one they openly profess to have. Doctrines that preach love and active kindness to all that lives never repressed the actual feeling of more than a small minority of better people. Wherever apparently successful — i.e., wherever nominally widespread, like Buddhism — they owe their success to other factors, not to that side of their ethics concerning man's attitude towards living creatures other than human.

Nothing is more rare, everywhere — and nothing has always been more rare — than uniform, indiscriminate love towards animals and even plants; love that makes one feel for each one of them individually.

In a few countries of the north and northwest of Europe, as in a part at least of North America, people boast of being comparatively kinder to animals than anywhere else, in spite of the strongly man-centered creeds which they profess. But as we have already remarked, their love for creatures of other species is skin-deep. Skin-deep, and partial, too. Those people are in general either dog lovers or cat lovers or horse lovers, or, maybe lovers of all those species and of a few more. But they are not what we could call actual lovers of animals. Many who would fondle a cat or a dog would mercilessly drown a mouse in a trap, as though it were the

most natural thing in the world. Yet mice have life and sensitiveness; and beauty also. But those men — "kind to animals" as they might think themselves to be — seem to forget it. They seem never to have known it; never to have thought of it. Others, who vehemently stand up against scientific experimentation upon animals, do not object to fox hunting or to tiger hunting, or to the hunting or trapping of those equally beautiful animals whose skin goes to make fur coats and muffs. And many of those who protest against these and other forms of cruelty, and who would never dream of drowning a mouse — who would perhaps also refuse to join in a tiger hunt on the grounds that they feel for the splendid stripy felines — are still not consistent enough to give up eating meat and fish.

On the other hand, most of those Hindus for whom vegetarian diet means more than a mere social tradition — more than a part and parcel of the caste rules that regulate their whole life in detail — and who willingly despise the Mohammedans and Christians for not being vegetarians, are no animal lovers at all. They are at the most cow lovers, and that also often only theoretically. They are generally the last people to keep any animals as pets, and if by chance they do, to take real interest in them and to keep them for long. They will easily continue discussing high-flown philosophical ideas (that have mostly little to do with their lives) or broad national and international problems which they have no power to solve, while some stray cat, to which they never cared to give a home, keeps on mewing for food at an audible distance. They will not pay attention to the helpless, distressed voice; they will not interrupt the pleasure they draw from their worthless conversation, in order to seek out the creature and give it something to eat. They will boast of their superiority over the meat-eating peoples, but eat their food unperturbed by the sight of the hungry dog lying near by and looking up at them with longing eyes. And more often than not, when they have finished their meal, they will ask the servant to carry away the leavings and not even think of telling him to give them to, the poor animal. And the servant will throw the clean rice and vegetables into the dust bin. The dog can find them there if it likes, they tell you. It will find them there no doubt, mixed up with ashes and rotting food from the day before, and with all the rubbish from the street — perhaps with the corpse of some cat or dog already stinking. And it will eat them "if it likes," that is to say, if it can; if they are still edible, even for a hungry dog; while with a little care on the part of the man so

proud of his high philosophy, it could have eaten them clean and enjoyed the whole of them. You tell the man so, and he answers the usual thing we have heard over and over again —the answer of the selfish, jealous human beast to the problem of hungry animals from Belgrade to Shanghai — "there are millions of starving children, and you speak of dogs and cats!" For this argument is not used only by the Hindu vegetarian. It would be put forward also by any fellow who believes in a man-centered creed — by any Christian or Mohammedan; *not* one who professes to uphold the unity and sacredness of all life, and whose vegetarianism is supposed to be, partly at least, a sign of that belief. It is, irrespective of all professed creeds, the argument of the selfish, callous majority of men.

And the most disappointing of all is that, when you point out to the pious vegetarian that the food he had left was not eaten even by any famishing child but simply wasted, the man just smiles — as though your interest in street dogs were indeed a funny thing in his opinion. His own lack of interest in them, as well as in all distressed animals, is not funny at all. It is, in its way, just as criminal as the indifference of the meat eaters to the fate of the cattle driven to the slaughterhouses, and the daily encouragement they give to the ghastly industry of death which could so easily be suppressed with a little good will on their part. Just as criminal, we say, if not more; for the vegetarian Hindu outwardly *professes* to love all creatures; the meat eater (the Western meat eater, at least) does not.

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Most men feel that living nature is just there for them to exploit. And those who make the most fuss over certain forms, or all forms, of exploitation of man by man are often the first to support the most thorough exploitation of animal-kind by man. We believe that, as long as this attitude prevails in the world, man will not cease to be, himself, just an animal among others; cleverer than the others as a rule, but in no way essentially different from them. He will never become the actually superior species which he *could be* if he only realized in which way lies his true line of progress.

And as long as man is nothing but an animal, somewhat more intelligent but no more generous then the others, what right has he, we ask, to claim for himself the preference of those few human individuals whose impartial love extends to all that lives? And why should those few grant him more love than to the other species,

and give him special treatment in all walks of life? "Human solidarity" appears, in their eyes, in no manner a more admirable thing than does any of the much-despised forms of narrower solidarity in the eyes of the humanitarian universalist, who boasts of having transcended all of them. It is, to us, but a partial expression of a far broader and more fundamental solidarity: the solidarity of creatures brought forth and nourished by the same Life-energy, reaching them all, ultimately, through the same Sun.

We admit, of course — one just *has* to admit it — that the Law of struggle for life (and of struggle for well-being) is inseparable from time-bound existence; and that Nature's command is: "Kill, and eat!," since even plants are endowed with life (and, to a certain degree, with sensitiveness) and since one has to eat *something*. But we notice that his iron law of struggle for life and for well-being is *universal* and that, especially in an increasingly overcrowded world such as ours, it determines, and cannot but determine, the attitude of human beings and of human collectivities towards one another just as mercilessly as it does the mutual attitude of different species. It justifies not only all defensive wars, but also all wars of so-called "aggression" inasmuch as they are, from the standpoint of the so-called "aggressor," the only or the best solution of the dilemma: "Future — i.e. biological survival — or ruin!" We scorn all men who condemn "wars of aggression," and who, at the same time, eat meat; nay, we scorn all pacifists who do not, in their everyday dealings, live up to the ideal of universal nonviolence preached by the Jains. We scorn all those, whoever they be, who have never raised their voice against scientific experimentation upon innocent animals (which can be neither *for* nor *against* any cause) and who dare condemn experimentation upon one's dangerous — or potentially dangerous — human enemies. We scorn all those who never were moved to indignation at the idea of man's lasting crime against the living Realm; — at the thought of the enormous daily round of *avoidable* pain inflicted by man upon beasts (and even plants) — and who, yet, dare speak of "war crimes" and of "war criminals." We flatly refuse to condemn war, — be it a thousand times a war "of aggression" — as long as mankind at large persists in its callous attitude towards animal (and tree) life. And as long as torture is inflicted by men upon a single living creature, in the name of scientific research, of sport, of luxury or of gluttony, we systematically refuse our support to any campaign exploiting public sympathy for tortured human beings — unless the latter be, of course, such ones as we look upon

as our brothers in race and faith, or people near and dear to these. The world that exalts Pasteur and Pavlov, and countless other tormentors of innocent creatures, in the name of the so-called “interest of mankind,” while branding as “war criminals” men who have not shrunk from acts of violence upon *hostile* human elements, when such was their duty in the service of higher mankind and in the interest of all life, does not deserve to live.

CHAPTER V

Lights in the Night

The history of animal life has been (and is still, so far as we know) but one long record of merciless exploitation by man, or at most — in the case of the more fortunate wild beasts — the history of one long and increasingly hopeless struggle against the pretension of man to have the whole earth to himself.

The destruction of the proud and free animal species began with weapons of silex in the days most men — scientists tell us — looked more like apes than like that which we call today human beings. And it is continuing up to the present day, with old fashioned arrows in the dark forests of central Africa, with firearms in the swamps of south Bengal. There were lions in Greece as late as one thousand B.C. or so, and wolves in England up to the seventeenth century A.D. There are none now. And the lions of North Africa, so numerous when the Romans conquered that part of the world-in the second century B.C. — have been so ruthlessly hunted out that they are now a species on the verge of extinction. There were bisons throughout North America — millions of them — but a few decades ago; there are hardly any today. They have been killed of in such numbers that they have become a rare curiosity to be carefully kept in reserved areas. Man has taken their place and built his cities, and drawn the boundaries of his cultivated fields — spread the network of his ever-grabbling organized life — over the boundless green plains in which they once used to roam in the sunshine. The same can be said of the llamas of the Andes. Four years after they had set foot in Peru the Spaniards had already massacred more of them for their meat (and especially for their brain, regarded as a delicacy) then had the Peruvians in occasional sacrifices during the four centuries that the Inca Empire

had lasted. The same can be said of many other animal species at present extinct or nearing extinction

The species that are not hunted out for sheer "clearing of space" or merely for "sport," are pursued for their flesh, or for their fur, for their brightly colored feathers or for their beautiful ivory tusks — for the gratification of man's gluttony or of his vanity. The rest are domesticated and made to have young ones regularly, so that man may enjoy to his heart's content a continuous supply of fresh milk and tender flesh; or made to work for man under the threat of the whip; or injected with all sorts of diseases, so that man may try his medicines on them before applying them to himself; or tortured to satisfy man's scientific curiosity; or fondled for a while as pets and then — when man gets tired of them, or when he is going on a journey and cannot, or does not wish to, take them with him, or when conditions become such that there is not enough food for both them and his own children — remorselessly "put out of the way" — chloroformed, if there happens to a branch of the S.P.C.A. near by and if their owner be kind; just thrown into the street, if he be one who "does not care"; stolen and sold for meat when man is short of food — as so many cats and dogs were in different parts of Europe during the last winter of the Second World War; sometimes even, in such abnormal times, eaten by those very rascals who had brought them up, who had once fed them with their own hands, and who pretended to love them — by those rascals who had not the courage to lie down and let themselves die of hunger rather than become such cowards.

* * *

People have probably always been, as a general rule, and at any given epoch, less indifferent to the sufferings of animals in some countries than in others, though, as we have said before, their attitude towards living creatures was never or nearly never the ideal one. Among the nations of Antiquity the ancient Egyptians, for instance, and more so the Indians of the Buddhist period seem to have been the kindest. The number of beasts and birds that the former held sacred down to the beginning of the Christian era was perhaps as much an expression of spontaneous love for all living things (including such awe-inspiring ones as crocodiles) as a survival of obsolete totemic beliefs dating back to prehistoric times. And we like to imagine that the wild indignation of that Egyptian crowd, said to have torn a Roman soldier to pieces for

having killed a cat — indignation we understand so well — was roused by a nobler feeling than mere superstitious fear.

But, we repeat, there seems never to have existed a civilization which actually denounced the exploitation of animals, and fully recognized their rights (and even those of plants) for more than a few brief years. King Asoka's efforts to secure the welfare of every living being within his realm, and Harshavardhana's drastic regulations against cruelty to animals give us just rare glimpses of the application by law, on a national scale, of generous principles yet never conceived but by a very few. The same spirit of universal love which inspires them found expression also, centuries before, in King Akhnaton's beautiful hymns to the Sun. But we have no evidence of how far even Akhnaton's closest disciples lived up to it in their everyday lives. Moreover, whatever might have been the atmosphere that prevailed in his immediate surroundings, even in his capital as a whole, during his short reign, we know that very soon after his death nothing was left of his teaching or of its implications.

The fact is that even the most illustrious cultures of the world - including those supposed to be relatively "humane" — are in general sadly devoid of any sense of real consideration for nonhuman suffering, as well as of any serious preoccupation concerning the welfare of nonhuman beings regarded *for their own sake*, and not for what man can get out of them.

We have recalled the story of Enkidu's conversion to social life, which meant the break of all his ties with the beasts of the wilderness, who loved him, and which he had formerly loved. The story belongs to the dawn of history — to legendary times. But feelings towards animals do not seem to become more friendly as years pass. We gather some idea of what they were in the Near East in the twenty-second century B.C. from that famous compilation of laws, with doubtless corrections and additions, known as the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon — a code of laws praised by most historians for its equity. There, as in all the later legislations of neighboring countries that have most probably borrowed from it their essentials, animals are considered as nothing more than the property of their human owners. If, for instance, a man borrowed an ox, and returned it lame or wounded, possibly as a consequence of ill-treatment, he was, according to this code, to make good for the loss he had thus caused *to its owner*; to give him a sum of money proportionate to the damage, or to give him another ox if that damage was irreparable. In other words, injury to an animal was punished, not because it meant in

infliction of suffering upon a sentient creature, but because it implied some material loss to the man who owned and exploited that creature.

The Egyptians themselves, kind as they may have been to our dumb brothers in comparison with other nations, seem never to have reached, as a whole, that widespread consideration for all living beings which such a king as Asoka tried to create among the Indians of a later Antiquity. The famous bas-relief that pictures "a stubborn donkey," in a tomb of the twenty-seventh century B.C., testifies that beasts of burden — which were not sacred to them — were not necessarily treated by the common people, in y those remote days, as mercifully as they would have been in a society governed by the spirit of the far later life-centered teaching of King Akhnaton, or by that of the perhaps much similar original solar philosophy of a few initiates (of immemorial antiquity, and probably already half-forgotten in twenty-seventh century Egypt). The pitiful expression of the beast, with its ears flattened against its head under the thick, threatening stick, makes one regret that no equivalent of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had yet been invented in the world, as far as we know.

Apart from that, everyone knows that the Egyptians in general were meat eaters and fish eaters, and often mighty hunters. Records of successful chases, in which the court scribe has carefully exalted the skill and courage of the King, are common in what has come down to us of their annals. And the short reign of Akhnaton seems to be one of the very few that have not, up till now, yielded any such documents; and that remarkable Pharaoh is one of the rare ones, if not the only one of whom one can say, with Sir Wallis Budge, that "not only was he no warrior" but "he was not even a lover of the chase"[1] — a statement which is fully in keeping with the love of all living things that one admires in his hymns to the glory of the solar Disk.

If a people whose consideration for animals amazed the Greek travelers of classical days was not more thoroughly consistent with the ideal of true, universal love, then what about the others? One would hardly expect much mercy towards all creatures from men who treated their prisoners of war with as much appalling cruelty as the Assyrians often did. And in fact, from the numerous and splendid bas-reliefs that they left, it appears that hunting of big

[1] Sir Wallis Budge: *Tutankhamon, Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism*, edit. 1923, p. 92.

game was, apart from war, the pastime that these ruthless fighters enjoyed the most. The Hebrews, as they are portrayed in the Old Testament of the Bible, seem always to have looked upon beasts as exploitable commodities — potential milk, wool, flesh and labor — if they happened to be of the sort their god had allowed them to eat or given them to use, and hardly more than dirt if they happened to be of the so-called "impure" ones, which they were forbidden to eat or even to touch. They seem to have had, at times, like many primitive people, a strange conception of animals' responsibility. It is written in the Leviticus that "if a man lie with a beast" and "if a woman approach unto any beast and lie down thereto," he or she *and the beast* "shall surely be put to death," as if the unfortunate animal, forced into an unnatural union by a perverse human being, had any voice in the matter or any share in the guilt. This regulation seems all the more unjust that, according to the same lawgiver, a damsel forcibly raped was not to be killed along with the man who had outraged her, for there was in her "no sin worthy of death."[1]

Was the helpless beast considered more responsible than the helpless girl? Or was it to be destroyed as a mere instrument of sin, which would be hardly less irrational? The sad thing is that the spirit of such a legislation has persisted, as Norman Douglas has pointed out,[2] until very recently, among so-called progressive Western races who should have known better.

And at the other end of the Ancient World, no idea of ethical wrong was ever attached, so far as we know, to the slaughter of animals for food or sport, or to other forms of exploitation of them by man, in the books of Confucius and of other wise thinkers, held in reverence by the Chinese; nor were any duties towards them apparently stressed or implied in the teachings of those philosophers. Buddhism alone seems to have actually spread, to some extent, to the countries of the Far East, the idea of the ethical corollary of the belief in the oneness of life, as regards our relation to animals. And its influence in that line appears to have been very slight.

As for the classical Pagan nations that stand as the immediate cultural background of modern Europe — Greece and Rome — there is in their literature, or in the tangible data that reveal their civilization, nothing to indicate that they had any greater respect

[1] Deuteronomy, 22, Verses 25, 26.
[2] Norman Douglas, *How About Europe?*

for animal life than the nations which they looked upon as "barbaric," or that they took any more care than those did to avoid the ill-treatment of beasts of burden, or to make life less miserable for the stray hungry dogs and cats in their streets.

One may, of course, recall the touching episode of the Odyssey in which Ulysses' old dog recognizes him after twenty years of absence and dies happy to have seen him once more. But we have to admit that there are but a very few such accounts of friendship between man and animal in the whole of Greek literature, and that mercy in general — including mercy towards human beings — seems to have found little place both in the Greek and Greco-Roman world, so fascinating in other features. We have to admit that Christianity did owe its triumph as much at least to the kindlier outlook it originally brought with it as to the imperial patronage of Constantine.

* * *

But, as we have said already, that kindlier outlook remained a narrowly man-centered one. Partiality towards the human race as a whole replaced the partiality towards tribe or nation that had prevailed in most of the ancient religions of the world — and in all state religions we know of in Antiquity west of India, save in the short-lived Religion of the Disk. And although, thanks to the new doctrine of Christ's own blood being the only atonement for man's sins, the blood sacrifices of old became obsolete, still living creatures were not spared.

Some substantial progress in that respect might have been realized, if only the Christians had consistently observed that old injunction of Mosaic law according to which cattle should not be slaughtered unless it be brought "unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" to be "offered as an offering unto the Lord, before the tabernacle of the Lord."[1] And there was no reason why they should not have observed it, since Christ himself had declared that he had come to *fulfill* the Jewish law and the prophets, not to destroy them. Had they done so, they logically should have given

[1] "What man soever there be of the house of Israel that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, *blood shall be imputed unto that man*; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people." Leviticus, 17, verses 3 and 4.

up eating meat altogether from the day the one supreme human sacrifice — the one divine sacrifice, as it was in their eyes — had been offered as the ransom for the sins of the world once and for all, rendering all further burnt offerings useless. But — whether prompted by the desire to facilitate the conversion of Pagans, or for any other motive — they did not. And by not doing so, they made cattle-slaughter all the more ghastly by depriving it of the one excuse it has (if that can be called an excuse) in a world given over to "superstition," namely of the religious symbolism formerly attached to it; of its meaning as a sacrifice to the Maker of both man and beast. The places of worship ceased being also places of slaughter. But the idea that slaughter for the sake of food alone —without the slightest idea of sacrifice — was perfectly commendable; that the murder of an animal was no murder at all, and the infliction of pain upon an animal no sin, soon grew into the consciousness of those who looked upon the oblation of the Cross as henceforth the only efficacious one.

That idea, in fact, seems to have spread to the whole world, wherever the old religions of sacrifice were not replaced by any creed which openly and definitely characterizes the murder of animals as a sin. And even there — even in those countries, for instance, where Buddhism is officially prevalent — one cannot unfortunately say that it has not been broadly accepted. The more orthodox may still reject it. But the freethinking, the youthful, the "progressive" seem to include that obnoxious inconsistency within their "reformed" outlook: and the last widespread religion of truly universal mercy seems to have become in their eyes little more than a political badge, an outward sign of newly born nationalism. Even among people expected to be strict Buddhists — the monks of Burma, for instance — a great deal of casuistry plays its part (or played its part until very recently) in matters of diet.

So that we could say that, all over the world, men in general ceased offering sacrifices as their fathers had, but accustomed themselves to the existence of slaughterhouses as to that of a so-called "necessity," and smothered in their hearts, to a still even greater extent than their forefathers, the awareness of a man's link with the rest of living and sentient creatures.

Of course there have always been individuals whose natural, spontaneous love for creatures transcended the general outlook of their contemporaries and coreligionists; people like St. Francis of Assisi, who used to speak of his "brother" the wolf and his "brother" the ass, in the midst of a society and of a Church that

denied an immortal soul to dumb beasts; people like that early follower of the Prophet Mohammed who, rather than disturb a cat a that had gone to sleep upon it, cut off a piece of his mantle so that he might raise himself to his feet and answer the call to prayer, and thus won himself the surname by which he is now broadly known: Abu-Hurairah — "Father of Cats."

Those men half-consciously aspired to some ideal of integral kindness which most of them never succeeded in expressing in all its uncompromising clarity, and which they very seldom lived up to, in *all* walks of life. Brought up in the medieval tradition of Christendom, which regarded a vegetarian diet as "fasting" and could not conceive of merriment apart from flesh eating, kind St. Francis himself — so they say — once vehemently rejected the idea, put forward by one of his monks, of keeping up Christmas Day without meat. And doubtless many other less holy and less well-known persons, among those who have acknowledged the brotherhood of all living creatures, were not more consistent in all they did or said or tolerated without protest.

But along with them there have always appeared, from time to time, an extremely small number of men who actually embodied, both in words and deeds, the ideal of real love towards all life which is the very essence of eternal ethical truth- of love as selfless and as impartial as the warmth and light that our Parent Star sheds indiscriminately over the earthworm and the superman, through the glory of His rays.

In the East, Prince Siddhartha, of the Sakya clan, universally known as the "Awakened One" or the "Enlightened One" — the Buddha — stands out as the most glorious of such men. Touching legends preserved in the "Jataka" — the history of the Buddha's previous lives, often as fantastic as any fairy tale as to its actual contents, but true to his spirit from one end to the other, - go to show in him, from life to life, the predestined Helper of all creatures; the Loving One, whose irresistible compassion pervades the whole scheme of nature, and manifests itself, age after age, without ceasing. As an animal, he sacrificed himself to save other animals. As an evolved human being — an ascetic in the forest — he gladly gave his own body to feed a hungry tigress. And his heart was filled with tenderness for her and for all suffering creation, and his face beamed with divine joy — says the author of this beautiful story — as he who was one day to become the Blessed One felt the famishing beast tear his flesh and lap his blood, inviting her young ones to take their share of the easy prey.

And in spite of the deplorable decay of his religion in the hands of a self-seeking clergy and of an apathetic laity — decay which every valuable doctrine has experienced as the ransom of worldwide success, and which he himself had foretold-one can say that none of the great teachers of the world has contributed more than he did to the diffusion of the belief in the oneness of Life and in the brotherhood of all living creatures, as well as of the consciousness of the duties that this belief implies.

Asia has certainly gone a very long way down the road of moral abasement and religious death from the time the Community of monks, intended to be the nucleus of a better world — the "gangha," in which the Master had put his hope — started to deserve the bitter criticism of its bitterest Hindu detractors. But, still today, the spark remains alive — the flame of true love, kindled more than twenty-five centuries ago by the Blessed One, lingers both in the tradition of the Hindus and in that of the nations that boast of having accepted Buddhism as one of their state religions. However enfeebled, however smoldering, it is there. It just lingers — more in the consciousness of the humble, illiterate masses of India in particular and of East Asia in general; of those millions of simple-hearted folk, apathetic it is true, but not yet irredeemably hardened or defiled — not yet rendered unteachable — rather than in that of the so-called "progressive" elements, most often the stubborn products of a false education, not enlightened enough to find the truth for themselves and too conceited to accept it from anywhere but from the textbooks which their foreign training has taught them to regard as infallible. It lingers. To undertake to revive it would mean a tremendous task, yet not an altogether impossible one. The tradition is there. The idea of the brotherhood of all living creatures is intimately linked, in it, with the unforgettable figure of Asia's greatest son. And one is amazed at the power of love that must have radiated from the superman who managed to leave, for so long, even a faint mark of his passage upon the life, thought and feelings of a whole continent.

Mahavira, the founder of the Jain sect, and the twenty-fourth of the "tirthankaras," or perfect human beings who, according to the belief of that sect, succeeded one another on earth before him, was apparently another of those rare men whose love for creatures has left its impression upon the tradition of a living community; so were, undoubtedly, long before his time, the authors of some of the Upanishads, in which the doctrine of the oneness of all life is

already to be found, and the essence of Buddhist morality, to some extent, already implied, although the *ontological* conception behind these be quite different. While, in later days, India's immortal Asoka, and other Buddhist rulers, patrons of their faith in and outside India (Prince Shotoku, for instance, in sixth and seventh century Japan) and men like Harshavardhana, deeply influenced by Buddhism without however having been exclusive followers of the Eightfold Path, and probably also thoroughly loving people of lesser rank, of whom history does not speak, honored Asia, upholding there, to an extent perhaps nowhere ever equaled on so broad a scale, the creed of mercy towards animals — and even plants as far as possible — as well as towards human beings.

And the little real sympathy for animals that might still be found today, in the countries of Buddhist civilization and in India herself — in spite of the downright wickedness of a number of people and of the cruel indifference of nearly all the rest — has been and is being encouraged by the lingering influence of those exceptional men whom we have just mentioned.

* * *

In what can broadly be called "the West," that is to say, in Europe as well as in the countries of which the ancient history and culture lie at the background of hers — the nations of classical and biblical Antiquity — and in those that can be looked upon, on the contrary, as her offspring — modern America and Australia — no man has yet risen whose blessed influence upon his time and upon posterity can be compared, as regards kindness to animals, to that exercised by the Buddha or his powerful disciples in the East.

That does not mean that the Westerners as a whole feel less sympathetically towards our subhuman brothers than the average people of India or of the Buddhist countries do; or that they are more callous about animal life, more indifferent to the suffering of beasts. Nor does it mean that none of those saintly beings, embodiment of true universal love, was ever born west of the Persian Gulf. We have already tried to show that cruelty and kindness are of all lands and of all times, just taking different expression in different surroundings. And exceptional men who feel intensely the beauty and sacredness of all life as such; who, no doubt, love their pets if they have any, and may possibly prefer certain animal species to others, but who, at the same time, realize that all living creatures are their brothers, and who love them spontaneously and consistently; such men, we say, surely do and

always did appear beyond the sphere of influence both of Buddhism and of broader Hinduism. And some of them cannot but be looked upon as lights of truth of the very first magnitude, shining, just as those of the faraway Eastern horizon, in the long night of selfish ignorance, cowardice and callousness that still envelops the earth.

In this present-day, nightmarish world,[1] — the outcome of the victory of the Dark Powers — we cannot, unfortunately, say a single word to the glory of the greatest of all Western men of love and of vision; of the inspired Prophet (for *that* is what he was) who fought for the reinstallation of a world order in tune with the divine order of nature: a world order in which beautiful healthy beasts had rights, while decadent men had none. Whatever we could say would be bitterly held against us and our brothers in faith, and against the very cause of Life which we intend to serve. Those who know will understand us without our mentioning the godlike leader's name. Those who do not know yet, will know one day (if they have at all any wits) and admit that we were right, and place the one great vegetarian ruler the West has ever had ahead of those most uncompromising expounders of the life-centered outlook who are, at the same time, men of action.

One of the most remarkable of such torchbearers in *relatively* recent times, — of whom we *can* speak — seems to have been that all-round genius of the Renaissance, upholder of all that was eternal in the Christian and Pagan cultures alike, whom neither traditional Christianity nor resurrected Hellenism could satisfy, and whose work, thought and life reveal him to have been a man in tune with cosmic Reality: Leonardo da Vinci. His biographers tell us that he consistently loved all that lived, not only abstaining from eating flesh, but doing also his best to help any distressed creature he came across individually. When yet a child he is said to have fought to defend a mole, tortured by other children, and suffered an unjust punishment for having done so. And the comments with which he recalls that incident, many years later in his diary, show that he abode all his life by the natural, true ethics of his childhood. And his greatness in that respect appears all the more when one thinks of the appalling atrocities committed upon animals in the name of scientific research in da Vinci's days, and later on, by representatives of the "New Thought" who entirely lacked his universal love — when one thinks, for instance, of the process by

[1] This book was written in 1945-46.

which Azelli discovered the phenomenon of digestion in the bare intestines of a live, opened dog — or when one recalls the revolting attitude of other well-known men towards creatures, such as that of Descartes and Malebranche, philosophical forerunners and accomplices of all the crimes perpetrated on beasts for the sake of "knowledge" (or rather scientific information) in our times.

We can think of no prominent figure of the first fifteen centuries of Christian history who could stand in parallel with the great Italian s artist for a life of consistent and active kindness towards all sentient beings and an intelligent understanding of the value of any living thing.

We do not know — and no one can boast of knowing on a basis of serious evidence — whether the religious teacher whose personality dominates all those centuries and the whole civilization of Europe as we see it, the *historic* Jesus, was such a person or not. All one can say of him is to be found in the four gospels — a selection, among many others, of accounts of his life put down in writing, in their present form, more than a hundred and fifty years after he had died, to say the least. As we have remarked in a previous chapter, the prophet who occupies the center of those fascinating stories does not appear at all to be a consistent lover of all the living, impartially. Most of his average modern English followers could match him — and beat him — in that respect. We would like to believe that the actual prophet of Nazareth was more in tune with the spirit of integral love than one can gather at first sight from the accounts which his admirers have handed down to us; we would like to think that the worker of wonders who appears in the story of the draught of fishes, and in that of the Gadarene swine or of the barren fig tree, is but an unhappy distortion of him, or a personage altogether alien to him, whose name has been confused with his; or that he himself acts in those stories but "symbolically." But we have unfortunately no solid grounds to do so.

One has, anyhow, to go back to the time of Jesus — first century A.D. — to End a towering figure of undeniable historicity whose philosophy implied the respect of all life and kindness to animals as well as to people, and whose life impressed his biographers sufficiently for them to tell us that it was in keeping with his high ideals. This man, little known to the modern public in general, is the neo-Pythagorean sage Apollonius of Tyana, whom some authors have, in a polemical spirit, characterized as "the Pagan Christ." The fact that, great as he was, he was not an isolated

ideologist without a tradition and without a following, but the perfect embodiment of the philosophy of a sect; the master, in his days, of a school of thought and ethics that prided itself in tracing its existence to Pythagoras himself, seven hundred years before him — of a sect, also, that did not die with him — makes him, historically, all the more important.

We know that he was not merely acquainted with the main tenets of Eastern thought, as all neo-Pythagoreans were, but that he had travelled in India and learnt there, thoroughly, from experienced ascetics, further secrets of the difficult art known as *yoga* — the control of the mind through that of the body, especially of the breath. He was, like many of those who practice that art, vowed to celibacy. And though the love of all creatures, revealed in many an episode of his life, was probably an inborn trait of his character, as with other truly great souls, one might imagine that his direct contact with Buddhism and Hinduism at a time when those thought-systems were in their full vigor, would have strongly encouraged him in his natural trend, given a philosophical justification to his spontaneous ethical tendencies, and buttressing his own intuition of truth in the light of that of a whole civilization. And when one reads of that Greek sage's refusal to witness a blood sacrifice[1] or to depart from his strict vegetarian diet; and when one realized that his spirit was not only that of a particular individual but also, as we have said, that of a school, one might well wonder whether Western civilization itself would not have taken a nobler turn — recognizing, long ago, in practice as well as theory, the right of all living beings — if only Indian thought, and especially Buddhist thought, had been able to play in its formation the direct part played by Christianity. It would have, then, it is true, experienced all the drawbacks of early Christian asceticism, and that, perhaps, on a magnified scale. But who knows how far the militant Western races would finally have carried the duty of mercy towards all living creatures, had they accepted it in the days of Apollonius of Tyana, as a consequence of the belief in the oneness of life, along with the Hellenic elements of their growing culture? — in other words, had the foundation of their culture been Indo-hellenic instead of Judeo-hellenic; had the "Pagan Christ" and the thinkers of his school been able to exercise upon them an influence comparable to that of the Galilean Messiah and his disciples? Perhaps they would have been,

[1] Mario Meunier, Apollonius de Tyane.

in the long run, more consistent than the average Eastern followers of life-centered creeds. Who knows?

It is useless to speak of what *could have been* under different circumstances. But the fact remains that the one important tradition of truly universal kindness, if any, in western Antiquity; the one in which animal slaughter and meat eating were definitely held in abomination — the Pythagorean, continued for some time, even during the Christian era, by the neo-Pythagorean — was beyond doubt influenced by thought currents from India. It would seem that it was more and more so; or at least we know with more and more certainty that it was so, as we pass from Pythagoras himself, whose connections with the East are vague, though obvious, to the later thinkers who took pride in a tradition that bears his name, in particular, to that most indebted of them all to the East: Apollonius of Tyana.

* * *

We have just mentioned Pythagoras. Little can be said with certainty about his life. One can only infer, from some of the tenets of his philosophy — from the strict vegetarian diet which his disciples observed, and for their belief in the dogma of birth and rebirth, probably borrowed from the East — that he was one of the rare great teachers born west of India whose ethical outlook was centered neither around any arbitrarily "chosen" human community (as was that of the Hebrews) nor around "man," but decidedly around life as such. We do not know whether he was or was not the first in Greece to have had that outlook, but he surely seems to be the first in the Western world, as we have defined it, to have been able to create a lasting tradition of respect for animal life, if not on a broad scale, at least among a small circle of close followers.

So far as we know, the only great thinker before him whose creed logically implied love and active kindness towards all creatures is that extraordinary young king of Egypt in the early fourteenth century B.C., of whom a little has already been said in a previous chapter: Akhnaton, the Founder of the Religion of the Disk.[1]

His beautiful solar cult, the most rational that was ever conceived — a religion that could have been invented to satisfy the scientific conceptions of our own age, as Sir Flinders Petrie has remarked — appears to be at the same time the one state religion preached west of India that was centered around life (and not man)

[1] See Chapter III, p. 24 and following.

and that revealed a love as truly universal as did the great Asiatic religions of mercy. The fact is all the more striking as, to the extent it is possible to ascertain such a thing in the present state of historical investigation, the Religion of the Disk was evolved independently of foreign influences. The Asiatic religions of mercy are indeed, here, out of question, since the oldest of them — Buddhism — came into existence some nearly nine hundred years after Akhnaton. And Vedic Hinduism-the only Indian cult akin in some of its aspects to that of the "Heat-and-Light-within-the-Disk," and the only one as old as or older than it — cannot be actually proved to have had any connection with it. Moreover, the warlike moral outlook of the Vedic Indians could not but be definitely different from Akhnaton's, although their conception of the universe might have been more or less the same as his.

The youthful seer stands therefore as the first recorded teacher west of India— -and perhaps the first in the world — to have had a fully clear consciousness of the supreme beauty of life in all sentient creatures, from the godlike man that he himself was down to plants, and to have loved it in each one of them, impartially, as the wording and the general tone of his hymns show beyond doubt.

His state religion lasted hardly any longer than his own short reign. And no school of thought comparable to the Pythagorean and neo-Pythagorean — let alone to the mighty followings of the later successful creeds — survived his historic attempt to spread the truth. Nor is it possible, by any stretch of imagination, to point out be it even a vague filiation between that particular aspect of his joyous, life-centered Teaching which we have just recalled, and one or more than one of the less ancient religions that have left their mark upon human consciousness. Though soon distorted, the idea of the oneness of God and brotherhood of man, doubtless implied in his teaching, reached posterity and lived in other Western creeds. His idea of the oneness of Life and brotherhood of all creatures did not. And he stands by himself, in that respect as in so many others — one of the very first, if not *the* first of those "lights in the darkness," as we have characterized the few forerunners of a better world: of a world in which one would help all creatures to live in health and to enjoy the sunshine.

* * *

It is not until our own times that the idea that we have duties towards living beings other than human has begun to dawn upon the minds not only of one or two exceptional men, but of small groups of average people, in certain countries at least, and that,

irrespectively of the man-centered or life-centered or nation-centered creeds which those people might profess. It is not until our own times that torchbearers of the old truth known to the mythical Enkidu before the perversion of these feelings (and to all good people, before the ravages of a hateful education upon their deeper conscience) can speak in public of the rights of all the living. It is not until our own times, we repeat, that a champion of the cause of exploited animals such as Bernard Shaw, can write his immortal impeachments of human wickedness, cowardice and stupidity — the preface to his "Doctor's Dilemma" and the chapter on Pavlov's atrocities in a more recent work — and win, along with the fanatical opposition of many, the wholehearted, intelligent support of a number of Englishmen, Germans, Scandinavians and Americans, and of a handful of individuals in the rest of the world. It is not until our own times that, in a few countries at least, some people, in spite of all the horrors which they still tolerate in the name of food, sport, dress, scientific research and therapy, have not remained, like others, as callous as downright savages. It is not until our own times that laws are beginning to be made — not merely by absolute rulers, ages in advance of their people, but by average folk elected by other average folk as members of legislative bodies — in order to protect animals against man *on moral grounds*. It is not until today that actual agitation in support of the rights of animals is becoming possible, in certain countries at least.

Man's evolution seems indeed to have been very slow, in that respect. We cannot but experience a sad amazement when we contrast man's progress in technical matters as well as in purely abstract pursuits with his stagnation on an appallingly low level of love; when we think, for instance, of men acquainted with the nature of the stars or with the intimate texture of atoms feeding on sentient creatures' flesh like the coarsest and most ignorant of their hunting ancestors of paleolithic: times. And we cannot but marvel all the more at the superiority of the few who, from age to age, have transcended the old law of the jungle "right is might," common to all carnivorous beasts, and looked upon all living nature as a thing of beauty to be loved — not just an "inferior form of life" to be exploited in the interest of the more cunning human species.

We can only hope that the belief in the existence of dumb creatures' rights, which seems to be making its way into the hearts of a slowly growing number of our contemporaries, will continue to spread, and that we might be witnessing, in that sincere love of

animals and even plants shared to-day, in a few countries, by more average men than ever before (though still far too few), the dawn of a new era; the first sign of the beginning of a better world, which is to take shape no one can foretell when, nor after what further upheavals.

It remains to examine what should be done to hasten that really desirable change.

CHAPTER VI

Diet, Dress, Amusement and Hard Work

We have already remarked that there are meat eaters who would go out of their way to help an animal, and vegetarians who would just do nothing — who are even in the habit of ill-treating animals, or who neglect them. Illogical as this may seem, it is a fact. Vegetarianism — unless it be that conscious, purposeful, determined refusal to encourage the industry of death, which one so rarely comes across in its full, uncompromising vigor-is anything but a reliable certificate of kindness towards all sentient creatures.

Yet, though many sincere lovers of animals in the meat-eating countries may not be sufficiently aware of it, there is, undoubtedly, a contradiction in feeding on flesh when one has realized the ties of brotherhood that bind us to all life — especially to the warm-blooded beasts, so similar to ourselves in their expression of physical pain-and when one has felt what a ghastly thing the slaughter of animals is. Even if it could be proved that more than one of the most genuine upholders of life-centered philosophies has done so, it would not in the least make it less logical. It would only prove that some great people are less consistent with the spirit of their own teachings than one would expect them to be — a sad, but by no means astounding acknowledgement of human deceitfulness.

We think one can easily dismiss the foolish argument of those who say that “animals would overrun the world and eat us, if nobody ate them.” If that were so, then man should have been “overrun” and extinct long ago, for the number of animal species he actually eats is very limited. How is it that the other species, free to multiply *ad infinitum*, have allowed him to live until now?

A more stupid statement than the one just quoted can hardly be made, since it is precisely the meekest, the most defenceless and the most inoffensive animals — oxen, sheep, goats and pigs — which are daily sacrifices to man's gluttonous greed in the public slaughterhouses, not wild boars, not bears, not poisonous snakes, not man-eating tigers. Moreover, in the present state of affairs, in which the edible species have mostly been domesticated, the birth rate among those animals depends entirely upon man. In fact, the males and females are purposely brought together and made to have young ones in order that man may not miss his regular supply of tender flesh — a most revolting process of exploitation, if one only comes to think of it. If they were left to themselves, there is little chance that their number would increase as rapidly. In the rare regions where they are still wild, carnivorous beasts of a larger size would prevent their increase by preying on them. In the other areas of the globe, where human intelligence regulates all it likes, there would be no need for them to multiply beyond certain limits — no need for them to multiply at all, in fact, save as far as it is necessary to keep their species alive; for man, once he gave up the sickening idea of bringing up young animals for the butcher, would surely not allow the domesticated males and females to meet but at sufficiently rare intervals.

Anyone having a minimum of sensitiveness and refinement will admit that it is a horrible action to prompt females of any species to bear young ones just for slaughter. And the most pathetic side of the question is that, as we have remarked in another chapter, numbers of meat eaters, at least in England, Germany and America — and surely elsewhere too — seem to love the beauty of a kid, of a calf or of a lamb frisking about in a meadow. The sight of it (or of any beast, among those classified as "edible") does not urge them, personally, to go and stick a knife into its throat, as it would urge a hungry tiger to spring upon it and tear it to pieces. And yet they eat a slice of cold veal or a slice of roasted lamb without the slightest remorse — as though it were a slice of bread and jam; while to us, who have never done such a thing, this seems just as repulsive as eating a roasted baby. And we wonder how it is that people who call their children "my dear little lamb" do not feel as we do about meat in general, mutton in particular. A matter of habit we suppose. The cannibals must be feeling the same about fattened human flesh. And why would they not?

But our opponents come forth with another argument to defend meat eating and to distinguish it from cannibalism. They concede

that, as one ponders over it, it does appear to be a cruel practice. But, they add: "what can be done? Is not nature herself cruel through and through? Does not one animal species prey upon another? The only thing beasts do not do is to prey upon their own species; tigers do not eat other tigers, nor wolves other wolves; cannibalism, therefore, is 'unnatural,' while meat eating is natural. If the carnivorous kings of the jungle are entitled to kill and eat cows, sheep and goats, is not man — the king of creation — to enjoy the same right as they? Nature has provided him with teeth obviously intended to tear flesh, and his body needs proteins. He cannot work hard, physically, at least in a cold climate, without eating meat or cooking his vegetables in animal fats. Doubtless he should kill his victims as 'humanely' as possible. But somebody has to kill them, and slaughterhouses are a necessary evil."

Such series of statements one hears *ad nauseam* each time one tries to argue with meat eaters in the name of the right of animals to live. And how it is that more people, of those who profess to think rationally, do not seem to be aware of the fallacies they cover, we do not understand. Surely animals prey upon one another, in the wild and even in the domesticated state. The wolf eats the lamb; the tiger the antelope; big fishes eat smaller ones, and an ordinary domestic cat, carnivorous by nature, does not really thrive unless one gives him meat, or preferably fish. Quite a number of species also feed solely upon the vegetable world — upon grass, leaves or fruit. But one thing is certain, and this is that the carnivorous species, in their natural state, at least, do not eat anything else but flesh (or fish), while the herbivorous ones eat no flesh at all, not even when domesticated — not even when famishing. And the latter are far more uncompromising than the former. Some carnivorous animals, under certain conditions, and for a certain time, can be brought to some extent to accept a different diet. A starving cat, for instance, will eat boiled rice or dry bread rather than nothing — though of course he would prefer a little milk or gravy with it. On the contrary, a starving cow or sheep would die before anyone could get it to eat a piece of meat. Man, at present, in most countries, eats both vegetables and flesh; and he tries to justify himself by bringing the example of "nature" into the argument. If, however, he wished to follow that example consistently, he would have to become either decidedly carnivorous or decidedly vegetarian. He refuses, on the ground that he is a civilized creature and likes variety — just as much as a pet dog that enjoys potato soup along with meat and bones. But we

cannot help remarking that the dog, even after centuries of contact, with "civilization" have perverted his tastes, would still much rather have the meat alone, provided there were enough of it to fill his stomach; while any man would soon feel disgusted if he had to live on nothing but meat, without bread, without potatoes, without rice, without anything — as really carnivorous animals would enjoy doing. And why? The answer is easy: the dog — and still more the cat — is carnivorous by nature; man is not, whatever he may say. It is not his "nature" to eat meat. It is an acquired taste — acquired, most probably, many millenniums ago, perhaps under the pressure of abnormal circumstances, and kept ever since; yet a taste that is not constitutionally, irredeemably inherent in human nature.

* * *

But meat eaters are not content with that observation. "All right," they say, "the taste for flesh is, in man, an acquired one. What difference does it make? It has been prevalent for such a long time that it has become, in us, a second nature. It would be very difficult to do away with it. Moreover, since meat is good for our health and since it can be obtained, why should we go without it? What of it if man be the only living species that enjoys meat and vegetables alike? He represents the superior species, nobody can deny that. Should he not allot himself the right to kill and eat, as all flesh-eating species do?"

It is on that point that we differ fundamentally from those who, openly or not, profess in fact a man-centered creed. We admit with them that man is the cleverest creature of which we know on this earth. But we believe that as long as he uses his wits just for the same purpose as the rest of the living — that is to say, merely for his own personal survival or for that of his species; for his own welfare and for that of other men (be his conception of "welfare" far more comprehensive than that of any beast) — he is in no way different from them by nature. A degree cleverer, as we have said, of course. But, apart from that, an animal like any other. His only real superiority lies, in our eyes, in the fact that he can, and sometimes does consider, beyond and even against his own interest and that of his kind, the welfare of living creatures of any sort. A dog (especially if it be hungry) will not share its food with a hungry cat, or even with another dog. A hungry horse will not share its food with a hungry cow or goat. A bee or an ant will work for the welfare of the beehive or of the community of ants without bothering whether living beings of other species need any help or

not. A man who lives just for himself and his family is no better than a clever dog. Rather worse, for he wastes human intelligence on as narrow a purpose as any beast would choose to serve. A man who is merely conscious of his duties towards human society is no better than an ant, a bee, at the most a social monkey. Rather worse: for these cannot think or feel beyond their kind, while a man should be able to do so. Our opponents tell us that most of the "superior men" — great warriors, great artists, great thinkers, great rulers — from the "god-like heroes" of the Bronze Age down to the majority of the leading creative scientists of today, were and still are flesh eaters. That remark is of little weight in the present controversy. It only proves that there have always been exceptionally brilliant specimens of the animal-like human species. We knew that long ago, just as we know that there are prize dogs and exceptionally beautiful tigers and serpents. But that means nothing, save that nature works wonders on all levels. A meat eating thinker may be a fine specimen at *his level*. We cannot, however, compare him with Pythagoras or with the Buddha, — or, by the way, with the greatest European leader of all times; the most misunderstood among makers of history — who belong to a higher level altogether, any more than we can compare an outstanding cannibal with an equally intelligent man of a more evolved type. In our eyes, that man alone is really the specimen of *a higher species* who, beyond his own welfare and beyond the welfare of man in general, looks, in the daily routine of his practical life, to the welfare of all living creatures — of his pets, surely; but also of all cattle, of all wild beasts, of birds and fishes, insects and plants, *to the extent of his power*.

Whether it be true or fictitious, the beautiful story of the Buddha giving up his own body to feed a famishing tigress, in one of his former lives, is, to us, the story that illustrates the only true, unmistakable superiority of man: man's power to love *all creatures* (not merely his human neighbors) as himself. So that the statement: "The tiger eats meat; why should not I, who am worth more than the tiger?" does not appear to us as merely foolish but also as insulting to the human race. It is precisely because I am "better than the tiger" that I cannot allow myself to feed on other sentient creatures' flesh, as he does. (Moreover, the tiger has the excuse of not being able to live without meat, while a human being can well live on other items of food — in spite of what doctors and "scientists," irredeemably steeped in the man-centered ideology of the civilization that trained them, may say).

If man really wishes to be a "superior species," he has to give up the habit of acting as the "inferior" ones do. And if he cherishes the habit to the extent that he does not wish to give it up, then he must stop claiming "superiority" on any other grounds but those of the undeniable might that his brains give him, and openly admit that he believes might to be right. And if might be "right" when it determines the relation of the master species to the dumb creatures that have not the wits to become organized and to defend themselves against it, then surely it cannot but be "right" also when it determines the relation of the stronger, more intelligent or better organized and better equipped human groups to the weaker, lazier, poorer, less well-organized and less well-equipped ones. We know of nothing more painfully ridiculous than a man who criticizes those who have sacrificed or who are ready to sacrifice men to their dreams of racial, national or personal domination, and who, himself, a moment later, defends scientific experimentation upon animals on the ground that it may ultimately "help to save children;" or who supports meat eating on the ground that "man's body needs proteins." He is just in the position of the pot that calls the kettle black — and in this case, I am afraid, a kettle far less smoky and far less smutty than itself.

We neither deny the existence of human groups (races or nations) in which one finds a far greater proportion of superior individuals than in others, nor say that an average man and an average pig are just the same to us. But we say that, as one of the marks of nobility in superior man is to treat with generosity the weaker than himself — "may be kind, also," says Nietzsche of his "hero"; "may kindness be his supreme victory over himself" — so, if the ordinary man be really the specimen of a superior species, let him prove it by helping the beasts to live and enjoy the sunshine, not by killing them or exploiting them for his own advantage. He is not justified in eating meat "because the tiger does too." He is not a tiger. He is expected to be a man. He possesses, at least in the general shape of his body, something in common with the truly great Ones, lovers of all that lives. He is to strive to live up to their example, not to imitate that of the beautiful but less evolved carnivorous beasts of the forest that do not — and by nature *cannot* — know better. Far from becoming defendable for the fact of man being "a higher species," meat-eating, — along with all forms of exploitation of animals — is condemned by it.

Only an out-and-out believer in the old dogma that "might is right" — a man who supports and welcomes the idea of a world of

eternal strife among nations and even among individuals — can logically be a meat eater. And there is indeed no reason why such a man should not also eat human flesh; children's flesh at least, for he could then find, in the jungle, useful precedents of beasts that occasionally eat the young of their own kind, and his use of force would remain "natural." And we would hold an individual of that description in far greater esteem than any of those who advocate the law of the jungle in their relations with animals but refuse to apply it also in their dealings with other men.

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The next thing the meat eaters do is to accept with us, for the sake of argument, the fundamental truth of the unity of all life, and then to point out to us that the vegetables which we eat are also living creatures. "Why should we eat them? They are, if this be possible, even more innocent and defenseless than any lamb or calf can be. They suffer, in their way, though we need some scientifically devised index to detect their reaction to the tearing or cutting of their fibers, or to overheating. But from the fact that they do not show signs of pain perceptible to our senses, must we hasten to conclude that they are incapable of feeling pains at all? Would we not, by doing so, fall into an even greater inconsistency than those who would be sick at the sight of what goes on in a slaughterhouse, but who still see no harm in eating meat, provided they do not witness the death struggle of the animals? Suffering, after all, in this world, has to be. We must eat something. Every living creature must eat something, be it flesh or be it green leaves. And since there is only a 'difference of degree' between killing a lamb and uprooting a potato, why bother so much about either? Let's eat anything that comes, and keep our energy for the service of a better cause."

This is the final attitude of those who accept the ghastly industry of death as a matter of course, at least as long as it does not involve the death of human beings. Logically, we would have hardly anything to reply, if only those people did not acquire sudden scruples wherever their own kind is concerned; if only, that is to say, they did not shudder at the idea of a regular, large-scale organized slaughter of human beings also, in special places, and of a commercialized distribution of human flesh to be boiled or roasted in private kitchens, cooked in pies, or sliced and put between two pieces of bread and butter, for sandwiches. Why not, indeed, if it be all but a mere "difference of degree," *and if differences of degree*

do not matter? If it be "just the same," ultimately, to cut an animal's throat and to pluck a cauliflower, then surely it must be all the more so to cut a baby's throat, or a lamb's. (We speak of babies because we remember that "in nature" carnivorous animals, especially felines, do sometimes eat the young ones of their species, but not the old ones. And we know how seriously our meat-eating friends insist on being "natural.") The only difficulty would be practical, not ethical. It would arise from the fact that the baby has parents endowed with understanding and with the power to protest; parents who would not tolerate the slaughterhouses to claim any percentage of their progeny, and who would create trouble — while the poor mother cow and the mother goat and the mother-sheep do not find out why their young ones are taken away from them, unless they happen to be themselves sold to the same butcher, and would anyhow be powerless to protest even if they were conscious of their horrible fate.

We are the first to admit that differences of consciousness from one sphere of nature to another, and from one species to another within the same sphere, can probably be reduced to differences in *degree*. We know, as well as our meat-eating opponents do, about the study which sir Jagadish Bose made of the sensitiveness of plants to various excitements, and the conclusions he reached; moreover, we believed that there is probably some sort of dim consciousness prevailing throughout the mineral world also. All through the evolutional scale of which we know, from the most apparently inert mineral to the superman, it seems possible, even plausible, to see nothing but slowly increasing differences of degree. But to us differences of degree have their importance. They have indeed, also in the eyes of the meat eaters; otherwise all those who, among the latter, no longer cling to the belief that there is a difference of nature, *not* merely of degree, between man and animal, would see no harm in eating human flesh. As for the others — those who do share that belief — we pity their poor knowledge of human weakness; but at the same time we say that, if as they think there really be a difference of nature between a child and a calf, just because the one can speak and perhaps argue, while the other cannot, then there certainly is a difference at least as considerable, if not much more so, between a calf and a potato. The former can move, the latter cannot. The former can and does obviously express pleasure and pain in a manner easy to detect even at our scale of vision. The latter cannot. The former has a nervous system; the latter has not.

So that, whatever be the difference between man and animal (be it a difference of nature or, as we believe, merely of degree in intricate organization) there is a still far more striking difference between an evolved animal and a plant. The plant, even if it feels (as we believe it does, to some extent) does not give us marks of its pain, already obvious at our ordinary scale, as an animal would. And it is at our ordinary scale that we live and act. It appears to us as most sinister casuistry to take advantage of the knowledge we have acquired of the sensitiveness of plants to justify age-old horrible human customs, and to start saying that, since we cannot help eating potatoes, wheat and rice (for we must eat something) we may as well, while we are about it, kill calves and oxen, sheep, goats and pigs, and feed on their flesh. It is just blinding ourselves to our own common sense; to our elementary power of discrimination and sense of proportion. Anybody, whose sophistry has not completely obliterated his or her natural sensitiveness, will admit that the death-struggle of a sheep, goat, calf or pig, is undeniably more repulsive a sight than the uprooting of a potato-plant. "Yes, it is so," retort our casuists, "but merely *at our scale*; we do not *see* the death-struggle of the potato plant." It may be so. But as for all practical purposes it is "at our scale" that we live and act in the world, we cannot dismiss the fact. It is only natural that we should first put an end to whatever appears to be obvious cruelty, even at our gross and imperfect scale, before going into more subtle considerations.

If it were possible to live on water and air, or at least on ripe fruit fallen by itself from the trees, we would be the first to condemn the practice of growing rice or wheat in order to eat it. We would gladly welcome the idea of a better humanity — far reduced in numbers, far improved in quality — living on ripe fruits and water alone, in the warmer regions of a beautiful forest-clad earth. That vision seems very remote. But even as things stand today, *it is possible* to live without meat, be it in a cold climate. We know it from personal experience. We know it from the experience of other life-long vegetarians who were born and bred and lived all their lives beyond the fiftieth degree of latitude. Those who deny the fact show ignorance, or lie willfully. While it is not possible to live long on water and air, save for a very small number of *yogis*; and it is hardly possible to live on ripe fruits alone, save in the warmer regions of the globe. Compelled as we are to take life in order to live, we would therefore be content with taking that of the creatures which, at least at our scale of vision, give no sign of suffering: plants; of

the creatures which compared with other possible preys, seem to have the faintest degree of consciousness. Our opponents say: “We should not eat one another while cattle is available.” We say: “it is a crime to eat cattle while it is possible to live on vegetable food-stuffs.” And the flesh of any animal is as much abomination to us as human flesh is to most people.

* * *

The next question is: “What about eggs? What about milk and the products derived from milk-butter and cheese, etc.?”

An Indian vegetarian would rank eggs straight away along with meat, and refuse to eat a cake that contains any. Are they not potential birds? A thorough Jain “ahimshavadi” — one who tries to be “harmless” — would look upon the act of breaking a fecundated egg to make an omelette in the same light as many a European Christian (especially a Catholic) would judge that of killing a human germ, or a human foetus, in the process of birth control or actual abortion. Moreover, eggs are supposed to have “a heating effect” upon the body, just as meat (and certain vegetables like onions, and garlic) would have; an effect little desirable from the standpoint of those who regulate their diet in order that it may help them to live as ascetic a life as possible. And, as we have remarked in the beginning, the majority of the Indians who discard meat belong to that category, either by personal inclination or by family tradition.

To us, who are vegetarians simply to avoid being responsible for the suffering and death of conscious beings, not in view of our own spiritual progress, or of our own salvation, there appears to be a great difference between breaking an egg and killing a duck or a hen. The egg is alive and, if timely hatched, will become a bird that will chirp and run about and be glad to live. But just now, in the meantime — like the vegetable, which is also alive — it gives us, at least at our scale of vision, no signs of any consciousness whatsoever. The bird that has come out of the egg is happy to see the daylight; it expresses pleasure and pain. The potential bird does not know yet how beautiful life is and, if the egg be boiled or broken, will never know. It is a pity, we admit. Yet, if what we really wish to avoid by abstaining from flesh is less the destruction of individual life, at any stage of consciousness, than the infliction of pain upon a sentient creature, and the fact of depriving that creature of the joy of seeing the daylight — of the pleasure of being alive — then we must admit, also, that there is a great difference between killing the egg and killing an animal or a man. We would

even say that we believe it far better to eat eggs than to allow them to be hatched and to grow into chickens and ducklings, in all countries where the fate of any chicken or duckling, which is out of the vegetarians' control, is to end its life under a kitchen knife. We do not advocate the eating of fecundated eggs, or the destruction of any embryo, if it can be avoided. We would far prefer seeing to it that no embryo comes into existence unless a happy life can be secured for the individual it potentially contains — bird, beast or human being. But we cannot, from our point of view — which is the welfare of the "eaten," not that of the "eater" alone — see the breaking or boiling of an egg, and the murder of an obviously sensitive quadruped, bird, fish or crab, in the same light.

As for milk, it involves other problems, and we would be inclined to condemn the consumption of it, in certain parts of the world at least, far more uncompromisingly than that of eggs. Any lover of animals, even any moderately kind person, who has lived in the larger towns of India, will at once understand what we mean. There, we have seen skeleton —like young calves hardly able to stand upon their feet, tottering along behind their mothers from house to house; we have seen them gaze at the good rich food which nature provided *for them* — not for man — being milked out into a pail at every doorstep in front of which they stopped. A tightly-fitting muzzle encircled their mouths, so that they could not suck the cow, who turned back her head and tenderly licked them from time to time; and they got a hard blow or a kick from the milkman whenever they were caught trying, in spite of all precautions, to bring their hungry lips near the maternal breast. And the milkmen were supposed to be Hindus — believers in the sacred unity of all life, in theory at least. And the housewives who bought that stolen milk, that product of days and days of agony, and carried it in for themselves and for their children, in front of the famishing calf and of its sad-eyed mother, were Hindus too, who regard the cow as holy! —shame upon them and upon all men and women who tolerate any form of cruelty without a word of protest; nay, who are willing to take advantage of it!

We believe that to drink milk, or to eat products derived from milk, in any country where these goods are, half the time, obtained as the cost of the systematic starvation of the young calves, is far more criminal than to destroy potential birds by eating eggs, or, by the way, than to destroy embryos of any living species. And we are astonished that so many Indian vegetarians seem to take the milk problem so lightly. As far as we know, only a number of strict

Buddhists from the Far East actually exclude milk from their diet as an "animal product." Personally, without going as far as they do, and condemning the practice of "milking" cows, sheep, goats or camels altogether, we insist most emphatically on the fact that their milk was given them for their young (not for us), and that we should never allow ourselves to take it unless we first can be sure that the young have had their rightful share of it. Through a sinister necessity this is generally the case, wherever the baby beasts are deliberately brought up for slaughter: they fetch a higher price if well-fed and fat. We wish it only would become so always and everywhere, *without* the young animals being reared for anything else but for a healthy, happy life.

* * *

But food is by no means the only excuse which man brings forth to justify his shocking treatment of animals. There is clothing also; there is amusement; there are the "necessities" of transport and of agriculture; there is "scientific" experimentation, for the sake of "knowledge."

We have noticed how few people are actually aware of what they are doing when they order a slice of mutton or a sausage roll. We might also point out how few of the women who feel so happy to exhibit their expensive fur coats at tea parties, fashionable restaurants, theaters and concert halls, would not shudder if only they could imagine the atrocities that were committed in order to procure them their luxuries. The same can be said of those who wear feathers.

One meets ladies with kind, intelligent faces — more than once, ladies who seem sincerely devoted to some pet dog or cat — wearing overcoats of "persian lamb." Unborn lambs are torn from the wombs of the *living* mothers, and flayed alive, for the fur traders to get that particular skin covered with glossy, close-curled wool, as fine and soft as silk, which we call "persian lamb" or "astrakhan." And not one, but over a dozen scenes of ghastly cruelty are behind every overcoat made of that fur. But the smart ladies do not know it, or do not believe it — or sometimes they have, at first, recoiled on hearing the incredible tale of horror and then gradually forgotten it, or pushed the impression of it sufficiently far out of their field of vivid consciousness for it not to disturb them every time they see their coat.

And what we say about "persian lamb" can be said about many a skin obtained, if not by that specially revolting process, by some

other, hardly less cruel — perhaps even more so, if that be possible; skins that come, for instance, from beasts flayed alive long *after* they were born. This horrid thing is done so that the fur, taken alive, might remain more glossy and beautiful. Always that sickening idea that, for man — the "master" beast — to enjoy to the utmost all kinds of commodities, it does not matter what other creatures might suffer. Well does mankind at large deserve to be treated by the stronger and better organized groups of men whichever these be, in the selfsame way it treats the living species that cannot meet human cruelty with systematic retaliation!

There are people who would object to wearing a fur fully knowing that it had been obtained by torture; but they would not mind wearing one taken from an animal "humanely killed." Surely of the two evils, the lesser is always preferable, and "humane killing' is less appalling than the atrocities to which we have just alluded. Still, to destroy a creature that is only too glad to live — especially a beautiful one, like those of which man is so proud to wear the stolen skins — to deny it for ever the pleasure of breath and movement and the joy of seeing the sun, in order to provide another species with extra comforts and luxuries, is far worse than to put deficient human beings into the lethal chamber for the betterment of the human race. In the latter case, individuals are sacrificed to the interest of their own species, and in some instances at least, to that of their own race. But in the case of furbearing animals (as in the case of those which man eats) living individuals are sacrificed to the interest, or the mere pleasure, of a species that is not even theirs, on the sole grounds that this alien species is superior to theirs in wits and skill; that it has more "possibilities." The same logic would justify the men who have actually more possibilities than others to eat those others if they please, and to use their skins for binding books or for making fine gloves for themselves.

Feathers are, half the time, obtained at the cost of hardly less cruelty to birds than furs are at the cost of cruelty to quadrupeds or to seals. The details of those abominable practices exceed the scope of this book, mainly written to set forth, as clearly as possible, certain fundamental principles that must underlie our attitude towards all living nature and our dealings with nonhuman creatures, if we are actually to become a "superior" species. They can easily be obtained from any of the societies formed by friends of animals, in Europe and America, for the abolition of the evils we mentioned. What we want to stress is the heavy burden of guilt

that lies upon the ordinary man in the street-not, himself, actually cruel to any creature — for directly or indirectly encouraging, or at least, for tolerating the criminal industry in fur or feathers, no less than the industry of animal slaughter for the sake of food. The fact that no candidate up till now, in any country we know, has felt it necessary to introduce the issues discussed in this book into his electoral campaign and to tell his fellow-citizens: "Vote for our party; for our program includes the abolition of the fur and feather trades as well as of the meat industry," that alone is a shame on mankind at large. For the only reason why no political party has ever boasted of such a program is plain: cruelty to animals, when exercised for man's health, comfort or pleasure, does not shock people enough, and animal welfare in itself does not interest them enough for it to be worth while — helpful, that is to say, from an electoral point of view — to mention such things in an appeal for votes. On the contrary! the party that would dare openly to do so, would thereby jeopardize its chances of success: it would turn the meat eaters — the majority — against it.[1]

* * *

Very little needs to be said about cruel amusements like hunting, bullfighting, or circus performances. It "might" be not sufficient to establish "right"; and if nothing can justify the infliction of pain upon creatures which we have not even the excuse of hating for having willfully harmed us, then certainly the killing of big or small game for the amusement of the hunting party, the torturing and killing of bulls in the arena, or the exhibition of clever tricks performed, under threat, by wild or tame animals, for the pleasure of the human populace, are all criminal doings.

The latter, some will say, do not necessarily imply cruelty. Animals can be trained by kindness and patience to work many circus wonders. We reply that even if they *can be*, in fact they *are not*. They are not, because it would need, to train any beast — and especially a wild one — far more patience than a professional animal trainer can generally afford to spare, and far more love than any average human being is capable of. It would need a real saint, like some of those *yogis* of India who live in friendship with the snakes and beasts of the jungle, to persuade a lion to throw a football to

[1] This has been very clearly expressed in *Tischgespräche* — a presumed collection of Adolf Hitler's private talks, published long after this book was written.

another lion. And no real saint — no man truly in tune with the Universe and at peace with all beings — would dream of wasting his energy on such a thing. The very action would seem to him too unnatural, too ridiculous; at the same time humiliating to the royal animal, born for freedom and self-respect, and morally injurious to the human populace itself. Any saint — any thoughtful man, by the way — would disapprove of the perversity that urges circus audiences to enjoy the sight of a wild beast's degradation as a proof of man's skill.

It is therefore not saints, but just strong, fearless, and at the same time brutal men, who become "trainers" of circus animals. It is not love that makes a captive lion allow himself to throw a football or to stand on his hind legs like a pet dog in the midst of the cheers of a vulgar crowd, worthy only of his contempt. It is the fear of the lashing whip or of the red-hot iron bar — the fear of the repetition of physical pain inflicted time and again in the past by the human bully, weaker than the king of beasts, yet more powerful through cunning and mechanical skill — it is that fear, we say, not love, that makes the lion "perform" his ridiculous part in a circus show. And the same can be said of all "performing" animals. It is not possible for anyone — save perhaps for a great yogi, and that is, of course, out of the question — to force his will even upon tame animals (and *a fortiori* upon wild ones) and to make them exhibit tricks when *he* likes, without a considerable amount of cruelty. Trainers who are sincere admit it. To encourage circus shows is to encourage such cruelty.

Bullfights are even worse than circus shows — morally worse for the spectators, at least, for here the fury of the wounded, bleeding bull, maddened by pain, is precisely the essential part of the "attraction"; and nothing is more degrading than the sadistic pleasure many men and women take in such a sight. They call it "the sight of brute force overcome by human intelligence and skill." The supporters of gladiatorial combats, over a millennium and a half ago, probably said the same, and perhaps found also other reasons to justify the barbaric games which they enjoyed. And then, at least, along with duels of men and wild beasts, one could watch the more gallant duels of two men armed with different but equally murderous weapons. While here the display of "human intelligence versus brute strength" is just that of superior skill and equipment versus a greater natural strength devoid of these. The sight of five hundred strong men armed with stones, or at the most arrows, being "overcome" by ten men armed with machine-guns,

should be the ideal amusement for those who take pleasure in bullfights. In our eyes, any torture of animals for the sake of entertainment or for any other purpose, is just as revolting as the torture of children for the same purpose, or some similar one, would probably be to the average man, solely concerned with the welfare of his own species. And no nation deserves to live which tolerates any of the atrocities we have mentioned up till now, not to speak of the still more appalling ones practiced in the name of scientific research.

As for hunting, shooting and fishing, one should, it seems distinguish two aspects of them. There is, or rather there was, hunting and fishing as practised by the men of the Old Stone Age, who had forgotten how to live on wild fruits and not yet learned how to till the soil, and who did not know any better; by men who apart from, at the most, an extremely small number of privileged races, — whose superiority already manifested itself in the invention of abstract symbols bearing a cosmic meaning — were themselves but beasts more intelligent and aesthetically better gifted than the great apes of kindred species. Those men had to live on flesh and fish, and had to procure them somehow. We cannot blame them for the blood they shed any more than we blame the carnivorous animals of the forest that are supposed to have lagged behind them in speed of evolution. But men at that stage of development are no longer to be found, save perhaps in certain regions of the globe; in the equatorial forests of Africa and South America, or in certain remote parts of India, unknown to the Hindus themselves. What we condemn is hunting, shooting and fishing as practiced by people who would have something to eat even if they never touched a gun, a knife or a fishing rod — hunting, shooting and fishing for the sake of sport. We already condemn the murder of animals for food, — unless it *really be a question of life or death* for extremely valuable individuals or races — in the case of people who pretend to be any better than the wild flesh-eating beasts. But we see, in the wanton destruction of beautiful living creatures for the sake of amusement — and all living creatures are beautiful — one of the most disgusting expression of man's cruelty. The hunter and the man who goes fishing just "for the sake of sport" are decidedly among the enemies of nature; they are among the worst elements of ugliness, that is to say, of evil, in the midst of our lovely, sunlit planet, especially if, as it happens most times if not always, they use cruel means to capture and kill their victims.

We remember most vividly the horror we felt, in India, at the sight of every man of whom it was said to us that he had shot "so

many tigers," or at the sight of skins, or sometimes whole stuffed bodies of those magnificent felines, in certain people's houses. Even if the tigers *did* die on the spot, we fully realized what a pity it was (a pity in all the tragic sense of the word) to deprive such perfect specimens of divine creative Energy's handiwork: Bengal tigers, royal indeed; the most splendid inhabitants of the earth to look upon, of the joy of being alive and free in the warm jungle. Automatically we imagined the majestic, supple and stripy body, dead at the feet of the insignificant beast — the man, we mean — who has just shot breath out of it; the blood slowly running out of a small wound; the velvet paws stretched in convulsion of death; the phosphorescent eyes of emerald or transparent gold forever blind to the sight of the Sun, Father of all life. We compared the beauty of the tiger to the conceited vulgarity of the hunter. Few men, save the great Ones in whose faces genius and saintliness shine together, ever were such flattering examples of their species as an average tiger is of the feline family. And had we not remembered those rare men — by no means hunters — who lived to show us what man *can* be, we would have felt utterly ashamed of being ourselves afflicted with a human body.

And if we can speak thus of tiger-hunting, in which the animal at bay is sometimes shot dead at once, what can we think of fox hunting, of the hunting of deer, of the hunting of the hare, and of so many other living creatures only too glad to be alive, which men pursue and massacre in the most atrocious manner for the sake of amusing themselves? We let the reader judge for himself. And we invite him to study what hunting really is — and what fishing is, too — before hastening to dismiss our condemnation of both those sports.

* * *

From the earliest times onwards, men have been using beasts of burden-asses and camels, bullocks, buffaloes, horses and reindeer — to draw carts, to carry loads, or to plough the earth. Hardly any civilized nation — save those which flourished in Central America before the Spanish conquest — ever lived through the span of their historical existence without making some animals do their hard work four them. The habit has become so universal that most people find it just natural that certain beasts should work for man's profit or comfort. We have heard many times zealous humanitarians criticize those who, in India and in China, sit in a light two-wheeled carriage — a "rickshaw" — and let themselves be

drawn by a hired man, fast or slowly, according to their desire. The humanitarians find it shocking that a "reasonable creature" like themselves should do "the work of a horse." But they do not for a minute question whether a horse should do it or not; whether it really is or not "*its* work." One finds in that respect, as in all others, two standards of justice, two codes of pity; one to be applied to man — the self-appointed "master-species" — the other to be applied to beasts. The only thing we marvel at, knowing this, is the sudden intolerance which the humanitarians show to those who dare to go a step further than they (or to stop a step before them) and who claim a better treatment for the actual master races — or even the *white* races, or the ruling classes, or their own countrymen, or any other privileged human group — than for the rest of men!

We proclaim that *en principe*, no animal should be made to work for man.

The common answer to this plea for the freedom of creatures is: "Man has to work in order to live —at least, most men; — why not also those beasts that can be useful? And why should we feed the horses, the oxen, the buffaloes, the asses and the camels, if they did nothing? And if we did not feed them and take care of them, they would probably perish-through hunger during the season in which no fodder is to be found; or under the claws of the wild carnivorous beast in the countries where he still exists. Moreover, man is not necessarily unkind to the animals he uses to carry merchandise or to ride upon. The attachment of the Arab to his horse is proverbial. And many an Englishman who loves horses treats them as his companions and friends."

There is some truth in this. There is also a certain amount of prejudice due to a habitual man-centered outlook. First of all, there is no reason at all why the "useful" animals *should* work, simply because *we* do. We do the dull, regular, "useful" and detestable work for which we are paid only because we cannot live without money in a society in which every commodity of life has a standard price. If we could enjoy equal comforts while doing just what we feel inclined to do — while writing down our views in black and white, painting, travelling, spending time at our toilet table or in bed, or discussing subtle ideas at appropriate tea parties — we would undoubtedly do it, and rightly too. Why should not all animals do just what they feel like doing, if they can do so without any suffering or inconvenience to themselves? If most of us are so foolish as to s ell our individual freedom for advantages that are, half the time, not worth it, why should *they* do the same for the food and

shelter that they could obtain, in some regions of the globe at least, without that sacrifice?

The animals now styled as “beasts of burden” could still, in many warm and fertile countries, eat grass and be happy, without drawing carts or carrying loads, if only they were left free and could be secure, not from the threat of the wild beast, but from that of man’s greed and cruelty — from the rapacity of those who would drive their henceforth unowned and therefore cheap bodies to the slaughterhouses, and sell them for meat with a hundred per cent profit. They could have, everywhere, remained free and happy, and far more able to defend themselves than they would be *now*, if only man had never interfered with them, never “domesticated” them. He domesticated them for his own purpose; not in view of their welfare. He acted in that circumstance, no less than in all others, as a gregarious beast more clever than, but as selfish as, any beast could be. It is his fault, or rather the fault of his prehistorical forefathers, if there arises today, in the consciousness of the better few, any problem at all concerning the treatment of animals of burden as well as of pet animals.

It is probably true that most of the horses, buffalos, asses, etc., that now live in stables and work under man’s whip, would soon perish of hunger of cold, or become the prey of wild beasts, if they were suddenly let loose to fend for themselves anywhere, save in a very few privileged regions of the earth-regions both of temperate climate, of abundant and suitable flora, and of harmless fauna. But it is man’s fault if they have become so helpless and dependent. It is the result of millenniums of merciless exploitation; of a man-made reign of terror, in which they have continually lived, and which has become, to their submissive sense, like a natural environment. The reign of terror may cease. But the animals will take time before they recover the pristine self-reliance of their race — if they ever do recover it. Man should never have made them his slaves.

Now the only thing he can do to redeem, to some extent, the crime of his forefathers, is to help the beasts of burden to live happily, while preparing their different species for a new life of independence. The only thing he can do, if he wishes no longer to be the wicked tyrant before whose whip or stick the horse and buffalo, the ass and the camel bend in fear their weary heads, is to feed those beasts well, till they die of a natural death, without taking from them any work in return, for some generations — until machines replace them entirely in the fields, in the deserts, in the

mines and on the roads; and until their descendants, gradually reeducated to live their own lives independently, can be expected to fend for themselves in woods and steppes, deserts and jungles.

We know that quite a number of people nowadays are rather inclined to condemn the increasing use of machines in all walks of life. They insist, like Mahatma Gandhi, on the hardening, "soul-killing" effect of the constant handling of machinery upon the man who handles it; and they often oppose to that the natural friendship of man and of his faithful collaborators, the beasts of burden. We have seen too much of the daily distress of beasts of burden in all countries save perhaps a very few, to subscribe for a minute to the views of such incurable optimists, or to share their hopes. Men, if allowed to use animals to draw carts or to carry loads, on a broad scale, will surely overload them, overwork them and ill-treat them, in order to get out of them all the material service they possibly can for the money they spend on their food. Average men are naturally selfish and greedy and cowardly; they always were; they apparently always will be, so far as we know human nature.

In September 1941, in a half-an-hour's interview which he was kind enough to grant us, we could not help drawing the attention of India's saintly politician, Mahatma Gandhi, to the cause of the unfortunate horses that his followers and visitors used to hire to carry them from the Wardha railway station to Sevagram — Gandhi's abode — and back. We pointed out to him the number of times those beasts had to run the five miles that separate the two places, tired or not, hungry or not, sick or not, drawing in their two-wheeled carriages — "tangas" — besides the driver, believers or professed believers in the Mahatma's creed of love towards all life, whose number varied from one to six. Before leaving Wardha we had ourselves reported one of the drivers to the police for making a horse work in spite of an open wound upon its back, and we recalled the incident before the great man. Mahatma Gandhi seemed to understand our point of view and to share, to some extent, our sympathy for the exploited horses. But he knew the people with whom he had to work. He told us frankly: "I have, as it is, no real disciples. If I started criticizing those who come here for taking advantage of the 'tangas', I dare say, then, even the nominal ones would soon leave me, and the little good I might do would be entirely lost."

If that be the truth about Gandhi's own followers, then what can be expected of man in general? What can be expected of those who do not even profess to adhere to a life-centered creed? — of those

who have vested interests in the exploitation of beasts of burden? Can one reasonably believe that they would be kind and merciful towards their dumb "collaborators and friends" — that they would never overload them; never force them to work when tired or sick or unwilling, as long as they believe that a contrary behavior would be more profitable to themselves, materially? Even just laws protecting the four-legged laborers would result in little good. No government can afford to maintain a policeman to watch each and every cart-driver in the street, each and every ploughman in the fields-provided we suppose an animal-loving government could exist *and last* before tremendous changes take place in the collective ethics of our societies. Therefore as long as certain beasts are permitted to work for man at all, it seems that there will be fifty harsh and exacting masters for one naturally kind one.

The best course of action would be, in our opinion, to reduce as far as possible, and gradually to suppress altogether, the use of animals for hard work. The development of machinery is, in that respect, helping the cause of our dumb brothers.

* * *

But the problem would still remain of what to do with the beasts of burden, alive at the time it would be decided to exploit them no longer. Indeed, things are made worse by the fact that the use of those animals is "gradually" ceasing, and can only gradually cease. The progress of machinery, up till now, only "alleviates their misery" by bringing about their violent death. An owner of horses or buffaloes or bullocks buys a truck or mechanical farm equipment to do their work and sells them. After working for man all their lives, they end in the slaughterhouse. It is the accepted standard of human gratitude — a disgusting thing, but an unavoidable one as long as there are meat eaters and slaughterhouses, and cattle markets, and no organized care of man's old "collaborators and friends."

The progress of machinery can really help the cause of beasts of burden only if such organized care of the henceforth useless animals is made a reality; if homes for buffalos and camels, asses, horses, reindeer, etc. and all discharged four-legged laborers, are set up all over the world — comfortable homes, comparable to the best of those "pinjrapals" that already exist, in some parts of India, for old cows; places in which the beasts would be looked after by people who love them, and would spend the rest of their lives grazing in the sunshine; if, finally, the owners of the animals here alluded to are *compelled by law* to take them to those homes as

soon as they cease using them, and if there are severe penalties against anyone who buys or sells a beast of burden. Even then, so long as the meat industry *exists*, interested people would find loopholes to escape legal punishment and carry on a clandestine traffic of working animals as these would become useless. For the mechanization or modern society really to be a blessing for the animals, agitation against the meat industry has to be made effective, along with a campaign of kindness in favor of the beasts of burden. As the evils are interconnected, so are the problems of their suppression.

One can imagine efforts so that, wherever the geographical conditions permit, each new generation of animals formerly used as "beasts of burden" could be brought up to depend more and more upon itself, and less and less upon man, for its subsistence — until the species would be brought back to a tolerable state of self-sufficiency in its natural environment. If that can be done, so much the better. But if perchance it cannot be — we do not know; perhaps the enslaved animals have become congenitally dependent on man- then the least that man can do, if he has any sense of his responsibilities, is to feed for all times to come the descendants of the present-day beasts of burden — seeing to it, of course, that they do not multiply beyond a certain limit — and to make their lives happy in grassy expanses allotted to them, thus paying a small part of his enormous debt to their ancestors, and trying to make up, to the extent of his power, for centuries and centuries of cruel exploitation; trying to make up for the crime of the prehistorical human beings who first domesticated as many as they could of the older inhabitants of our earth, and for the crime of all those who, from age to age, took animal slavery as a matter of course, and never raised a voice of protest against it.

This task, in favor of healthy living creatures, whose various species have been working for man for millenniums, is surely more justifiable than the one (so popular since the political downfall of those who boldly refused to sanction it) consisting in maintaining expensive "homes" for incurable human wrecks, lunatics, congenital idiots, and all manner of two-legged freaks of nature, at state cost.

We know, however, very few people who would welcome our suggestion. But we know, too, that there are very few thoroughly just and thoroughly honest people in the world — especially *now*; very few, at least, who still dare to speak.

CHAPTER VII

Ritual Slaughter of Animals

The ritual slaughter of animals is closely connected with flesh eating in the countries where it still prevails. Apart from that, it has played, in the formation of man's religious psychology, too great a part for us not to devote a few pages to it.

The practice is now far less universal than it was once, and in Christian countries it is generally looked upon as one of the basest expressions of primitive superstition. There is, for instance, hardly a book written to defend the "civilizing" role of the white man in India, which does not give publicity to that gruesome side of Hindu religion, through some bloodcurdling description of the sacrifices regularly performed in the temple of the goddess Kali, at Kalighat, Calcutta.

We are surely the last people to support animal sacrifices, and yet we cannot but marvel at the inconsistency of those "sahibs" (and also of a certain number of "reformed" Hindus), who are horrified at the idea of what goes on at Kalighat, while they themselves are flesh eaters and — what is worse — flesh eaters not only in England or in Germany, or in the Scandinavian countries (where the animals are at least killed as quickly and painlessly as possible) but in India. They object to the goats having their heads cut off in one stroke at Kalighat, but see no harm in eating, in any of Calcutta's European restaurants, the flesh of quadrupeds or birds killed in the most revolting fashion in the slaughterhouses or in the New Market, or in the yard behind the kitchen of the place, by men who feel bound by no ritual rules and just do not care what the creatures suffer. This is done in the name of man's greed. And, in the eyes of many modern people, atrocities become really objectionable only when they take place in the name of the Gods.

And yet, what an amount of theology, inseparable from the primitive ideas attached to ritual slaughter, survives in some of the modern religions! To all those who are genuinely horrified at blood sacrifices while professing to be Christians, we would like to point out that the whole structure of their faith rests upon the dogma of atonement for sin through the shedding of *innocent* blood. True, the blood was shed once and for all, and it has to be that of a man — or rather of a God — the blood of ordinary cattle not being, we suppose, powerful enough to whitewash sinful humanity. And at the ritual meal, bread and wine are served to the faithful — apparently at least — in place of real flesh and blood. Still it remains a fact that, under all the elaborate symbolism that hides it in the Christian Church, lies the prehistoric belief in the necessity of propitiating an angry God with blood other than that of the sinner himself. It remains true that, at the back of the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion, lies the immemorial custom of partaking of the victim's flesh in a ritual meal. Theologians, of course, will say that even the most repulsive ancient customs contained some kernel of heavenly knowledge; that the sacrifices of the Jews foreshadowed the supreme oblation of the Cross, and that even those of the Heathen (including their occasional human sacrifices) betrayed the unconscious yearning of humanity for salvation through the blood of Christ, one day to be shed. But many unprejudiced students of history and ethnology are tempted to reverse the statement and to see in the basic dogma of Christianity a survival of the primitive belief in atonement for sin through the shedding of innocent blood, and, in the rite of Holy Communion, the symbolical survival of a cannibalistic feast.

However, we do admit that, whatever be the superstition that pretends to justify it, the ritual slaughter of any living victim is pretty gruesome and that, if it can possibly be replaced by symbolical sacrifices, or suppressed altogether, so much the better — *provided this does not give rise, in practice to a worse slate of affairs than before*.

But our little experience in a country where ritual slaughter and agitation against it are equally common, as well as our little knowledge of the past, in countries where the custom is now obsolete, make us, unfortunately, very pessimistic.

As we have pointed out in a preceding chapter, people who believe in Christ as the one victim offered in oblation for the sins of the world, and who accept the Bible as it is written, should logically be vegetarians. For the Jewish Law (which the Messiah came to

fulfill and not to abolish) plainly condemns all slaughter of animals save for sacrificial purposes.[1] Yet, the suppression of ritual slaughter among Christians has only had, as a result, an enormous increase in the number of animals slaughtered for man's food alone. The scruples attached to the murder of a beast when the latter was not a sacrificial victim — scruples obviously shared by some of the first Christians, if not by Christ himself, but repudiated by Paul of Tarsus — were rejected altogether. And the killing of oxen, goats and sheep for purely commercial purposes, instead of taking place secretly (and relatively rarely, as crime generally does), became, with the sanction of the Church, a widespread institution — according to us, one of the dishonoring features of Christendom. And the pig, regarded as unclean and therefore spared by the compatriot of Jesus, was shamelessly added to the list of edible beasts on the authority of a text relating Peter's famous dream and quoting alleged heavenly words according to which nothing that God has made is "impure" and unfit to eat.

Curiously enough, what happened in early Christendom is happening to-day, at a distance of eighteen centuries or more, among many of those "reformed" Hindus who reject the very idea of animal-sacrifices at a barbaric practice while tolerating the slaughter of the same and of other beasts for man's food.

The Arya Samajists,[2] the most eloquent opponents of ritual slaughter in modern India, are, we admit, strict vegetarians as a rule. But their sect draws its origin from a province Punjab — where, for centuries, the habit of offering living sacrifices never has been prominent and where practically all Brahmins, at least, just shrink at the idea of flesh eating. But in Bengal, the worship of the Mother Goddess with all the traditional ritual slaughter attached to it always was widespread, even among the highest castes of Hindudom. And the members of the Brahmo Samaj — the oldest of the reformed Hindu sects of the last century — shrink at the thought of blood sacrifices, but have unfortunately no scruples at all about eating meat. In the early days of the sect, some of them even rather gloried in that repulsive

[1] Leviticus 17, 3-4. (Already quoted. See p. 52).

[2] Members of a reformed Hindu Sect founded in the 2nd half of the XIXth century by Davananda Saraswati.

habit, as in an unmistakable sign of freedom from widely accepted custom and immemorial "prejudice." It seems to have been one of their ways of making themselves *different* from non-reformed Hindus, for the sheer sake of being different.

And up to this day — strange as it may appear — while blood sacrifices are looked upon in Brahmo Samajist circles as horrid remnants of ages of superstition (and rightly so), there has been no agitation worth mentioning against the still more shocking custom of breeding animals to be slaughtered for man's food.

To think of this attitude of self-styled "progressive" men is enough to generate in one's heart a profound disgust for mankind at large, and a no less profound contempt for European education applied to Easterners of Hindu (or Buddhist) tradition — or, by the way, for any type of foreign education applied to people on a broad scale, which only makes them worse instead of better.

One realizes that people would be brought gradually to give up their customary atrocities, through a series of more and more evolved interpretations of some of the most tenacious of their own old beliefs -if necessary, through an intelligent regulation of their oldest customs rooted in "superstition." One realizes that the newly Christianized (that is to say, Judaized) Greeks and Romans, and the people of Northern Europe, centuries later, behaved much like the nineteenth century newly Europeanized Indians. They shook off old customs which possibly were bad enough to take on a new outlook which implied a much worse one. In particular, as regards animals, they threw off the last shame they had about the act of eating non-sacrificial meat, and replaced the age-old institution of ritual slaughter (based on belief in magic and on superstitious fears) by the still more revolting practice of killing creatures just for the sake of greed, independently of religion. It became a crime to eat flesh only in the case if the latter had been offered up to the "idols." But in all other cases it became rather commendable. Only out and out ascetics were expected to abstain from doing so, and that merely in order to mortify their own bodies, not from any feeling of mercy towards living creatures.

The result (in both cases) was a regression, not a progress, in real civilization; a lowering of men's moral standards.

The number of animals sacrificed to man's greed — whether in the ancient world or in modern India — grew altogether out of proportion with that of the victims once offered up to angry Gods as a primitive means of propitiation. And (what is as bad, if not worse) the creatures, instead of being slaughtered in a definite

manner, prescribed once and for all by the ritual (which, among the "Shakta" Hindus of Bengal, at least, implied a minimum of suffering for the victims, whose heads had to be cut off *at one stroke*) were killed anyhow, the horror and length of their agony depending solely upon the greater or lesser skill of the slaughterers, bound by no laws at all, and, sometimes, upon their inborn sadism or lack of sadism.

One might think that this occurred only whenever a religion prescribing or tolerating blood sacrifices was superceded by a new one which implied no teaching at all as regards man's behaviour towards creatures, or at least which did not stress universal kindness. But it is a fact — though admittedly a baffling one — that populations, among which a religion such as Buddhism replaced others, of the ritual of which animal slaughter was a more or less common feature, very quickly reverted to meat eating (or fish eating) if they ever had given up that practice at all. This is the case of the Buddhist section of the population in China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon and India.

Admittedly the Buddhist vegetarians of the Far East are the most strict vegetarians on earth (more strict even than the Indian ones, which is saying much). But they comprise, apart from the monks, only a very small percentage of the people who profess to take refuge "in the Buddha, in the Law, and in the Community of the Faithful." Proportionally far more animals, killed in the slaughterhouses, are daily eaten by so-called Buddhists in Ceylon, and in the Chittagong district of Bengal — the last Buddhist spot in India — than are consumed by "Shakta" Hindus, who eat only sacrificial meat, and that, merely on certain religious occasions. Never was a vegetarian diet forced on a whole country in the name of Buddhism (or of any other life-centered creed) save in India, during the last part of the reign of good King Asoka, and, occasionally, for short periods, in Japan. And when this took place, it was always as the result of a decree expressing the sweet will of an absolute monarch. Also, at least in the case of Asoka, the new and better order was established *gradually*, a certain number of animals being slaughtered for some years, with the ruler's permission, for the food not merely of meat-eaters in general but even of the inmates of the royal palace.

This all goes to show how difficult it is to change man's ingrained habits, however wicked these be, even in the name of a Teaching of love as influential as Buddhism was in India, in Asoka's days.

It is indeed no wonder that, among the sincerest followers of life-centered religions (such as are *all* forms of Hinduism) there are some who, still today, are prepared to tolerate the ritual slaughter of certain animals solely in order to prevent a more general, more indiscriminate, and even more gruesome slaughter outside the temple precincts, merely in the name of human greed.

We have heard that argument put forward by several Hindu "Shaktas," in particular by one Bengali Brahmin domiciled in Assam, who appeared to me to be a sincere and consistent lover of animals. This man assured me that the only means he could imagine, at present, to avoid a crueler and more frequent slaughter of living beings, was to limit the murderous custom to *ritual* slaughter on certain festive days, and to confine meat eating strictly to occasional sacrificial meals. Of course he readily agreed that education, coupled with *gradual* reforms forwarded by religious authority, should end by rendering that primitive custom altogether obsolete and at the same time, by making a harmless diet the only conceivable one.

* * *

When one considers that this applies to India — the country in which meat eating seems to have been, for centuries, far less prevalent than anywhere else, even among those people who do not condemn it — one grows more tolerant towards those religious teachers (and especially those legislators) of non-Indian Antiquity who, though themselves the expounders of definitely life — centered religions or philosophies, do not seem to have protested against the slaughter of sacrificial victims in temples, high places, and other such sacred areas.

One might not go so far as to say that all legislations regulating the ritual slaughter of animals were worked out in order to avoid indiscriminate massacres on a broader scale by greedy, flesh-eating primitive men. But we firmly believe that all teachers who, *in spite of professing a definitely life-centered philosophy*, accepted or tolerated the custom of ritual slaughter (or even incorporated it into the external rites of their own religion) did so in the spirit which we have just tried to explain.

We believe that the better ones among the wise men of all ancient countries where a life-centered religion prevailed were moved by such a spirit — from the "rishis" of Vedic India, who accepted as a matter of course (and even regulated) the age-old sacrifices to Indra, Lord of heaven, and to the other Aryan Gods,

down to the most consistent of the Neo-Pythagoreans, Apollonius of Tyana. That sage, so keen to avoid taking advantage of the slaughter of creatures for his own food or dress; so genuinely against ritual slaughter as to refuse even to be present at a sacrifice, does not seem, however, to have raised, in his daily conversations with temple priests, such a protest against the gruesome custom as to win himself, amongst them, the reputation of a revolutionary. On the contrary, from what his biographers say, he always remained on friendly terms with the priest of the Greek Gods, whose temples were as bloodstained as any, a fact which can only be taken to imply an understanding silence on his part as regards even the barbaric aspects of their ritual.

Another historical instance confirming that which we have mentioned could be found in the presence of piles of geese upon the altars of the Sun, in the City of the Horizon of the Sun Disk, the Tell-el-Amarna of modern archaeologists. No creed could be more decidedly life-centered than the Religion of the Disk, of which we have said a few words in a former chapter. And the above instance would just point out how its Founder — Akhnaton of Egypt — the unquestionable revolutionary, arch-enemy of all priestcraft, found it less impossible to suppress some of the commonest manifestations of age-old superstition than to change a country's diet at one stroke. He might have preferred to confine killing to a sacrificial practice on very definite occasions, rather than take the risk of seeing an indiscriminate and broad scale slaughter of creatures for the sole purpose of man's food become a habit. We cannot tell, of course, from purely archaeological evidence, if this view is the right one or not. But it has, at least, the advantage of lifting the apparent contradiction between the undeniably life-centered spirit of a beautiful cult, and the conclusions that pictorial evidence might suggest. It also tallies with what we know to be the case in many other instances, ancient and modern.

To sum up, the ritual slaughter of living creatures, so over-decried today in a world that accepts and even encourages far more shocking institutions, can be looked upon from two entirely different angles: either as a traditional — magical — means of propitiating angry Gods, or, as a practical means of *avoiding* a greater and crueler slaughter of animals *outside* religious enclosures, and openly in the name of man's greed. Only very primitive people can possibly consider it in the first manner.

In all cases in which, though still accepted or tolerated as a part of the public cult, it obviously does not correspond to such a

barbaric theology — wherever such a theology is decidedly out of keeping with the spirit of the religion itself — ritual slaughter is to be interpreted in the second manner, whether today, in modern India, or centuries ago, in the temples of the Ancient World. In particular, we feel sure that this was the meaning of it in the eyes of the best men of Antiquity, upholders of life-centered forms of religion, whether Sun worship or any other.

But there is every reason for one to agitate against the gruesome custom wherever and whenever it can possibly be suppressed without greater cruelties to animals consequently taking place. In particular, in all technically well-equipped countries, in which animals are killed for man's food by such means as the "humane killer," the survival of the horrid "kosher" slaughter or of any other barbarous form of ritual killing is a shocking concession to obsolete superstition, to be stamped out ruthlessly, and without consideration for "religious freedom" — one is never *free* to inflict pain upon animals, Nor can we praise too highly the efforts of all such enlightened Indians who consider it to be time for their compatriots to realize at last that slaughter of innocent creatures is always to be condemned, even if taking place under the cover of age-old religious rites.

CHAPTER VIII

Knowledge and Therapy

One of the most appalling forms of exploitation of animals — if not the most appalling of all, for the tortures it implies — is undoubtedly the use of them as subjects of systematic experimentation, be it for the sake of mere scientific curiosity, be it with the definite purpose of discovering new and better methods of fighting disease in human beings, and, occasionally, in animals themselves.

The animals are either vivisected, that is to say that their organs are experimented upon while they are still alive — sometimes, but not always, under an anesthetic — or else they are injected with the germs of different diseases — turned into artificial patients — for the sole purpose of giving doctors and students an easy opportunity of studying those diseases and of discovering improvements upon the known methods of curing them. The two main reasons invoked to justify the atrocities committed in both cases — the "right" of man to increase his knowledge of nature, and his "right" to defend his life *at any* cost, — cannot be said to concern, each one, a separate class of experiments, for in research work, everything is connected. From the results of a series of experiments carried on today for the sake of pure curiosity, it may happen that light will some day be thrown unexpectedly upon some disquieting question of practical therapy. All arts apply some sort of information or other to their particular purpose, which is practical. And as the art of healing is no exception to that rule, it would be unscientific to justify the inoculation of animals for the immediate purpose of finding out new serums and other remedies, without justifying at the same time any experiments on the same, undertaken in order to acquire a more accurate knowledge of the mechanism of life. The two stand or fall together.

The two seem to be, in the eyes of those who support them, more difficult to condemn than most of the other forms of exploitation of animals of which we have spoken up till now, except, perhaps, than the custom of killing animals for food. Meat is supposed to contain "indispensable" elements of nutrition, and the horrors of the slaughterhouse industry come, therefore, under the same category as those involved in scientific research. "Helping man — the master species — to live" is always, to many people, a "noble" work, as least a "necessary" one, whether it be carried on by simply feeding him according to his needs (or tastes), or by "acquiring whatever such knowledge" as might be immediately utilized for the cure of his diseases, or stored up as useful information for the benefit of future research workers, "benefactors of humanity." People do not care, in one case or in the other, what sufferings the so-called "noble" work might imply for creatures other than man. The "master species" should, in their eyes, come first.

After man's right "to live," the right the most broadly recognized and the most strongly defended is that "to think," which is inseparable from the right to know, for it is only by getting to "know" the secrets of nature better and better that man can grow to think more and more accurately, to build a philosophy of life nearer and nearer to unshakable realities — to acquire the understanding of "truth." Is it not so? Our scientists, greedy of information if not of actual knowledge, believe it, at least. And as thought and knowledge are the supreme functions of man — his justification, that is to say — man is, according to many, far more entitled to inflict pain upon creatures in order to enable himself to *know more* than he would be, for instance, in order to look more attractive, or to amuse himself, or even to get his hard work done for him cheaply and well. After all, there are plenty of amusements besides hunting, circuses and bull fights (or cock fights); there is plenty of stuff to wear, apart from animals' skins, even in cold countries; and days are coming when furs, and even leather, will possibly be replaceable by plastic materials, and when machines will be made to do all the hard work that there is to be done in the world. But how to know about the different brain centers of a dog without experimenting upon it, even if that implies hours of incredible torture to the dog? The cruelties for the sake of dress, sport or transport, seem to many people less unavoidable than those perpetrated in the name of those two "higher" causes: the "saving of man's life," and the advancement of man's "knowledge" — the "progress of science."

In the increasing literature of all the noble societies formed in recent years for the defence of animals against the claims of fanatical “saviours of human life” and champions of “knowledge” at any cost— the different anti-vivisection and anti-vaccination leagues-much has been written to try to prove that experimentation on animals is useless, from the very point of view of the experimenter and of the scientist in general, i.e. that it does not yield the positive results that man mostly expects from it, and therefore that it boils down, most of the time if not always, to wanton cruelty. Much has been written to prove that no substantial scientific information was gathered through the practice of vivisection, which could not have equally well, if not better, been gathered through some humane and far more simple channel. Much has been said to point out the utter futility, the childishness — the silliness — of some of the most atrocious experiments performed in our times on dogs and other animals. Much has been done to counteract the results of an obnoxious widespread “health” propaganda among the public, and to point out, both to the possible patient and to their guardians (in the case of children) the tragic aftereffects that vaccination and “preventive” inoculation do bring about, more often than many of us imagine.

All this is well and good as a means of practically impressing the populace. The average man, though not sufficiently depraved to encourage “useless” atrocities, is quite selfish enough to excuse any cruelty to dumb beasts as long as he believes it to be, in the long run, profitable to his own species. And as, in modem times, the average and less-than-average man’s views seem to be the only ones to count, he is the first power to tackle. The anti-vivisection and anti-vaccination leagues are moved by the noblest of intentions when they publish the opinions of eminent scientists concerning experimentation on animals either as gross, inaccurate and primitive, and therefore useless, or even as misleading in its results, and ultimately pernicious from a scientific point of view. Their aim is to move the governments of all so-called civilized countries to make the crimes in the name of knowledge and therapy illegal and severely punishable as soon as possible. And they naturally insist the most upon the one argument most likely to appeal to the vulgar, hard-hearted, utterly selfish average man who, after his own little person and his immediate kith and kin, values the “human race” above everything, incapable as he is of feeling his ties with all living Nature beyond it. The argument may be the cleverest one. It may be also a strong and entirely honest

one, founded on undeniable facts. It may be indeed that all the revolting atrocities of Pavlov and others, which dishonor our times, and all the horrors committed on animals in the past, from Claude Bernard to Galen, and from Galen probably to the dawn of history, under the pretext of gathering information about the mechanism of nature, or of finding out new means of healing patients; it may be, we say, that all those horrors rolled in one are but a grim piece of silliness, a monstrous farce, of no more consequence, for the real "advancement of science," than the play of those devilish children who torture beetles, worms or ants, just for fun. It may well be so. We are neither in a position to assert that it is so, nor to deny it, not being ourselves versed in any of the particular sciences or techniques in the name of which the crimes we have referred to are ordinarily perpetrated. What we have to say is of a different order altogether.

We do not know whether vivisection has or not ever yielded scientific information of any value, which could not have been obtained otherwise. We do not know whether vaccination and inoculation have or not any real efficacy as a preventive measure against certain diseases, be it smallpox, typhoid, diphtheria or any others. We do not know whether certain serums, taken from animals, have or not a curative effect in most cases. We do not know whether certain human patients can or not expect to save their lives by taking liver extracts or meat extracts, or by drinking animals' blood, or by using still more gruesome means of therapy recommended by village healers. We do not know, and we do not care to know. To us, *whatever be their results from a scientific point of view*, all those practices are damnable in themselves, on the sole account of the tortures they imply — tortures inflicted upon sentient creatures of any species whatsoever.

And even if they were of the greatest immediate service to the human race; even if they actually had led, or were rightly expected to lead, to the greatest discoveries concerning both our knowledge of Nature and the means to fight disease and to prolong our lives; even if they could reasonably be expected to give man the power of calling the dead to live again, we would, nevertheless, characterize them as damnable, and consider with indignant horror whomsoever it be who indulges in them, or encourage or tolerates them by his or her cowardly silence, instead of raising against them, at every possible opportunity, a stern voice of protest. As for ourselves, we declare in absolute earnestness that if, for consenting that any atrocity be committed upon a pig, a rat, a toad, or a still meaner

creature, we could be given at once the stupendous power to call back to life not the ordinary dead (as worthless in general as the ordinary, insignificant living) but any One we might choose among the great expounders of integral truth and lovers of all life, who flourished in the remote or recent past; and if we could be given the unthinkable joy of seeing the whole present world handed over to Him that he, visible in the flesh for the second time, might rule over it forever, still we would refuse.

For no reign of integral truth can stand upon a compromise with the great Law of love. And any of the great Ones whom we would be tempted to call back would blame us for making such a compromise, which He would look upon as the most shocking denial of all that he stood for and as an insult to Himself.

In other words, even if it were possible to promote, as by magic, the establishment of the very reign of perfection on earth, it would be criminal in our eyes to do so at the cost of the deliberate torture of a single *innocent* creature.[1] And if this — the highest of all ends — could by no means justify any atrocity whatsoever (were any, perchance, indispensable, in order to bring it about, which of course seems absurd), then what can one say of the ordinary ends alleged in defence of the revolting exploitation of animals "for scientific purposes": the mere increase of man's information concerning the phenomena of life; the mere saving of human life — in admitting that those two ends are effectively served?

* * *

Those who try to justify the exploitation of animals in its most horrible forms — vivisection, and the inoculation of healthy animals with noxious germs in order to create cheap artificial patients for the study of disease —are just as inconsistent as any of the many people who draw too definite a line between man and beast. Perhaps more inconsistent than most of them. For it is questionable whether human skins, thin as they are, and without hairs, could ever serve the purpose for which so many thousands of animals are stripped of their warm glossy furs. And though human flesh would perhaps be as tasty as beef or mutton, when well cooked, a man can always prefer to prey upon other species rather than on his own, when he can do soy with practically as much

[1] Such human beings as are actual (or even potential) enemies of Life — or of a socio-political order rooted in truth (i.e., in harmony with the Laws of Life) — are, of course, anything but innocent creatures, in our eyes.

advantage. But here, the position is a little different. Here, the result would probably be far more encouraging, far more enlightening, scientifically speaking, if the subject of experimentation only were a man instead of a dog or a guinea pig. The animal cannot speak. It cannot give the experimenter firsthand information about what it feels while he acts upon its organs, laid bare upon the vivisection table, or while he tries upon it new treatments to combat the effects of the diseases he has himself afflicted it with. It cannot help the investigation in any way save by provoking unconscious variations in certain indexes which are to be read and interpreted. But a man! A man who could describe his sensations in picturesque language! A man, moreover, who would be convinced that, upon the accurate description he would give of his sufferings to his well-intentioned torturers, depends the comfort and healing of millions of patients in the future; a man who would be told, his arms and legs once bound upon the vivisection table, that he is going to fulfill a great purpose by groaning with pain for a couple of hours for the sake of Science with a capital S, and who would be given beforehand a decoration on behalf of the government! What marvelous information would not such a creature yield, provided he be, of course, as true a humanitarian and as enthusiastic an admirer of "scientific progress" as many profess to be *now* that there is no danger of *their* being vivisected! If a scientist thinks he can gather some useful hints from the naked brains of a dog — as he tells us he does — then surely he would be able to gather far more (and not mere hints, but facts, perhaps of immense psychological value, properly stated by the subject himself) from the brains of a man, exposed alive, if necessary without an anesthetic, according to the same technique.

If scientific information, exalted under the lofty name of "knowledge," be really all that the scientist wants, and if it be precious enough, in his eyes, to be gathered at any cost, then indeed the vivisector should be made to experiment upon human beings alone — creatures who can speak. And if saving human life be really such a great task as many seem to believe when they excuse any atrocity committed in view of that end, then it is not rats and guinea pigs that one should inoculate in order to study the evolution of al sorts of diseases and the effects of all sorts of new remedies, but men and women. One will notices that "such things are done, or are said to be done, sometimes, in hospitals." We reply that if so, they are rightly done, and should be done also in systematic laboratories containing artificial patients — man-made

patients — belonging to the human species; we say that such things, and worse ones should be done on human victims in the chambers in which vivisection is practiced; such things should be done everywhere on reasonable creatures able to speak, and preferably on people thoroughly devoted to the "progress of science" (for the others would perhaps refuse to speak); and if there be not enough real lovers of science ready to give their bodies, then — as a second best — experiments should be carried out on downright criminals, on traitors, on actual or potential enemies of higher mankind, *or else* they should be stopped altogether. As a result, many a scientific magazine might cease to be printed. But the world would go around just the same, without anybody being the worse for it.

People are in the habit of vehemently admiring those doctors (for there are some) honest enough to experiment upon themselves. They call them "martyrs of science." They are, anyhow, self-appointed martyrs, a fact which makes their position somewhat different from that of the religious ones. They are workers, doing their job — not fighters defending their Gods or their principles, attacked by *other* men. They are scientific workers, more intelligent, more rational than others — better workers. For by inoculating their own bodies, which they know (because they can feel them directly) and by trying on them the drugs they wish to test, they have the opportunity of obtaining far more useful and interesting results then any of their colleagues would by using guinea pigs for the same purpose. They are, in our eyes, the ideal workers, satisfying at the same time the necessities of research (if necessities they be) and the scruples of true morality — taking as a subject of experimentation the most interesting creature possible: a human being; and choosing, among all the voluntary human victims that could perhaps be found, both the most handy and the one of which the "voluntary" quality is the most unquestionable: themselves.

The question of experimentation upon living creatures can be summed up as follow: either scientific information, whenever available, should be acquired at any cost, and human life, whenever there seems to be a chance of saving it, should be saved at any cost; *or else* there are things that are too degrading to do for any purpose whatsoever — be it to increase human knowledge, be it to save human life, be it to save the life of all the living; nay, be it even to establish (were that imaginable by such horrible means) paradise on earth for all times to come. In the first case, i.e., if one believes that scientific research should be carried on at any cost, then *carry*

it on upon human beings alone, preferable, but not all necessarily voluntary victims; men condemned to be vivisected or inoculated, as there are now men condemned to the gallows or to hard labor for life; prisoners of war[1] —why not? — and men picked up at random among the most stupid and the most useless for any other service, but men exclusively (and women, of course) — *not* animals. Even if they be not always able to describe their excruciating pains in properly accurate, technical language, even if they cannot or will not speak at all, there is every probability that the information they would yield to the vivisector and to the doctor would be far more varied, far more thought-provoking, than that which the poor animals are able to give at the best of times. And why be contented, in any case, with a little increase in scientific knowledge, when greater progress would be possible — when perhaps unexpected horizons would be opened — just by substituting as laboratory subjects two-legged mammals for four-legged ones? If Science (with a capital S) is to be served at any cost, then we cannot be blamed for arguing thus. On the contrary, there is no other way one could argue.

But if scientific progress be not the end of ends; and if human life, however precious, be not worth saving at the cost of those eternal values, the consciousness of which alone makes man a possibly superior animal, a species apart from the others; if it be indeed better not to know and not to live than to know and live, and fight disease and death at the cost of the most appalling agony inflicted upon helpless creatures (i.e., at the cost of incredible collective selfishness and cowardice) then painful or possibly injurious experimentation of whatever nature, and in particular vivisection, should *never* be practiced, save upon voluntary human beings, and preferably, whenever it is possible, upon the scientific investigator himself.

The common — and most natural — answer to this, we all know, is that, if such were the strict laws of the land, and if they were properly enforced, all scientific experimentation of any painful character would soon come to an end for want of "subjects." For even among such people who support the practice of vivisection the most noisily, putting forth all sorts of fiery phrases about the "requirements of science" and the "interest of humanity," there do;

[1] In olden times, prisoners of war were sacrificed occasionally to their victors' Gods. *We* surely do not look upon "Science" as *our* God. But some people apparently do. So, *if such be the case*, indeed "— why not"?

not appear to be any who, in the case of the absolute prohibition of the use of animals for the purpose, would be ready to lie down in place of the dog or the guinea pig and to be themselves vivisected, with or without anesthetic — as it be "necessary" — for the pleasure of feeling useful to humanity and to science (more useful indeed, it seems, than most of them would ever be in ordinary life, if one is to believe that all those "scientific" atrocities are not but a revolting farce from beginning to end.) There are not many, for sure. And we are inclined to be of the opinion that there are none — save perhaps some of those conscientious doctors who already experiment upon themselves rather than on other patients, natural or artificial, two-legged or four-legged. And even among those, we dare think, many would allow themselves to be inoculated with diseases, but refuse to be *vivisected*. The number of voluntary human "subjects" would anyhow be insufficient for scientific research on the scale it is practiced today.

What, then, it to be done? We answer boldly: "Go without scientific research altogether, in all the branches in which the experts in the matter say that it cannot be carried on save at the cost of infliction of pain and death upon creatures that are not and cannot be voluntary victims. Go without it; and go without the advantages it might or might not bring (be they intellectual or practical advantages) rather then encourage cruelty, rather then patronize cowardice — for every man capable of inflicting pain upon an innocent, helpless creature is a disgusting coward; and every man who would shudder at the idea of doing so himself, but who approves of others doing so for advantages which he values and accepts, is still a greater coward. Go without it, and become true men, conscious of their sacred ties with all living Nature, rather than remain just the cleverest and the cruelest of all beasts!"

Our opponents — those who defend the practice of vivisection and the study of diseases on laboratory animals — would, most of them, recoil, if asked to sanction the uses of murderers, traitors and sadists as subjects of experimentation, although, as we have said, in some cases at least, science would be likely to gain by such an innovation. They would rather go without such a gain. The "subject," be, he the most repulsive degenerate, condemned for having raped and killed his own mother, would still be "a man" in their prejudiced eyes. They could not possibly vivisect him! While the innocent, loving dog, which, unaware of his ghastly fate, licks the hands that will soon be "working" upon his bare intestines or bare live brains, is "nothing but an animal." He can be used for any

purpose that suits man. He was given to man to be used. The vivisector would reject the advantage of scientific information, even the tempting promises of finding out new means of "saving human life," if those advantages could be obtained, and those promises fulfilled only by inflicting upon the worst of human beings the agonies of a beast on the vivisection table. His lust for discovery would suddenly vanish, if *men* had to be sacrificed to it. His morality stops at man. Ours does not. That is all the difference.

* * *

All morality implies the idea of some sort of community: generally tribe or country, race or humanity as a whole. Our morality is based, as our religion, upon the conception of the unity of all life (within astounding diversity and God-ordained hierarchy) and upon the birthright of every healthy creature to enjoy, to the uttermost of its capacity, throughout its full span of years, the sight of daylight, which is beautiful. We also believe that the greater the claims of a species — as of a single individual — the greater also and the more exacting are its duties towards the rest of the living. *Noblesse oblige*. The real superman, if any, is the man in whom boundless kindness to all creatures goes side by side with the utmost intelligence and power. The actual master races surely cannot allow themselves to think and feel as it would seem natural to man of a mean type. And the real master species, if any, is the one that puts its consistent nobility above any advantage; the one that would not, even to save its existence, even to broaden its intellectual horizons, renounce the privilege of remaining at peace with the whole of the living universe; the one that would rather lose than break the great Law of Love — the inborn law of its best representatives; — that would rather die out than degenerate.

All the crimes that are excused in the name of the so-called "higher motives" of those who performed them and, in particular, all forms of the shameful, age-long exploitation of animals by man — from the brutalities of the cart driver to the learned horrors of vivisection — rest ultimately upon an ugly, barbaric conception of man's superiority. They all presuppose the idea that man's privileged position gives him "rights" over the other species of creation, without giving him also, and to a much greater extent, *duties towards them*. And they often, if not always, cover an exaggerated consciousness of human suffering and a bloated estimation of the value of *any* human life, be it of the most idiotic, the meanest or the dullest. There is, among the public at large, an

undue appreciation of quantity rather than of quality; and undue popularity is given to scientists of the type of Louis Pasteur, whose discoveries are said to have saved a *great number* of human lives (never mind at what revolting cost) while those other scientists, whose discoveries have opened new perspectives in the history of our planet or in our vision of starry space, are seldom mentioned outside specialized circles.

The average man, whose ties and pleasure and daily concerns are, whatever he may say in his conceit, very little different from those of most other gregarious beasts, would stoop to any atrocity in order to prolong his own life, or that of his kith and kin, for a few wretched years or even months. Above all, he would do anything, accept anything, tolerate anything, in order to save the life of his young ones. So nothing is more natural than the bigoted reverence in which he holds both the physicians and the scientists directly or indirectly concerned with the preparation of vaccines and serums, and the advertisers of preventive and curative medicines of all sorts. It is based, like the most irrational of his religious beliefs, on the fear of death. One cannot blame the little man. It seems beyond his power to understand better, as well as to feel and act more nobly than he does. The shocking point is merely that he is given such a say in the making of modern institutions —that on his support depend the governments of the world. For he naturally sends to the ruling assemblies individuals whose outlook is not broader, and heart no nobler — no more universally loving — than his own, whatever be their intellectual qualifications; individuals who are as sadly unaware as himself of the duties of a truly superior species, and as incapable as he of conceiving the need of better laws protecting the rights of all the living.

In our eyes the quality of human life is far more important than its length. By *quality* we mean that which makes a person actually superior to others: inborn balance and consistency, generosity and detachment; and inherent consciousness of eternal values; a joyous sense of the beauty to be found in everyday concerns, allied to a sense of personal responsibility; the urge to live in beauty and in truth. Such a thing does not come from our surroundings; but our surroundings can help us to develop it, when it happens to be in us. And we are far, far more grateful to the scholars whose discoveries in astronomy and higher physics, in philology and archaeology, etc., have enabled a few of the better men to live more richly, more intensely, more harmoniously, by opening to them new and more astounding sources of inspiration, than we

ever will be to those so-called "benefactors of mankind" whose main work has resulted merely in keeping alive thousands of human beings neither good or bad, nor even physically beautiful, who could as well have died and made place for others at the best of times, as the rest of the living do. We are far more grateful to Sir James Jeans and to Max Planck, and *also* to the first translators of Homer and Plato, than to the inventor of penicillin; far more grateful to Heinrich Schliemann, Sir Flinders Petrie, Sir Arthur Evans and Sir John Marshall, than to all the prolongers of human life that this planet has produced.

For the world is far more benefited by the joyous thrill of a single intelligent and noble adolescent who feels his vision of it suddenly illuminated by a peep into its majestic mysteries, or by the contact of one of its great Souls embodied in the past, than it is by the prolonged presence upon its surface of millions of mammals, both two-legged and four-legged, made immune from certain diseases at the cost of atrocious experiments upon individuals of their own or of other species.

Teach people, for goodness' sake, to live more beautifully — when they still happen to be able to *live* at all, — instead of concentrating so much intelligence and wasting so much time and money in order to find out, no matter at what cost, means to keep them from dying! Feed animals and make them happy-help them too to live in beauty and in truth to the utmost capacity of their species — instead of telling us that the hundreds of victims, tortured in various ways in the laboratories for the "progress of science," suffer so that cures may be discovered for the diseased creatures of their own kind, as well as for human beings!

Far too much is made, nowadays, of human life as a bare physical fact. Far too much is done "to fight disease" and to prolong life by any means; not enough to make life worth living, both for human beings and for animals; not enough, especially, to impress upon man that his life has no greater value than that of any gregarious beast as long as he remains contented to use his human intelligence in the pursuit of nothing more than the mere welfare of his own kind — as social apes would do, if they enjoyed the means of which men dispose. Not enough is done to cultivate among men in general, and especially among the better men, the characteristics of a truly "superior" species: a stoic fearlessness before their own sufferings and death: a chivalrous attitude towards the unorganized or less organized dumb creatures of the earth; not enough is done to stir in them the sense of shame, and make them feel that, even if

it be a fact that, at the cost of experimentation on animals, they can hope one day to reject entirely the burden of disease and death, still the only course for them, as creatures of a higher kind, is to cast aside the unholy bargain; to refuse the opportunity forever — lest they be cowards.

There is no other answer to all the arguments — "humanitarian" or "scientific" — put forward in support of vivisection in particular, and of systematic experimentation on animals in general. No other answer but this: such experimentation is downright cowardly. Any infliction of pain on a helpless creature, for whatever purpose, foreign to that creature's *own* welfare, — or, in the case of a human being, foreign to his justified punishment as an offender against Life, or to very definite State necessities, (provide the State itself be a genuine national State, founded upon the true laws of Life, and thereby worth defending) — is cowardly. It would be far better for all "scientific progress" to stop rather than for it to be bought at the cost of such a degradation of man. And if disease can only be fought at the same cost, then it is better for it not to be fought at all. And if human life, in many cases, can only be saved by such means, it is better — far better — for men to die. Their death would at least be an honorable one.

CHAPTER IX

The Rights of Plants

The great brotherhood of the living does not stop at animals; it includes also the whole of the vegetable world. And there are reasons to believe that the transition between the less elaborate of plants and the mineral realm is just as gradual and imperceptible, in its way, as that observed between the lowest forms of aquatic animal life and the plants themselves. We do not know where fife begins — if it be true that it "begins" at all. We do not know what life is. The only fact of which we are well aware, as a fact, is its unity within the greatest possible diversity of forms and functions. We know, by a sort of direct, intuitive evidence — provided we are sufficiently sensitive — that the life of a tree, of a bush, of a blade of grass, of the moss that grows greener or yellower upon an old wall, is not fundamentally different from that of the worm or of the jellyfish, of the reptile, or the quadruped or of ourselves; not fundamentally different either, on one hand, from the extremely slow, heavily bound life of rocks and crystals, and, on the other, from that of the unseen creatures, more subtle, more highly organized and much freer then ourselves, if such creatures exist. A deep feeling tells us that there are no real breaks in the economy of Nature, and that nothing is *outside* nature, or in contradiction with its eternal laws. And scientific research applied to plants has, up till now, given increasing experimental support to the belief in the continuity at least of the animal and vegetable realm. While the study of metals — in particular the very word used to describe their condition after hard use: "fatigue" — seems to point out also to the presence, in them, of a dim sort of alternate state of pain and ease, a mysterious "life," as apprehended throughout the whole scheme of existence by the seers of old.

No nation has stressed the idea of the unity underlying all beings, from Gods and Buddhas down to the humblest forms of plant and even mineral life, as eloquently as the ancient Hindus. What still lingers of their spirit and influence in modern India gives that unfortunate subcontinent, in spite of all its drawbacks, a place as a great constructive factor in any disinterested vision of a better world. And a large part of what is to be found concerning the unity of life in non-Indian teachings, ancient and modern — in Pythagorism and Neo-Pythagorism; in some aspects of the "Hermetic" teachings; in Unitarianism today — seems due to more or less obvious Hindu influences. Yet the most luminous souls of the world, be it in the East or in the West, not only always felt in tune with the whole of *life*, but expressed, occasionally at least, their conviction that plants and animals and ourselves have similar ultimate aspirations.

In the two of his hymns to the Sun that have survived the general wreck of his beautiful religion, Akhnaton, in particular, puts forth a that idea in simple words. Having recalled the gestures in which he sees the daily adoration of the Sun by man and beast, bird and fish alike, he speaks of the lilies in the marshes: "The flowers in the wastelands blossom at Thy rising" . . . "they drink themselves drunk (of Thy radiance) before Thy face," says he, implying both a physical pleasure and a mystical thrill — a holy intoxication and an act of worship — in the opening of the velvety white petals to the warmth and light of the morning Sun. Plants are considered here not merely as living beings endowed with sensitiveness but — which is more — as religious beings; as creatures of the same nature as animals and men, and similarly capable of a sacred exaltation of all their powers of life in the presence of the Life-giver. A better recognition of the unity of all life in nature and in purpose, could not be imagined.

* * *

We do not deny that differences in degree, once they exceed a certain measure, are, for all practical purposes, just as good as differences in nature; that they are, at least, bound to determine very visible differences in our behavior towards creatures. And that is why we rejected so categorically, in previous chapters,[1] the fallacy of those who are inclined to justify animal slaughter and meat eating by telling us that, "since plants have also life" — and

[1] Chapter VI., p. 71 and following.

probably sensitiveness — and since we eat quite a number of them, we may as well eat the flesh of animals too, while we are about it. We are the first ones to admit that, however continuous be the succession of all forms of life, from the hot-blooded animal to the most rudimentary vegetable, and however "one" life be as a whole, there *is* a considerable difference between killing a lamb or a bull and pulling a beetroot out of the ground — a difference, nay, far greater then there can ever be between the murder of a man and that of a reptile or fish, let alone of a quadruped.

Still, we do not believe that such a difference justifies in any way the ruthless exploitation of plants. It only makes that of animals all the more shocking. Its existence implies that the eating of vegetables cannot excuse the eating of animal flesh any more than it would that of human flesh. And it may make the necessity of using the products of the fields and forests for our food appear less tragic to us, as, like all other creatures, we have to live on something. It cannot justify any destruction of plants — clearing of jungles, cutting down of forests, destruction of individual trees — save on a minimum scale, and that only in order to prevent death or pain being inflicted upon animals in their stead.

Animals, for instance (including ourselves), have to be fed. And this is an unavoidable source of destruction of adult plant life, so long as the vegetable-eating beasts cannot live either solely on mineral preparations, or on fruits naturally fallen from the trees, or on both these. And just as the obviously carnivorous animals are justified to feed on flesh (since they cannot possibly do otherwise without dying) so it appears reasonable to believe that the herbivorous species and ourselves are justified to eat rice and wheat, potatoes and peas, and all manner of vegetables and fruits, since we have no better choice.

The same thing can be said of the destruction of certain plants of which the fibres or the wood are used for our clothing, our housing or our fuel.

We should, *en principe*, strongly encourage the use of *dead* wood and of coal (mummified wood, so as to say) and of the by-products of the coal industry (gas, coke, etc.) as fuel, instead of live wood-or we should like to see people cook their food and warm themselves with electric stoves; we should encourage the use of stone, bricks or mud — or concrete — in preference to wood, as materials for the building of houses; of stucco, or similar plastic materials, in preference to wood, for interior decoration. And we should earnestly like to see dress reduced to a minimum, retaining,

wherever climatic conditions permit, but what is indispensable for attractiveness and decency. But we cannot deny that, until facilities of transport are far increased all over the world — so that mineral products might everywhere replace live wood, as fuel as well as in the construction of buildings — there is very little chance of sparing trees altogether.

And first of all (as in the case of our dealings with animals) there is a whole worldwide educational campaign to be carried on, so that people, now so callous, might more and more become aware of the beauty of plants, of the actual life that pervades them, or their sensitiveness (less obvious, and probably much dimmer than that of the highly organized animals, yet a fact); an educational campaign so that they might become more and more unwilling to cause any harm to them — unless it be, for themselves or for the animals, a pressing alternative of life or death, which it seldom is, save in the case of edible vegetables or herbs.

Our idea, put in a nutshell, is: no exploitation of animals whatsoever, and as little exploitation of plants as possibly there can be to keep both animals and men alive and healthy. We bear in a mind that even that much exploitation might well be temporary and that anyhow, so long as it lasts, it should be — as far as it *can* be — confined to plants naturally quick to grow and short-lived, mainly nutritive herbs and roots, and cereals.

Our sense of the unity of all life seems to us no excuse for not believing in the fundamental inequality of plants, as well as we certainly do in that of animals and also of men and races of men. And we do feel it is a far greater pity to destroy a noble oak, — a tree that took hundreds of years to reach its present splendor and that, if left to itself, would remain a thing of beauty for hundreds of years more — than to cut a rice plant or an ear of corn. We are even compelled to believe that the great realms of nature overlap one another, just as do, within each realm, the different species of unequal beauty and intelligence. And although we are not in the habit of killing anything, if we can help it, we would very certainly destroy a bug or a flea before consenting to see in their place a rose tree — not to speak of an oak tree or of a cedar — be cut down, just as we would give up any number of human dullards rather than consent to the death of an animal embodying the strength and beauty (and perhaps also the intelligence) of one of the most splendid or loveliest species.

* * *

One of the saddest tragedies of historic times is surely the gradual disappearance of forests all over the surface of our planet.

Ancient India — that India whose better sons composed the Vedic hymns and wrote the Upanishads — was a land of endless, luxuriant forests, with a comparatively small population. Ancient Greece was, in its mountainous areas at least (and these occupied then, as always, the greatest part of the country) covered with woods, fragrant abode of divine and semi-divine beings. There too people were few, compared to trees, without their quality suffering from it in any way, as their deeds have proved. The same could be said of ancient Italy, of North Africa, of Asia Minor; of China and Indo-China, and Japan. The same could be said of the whole world in ancient times.

But, as mankind expanded, forest areas decreased in surface, or vanished away altogether to make place for cultivated fields and various human industries. Whole portions of the globe lost their glorious living mantle. The famous Hercynian Forest that covered a great part of Germany and Central Europe in the days of Tacitus, and the forests of France and of the British Isles, where stately priests and virgins worshipped the Principle of Eternal Life in the sacred Oak, gradually fell under the merciless axe. Castles, towns and villages, churches and convents, warehouses and slums, and fields to nourish man, appeared upon their ruins. And the process seems to have gained impetus as man's technical achievements became more remarkable. In those very countries of Central and North-Western Europe there were as late as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — not long ago — many more woods than one can ever think of today. Now, what have they in the place of their royal oak, their birch trees and fir trees? An intricate network of roads and railways, huge industrial towns, a countryside full of neatly delineated food-growing fields and villages close to one another, and twenty-five times more population than is good for them — a restless population wasting its intelligence in inventing and solving new "problems" and curing new "complexes" instead of looking at the beauty of the world under sunshine, mist or snow.

The United States of America were a land of forests as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. Canada is said to be still, but not to the extent it once was. And there, in the place of the murdered trees, one sees undoubtedly, like everywhere else, roads and railways, towns with endless suburbs, villages rapidly, growing into towns, and vast expanses of cultivated land; more and more cultivated land to feed more and more people who might as well never have been born.

Save in the basin of the Amazon River and a fairly large part of Brazil, in the whole equatorial Africa, in Malaya (until very recently at least) and in some parts of Burma, Siam and Indochina, there are hardly any forests worth the name in all the world today. This, and parallel decrease in number of some of the most beautiful species of wild beasts — such as lions and tigers — is, in our eyes, the most disquieting fact of our times. It is disquieting because its consequences may well become irreparable in the relatively near future, unless men come to their senses, for whatever reason and whatever pretext it may be, and stop this rush to destruction.

Today, as after most wars of some importance, one hears no end of resounding talk, in private and in public, on the best means of putting a full stop to war. People seem to be terrified at the idea of destruction involving their own precious kind. And this is not to be found too strange, when one remembers that over fifteen hundred years of well-organized Christianity (influencing, more than one thinks, the whole world) have helped them and are helping them still to take their natural collective selfishness for the highest of virtues, and to consider human solidarity as their foremost duty.

Still, to us who look upon life — and *not man* — as the measure of values, there is something extravagant and ridiculous in that indignation that flares up at the mere name of "war," while all forms of destruction of nonhuman beings, however lovable and beautiful — be it the daily massacre of thousands of animals in all the slaughterhouses of the world, be it the cutting down of the most magnificent trees — leave most people unstirred.

We are surely the last persons to exalt war — especially colonial war, the worst type of uncalled for aggression. Yet we cannot but admit that the alleged remark of Napoleon Bonaparte at the sight of the multitude of dead men on the battle field of Eylau was not entirely devoid of meaning. The conqueror is said to have exclaimed, so as to console himself, perhaps, for the loss of so many good soldiers and officers: "A single night in Paris will fill that gap!" In fact — and provided the Parisians did not oppose themselves to the course of Nature — a "single night in Paris" would, probably result, twenty years hence, in the existence of a number of youngsters sufficient to form an army. Average men are good enough to fight wars, if not always to direct them. And average human life, though no doubt precious — as all life — is easy to replace, for all practical purposes. Buildings too are easy to replace, save when they happen to be extraordinarily beautiful, or of outstanding historic interest. The Houses of Parliament in

London, or Westminister Abbey, or the Cathedral of Chartres in France, or the Temple of Minakshi in Madura (South India), rare spots of utmost beauty with a long history behind them, would be irreplaceable. Fortunately enough such spots are not always hit. Bombarded towns, in general, recover far quicker than one would expect, and often emerge from the turmoil of war cleaner and better built than before.[1] Their ancient monuments are the only ones of which the loss, when it does occur, can count as a tragedy.

Now, every day, in some part or other of the world, majestic trees, older than many of the hallowed specimens of mediaeval architecture — patent masterpieces of nature — fall under the axe of the woodcutter. They too, we know, can be replaced. The systematic replanting of a seed for every felled giant of the forest would do for them what the "single night in Paris" was expected to do (and probably did) for the dead of Eylau. But it would take two hundred years — not twenty. In the meantime, the earth lies despoiled of its loveliness. It mourns its destroyed forests. And it is a fact that half the time there is no systematic replanting of trees at all, so that the earth is left to mourn its forests forever.

* * *

Most people do not take the tragic reality of deforestation too seriously, simply because they do not feel for the trees any more than they do for the animals. They far too badly lack any vital sensitiveness to beauty to be disturbed by the idea of the murder of a tree, be it the most royal sample of its kind. All that they care for is, at the most, their own species — when they care for anything at all besides themselves.

This is abundantly proved by the arguments put forward by those very speakers or writers who raise any cry of alarm at all as they contemplate the gradual disappearance of woods, and forests from certain regions of the globe. What is their cry of alarm? Trees, they say, are useful — indispensable — to the stability of the ground, and to be normal repartition of rainfall, of which they absorb a considerable portion. Their roots, infinitely ramified as they are, drink the surplus of the water and hold the earth together at the same time. Once they are no longer there to accomplish these two most useful tasks, the rain, following the natural course of all liquids, rushes down the slope of the hills to swell the rivers,

[1] Not, however, such towns as Nuremberg, *every house of which* was a work of art — such towns *are* irreplaceable.

dragging along with it sand and gravel and bigger rocks. Often whole masses of soaked earth, or loosened blocks of stone, detach themselves from those hills which have been stripped of their woody growth, causing in their fall more or less damage to human life or property; while in the plains, the rivers, increased by unchecked supplies of rainwater, rise and flood the countryside, carrying away hamlets and villages — cattle, houses, provisions and all; and men too — in their overflowing stream; becoming the cause of unheard of disaster. So, in order to avoid such calamities on an ever broadening scale, stop at once the cutting down of forests! Replace the murdered trees — for the sake of the coming generations of men — and allow the survivors to live and flourish — for the sake of the men of the present day, threatened with ruin and starvation!

This, in a few words, is the main argument advocated by the defenders of the forests. It is probably a very sound one, containing nothing more than a statement of actual fact, a relation of cause and consequence, well defined. It is surely a clever one, for it is the one, if any, that will move people to agitate for the preservation of forests, and governments to take steps against their destruction. But there could be a nobler one. It is an argument which appeals to one of the strongest of all feelings in average man: fear. Fear of his own loss; fear, at the most, for the loss caused to the human race. It resembles the argument of those who support vegetarian diet pointing out that meat eating is less healthy, or altogether unhealthy; or of those who speak against vaccination and against inoculation by serums saying that these do, ultimately, more harm than good to the patients. It betrays no feeling more generous than the desire to forestall avoidable disasters (landslides, floods, etc.) by practical precautionary measures of which the first would consist of protecting the trees; it supposes no broader love than that implied in human solidarity. It is not the argument of those who see, in the whole of Nature, a beautiful hymn to the glory of the mysterious Power within all things; of those who see in the trees, stretching out their branches and light-thirsty foliage to the Sun, as well as in animals, children and worshippers of the selfsame radiant Father-and-Mother of our world, and who love all creatures as themselves. It is not *our* argument, though we fully recognize its opportunity.

The great reason — the one reason — for which we advocate not only the preservation of the few existing forests, but the gradual replanting of the former ones, (now reduced, some of them, to

hardly a few trees) — is the beauty of trees — the beauty of life in the vegetable as in the animal kingdom.

Most people admit that trees are beautiful; and many, thrilled by the idea of that intricate inner organization that all life represents, are ready to marvel at them as works of art out of comparison with anything man can produce in stone, sound, or even thought, and to quote Joyce Kilmer's well-known words:

> Poems are made by fools like me,
> But only God can make a tree!

Yet they do not really feel for the lovely innocent creatures whose only purpose, like that of all creatures, including man, is to live to the utmost in the truth of *their* life, and to be beautiful; of the lovely innocent creatures whose only joy is to drink in the fragrant dampness of the earth with all the power of their sensitive roots, to absorb the Sun's rays through all their leaves, and to grow — to grow in strength, to grow in grace, in an exuberance of shapes and forms, as well as in a harmony of elemental sensations; to express, to their full capacity, the joyful presence in them of a universal Soul. They willingly look upon them as the incomparable handiwork of a supreme Artist, but do not apprehend in them *a part and parcel of that Artist's life*. The inherited habit of considering the world as the arbitrary creation of a personal and transcendent God, distinct from it, has killed in them (west of India, at least) the sense of the divinity of Life as such.

We remember the instance of some Hindus offering a feast of milk, fruit and cakes to the life-spirit within a tree before putting their axe to the stately trunk. Ancient Greeks or ancient Romans, ancient Germans or Britons, who believe, the trees of their forests were inhabited by dryads and sylvan gods, would possibly have done the same in similar circumstance. If the felling of the tree was unavoidable, it was perhaps the only thing left for them to do, to show how reluctantly they were yielding to an awful necessity. It was surely less barbaric than simply to fell the tree, without remorse or regret, as though it had no beauty and no soul. It showed a better sense of the value of plants as such (irrespective of their utility to man), a better knowledge of the unity of all life than most possess, west of India, for the last fifteen hundred years (and in India, too, in general, at the present day).

We would like everybody, but especially the more consistently rational people, to feel increasingly all the beauty and sacredness of life in trees, creepers and bushes — in all plants — as in animals. Such people would perhaps not try to propitiate the spirit forced

out of its sylvan abode before ordering or allowing the felling of a tree. But they would surely think twice before deciding, in their heart and conscience, that the felling of that tree has to take place, and "cannot be avoided" anyhow. They would look upon the action as an evil in itself, and consider it very seriously.

Felling trees is bad enough; burning out forests is even worse, for it implies the infliction if the most horrid death not only upon the trees themselves, but also upon the luxuriant living undergrowth, and on numbers of birds and animals caught in the flames. Only try to imagine how many young birds are burnt alive in their nests when a forest is set on fire; how many insects perish, and how many reptiles twist their bodies in a cruel agony; how many deer and wolves, foxes and wildcats, — or leopards and panthers, if in the tropics — rush hither and thither, maddened with fear, surrounded with flames, not knowing where to run, until they are burnt to death. But leaving the animals aside, think of the ferns and flowers and creepers, the bushes that grew so happily an hour before in the shadow of the high trees. Think of the trees themselves, their boiling sap bubbling out by a thousand horrid splits; their leaves — those leaves that drank in the sunshine with sensuous delight, — shriveling up in the contortion of death as the trunks burn, upright, desperate living torches, unable even to try to run away. Men who can set fire to a forest, or order others to do so, deserve death at the stake.

We know the reply. "Horrible though it may be, this has to be done, especially in the tropics. There is no way of clearing out space otherwise. And space is needed to build roads and railways; to win new ground for cultivation and human settlements. Or, in other cases, one has to cut down trees and burn them, by a different process, in order to make charcoal; one has to cut them down to make pulp for paper. For without roads and railways, civilization would not progress, exchanges would stop — things I could not be sold cheap wherever they are needed; new fields are I necessary to feed people; without an extra supply of charcoal, buses could not run in wartime, when all the fuel is needed for airplanes; and without paper, or with very little paper, hardly any books could be published." We know this argument. It is, applied to crimes against vegetable life, the same old selfish argument put forth to justify the torture and slaughter of animals, by those who believe that "anything" can be done when it suits the interest of the human species. It shocks us as much gas would the reasoning of a man advocating the wholesale destruction of more or less

extensive portions of foreign humanity in horrible agony for the convenience of his own country, guild or family. In case men were to be the victims, most people would exclaim: “We would rather go without our convenience than purchase it at that cost!” In case of all the life and beauty that a forest contains, we exclaim: “Better to have no roads and railways; no new fields; no buses running when they cannot get the necessary fuel; and better have next to no paper for new books, rather than purchase any of those advantages at the cost of a forest in flames, even of a felled forest — of beautiful trees lying dead where they could still have been alive, enjoying the light and warmth of the Sun!”

The world would be none the unhappier if a few extra places remained without roads or railways; if a few more imported things remained expensive, even unobtainable; if a few more people travelled on foot, or renounced travelling altogether for want of buses in abnormal times. And as for books, far too many mediocre and decidedly bad ones have been published since the invention of the printing press. Many are not worth the paper on which they are printed. A few — extremely few — are worth the sacrifice of a single tree for paper pulp. A little slowing down in paper production would do more good than harm. It would perhaps — it could, anyhow — become an opportunity to stop the widespread prostitution of the pen; to remake the art of writing what it should never have ceased to be: a disinterested attempt to express beautifully some strongly-felt aspect of everlasting truth; a *mission*, not a profession. It would perhaps eliminate the many commercial writers, the idle readers, and an enormous quantity of trash. And paper made out of rags would be quite sufficient to publish all that is truly beautiful or truly instructive.

On the other hand, if man could wholeheartedly refuse the advantages he might get from the destruction of forests rather than accept them, knowing fully well what crimes against life and beauty they involve, then he would begin to grow into a creature somewhat different from a clever and selfish beast; he would experience the development of a finer nature within himself; he would earn the right to call himself “superior” to the rest of the living. But will he ever do so? Will even the superior human races ever do so on a broad scale?

* * *

Among the most shocking forms of what we could call cruelty to plants in ordinary life-assuming, as we cannot but do, in the

vegetable world, the existence of some dim consciousness — one should count all those attempts to force certain trees to grow into all sorts of unnatural shapes for the satisfaction of perverse human taste. Trees (in particular certain fruit trees) tortured into fan-like formations, or into square, triangular, conical, cylindrical, oblong and other geometrical shapes, and trimmed regularly so that one branch may not stretch further than another and "spoil" the line; hedges continually cut in order to keep their tops and sides perfectly flat, and to make them look like living walls; grass clipped and reclipped to make the lawns look "tidy" — all this seems to us gruesome. Ugly, for one thing; anything distorted is ugly — and in addition to that, cruel to the extent that the trees in a "Dutch garden," the bushes in the too "neat" hedges, and the grass in the "tidy" lawns, are alive and sensitive in their own way, and that they are thwarted in their healthy natural growth, just as a child would be, were it forced by some mechanical device to grow crippled. These practices seem to us all the more repulsive in that their only motive lies in a human fancy for living "curios," a taste for monsters and freaks of nature, that is not a particularly noble one, or in a mania for "tidiness," ill-becoming when tender, live shoots and branches that had their place in a greater and more generous order, and grass and flowers eager to grow are ruthlessly sacrificed to it.

Personally, we would even abstain from despoiling plants of their beautiful flowers save on very special occasions, or for truly exalted purposes — for the cult of Him who made them grow, for instance, or for the embellishment of the shrines dedicated to the world's great Souls. And we disapprove entirely of the custom of sacrificing a whole plant merely to decorate the entrance of a house on a festive day, or to form the basis of an arch of green leaves and flowers under which a procession is to pass. Banana trees, in India, are often put to such uses. It is a pity, no doubt. And the Hindus would not do it, were they nearer at heart to the spirit of their great life-centered religions.

* * *

To sum up, we do not — we cannot — reject all idea of exploitation of plants as categorically as we do that of animals. An uncompromising attitude, possible in the latter case, would lead nowhere in this. We *can* live without eating meat; we cannot live without eating some kind of vegetable; without even growing, for our own staple food and for that of thousands of domestic animals,

certain plants such as rice, wheat and grass.

But this once granted as an unavoidable fact, we do firmly believe that the exploitation of plants could be reduced to a minimum hardly credible to most people in the present state of affairs. In particular, we believe that the burning and cutting down of forests, for whatever purpose it be, could be entirely stopped, and that the destroyed leafy mantle of our planet could systematically be replaced and allowed to flourish forever, if only humanity were ruled by an elite sharing sincerely — openly — a generous, life-centered creed. We are convinced that much unnecessary suffering and ugliness could be avoided, with regard to the daily treatment of plants as well as of animals, if men only were taught to feel, from the beginning, that plants — and animals — have *rights*, as forming, along with us, a part of living nature; if they were only taught to feel that they are not made for us, but for themselves, as all creatures are — for themselves, as things of beauty, expressing the glory of universal Life — and that we alone, if at all we be a "master species," have duties, and nothing but duties, towards them and the rest of the living. If children were only brought up in that spirit, the individual who gives the order to set a forest on fire would become an object of horror to all. And instead of having the trees along the avenues mutilated so that their living branches might not interfere with the streetcar wires, municipalities would see to it that the streetcar wires be placed so as not to interfere with the beautiful branches of the trees, full of sap and full of life.

CHAPTER X

Active Kindness

As we have remarked in the beginning of this book, there is in general very little *positive* kindness to animals even in such a country as India, where eighty per cent of the people can be said to profess — outwardly, at least — life-centered religions, and to be, for long centuries, familiarized with the idea of the oneness of all life.

The condition of the unowned animals there, especially of dogs and cats, is often appalling. We have seen them — thin, miserable, famishing creatures, with ribs jutting out, lame or diseased more often than not, and nearly always scared at the sight of a human being walking towards them; not daring to come within the reach of the two-legged friend who offers them some food, or wishes to stroke them, for the two-legged ones, they know, are treacherous: they only brandish sticks and throw stones; they are hostile demons to be feared. We have seen them-and cursed the hypocrisy of the men who can tolerate the existence of such distress while worshipping the Great God Whose name — Pasupati — means "The Lord of Beasts," and taking pride in being the Buddha's compatriots.

We must admit that, in the blessed Land which has managed to keep alive up till today the tradition of so many faiths all proclaiming the unity of Life, most grown up people are not aggressively cruel to animals; they just "do not interfere" in the cases of positive cruelty which they might happen to witness and, in ordinary life, they are simply indifferent. They will not kill an animal, certainly not — not even a bug or a flea, most of them; nor eat meat, of course; nor commit, nor support, most of the crimes that the believers in man-centered creeds find so "natural." *Ahimsa* — "not

injury," harmlessness — is the consecrated word which comes back, over and over again, like a leitmotiv, on the lips of the Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, etc., exalting the excellence of their respective creeds before outsiders or among themselves, as though to convince the world (and themselves) that they are the inheritors of the most perfect of all civilizations. "Harmlessness" — non-aggressiveness towards all living beings — they say "is the supreme religion, the duty of duties." And they take it literally-not in its spirit. Kill a living creature? never. They would not do that. Hit it? not even that. But never matter what a creature suffers at the hands of other people, less enlightened, provided the proud "ahimshavadi" (the believer in harmlessness) is not himself the author of the mischief! Never mind, also, what it may suffer from sheer neglect, from want of active sympathy provided *he* does no positive harm to it, no "injury"! We once saw a respectable believer in "harmlessness" pass before a group of street urchins busy trying to bring down a bird's nest from a tree, and say nothing. We asked him — after reprimanding the young rascals and forcing them to disperse — why he had said nothing. "Oh!" answered he, "they are children of the lowest of the low; they don't know any better." It is probable that they did not. But it never occurred to the gentleman either to teach them better, or — if he was *a priori* convinced that they were unteachable — at least to prevent them, then and there, from harming the birds. It was "no business of his."

We have seen rich men and women, upholders of the ideal of "harmlessness," pass by starving dogs lying at their door — or at the door of the hotel where they had enjoyed a good meal — and never even think of asking a servant to give the poor creatures something to eat; never even tell him to throw them the leavings of the food instead of casting these into the garbage can among the ashes, from which no animal could possibly pick them out; never protest at the sight of people kicking the dogs or chasing them away. We have seen well-to-do householders, believers in "harmlessness," chase away starving cats from the approach of their kitchen instead of asking a servant to put down some food for them, if necessary out of doors. As they did not actually *hit* the creatures, but just caused them to remain hungry when they could have done otherwise, all was well, they thought; and their conscience did not reproach them with cruelty. Man's conscience is what upbringing, habit and individual sensitiveness make it. And where individual sensitiveness is lacking — as is the case with most people every-

where — a faulty upbringing is never recognized to have been faulty, and habits of callousness never taken to be bad.

Yet, as we have remarked in former chapters, there have been times when positive kindness to animals (and not merely abstention from harming them) was widely preached and made a duty by law throughout India; times when hospitals and homes for sick or aged beasts were maintained there by the government, and when people were prompted by the example of the ruling king himself actually to help any living creature. Those laws and institutions, that whole state of affairs, were the result of the initiative of a very few individual men who happened to be both vividly aware of man's duties towards all sentient beings, and to possess either absolute power — like King Asoka — or an enormous influence upon those in power — like those saintly mendicants of old who once carried the Buddha's message of love all over Asia and were heard with reverence at the courts of kings. They do not seem ever to have been the outcome of widespread spontaneous interest in animals on the part of a whole nation. And though we do not deny that, even today, the ordinary, humble folk of India often show somewhat less callousness to animals than the so-called educated people do, we have yet to come across any nation having spontaneously, as a matter of course, in ancient or modern times, lived up to the law of active love preached, as regards all creatures, by the world's greatest seers. Ancient India, even after Buddhism had left its stamp upon it, was no exception; otherwise what need had Harshavardhana (seventh century A.D.) to be so drastic in his punishment of cruelty to animals? Ancient Egypt, with all the attention her people paid to sacred animals of various sorts, was no exception either; otherwise hunting and meat-eating would have disappeared there, from earliest times. *Active* — and impartial — kindness to all that lives was never looked upon as a duty but by the better few, and never practiced, even in Hindu or Buddhist countries, save when enforced or particularly encouraged by a ruling elite.

* * *

What about the countries that profess man-centered creeds? In most of them — in nearly all of them — the way animals are treated is revolting; the less said about it the better. We shall only recall Norman Douglas' vivid and all too accurate description of the massacre of lambs in Greece at the time of Easter; we shall recall the cruel way both those and other animals are killed in public

slaughterhouses, in markets or at the back of butchers' shops any where in the Near East or in Mediterranean countries; we shall recall the atrocities daily committed in France for the gratification of man's gluttony: the stuffing of poultry "de Bresse," or of those geese from the enormously overdeveloped livers of which "foie gras" is prepared — to say nothing of the horrors of vivisection in all the laboratories of Europe and America (save of the one or two States in which it has been made illegal).

Even taking into consideration the few excellent laws passed in recent years in Germany and in England for the prevention of cruelty to animals, the West *as a whole* has absolutely nothing to boast of compared to India or to any country of Hindu or Buddhist tradition. And North Africa — Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco — is one of the few regions of the world (of the old hemisphere at least) in which the wanton cruelty displayed in the killing of cattle, and man's usual brutality to pack-animals, especially to donkeys, beat those witnessed in Mediterranean Europe or in India.

Yet, along with the apparently healthy condition of the horses he meets in the streets, there is one thing that cannot but favorably impress a lover of animals on his arrival in England or Germany, and that is the special care generally given in those countries to cats and dogs. I shall never forget the sight that greeted me on a cold November night of 1945, as I walked out of Victoria Station in London, coming from India: a magnificent, panther-like cat, fiery yellow with tawny stripes, fat and glossy, his tail erect; an animal accustomed to be loved, that was not afraid of human beings, but came at once when I called him. I took him up in my arms. How heavy he was! I thought of the dozens and dozens of miserable starving cats which I used to feed in India; of the hundreds and thousands that have remained out of my reach: of all the creatures, all over the world, that are born, live and die without knowing a human caress. And tears fell from my eyes as I stroked the soft, thick, royal, furry creature that purred and purred in response to my touch. And — although I had, on ideological grounds, actively fought against her during the war — I blessed England from the depth of my heart, "Whatever be their rulers — or those who sit and 'pull the strings' at the back of these — *her people*, of overwhelmingly Nordic stock, are thoroughly good," thought I.

The following day I saw other cats, all in good condition, all friendly, all taking it for granted that a human being could do them no harm. I saw beautiful well-fed dogs with their mistresses in the subway and in the buses. The mistresses were not looked upon as

"queer" creatures, nor the dogs as a nuisance, by the other passengers, as they would have been in many parts of the world. On the contrary; more than once a child would stretch out its little hand to stroke a silky snout, with two large, intelligent, loving eyes. And the mother, far from showing signs of anger, would say, speaking of the dog: "Look! he is a beauty! He looks just like our poor Top." And sometimes she would start talking about members of their owner's families. They are loved; they had died at the age of sixteen or seventeen, or about dogs and cats in general. One felt that, here, pets are just like members of the owners' families. They are loved; they are looked after; they have their place at the fireside. And to know that these people had suffered, that they had just emerged from a great war during which their endurance had been tried to breaking point, and that they were still strictly rationed, and one realizes all the more the possibilities of true love that lurk in them. How many times have we not thought: "Had these English men and women had the privilege of being brought up in the teaching of the Buddha, or of the Pythagorean — or in the long forgotten Religion of the Disk — instead of in man-centered Christianity, they would probably have been the finest people on earth." We would no doubt have thought the same of the Germans, and of most Northern Europeans among whom kindness to pets is an undeniable fact.

However, as one lives longer in these countries where no animals are visibly ill-treated (save the victims of "scientific research" and the hunted deer and foxes) and where cats and dogs are given a place in the home, one gets to know more about them, and one admires them less — even when coming from the wretched East. One learns the true value of those demonstrations of affection for "poor old Top"; one understands what an amazing amount of selfishness lies behind half the care which most owners of cats and dogs lavish on their pets. The unsurmountable weaknesses of the man-centered and man-ridden civilization are everywhere visible under the pleasing appearance of cozy, comfortable animal life, spent on cushions, at the fireside. And they are all the more shocking in that the surroundings are more tidy, if not more sumptuous, and in that the people are more well-to-do and that, outwardly, they make more of their pets and of animals in general.

One soon gets the impression that, in the only countries of the world where they are well fed and kindly treated, pets are kept for the pleasure of their owners, not for the sake of their own lives,

recognized as beautiful and therefore considered precious in themselves. It is the convenience of the animal's owner — and sometimes of the owner's neighbors; always, at any rate, of human beings — that decides the destiny of the animal, cat or dog. When "poor old Top" became sickly (as it is only natural that he should, one day), and when it is too expensive, or too tiresome to look after him, he is just sent to the "vet" and "put to sleep." "Painlessly," say his masters. It may be. Yet life is sweet, even to an old sick dog, as it is to an old sick man. Top was still full of affection; he still used to wag his tail as his master or any of the children passed by his bed; he still would have been happy to warm his old bones a year or two more at the fireside in winter and in the sun during the brighter days. But his presence was no longer a source of joy to his owners. *They did not love him as he loved them*.

They loved only themselves, like most human beings do. Top was too old for them to play with, though not too old to feel the sweetness of daylight. He was also getting "dirty" and needed care — as his masters probably will, when they grow old. And his masters were not prepared to put up with so much bother from their four-legged friend; so Top was "put to sleep" — that is to say, killed as humanely as possible. He was selfishly sacrificed to human convenience.

In another household, the cat had just had three kittens — three tiny blind creatures no more and no less conscious of being alive than any newly-born mammals, including human babies; but three little creatures that would have grown into delightful, fluffy, playful and sensitive things, balls of fur, running after each other and catching each other's tails, or rolling on their backs and kicking with all fours at a scrap of crumpled paper. They would have grown into that, and then into adult cats, enjoying food and love and adventure; gazing at the Sun with their dreamy emerald eyes; in winter, comfortably rolled up on cushions and eiderdowns — cats, with all the grace and experience that this word means. And their mother, the house cat, was so glad to have them! To her, they meant fulfillment, joy, success of a great purpose beyond her. She purred and purred as she licked them, nearly as soon as they were born, her three little treasures, *her* kittens. How she would have loved to feed them and bring them up! But no. She was not allowed to do so. Her owners could not afford "so many cats about the house." So the little kittens she had left in her basket asleep, fully confident that she would find them there again after her meal, were carried away and drowned. And the poor mother cat wanders

about the house in search of them. She calls them, with a special cry: “Meow! Meow!” as if to say: “Where are you, my little ones?” They must be somewhere, she imagines. They cannot have walked away; they were too young. And the human beings living in the house-those kind creatures that feed the mother cat and caress her and take her on their laps-cannot have taken them away. Why should they? The unfortunate beast looks up to the murderers of her babies with inquiring confidence and says: “Meow!” — that is to say: “Do you know where they are? Can you help me to find them?” Poor mother cat! Her beautiful green eyes express no horror and no hatred — nothing but distress. For she does not know what has happened. She does not know what treacherous creatures they are, those two-legged ones who feed her and caress her. And gradually, as days pass her grief seems to subside. She mews no more. She seems to have forgotten about her lost kittens ... until she gives birth to more, in due course; and the same old tragedy begins again.

In how many households do such tragedies regularly take place, without anyone even realizing the cruelty of them? And if one points it out to them, the “kind” people just remark that they “cannot have dozens of cats about the house,” especially when food is as expensive and as scarce as it is now; they can hardly afford to feed their children properly!

Other “lovers of animals” deliberately refuse to take a female cat, for fear that the problem of her kittens will arise sooner or later. They hate the idea of having them drowned or chloroformed; and they know they are not able to find suitable homes for them. So they only accept a male cat as a pet. That seems reasonable enough. But tomcats are highly sexed; they get “in season” pretty often, and pretty violently; they meow in a particular manner, and very loudly, at that time, and it disturbs the neighbors. They spray here and there — against the walls, against the furniture — and that upsets their owners, especially when the latter consider the possession of expensive cushions, carpet, and so on, as essential to their happiness. So what is to be done? Go without a cat, and put food out of doors for the stray cats that might come to eat it? No. That could be done, of course; but that is not what kind people do in the West of Europe. They keep a cat, but they have it castrated, that is to say they thwart it in its natural development; they deprive it, for life, of the only means it has, as an animal, of putting itself now and then in tune with cosmic Reality — all for their own petty convenience; for the neighbors not to complain; for the sofa

in the drawing room not to be spoilt. They might be all the time caressing the pet's glossy fur; they might put a blue silk ribbon around his neck and feed him tinned salmon and cream, and allow him to sleep on their own bed. Still, we would say, they do not really love him. They are pleased to keep him as an ornament and as a plaything. But they have no sense of his rights as a living being. They really love nothing but themselves, the selfish creatures.

The same can be observed of all those who keep birds in cages; of all those who have dogs and keep them half the time on a leash, or shut them up in some back yard with hardly any exercise; of all those who put their own convenience before the real, natural interest of their pets. One has only to look around among one's friends and acquaintances in the West of Europe to see what an appalling proportion of people, pretending to love animals, fall into that category. We say nothing of the altogether repulsive sort of "animal lovers" who have their pets "put to sleep" simply because they are leaving town — or leaving the house — and find it "inconvenient" to take them with them.

* * *

There is more to say. We have recalled the widespread practices of the West in which cruelty to animals is involved, the legal crimes committed every day and in nearly all countries, in the name of man's food, clothing, amusement, health and scientific research. a What seems to us utterly shocking in the West is precisely the coexistence of such criminal institutions side by side with a certain general interest in dogs and cats as pets; the fact that, for instance, so many English men and women would go far out of their way to make Puppy and Pussy happy at their fireside, while so few are actually ready to start as energetic and thorough an agitation against vivisection as they once carried on in support of women's suffrage or other such reforms. What makes us sick is to see that three quarters of those owners of pets never seem to have given a thought to the daily horrors implied in the exploitation of animals in general. Numbers of them are meat eaters, without the slightest sense of guilt; many of them occasionally go hunting, or find it natural to count among their friends people who happen to indulge in that sport; others can be seen. in winter wearing animals' skins — including "astrakhan" and "caracul" — upon their backs. We even know, in France, of a woman who herself used to perform

vivisections and who, at the same time, was said to be extravagantly attached to a pet cat.

The attitude of the average owner of pets towards animals in general, even in Western Europe (we should say, especially in those countries of Western Europe in which pets are given the most care) appears as nothing less than damnable hypocrisy, to any *consistent* lover of animals, innocent of the everyday crimes in which all meat-eaters have their share, and inspired by a life centered creed. It shocks him, or her, as much as the occasional "philanthropy" of cannibals would shock a man inspired by the Christian standards of morality. It appears to him ridiculous and pitiable — and abominably selfish. The fact of having pets and of feeding them properly only proves that certain people enjoy the presence of certain animals (cats and dogs, of often exceptionally beautiful breeds) in their immediate surroundings. It does not prove in the least that those people do their duty towards living creatures as a whole; it does not ever prove that they love those very pets they have with true, disinterested love for the animals themselves.

In other words, when one comes to examine closely its institutions and its mentality, the West of Europe (and America) with its well fed horses, cats and dogs, is hardly better than the rest of the world. It is, at the most, not quite so bad as a whole — and of the truth of this statement we cannot be sure. The only thing that can, if not serve as an excuse for the non-Hindu world — for there is no *excuse* — at least make its crimes less grievous, compared with the criminal indifference of so many Indians to animal suffering, is the fact that India has had the life-centered teachings of her greatest sons to guide her conduct, and *should know better*, while poor Europe has slowly evolved in the sense of kindness to animals *in spite of* the long conscience-killing tradition of man-centered Christianity. One should indeed congratulate the Western continent for the little progress recently realized against such odds; one should congratulate the few who, especially in certain Western countries, like England, and in Northern Europe in general, are aware that we have duties towards all sentient creatures; one could, above all, congratulate Germany's now persecuted, heroic ruling elite for the stress it lay, throughout its twelve years of power, upon the right of animals and trees; for its admirable "code concerning hunting" — more a protection of the wild beasts than a "hunters'" code; — for the severity with which it punished any cruelty to animals, including

pigs[1], and last but not least, for its bold stand against experimentation upon live beasts.

We would, no doubt, like to see the cats and dogs of Asia, of Mediterranean Europe, and of all the world, in as good a condition as that majestic feline we met in November 1945 on our arrival in London. But we would no less like to see, in England itself and in other countries priding themselves in being "kind to animals," no kittens or puppies taken away from their mothers and "destroyed," no tomcat emasculated, no horses shot (or sold to the slaughterhouses) when they are too old to work — and, of course, no animals bred for the meat industry, the fur industry and so on, or used for scientific experimentation. And that too is not enough. That is just harmlessness. What we want is harmlessness coupled with positive, active kindness, not merely to cats and dogs, horses and cows, but to all living things; to those that are useful to man and to those that are not, impartially; positive, active kindness, reflected both in every individual man's behaviour towards animals, and in the national institutions of every country — in the world's various civilizations.

We should like to see the mothers, in every human home, teach their children to put by a portion of their bread, of their rice and of their milk (or of whatever other edible substance they might share) for the unowned cats and dogs of the locality; we would like to see the women put by their potato peelings, cabbage leaves and other kitchen scraps for the old horses, donkeys, cows, etc., maintained by men until they die a happy, natural death, instead of being either killed or left to starve; we would like to see restaurant owners all over the world put by their customer's leavings for the same purpose of feeding living creatures — put them by neatly: the bread and soup leavings in one container, the rice and milk in the other, so that the animals of different species might pick and choose what they like. How many poor starving dogs and cats, cows and donkeys, could live and thrive, if only every hotel or restaurant owner would see to it that his staff just puts by for them the

[1] We know of the case of a person who spent three and a half years in a German concentration camp for having killed a pig "in a cruel manner" while at the same epoch (1943) — but under an entirely different regime — a Calcutta butcher (named Mahavir Kahar) was sentenced to *one month imprisonment only* for flaying goats alive (in order to sell the skins — more easily stretched — for a few *annas* extra.)

tremendous amount of food now carelessly thrown away day after day? We have seen in India — in starving Bengal itself, during the very time of the great famine of 1943, much spoken of abroad — what criminal waste takes place in the hotels and restaurants, out of sheer lack of positive kindness (out of lack of care for creatures other than themselves) in the hearts of men: whole portions of good boiled rice, potatos, vegetable dishes (meat and fish dishes in the non-vegetarian restaurants) remorselessly thrown into the trash can, into piles of ashes and stinking rubbish, when it was so easy to give them to some starving creatures, men or beasts, or both.

And it is not merely in the daily habits of the people all over the world, it is also in their official institutions, in their laws and regulations, that active kindness towards all living things should find its expression.

One often hears Christians boast of the fact that the philanthropic spirit of their religion still influences the whole of the civilized world inasmuch as, in spite of creating religious skepticism, the thinkers of the whole world today show more and more interest in human welfare, and that the world's institutions reflect the social preoccupations of its thinkers. But people who earnestly feel and think as we do, having transcended once and for all the selfish creeds centered around the mere love of humanity, are the heralds of a far better world. The, ideal society on Christian lines, or according to the spirit of any man-centered creed, religious or non-religious (not to mention any clumsy attempt at its establishment) appeals no more to us than would, to the Christians, or to the humanitarians of any denomination, a ferociously and falsely national-minded society in which no men, save those of a definite ethnic group, would enjoy the slightest rights even as temporary guests. We want a society in which not only would slaughterhouses and vivisection laboratories be remembered with general horror and disgust — and the civilizations that tolerated them be looked down upon as inferior civilizations — but in which comfortable homes for different unowned animals would be as common, and appear as natural and necessary, as orphanages and homes for aged people do now, in a world that can imagine nothing higher than Christian ethics. We want a society *in which public conscience would be truly life-centered, not man-centered*; in which there would be no preference for human beings in times of food scarcity any more than there is now — or than there is supposed to be — for men of any particular

race or country. Such preference shocks us as the mark of a definitely mean mentality; as the expression of moral standards utterly inferior to our own — the standards of savages, compared with ours. If it is, in certain cases, to appear at all, *it should first appear* among human beings, in favor of the better races, and amidst every race, in favor of its natural elite.

The little that is done now against such a state of affairs is done through purely individual initiative, under the dictates of a better heart than that of the average people. One man out of twenty — in some countries one man out of a thousand — will spontaneously give the whole of his milk ration to a cat, and half his bread ration to a dog, though he needs them himself. For not more than one out of twenty — and generally far less — are earnestly indignant at the fact that, in times of emergency, when food is rationed, governments allot no ration cards to any living creatures but human beings. The majority of men find this injustice only natural. In their eyes, they and their children must come first; and if there be not enough food for all, it is the animals which should perish first — perhaps even be killed in order that the human beings, including the deficient ones, the useless ones, and even the dangerous ones, might feed on their flesh.

We never could have any respect for civilizations based on such a mean outlook as this. The doctrine of active, universal kindness, preached by a few of the earth's greatest seers, knows of no distinctions in matters of material help, between two-legged and four-legged mammals, between bird and fish, man and beast. We can only respect a society in which not only would human diet, dress, therapy, etc., be absolutely harmless to subhuman creatures, but in which, in times such as those which the world is now going through, governments, acting under the pressure of an evolved public moral conscience, would include all animals depending upon man in their rationing schemes as naturally as they now include in them all human beings nay, definitely give them, if they be healthy, priority over deficient or objectionable men.

Not merely to be "harmless"; not merely not to exploit, for human ends, any beast, and even the vegetable world *as far as possible*, but to extend our active love to all that lives; to do our utmost, even at our own cost, so that every individual creature, bird or beast, might continue to enjoy the sight of the sun, in health and beauty, — these are our ethics. Arid, as we have said already before, there are no metaphysics behind them. We do not need theories about the unknowable in order to love the beautiful living

things that grace this planet: beasts and birds, insects, reptiles and fishes; trees and creepers. At most, if any everlasting words, ever echoing in our heart, express better than we could that joyous communion of all creatures in the common thrill of Life of which we are so vividly aware, these are the inspired verses of Akhnaton's hymn to the Sun:

Cattle frisk about upon their feet; creatures that fly, and insects of all kinds spring into life when Thou risest upon them. The birds fly round and round, flapping their wings in praise of Thy Essence . . . The fish leap up from the depth and greet Thy rising . . . O Disk of the day, great in majesty!

CHAPTER XI

Race, Economics and Kindness. The Ideal World

All that we have just written will seem rather unpractical to a great number of readers. And we ourselves cannot but admit that, for all but a very few people, exceptionally conscious of the sacred unity of all life (and also exceptionally prompted *by nature* to love animals and even trees as their own kith and kin) the teaching of universal love which we have tried to put forward is a little difficult to live up to, *in the present conditions of society*.

Ninety per cent of men (and women) are both lazy and cowardly, and out of sheer moral and intellectual apathy they behave just as circumstances suggest. They follow the apparently easiest way, that is to say, the common, long-trodden path. And the common, long-trodden path is suggested, if not determined, mainly by the race to which the overwhelming majority of the people belong in a given land, and . . . by economic factors.

This is obvious in the difference that one cannot but notice between the way animals (and trees) are treated in Germany, England, Scandinavia, and in all Northern Europe, where the whole population is practically of Nordic stock, and the manner in which they are handled in those countries of the same continent in which Aryan blood is less pure; nay, in which non-Aryan elements are prevalent. So obvious that one might boldly say, speaking of course, *in general*: "Where Nordic humanity ends, cruelty to animals (and callousness about living nature as a whole) begins." This is also the reason why — or one of the reasons why — the *masses* of India are so indifferent to the suffering of living creatures, in spite of the beautiful *life*-centered religions (inherited from Aryan masters) which they profess: they are themselves non-Aryan by blood in a very high proportion.

But, along with race, standard of living has to be taken into consideration. Widespread misery — and, which is more, not *temporary* but *permanent* misery — breeds callousness. Few people even among the so-called greatest ones, have ever had enough pluck to stand *all their lives*, day after day, against the suggestions of economic pressure — to become poorer still, while poor already, generously, for the sake of a higher urge; to be openhearted and openhanded, noble in their treatment of creatures, while themselves hungry and despised. We knew such a person in India, a humble woman, living in wretched surroundings and crippled, who begged for her food, and yet who could not witness an animal's distress without doing something to relieve it. She still picks up and feeds the poor unwanted kittens that other human beings have thrown into the street; she once adopted a puppy she had found, half dead, under a heap of rubbish; and at the time we knew her she managed to feed some twenty or twenty-five starving cats and several stray dogs of the locality.[1] But such people as she are rare among the rarest. In general, one of the strongest factors of all at work against the growth of a society essentially kind to animals is human poverty. One cannot get away from that fact.

We have been compelled to recognize that the religion which people outwardly profess has far less influence upon their behaviour toward animals in everyday life than one would logically be inclined to think; for people are anything but logical. We have seen how cruelty to animals is indeed hardly less rampant in Hindu and Buddhist countries (which should know better) than in Italy, Spain or North Africa, where children are brought up in the atmosphere of strongly man-centered religions. We have just seen how one can account for this on racial grounds, But we could have, also, roughly divided the world into countries where the standard of living is generally high — the North and West of Europe; the Northern States of the United States of America — and countries where it is generally low; and we could have asserted, with fairly little chance of being mistaken, that in the first animals are, as a whole, less badly treated than in the second. (Curiously enough — thanks to certain *moral* qualities inherent in their people's blood — the countries that have a definitely Aryan population are precisely the "highest standard" ones).

[1] The woman happens to be a Muslim. Her name is Zobeida Khatun. She used to live at 97B, Taltala Lane, Calcutta, at the time we knew her.

Not that no cruelties take place in the lands where the average standard of living is the very highest; appalling laboratory experiments on live creatures are performed in America (where only a few States have sanctioned the abolition of vivisection) just as elsewhere English people — some of them at least — occasionally go hunting, and encourage the horrors of the fur industry by wearing fur coats. But what can safely be said, it seems, is that deliberate cruelty to animals, and especially indifference to their sufferings — widespread callousness — are far less rampant, as a rule, in countries where the standard of human life is higher than in those where it is low. It is as though the worries and discomforts of poverty — and even the daily sight of slums and beggars, and of dirty, ill-fed street urchins — harden the heart of the common man to all suffering save, at the most, to that of his own species (when they do not close it altogether to all but his wretched personal problems). Poverty, we say, *and* the daily sight of poverty. It is a fact to be reckoned with, however shocking it might be to people who are strongly conscious of the value of *all* life, as we are ourselves.

The Indian (and European) slum dweller takes little notice of the thin, tired and thirsty horse, donkey or buffalo, dragging its cart through congested back streets under the threat of a hard stick. He takes little notice, too, of the famished dogs and cats, seeking a meager sustenance in the dustheaps; of the kitten, still alive, that somebody threw in the gutter or in the trash can three days before; of the young birds, in agony among the blood-stained remains of their crushed nest, which half a dozen human rascals, armed with stones, shouting and stamping with fiendish glee, have just brought down from the big tree near the water pump. He takes little notice of the cow, kid or pig, screaming in the yard at the back of a shop as it is being killed. Familiar sights and familiar sounds; everyday occurrences, perhaps bad in themselves, but far too common to stir his indignation. He has no leisure to give them a critical thought, were even his brains still alive enough to produce one. He has enough to do — he says — to think of his own misery; of the job he has just lost or is threatened to lose; of his sick children; of his own wretched body.

But the rich Indian, even educated — especially the one who has imbibed, along with his knowledge of English, a definitely man-centered outlook in spite of his traditional Hinduism — and the well-to-do European in countries where poverty prevails (Spain, Italy, the Balkans, etc.) show no more sympathy for animals, and no

more indignation at the contact of those very same things or of similar ones. They react in just the same way as the slum dwellers. And if one points out to them the terrible misery of animals — the skeleton-like dogs and cats, wandering in search of food at their own doorstep — they simply answer: "There is enough human misery to think of, without us bothering about cats and dogs also. There are enough starving children whom one should feed first."

Always that same sickening old distinction between man and animal; that barbaric partiality in favor of the two-legged mammal — the "reasonable" being, made "in God's own likeness"; that spontaneous collective selfishness of the average man, flattered, encouraged, kindled to a pitch by the widespread man-centered religions and the social creeds born of their influence; exalted to the status of a sign of objective truth; justified by whole fabrics of resounding theological, moral and pseudo-scientific sophisms!

It may be — and it is, in our eyes — a hateful thing. But it is a thing one has to take into account, because of its hold upon the insignificant little man who forms the majority of mankind; because of its appeal to public consciousness, which is not a criterion of truth — far from it! — but a condition of success, a guarantee of power.

And, if we keep our eyes open, we cannot but acknowledge that, whether in the East or in the West, wherever the average standard of living is particularly low, that hateful but deep-rooted collective human selfishness is particularly strong — even among the rich and educated; sometimes especially among them — and the chances of a general life-centered policy, on the part of the ruling classes, particularly little. Which does not mean to say that the ruling classes will always treat the wretched majority with evangelical kindness. Generally, they will do no such thing . . . But they will continue deliberately brushing aside all questions of animal welfare with the easy excuse that "human beings should be served first."

* * *

It is not only the average man (rich or poor, academically qualified or not) who allows his attitude towards animals to be influenced, if not entirely determined, by the general standard of human life in the country in which he has acquired his decisive experience. The instance of prophets and seers, and of founders of great religions, appears as a rule to confirm rather than to refute that relation, which we tried to point out, between human

economics on one hand and people's attitude to subhuman creatures on the other. It would seem that most originators of definitely man-centered creeds were born and bred in countries where the standard of human life was particularly low in their time — where human misery, dirt and disease were an everyday sight. While in general, wherever important religious or moral innovators have unmistakably stressed, as the basis of their teaching, the sacred unity and the value of all life — wherever their teaching can be said, at least, to imply that sense of unity and of value — the standard of human life, at the epoch and in the immediate surroundings of the seers, was relatively high.

It is a fact that the material background of Christ or of the Prophet Mohamed — the wretched streets of Palestinian villages, where lepers and beggars, ragged children and starving dogs were a common sight, or the stops along the caravan roads of Arabia, where a hardly less depressing atmosphere of savage poverty no doubt prevailed — was very different from that of the Buddha or of Mahavira, both Indian princes;[1] very different, too, from that of the forest-dwelling sages of ancient India, free from the day-after-day contact with dirt and disease; or from that of Akhnaton, the richest monarch of his times, whose glittering luxury astounded even the King of Babylon.[2]

One might believe that Prince Siddhartha — the future Buddha — was so utterly upset as he encountered the old man, the sick man and the corpse, precisely because, during all the first part of his life, he had been systematically kept out of contact with the darker realities that those summarize. One might believe, too, that his heart, entirely unaware of cruelty under any form whatsoever, was precisely on account of such ignorance as thoroughly moved to pity at the sight of the flock being led to the sacrifice as at that of human misery. And the love of all living nature, whose joy in life and health and sunshine he understood so well — whose praise of the Sun he unhesitatingly assimilates, in his hymns, to his own adoration of Him — was also, in Akhnaton, the love of a heart that

[1] One should *also* notice that, as such-members of the Kshattriya caste-these Founders of life-centered religions were Aryans; and that King Akhnaton was half Aryan. (See our book *The Lightning and the Sun*, Edit. 1958, Part III).

[2] "In thy land, gold is as common as dust ..." (Letter of Burraburiash II, King of Babylon, to Akhnaton: *Tell-el-Amarna Letters*).

daily *personal* contacts with brutality and wretchedness had not hardened.

While in a lad brought up in a carpenter's shop, among the people — we would say today among the "masses" — of the Semitic near East, in the daily company and friendship of the peasants and artisans and fishermen of Galilea (honest but miserable folk, who might have had good qualities, but who knew nothing besides their bitter struggle for existence, and who had surely no more time for kindness to asses and to dogs than their descendants have at present); or in a man accustomed to the rough ways of nomadic warriors, shepherds and camel-drivers, one need not be surprised not to find a similar sensitiveness to all suffering, a similar love towards all living creatures; one need not point out too indignantly the absence of any signs of a life-centered outlook — even if the lad has grown into a miracle worker and a prophet (and a God, in the opinion of some), and the man into a teacher of millions, and a still greater prophet (in the opinion of others). One should, on the contrary, be almost grateful to Jesus of Nazareth for having compared himself, in a parable, to "the good shepherd" who leaves his whole flock to seek the lost lamb that he loves, although he does not appear to have abstained from lamb's flesh at the Paschal Feast. And one should be grateful to the Prophet of Islam for the kindness to cats so clearly ascribed to him by popular tradition, although dogs are not regarded with the same favor by his followers.

But it may be that this correspondence between the standards of living of a country or a class, and the outlook of its greatest seers on animals and on life in general, striking as it appears in history, at first sight, is in reality but a coincidence. To all that we have just written one might object that a genuine seer — and "initiate" — cannot but include in his love all forms of life, even the humblest, whatever be his material surroundings; that much is "symbolical," "allegorical," in episodes of the Christian gospels such as the story of the barren fig tree, or that of the draught of fishes or of the Gadarene swine; that we know nothing of the "real" Christ or of the "real" Prophet of Arabia. And it may be so indeed. It is difficult to *know* such exalted beings, save through direct, mystical contact with them, in which case all that is allegorical in their teaching appears in its proper esoteric meaning, as clear as daylight. And rare are the lay folk, like us, who are granted the privilege of such a communion with more than one of the great seers in their lifetime. It may be that the "real Christ," whom we do

not know, loved the fishes and the swine and the trees in spite of references of which the true meaning escapes us, and the sheep also, in spite of his partaking of the Easter sacrifice. It may be, too, that the verses of the Koran in which meat eating is tolerated, are a concession to deep-rooted custom on the part of the legislator, rather than a mark of indifference to the suffering of animals on the part of the Prophet.

On the other hand, we ourselves would like to think — for the honor of our planet — that the Buddha and Mahavira, and the other Indian sages with a life-centered outlook, and the royal Prophet of the Sun, young forever, who sang the joy of life and adoration in all flesh, would have been no less universally loving had they been born and had they lived in the most wretched material conditions, instead of in their privileged status. We cannot, in fact, imagine any of the great expounders of life-centered teachings to have been less free from the burdensome influence of surrounding misery — or even of personal misery, had it been his destiny — than the one or two beggars, kind to all creatures, whom we met in a poverty-stricken land.

But one thing remains certain: the *interpretation* of a real teacher's message depends — and depends a good deal — on the standard of living of the people among whom it is preached, *whatever be the teacher's original spirit*. In particular it seems true to say that, however thoroughly life-centered a teaching might be, the interpretation of it is bound to be man-centered to the extent to which the people to whom it is addressed are in a materially miserable condition. One only has to look and see to what extent the great life-centered religions of India have degenerated in the hands of the increasingly miserable Indians of modern times. The very revivers of the most obviously impartial creeds of universal mercy — Buddhism and Jainism — seem to forget that they are not merely Christians; that man's welfare should not be their sole aim. The Jains seem to have no concern whatsoever, outside man, but for cows. And ever so, in the propaganda articles they publish, their writers insist far too much on the "usefulness" of those animals, as though they were defending them mainly in the interest of mankind. The well-known Buddhist Society of Calcutta — the Mahaboddhi — during the dark days of the Bengal famine in 1943 started free distributions of milk for babies, as any Christian organization would have done. But it had no free food for the numberless starving animals *also*, in the spirit of the Buddhists of old. The Ramakrishna Mission, the Arya Samaj, and other

societies, all aiming to compete with the foreign Christian missions for the respect and support of the Indian people, behave, for all practical purposes, exactly like the Christians: they have hospitals, dispensaries, schools and orphanages, but no animal-welfare centers at all; men seem to come first, in a country of widespread human misery, in the eyes of such averagely "good" people as those bodies are composed of — in the eyes of *all* people, in fact, save of a very few truly intelligent, unprejudiced and impartially loving ones.

* * *

This brings us to say, that, whatever be the creed people officially profess, their *practical* interest in the welfare of all beings is largely dependent — in the case of all average folk, at least — on the general standard of human life in the country where they have learned to feel and to think. Useless to add that the practical possibility of doing good to animals depends largely on the same. With the best of good will, an Indian slum-dweller or peasant, in the present state of affairs, *cannot* do for the starving dogs and cats of his locality what an equally kind well-to-do person could easily do. There are material limitations which even a true lover of animals experiences, when he is himself half-fed, sickly and overworked. The exceptional beggar woman whom we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter could not do what she does without the financial help of one or two more privileged people interested, like her, in animal welfare.

In other words, there is a very close relation between human welfare as a whole and the well-being of those animals at least which depend on man for their food; a very close relation, surely, between human welfare as a whole and kindness to pet animals — dogs, cats, horses, ponies, etc. We know it is often difficult enough to teach kindness towards all animals even to those people who happen to be full of solicitude for their pets. It seems still more difficult, not merely to induce people to give up eating flesh, but to bring them to realize their *positive* duties towards all creatures when they never experienced, in their homes, the fellowship of a tame animal — when they never knew the pleasure of making a cat purr, or of seeing a dog wag his tail at their approach.

Which means that the preaching of active kindness towards animals is likely to meet with little response in any part of the world wherever the general standard of human life is low. And even in those countries where it is high, one is likely to face the

indifference, if not the opposition, of all such believers in man-centered creeds as hold the existence of human misery, *anywhere* in the world, to be a more than sufficient reason to postpone the starting of any animal welfare work on a national or international scale.

What, then, is to be done? Put off all serious talk about animal welfare till all human beings are "served first"? Wait till there is no more human misery *anywhere*, before promoting any broad scale effort to give a happy life to dogs and cats, donkeys and buffalos, now miserable? Or try to kill in many the spirit of the man-centered creeds, in spite of the remaining fact of human misery? The first of these two courses would be criminal, the second utopian — practically impossible. One surely should do one's utmost to fight against the prejudices of the present-day world, product of a man-centered tradition, centuries old. But we believe that one has, at the same time, to contribute to the relief both of animal and of human misery, and especially to work in order to prepare the advent of a type of society in which it would be easy for men to live in loving harmony with animals, and even with plants.

* * *

The root of much human misery — and in particular of many wars — seems to lie in the steadily increasing number of human beings in the world. When a country which has already more inhabitants than it can comfortably accommodate, employ and feed, continues producing more and more babies, it is bound to claim "more living space" for itself in due course; in other words, it is bound to attack its less prolific or less well equipped neighbors, or to seek colonies overseas. Its only third alternative would be to see its millions starving and discontented; to accept a gradual lowering of its average standard of life. In all cases, human misery is the natural outcome of reckless overbreeding. It seems to be so now, at least, in the present state of the world.

The immediate step to take, therefore, all over the world, in order to raise the standard of human life everywhere and to avoid useless wars, would be, logically, to stop the indiscriminate production of babies — to cease bribing people to have young ones, in the countries of moderate birthrate, *unless, of course, these be of exceptionally fine racial stock*, to encourage them to have none, or extremely few, in countries already burdened by overpopulation, especially if these be also of inferior racial stock. Less people

would mean "more living space" for all men. And racial selection would mean a more beautiful and nobler mankind.

But our humanitarian dreamers do not want that solution of the world's economic problems. Fancy depriving human beings, members of the "superior" species, "reasonable" creatures, of the pleasure of having as many children as they like! What an awful thing to think of! Their solution is different. There is quite enough space for everybody, they say, provided everybody is allowed to use it. Don't stop or discourage the production of babies, but increase and systemize the production — and also if necessary, the consumption — of wealth. Organize the distribution of the world's goods so that every man, woman and child will live comfortably with a minimum number of hours of daily work. The earth can yield far more than man has yet compelled it to. There is more than sufficient space, and more than sufficient food. The only thing is to make the best of it: to increase the production in proportion to the increase of the population — indefinitely.

To keep on increasing production indefinitely — what does that mean, and where does it lead? In the present state of the world— with the unhealthy division of mankind into separate, unnatural states, each one protecting its own industry by putting high duties on foreign goods; each one bent on "keeping up the prices" of its own goods sold abroad — it means waste in one part of the globe and want in the other; it means bitter competition between countries struggling to lay hands on the same "markets." It ends in war. But — such, at least, is the opinion of many of our humanitarian friends — in a "better" world, in which both capitalism and watertight commercial barriers, and also artificial frontiers, would be things of the past, it would be quite different. In that worldwide paradise governed by all workers in the interest of all, on socialistic lines, every particular increase in production, no matter where it be, would mean a corresponding improvement of the general standard of human life — not competition, not war. The population of the globe, of course, would continue to increase, perhaps not in the proportion it does now in India and China, but still quite steadily enough for a constant increase in the quantity of foodstuffs and of manufactured goods of all sorts (and thus, in the surface of cultivable lands and in the production of raw materials) to be necessary, if every man is to live in relative comfort.

This ideal system would not for years, and perhaps for centuries — for as long as population and production would keep pace with each other — mean waste on one side and want on the

other, and commercial strife. But it would mean something, in our eyes, far worse. It would mean the intensified, and more and more systematic exploitation of living nature by man, on an ever-broadening scale. It would mean, with a flesh-eating population — and men would soon find in their very number an easy excuse to remain flesh eaters for want of mere vegetable food, specially in certain regions — an intensification of cattle breeding and an extension of slaughterhouses; an increase of the fur industry (men would be too numerous to all live in temperate climates, where they could go without wearing furs); a further cutting down of forests and clearing of jungles, in order to utilize every inch of land for the securing of man's food, and man's clothing, and man's housing; also of man's industries. The beautiful wild beasts, especially those that dare to be man-eating, would soon disappear. The last specimens of their vanquished species might at most adorn the "zoos" for man's amusement. Man, having at last ceased to prey on his own kind, would prey on the whole of creation with unprecedented efficiency. He would make the world a safe place for his own species, never mind at the cost of what ruthless exploitation of the rest of the living, both animals and plants. Were those not all "made for him" by old Jehovah, the typical god of all man-centered creeds, whom our "free thinking" humanitarians worship, at heart, more thoroughly than even most Christians or Muslims? He would live and thrive. They would either die — if harmful or useless to him — or else live for the sole purpose of being utilized by him to the utmost; of having their flesh, their fur, their skin, their young ones year after year, their milk (or their sap, their wood, their bark, whatever they have) taken by him. There would be one king of the earth: mankind; one slave: subdued living nature. Most hateful prospects!

We know — they tell us, at least — that a time would come when an excess of comfort would bring the human population of the globe to a standstill and even to a gradual decrease. But before reaching that new equilibrium the world would have become, for long, past praying for. Men would perhaps at last decrease in number. But the beautiful animal species sacrificed one after the other to their convenience could not be brought to existence again. And the remaining enslaved ones would probably be too degraded to be able to live in renewed freedom. The forests alone, perhaps — in the tropics — would regain their former breadth and beauty once greedy mankind would be extinct — out of the way forever. But what an abominable trail of ugliness and of suffering,

until then! A thousand times better the age-old international rivalries; war, and again war, each time on a grander scale; the atom bomb — or some other similar device of destruction — and the end of it: man, animal, plant and all; the world's "master species" and its victims — once for all, within a few brief decades from today!

* * *

To raise the standard of human life all over the world by an increase of production and an entire reshuffling of the distribution of wealth, without bothering about reducing the number of men on earth to a minimum, would be doing little or no service to the cause of living creatures in general.

At most, once man as a whole would be completely free from the burden of human poverty, one might expect him to give a little extra care to pet animals; one might hope that, in the ideal world of our humanitarian friends, dogs and cats would be as well looked after in Spain and Italy, Greece and India, China and Mexico, as they are today in England. That would surely be something; but how little, compared with the intensified worldwide exploitation of animals for man's food, clothing, "scientific" researches, and amusement; or with the merciless destruction of both forests or jungles and of the wild animals that live in them! How little, compared even with the amount of suffering indirectly inflicted on pet animals in the name of man's convenience in a well-to-do society dominated by the principles of a strongly man-centered creed: the merciless castration of tomcats, the destruction of whole litters of unwanted kittens or puppies, the "putting to sleep" of sick, old, or simply no longer cherished pets!

Our dream is not to see all the world behave towards animals as most people already do in present-day England. We wish it would behave much better, and under the urge of an entirely different outlook on animals. Up till now, most of those who, out of spontaneous kindness, take good care of their pets, and even those who protest, sometimes vehemently, against cruelty to animals in general, do so while still clinging to the belief that animals are "made for man." They cling to it without even questioning it, as to an inherited habit of thinking, and therefore consider the destruction of a litter of kittens and that of a newly-born baby, the shooting of an old horse and the shooting of an old man (equally unfit to work) in a different light. It is *that very belief* that should be uprooted all over the world, if a better world is ever to come into existence. The idea, or rather the feeling, that in the beauty of life, and *not* in

the interest of man, lies the basis and the measure of all moral values, should replace, in the subconscious mind of all men, or at least of an overwhelming majority of men, that sense of mere human solidarity, hardly less barbaric than the most outdated forms of tribal or even personal selfishness. Then, and then alone, will man become the perfect culmination of the living world instead of its rival, its tyrant or its torturer; the truly superior species. Then and not before.

Possibly — probably — that cannot be as long as there is widespread human misery. That cannot be, either, if the problem of human misery is finally solved in a man-centered spirit. We repeat: it is better, far better that the world should rush to its doom as it is, rather than evolve into that horrid future society, efficiently organized for the well being of all mankind *but of mankind alone*, which appeals so much to some of our contemporaries!

* * *

Our ideal world, entirely free from all forms of exploitation of animals; our world, in which man would both feel himself morally compelled to help all living creatures and have every power to do so; in which the rights of vegetable life itself would be recognized and respected as far as possible; our world, we say, seems bound to remain a dream so long as the number of human beings is not brought to a minimum — a few score million only; perhaps a few hundreds of thousands on earth — and made to remain stationary, *and* so long as the noblest section of the Aryan race — Nordic humanity — not only is not the master of its own destiny, but has not *the* final word to say in *all* matters of legislation — even outside its own actual pale.[1] Only then would it be easy, apparently, for man to increase his wealth and comfort to a degree yet unheard of, *without becoming the rival or exploiter of the other living species*. Only then could active, organized kindness to animals take, all over the world, the broad proportions that organized philanthropy has taken in the present-day centers of Christian tradition — provided the few men enjoy, along with their material well-being, a proper education.

* * *

The state which appears to us as the ideal preliminary background to the true fraternity of man and animal (and plant, to

[1] Otherwise there would hardly be any protection for creatures, among men of an inferior stock.

the extent it is possible) is not the return to that “simple life” and “healthy manual labor” so vehemently advocated in certain circles in our present society.

We have not witnessed enough kindness to animals among the manual workers living a relatively “simple” life to be convinced that such a return would be of any use to our cause. On the contrary, it is difficult for us to visualize a non-mechanized society without any form of exploitation of animals whatsoever, especially if it be a society in which animals were still the slave of man not long before. If there be no trucks, nor agricultural machines, nothing, then men would soon take to using horses and oxen once more to pull their carts and plough their fields — for their must be fields, and there must also be arrangements for carrying goods from one place to another. Men with absolutely no machines at all would soon learn to regard the horse and the ox, the ass, the camel and the buffalo just as they did before, as useful instruments “made to work for them.” And, with this obnoxious outlook, the whole trail of evils we wish to abolish would again come into being. It is better to nip it in the bud.

We believe that all hasty talk against man’s technical achievements in general, and particularly against the use of machines in daily life, is out of place in the mouth of anyone who earnestly aims at the liberation of animals (and even of plants, to the extent it is possible) from the yoke of mankind. The society we call “ideal” would be a very highly mechanized one, and electrified one, in which man himself would have to work only as little as possible; a society composed of a few myriads, at the most of a few hundreds of thousands of households with two, one, or no children — or rather, with twelve, in the case of pure blooded, healthy and beautiful fathers and mothers, splendid specimens of their race, and in all other cases, with none or at the most one — living far apart from one another save in a small number of attractive and comfortable industrial areas (automobile factories and aircraft plants; shipyards, mining, electrical plants, etc.); happy households, separated and united by vast expanses of forest, by jungles or steppes, or simply by areas of free waste land with motorable roads running through them; a small, harmoniously evolved society, scattered over the surface of this glorious earth like rare waterlilies of different colors over an endless marsh. It would also — naturally — be a hierarchized society run on racialist principles. Indeed if the number of men is not to increase indefinitely, very strict regulations are to keep down the numbers

of the inferior races lest the Aryan — the ruling race — be *forced* to have larger and larger families, merely in order to survive. For without his survival, there *could be* no ideal world, in the sense we have defined it.

A dozen factories or so would be enough to supply the whole world with all the necessary things: foodstuffs, textiles, machinery — flour, vegetable preserves, jams and chocolates, linen and cotton cloth, electric bulbs and engine parts. Men who have no special call for any art of learning would have to work the machines for an hour or so a day, in turns. The rest of the time they would enjoy leisure. Those who have a marked inclination for any sort of handicraft or art, for music or for writing, or for any sort of serious and harmless research, would be encouraged to contribute, each one in his way, to the edification of the world. They would have more duties, but also enjoy greater freedom than the others: they would have higher wages for producing their handspun, handwoven cloths, their embroideries, their artistic brass work, carvings or jewelry; they would be given free transport to go and play, exhibit or speak in public from place to place; and granted the free printing of their writings, if these be really works of art with an eternal meaning.

The number of human beings on earth, after having been gradually reduced to a few tens of millions at most, would be maintained at that level as rigorously as possible. We suppose that such a result could hardly be attainable without a systematic training of the *average* man and woman in the art of avoiding conception while living as most creatures do, and without the free supply to them of the technical means of doing so. As for the more sensitive and more understanding people, their whole education would naturally lead them to prefer experiencing in their lifetime rare periods of perfect enjoyment — glorious fulfillment of all their being, in. harmony with itself and with the world; hours of apotheosis (a few, but supremely beautiful), after years of both physical and mental preparation — rather than having the regular, humdrum satisfactions of the majority, with the necessary adjuncts of trickery for fear of "complications."

Moreover, as people would be *few*, education would become quite a different thing from what it is now. It would not consist merely of imparting "information" on various subjects to groups of fifty or more children of about the same age. It would be an *individual* training in the art of thinking and of living, given by every recognized master to a very few boys and girls, along with

the necessary information about the history and geography of the world, the properties of matter and of numbers, lines and curves, etc. The development of an aesthetic outlook on life, and of *the will to live up to it in all one does*, would be the main aim of such an education. The very atmosphere of that world which we call "ideal," the general mentality of its people thus educated, would be congenial to the existence of small, comfortable families; to the free individual development of men within the limits of the freedom of other men *and of animals* (and even plants, to the extent to which it is possible), and to active, *organized* kindness towards all living creatures.

* * *

In our ideal world, the extra wealth of man, instead of being used to bring up more and more future men in extravagant numbers, and to increase indefinitely the production of goods useful to man, would be employed both by private individuals and by governments to make the world a happier place for all the living: men *and* animals.

As we said in a previous chapter, it is gradually that one would have to get rid of the system of enslaving animals to man in man's interest. One would have to prepare the coming of the day in which cows and sheep, goats and buffalos, horses, asses, camels, reindeer, etc., would once more live in their free wild state, only occasionally coming in contact with man as his friends, never as his servants. Homes for every kind of presently enslaved animals would have to be set up in the meantime, and maintained by public taxes (as homes for children and aged men are already, in present society) until the new generations of beasts, slowly reeducated, would again be fit to live on their own, as they did before the dawn of man's domination. We know that, then, a number of them would fall a prey to carnivorous animals, especially in certain regions of the globe. That cannot be helped, so long as nature is such that some animal species cannot live without flesh. It is perhaps also — and that has to be considered from a practical point of view — the only lasting solution of the problem of the increase of animals. So long as one cannot teach birth control to wild beasts or in some way interfere with their rate of reproduction, it seems indeed to be the *only* solution. As for domestic animals living in the human settlements as man's friends — dogs and cats, and occasionally bigger animals (now made to work, then completely free) such a pet horse or cow — one would *have* to force some

amount of sex control upon them, as on the human species itself, if, in time, one is not to witness again the habit of drowning or abandoning newly-born kittens and puppies, or of castrating tomcats, horses and bulls. The best way would be, apparently, to have public institutions, maintained lavishly by government funds, to which people would be obliged by law to bring their unwanted puppies, kittens, or any other young animals, after the mothers have finished nursing them. There, the males and females would have to be kept apart from each other, unless it were possible to operate *painlessly* and *without any injury the their well-being* upon the females (not the males) so that they might know the joys of life without the risk of giving birth to more young ones than could be well fed and well looked after as long as they live.

Surely this would be a very imperfect arrangement. Anyone who has watched a mother cat lying with her kittens and purring as she gives them her milk understands what a pity it would be to deprive numbers of female animals of the pleasure of having young ones, or to allow it to them only once in their lifetime. But unless they are all gradually put back into their natural wild state, and left to fend for themselves among other animals of all sorts in the great forests of our "ideal" world, there is no other solution.

Another sad point is the food problem for carnivorous pet animals, such as cats. Dogs could, to a great extent, live on rice or bread mixed with milk. Cats, without any flesh or fish at all, do not thrive. The best would certainly be for them to be given rice and milk or bread and milk in the human homes and to catch rats and mice for themselves out of doors. But would they find enough rats and mice to live on? They do not now, in countries like India, where they are left to eat what they can, having more often than not no owners to look after them. And what about the cats that would grow up in the public homes, never to go beyond the limits of a certain enclosure — broad enough for them to have the impression of freedom, but still a fenced enclosure? They would have to be fed. The only solution, apparently, would be to give them not meat, but fish. The fishes, as all creatures, are no doubt glad to live. But what is to be done? As the flesh-eating men say, the law of the animal world is that one species preys on the other. One has no right to keep animals within a limited enclosure and to force unto them an uncongenial mode of living. Man alone should either rise above the law of the animal world, whenever he can without impairing his physical well being, or else cease claiming to be the "superior" species.

* * *

To the picture we have just tried to sketch — the picture of a society organized in a life-centered spirit, far better than the present-day one, but yet a long way from perfect — we would no doubt prefer that of a world in which all animals, including dogs and cats, could be allowed to breed freely, being in a position to find their own food, and in which they would come to man's settlements as visitors and friends, without being dependent upon him for their sustenance. We would far prefer the impossible world in which the wolf and the lamb would walk together. But it is not in man's power to change the nature and needs of the animals. All he can do — if he really be the superior species — is to organize the world, inasmuch as it depends on him, in such a way that all creatures — men, animals and plants — might enjoy happier lives to the extent the rival species allow them to live. All he can do is to abstain, for himself, personally, and as a species, from becoming the rival or the enemy of any animal. All he can do is to be kind to all, both individually and as a promoter of institutions maintained for the welfare of animals; to choose as members of the human governments, only such men as have a spontaneous life-centered outlook; such men as love all living beings without even any official religion telling them to do so. All he can do is to bring up his children in the spirit of a life-centered teaching; to believe himself in the one universal religion of Life and Sunshine, whatever be the recognized faith of his fathers, and to live up to it in earnest — in truth. But that is already sufficient to make him more than a clever animal. Nay, that is the only way by which he can become a truly superior living species, not merely cleverer than the others, but also nobler and more generous.

In the Popol-Vuh, the old sacred book of the Quiches of Central America, it is said that the animals were, from the start, condemned to be killed and eaten because they were devoid of articulate speech and could not therefore praise the Gods.[1]

In the beautiful hymns of Akhnaton to the Sun — millenniums older, but far more modern in inspiration than the indigenous American Scripture — quadrupeds, birds, insects and fishes, and even plants, all living creatures are said to worship and praise, every one in its way, and to the utmost capacity of its species, the

[1] *Popol-Vuh*, French translation of Brasseur de Bourbourg. Paris, Arthur Bertrand Edit, 1851, pp. 15-17.

One and self-same creative Energy, Essence of the Sun, "Lord and Origin of Life, Father and Mother of all beings."

Mankind has been evolving between those two conceptions of the world and the two different scales of values that correspond, each one, to each of them: the man-centered; the life-centered. If one judges them by their actions in everyday life, one must admit that most men — even today, even in the countries that officially profess life-centered religions — are still on the moral level of the tribes who produced the Popol-Vuh; not an inch higher. They will pride themselves on articulate speech — on "intellect" — as the special prerogative of man, and try to justify the horrors of all forms of exploitation of animals on the grounds of that human "superiority."

We believe man is not yet, as a whole, a really superior species, but just a creature applying its greater intellect to the same selfish ends as any animal would: to its personal interest and, at the most, to the interest of its own kind. And we are convinced that it is not intellect alone that can ever bear witness to any true superiority in him. What can, and what does — be it up till now, only in a few individuals — proclaim real human greatness, is sympathy for all that lives; it is not the mere intellectual admission, but the *feeling* of the unity of all life; the love of all sentient creatures as man's brothers of various shapes; the feeling that one is guilty if one does not help them to live in health and joy, as one would like to see one's own children live. What can alone reveal in man a superior creature is his capacity to rise from the man-centered point of view of the Popol-Vuh (and of other Scriptures, more famous, but in fact no better than it) to the joyous wisdom expressed in song — and in life — by Him-Who-lived-in-Truth;[1] his capacity to see, in every beast or bird, a living hymn to the Sun, and to love it because it is beautiful.

We are conscious of the practical difficulties one would meet in organizing even a far more limited human society than the present-day one on such lines and in such a spirit as this. But we believe that it is better to try to overcome those difficulties, if necessary to face a bitter struggle for the welfare of all creatures and for the cleansing of humanity from an age-long shame, rather than to remain indifferent to all the cruelties involved in the exploitation of animals. We believe one should at least do one's best to make men conscious of the amount of barbarity tolerated by most organized

[1] *Ankh-em-Maat* — one of the titles of King Akhnaton of Egypt.

religions in their present state, and to stir in them the shame of it. One should do one's best to tell the modern world, craving for a lasting peace based on international justice and for the end of the exploitation of man by man, under any form, that man, as a whole, deserves no such justice and no such peace and no sympathy whatsoever, as long as he tolerates the existence of slaughterhouses, of the fur industry with all the atrocities it implies, of scientific experimentation upon living creatures for whatever purpose it be; as long as hunting parties, bull fights, circuses and exhibitions of caged animals are not yet an abomination to him; as long, too, as he can witness the life-long hard labor of the beast of burden without a collective outcry of protest.

That is what we have done, in this book as all through our life.

— Savitri Devi Mukherji

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