

Jiddu Krishnamurti on Vegetarianism and Killing

Question: Do you advocate vegetarianism? Would you object to the inclusion of an egg in your diet?



Jiddu Krishnamurti: Is that really a very great problem, whether we should have an egg or not? Perhaps most of you are concerned with non-killing. That is really the crux of the matter, is it not? Perhaps most of you eat meat or fish. You avoid killing by going to a butcher, or you put the blame on the killer, the butcher - that is only dodging the problem. If you like to eat eggs, you may get infertile eggs to avoid killing. But this is a very superficial question - the problem is much deeper.

You don't want to kill animals for your stomach, but you do not mind supporting governments that are organized to kill. All sovereign governments are based on violence; they must have armies, navies, and air forces. You don't mind supporting them, but you object to the terrible calamity

of eating an egg! (Laughter) See how ridiculous the whole thing is; investigate the mentality of the gentleman who is nationalistic, who does not mind the exploitation and the ruthless destruction of people, to whom wholesale massacre is nothing - but who has scruples as to what goes into his mouth.

[Laughter] So, there is much more involved in this problem - not only the whole question of killing, but the right employment of the mind. The mind may be used narrowly, or it is capable of extraordinary activity; and most of us are satisfied with superficial activity, with security, sexual satisfaction, amusement, religious belief - with that we are satisfied and discard entirely the deeper response and wider significance of life. Even the religious leaders have become petty in their response to life. After all, the problem is not only killing animals but human beings, which is more important.

You may refrain from using animals and degrading them, you may be compassionate about killing them, but what is important in this question is the whole problem of exploitation and killing - not only the slaughter of human beings in wartime, but the way you exploit people, the way you treat your servants and look down on them as inferiors. Probably you are not paying attention to this because it is near home. You would rather discuss God, reincarnation - but nothing requiring immediate action and responsibility.

So, if you are really concerned with not killing, you should not be a nationalist, you should not call yourself Sinhalese, German, or Russian. Also you must have right employment, make right use of machinery. It is very important in modern society to have right employment because today every action leads to war, the whole thing is geared for war; but at least we can find out the wrong professions and avoid them intelligently.

Obviously, the army, the navy, are wrong professions; so is the profession of law which encourages litigation; and the police, especially the secret police. So, right employment must be found and exercised by each one, and only then can there be the cessation of killing, which will bring about peace among men. But the economic pressure is so great in the modern world that very few can withstand it. Almost no one is concerned with seeking right profession, and if you are concerned not to kill, then you have to do far more than merely avoid the killing of animals, which means you have to go into this whole problem of right employment.

Though the question may appear very petty, if you go into it a little more carefully, you will see that it is a very great question because what you are, you make the world to be. If you are greedy, angry, dominating, possessive, you will inevitably create a social structure that will bring about further conflict, misery, further destruction. But unfortunately, most of us are not concerned with any of these things. Most of us are concerned with immediate pleasures, with everyday living; and if we can get them, we are satisfied.

We do not want to look into the deeper and wider problems; though we know they exist, we want to avoid them. By avoiding these problems, they are increased, you have not solved them. To solve them, they cannot be approached through any particular ideology, either of the left or of the right. Look at these problems more closely and effectively, and you will begin to understand the total process of yourself in relation to others, which is society.

But you will tell me that I have not answered the question about the egg, whether to eat an egg or not. Surely, intelligence is the important thing - not what goes into your mouth, but what comes out of it; and most of us have filled our hearts with the things of the mind, and our minds are very small, shallow. Our problem is to find out how to bring about a transformation in that which is shallow and small, and this transformation can come about only through understanding the shallow.

Those of you who want to go into the question more deeply will have to find out whether you are contributing to war and how to avoid it, whether indirectly you are the cause of destruction. If you can really solve that question, then you can easily settle the superficial matter of whether you should be a vegetarian or not. Tackle the problem at a much deeper level, and you will find the answer.

Source: Jiddu Krishnamurti, Talk in Colombo 1949/50