

SHARON GANNON ON VEGANISM

By Sharon Gannon on Wednesday, November 16, 2016

1. Q: Where do I get my protein?

SHARON: Flesh isn't the only source of protein. You can get all the protein you need from a varied plant-based diet. Protein is found in greens, veggies, beans, grains, nuts & seeds, avocados and so on. And there is no need to consume these foods in any special combination. According to the RDA (recommended daily allowance) we need between fifty to seventy five grams of protein per day. Actually, many researchers believe that this number is too high. Look around you, are Americans suffering from malnourishment? No, we're facing an obesity epidemic. On average, most people consume between 100 – 120 grams of protein per day. Not only is that unhealthy, it's extremely dangerous, as the majority of the protein consumed is animal based. To find out how much protein you need, take your weight (in lbs) and divide it by 3. If you're interested in protein breakdowns and charts, pick up *Becoming Vegan* by Brenda Davis. But rest assured, a whole foods, varied plant-based diet will give you all the protein you need.

2. Q: What about iron?

SHARON: According to Dr. Neal Barnard, founder of the *Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM)*, the most healthful sources of iron are leafy greens and beans. These foods also contain calcium and other important minerals. In fact, studies show that vegetarians and vegans tend to get more iron than meat eaters. Vitamin C from fruits and vegetables increases iron absorption. Meanwhile, dairy products reduce iron absorption significantly.

3. Q: Don't I need to drink milk to get enough calcium?

SHARON: No. In fact, drinking milk and eating dairy products can rob your body of calcium and contribute to osteoporosis. If you eat dark green leafy vegetables like kale, collards, and mustard greens, you can get enough calcium from a vegan diet. Beans, tofu, cabbage, sesame seeds, seaweed and broccoli are additional sources of calcium. Calcium from vegetable sources is more easily absorbed by the human body than from dairy products. It's important to understand that calcium isn't just about what you eat; it's also about what you keep. Acidic animal products mine minerals like potassium, magnesium and calcium from our bodies. In fact, the countries that consume the most dairy have the highest rates of hip fracture and osteoporosis. If you doubt that you are meeting the thousand milligram RDA, include calcium-fortified foods like fruit juice, cereals, soy or grain beverages, or take a supplement. Also, the weight-bearing aspect of yoga asana practice contributes to bone density and health. Sunlight is essential to the body's ability to absorb calcium from the food you are eating. Make sure you receive adequate vitamin D every day through sunlight. About fifteen to twenty minutes of sun on the face and hands is usually enough for most of us. Read the book *CalciYum* by David and Rachel Bronfman for more information and recipes.

4. Q: Is it okay to drink organic milk?

SHARON: Cows that are fed organic food are still kept as slaves on farms, regardless of whether it is a large corporate factory farm or a small family farm. Besides, every dairy cow, no matter what she has been fed, has her babies stolen from her shortly after birth and she will inevitably end up in the slaughterhouse. Milk is for babies. Human beings are the only species that drinks milk into adulthood and besides that we prefer to drink the milk of another species (enslaved cows and goats), and we have come to consider it normal when, it is actually a pretty perverse form of sexual abuse!

5. Q: Can I get B-12 from a vegan diet?

SHARON: A vegan must rely on getting adequate vitamin B12 from a supplement or from eating foods that have been fortified with vitamin B12. If we weren't so dirt-conscious, we would obtain adequate vitamin B12 from soil, air, water, and bacteria, but we meticulously wash and peel our vegetables now—and with good reason, as we can't be sure our soil is not contaminated with pesticides and herbicides. Today "aged" foods like sauerkraut, miso, and tempeh are fermented in hygienically sanitized stainless-steel vats to assure cleanliness, so we can no longer be sure they will provide us with the B12 we need. Vegans should not mess around with this issue. To ensure that you are getting the tiny amount (2.5 micrograms) you need per day, take a supplement and/or drink fortified soymilk or rice milk. Read the book *Becoming Vegan* by Brenda Davis, R.D., and Vesanto Melina, M.S., R.D., for more information.

6. Q: If all of life is sacred, then what is the difference if I eat a carrot or a chicken?

SHARON: This is a question that often comes up when people have started to consider the morality of imprisoning, abusing, slaughtering and ultimately eating animals. Yes, all of life is sacred, including plants; and yes, there is research that demonstrates that plants have feelings—they feel it when their leaves or stems are ripped—and there is scientific evidence that while plants do not have brains and nervous systems like animals, they nevertheless actively work to ensure their survival—they want to live, thrive, reproduce, evolve. If it were possible to live without causing harm to any living being at all, then indeed we might well choose not to eat carrots or other vegetables. But that is not possible—merely by being alive, we necessarily cause harm to many, many beings: we step on them inadvertently, we breathe them in without noticing, we kill them when we brush our teeth or wash our bodies, etc. The best we can do is strive to minimize the amount of harm we cause by living. We need to eat in order to live, and there is no moral or ethical code that dictates that we should refrain from eating and allow ourselves to die for some higher purpose. But as humans, we do get to choose what we eat, and when we choose to eat a plant, we are eating (i.e., harming) just that plant, plus indirectly whatever nutrients that plant consumed over its lifetime (and we are also harming whatever beings may have been living on that plant or who were injured or killed in the harvesting process). But when we eat an animal, we are eating not just that animal, but also indirectly all of the plants and other beings that that animal ate over its lifetime—those plants became the flesh that we eat. It takes 12-20 lbs of grain (plus 100 lbs of fish) to produce one lb of beef—that's a lot of harm for one lb of food. And moreover, eating vegetables, fruits and grains rarely causes total destruction of the plant or tree on which the food grew; after harvesting, seeds remain to be replanted the next season. But this certainly does not happen when an animal is slaughtered—death is final; that animal will not reproduce again!

But the imbalance in harm between a plant-based diet and an animal-based diet goes even further. Most of the food crops raised in the world today are fed to livestock destined for slaughter for us to eat, and most of the water used is used to raise the food crops that are fed to those animals. It has been estimated that, because of the extraordinary amount of grain it takes to raise food

animals, if we reduced the amount of meat we eat by only ten percent, that would free up enough grain to feed all the starving humans in the world. So when we choose to eat meat instead of vegetables, we are choosing to take food away from others who are hungry. Additionally, raising crops to feed animals for human consumption requires a lot of land. It takes eight or nine cows a year to feed one average meat eater; each cow eats one acre of green plants, soybeans and corn per year; so it takes eight or nine acres of plants a year to feed one meat eater, compared with only half an acre to feed one vegetarian. Also, most of the plants grown to be fed to farm animals are heavily saturated with pesticides and herbicides and have been genetically modified, all of which contributes to the pollution and destruction of our environment, which harms us all. Intensive farming of the land to grow animal feed, as well as the clearing of forests for grazing animals destined for slaughter, is rapidly ruining the delicate habitats for many wild animals, trees and wild vegetation.

For all of these reasons, if we want to consider the sanctity of life in deciding what to eat, the choice is clear. Eating a plant based diet causes less harm, to ourselves, to the other animals, to the planet.

7. Q: What would farm animals do if we stop eating them and let them go free? Where will they go? They've been domesticated for thousands of years; they don't know how to live on their own. Wouldn't it be a form of cruelty not to take care of them?

SHARON: This is the same argument that white American slave owners gave in the 1800s when they tried to defend their right to own slaves. Yes, we have robbed these animals of their wildness, and they might not be able to revert to a feral state if all the doors of all the factory farms were opened. We have severely altered these animals biologically and emotionally, depriving them of any opportunity to develop skills with which to live with one another and their environment. This process of degradation has been going on for thousands of generations. The first step is to stop abusing these beings: stop breeding them through cruel, artificial means. It may be unrealistic to let them all go free right now, but it is realistic to acknowledge that, as a species, we human beings are quite ingenious. If we give serious consideration to this problem, we will no doubt find solutions and eventually free these animals. When we do, we will free ourselves.

8. Q: Aren't humans biologically designed to be meat eaters or at least omnivores?

SHARON: The anatomical and physiological facts suggest no. We have small, flat mouths with small teeth. We don't have long, sharp canines to tear flesh. We have incisors in the front to bite and molars along the sides to chew and grind fruits and vegs. Our teeth aren't strong enough to chew and crush hard things like raw bones, whereas carnivores can. We have a rotating jaw that moves from side to side, another useful feature for grinding plants. Carnivores and omnivores have hinge-joint jaws that open and close. They don't normally chew their food well before swallowing, and they don't need to. Unlike us, they don't have an abundance of the enzyme ptyalin in their saliva, which breaks down complex carbohydrates found only in plant foods. Once we have chewed and swallowed our food, it travels through a very long digestive tract, although not as long as that of our herbivore friends—the cows, horses, and sheep. Meat-eating species have comparatively short intestinal tracts, which allow them to move food through their systems quickly, so as not to allow rotting flesh to stagnate and cause disease.

Because we lack sharp claws, aren't very fast on our feet, and aren't exactly endowed with lightning reflexes, it would be very difficult if not impossible for us to run down an animal, catch it with our bare hands, and tear through its fur and skin in order to eat it. Biologically, we are designed to be frugivorous herbivores eating mainly fruits, seeds, roots, and leaves.

Humans do not need to eat the flesh of other animals to exist, whereas some animals are carnivores and cannot survive by eating only vegs. Humans, on the other hand, eat meat only out of choice. We have been conditioned, taught, and coerced by the agents of our culture (parents, grandparents, advertisers, food critic, etc.) to eat the flesh and drink the milk of other animals. Because of this conditioning, which has occurred over a long period of time (thousands of years), we have developed addictive eating habits and blinded ourselves to the facts of our biological system and its true needs.

Many gruesome studies have been done in which cholesterol rich food was force-fed to dogs and cats in scientific research labs and the results have always proven the same: no matter how much highly saturated animal fat was fed to dogs and cats, it did not affect their arteries—there was no cholesterol built up in their arteries, and the researchers were unable to induce heart disease in them through feeding them a high protein/high fat animal flesh diet. This proves that animals like cats and dogs are true omnivores and can eat a wide variety of foods from both animal and veg sources. On the other hand, the number of human deaths due to hardening of the arteries and other similar diseases suggests that human beings were not meant to eat animals; our bodies are unable to digest the animal fat effectively and it ends up stored in our blood vessels, not to mention our waist lines, buttocks and thighs!

Often people will argue about veganism and bring up Eskimos, saying, “well what about Eskimos? They have to eat meat to survive—they can’t plant veg gardens on icebergs.” This is true: Arctic-dwelling Eskimos have no choice but to eat large amounts of meat and animal fat. But let’s get our facts straight: according to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Eskimos also have the highest incidences of heart disease and osteoporosis in the world and, in general, short life spans. Perhaps that is something to consider when we are faced with the choice of what to eat for dinner and unlike Eskimos most of us do have choices.

In fact, we would know ourselves that we are not meant to be meat eaters, and we would not have allowed ourselves to become conditioned to meat eating in the first place, if the effects of meat eating were felt right away. But since heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, etc. usually take many years to develop, we are able to separate them from their cause (or contributing factors) and go on happily eating an animal-based diet. We then become conditioned to see these diseases as occurring normally as we age or as we gain weight or if we eat a “bad diet” (e.g., a diet with too much animal products), and we resign ourselves to them and to the expensive and side-effect-laden pharmaceutical drug regimens we have devised to deal with them, which all involve horrendous, sadistic torture to animals in laboratories. We enslave, torture and then slaughter animals to eat them, then when we eventually become sick from that we enslave, torture and kill more animals in laboratories in the hopes of creating drugs to enable us to continue with our animal-abusive lifestyle! Few of us look to the future (i.e., to our parents and grandparents), see the effects of an omnivorous lifestyle, and opt out of it before it makes us sick.

9. Q: Isn’t the real problem human overpopulation rather than meat eating?

SHARON: Human population growth is a problem in that most humans consume more than they need. The Earth’s resources are now strained to sustain the needs and wants of the human population, which continues to escalate. The wealthier countries have curbed their population growth, in some cases to zero, while people in poorer or so-called “developing” countries give birth to many more babies on average. In the United States, the average is two children per family, while in Africa it is five children per family. On the surface, the statistic seems to indicate that Africans are having way too many kids and are taxing the Earth’s resources, while American kids are born into families who are able to take care of them. However, the average American child consumes roughly the same resources as fifteen African children. So when an American family says

they only have two children, they are actually consuming the resources of an African family of thirty children! Furthermore, those American children will be indoctrinated into a lifestyle that teaches them to consume more than they need. Human overconsumption is a greater problem than human population growth, and meat eating is a big part of that problem. Some well-to-do parents may say, "I have a right to have as many children as I want because I can take care of them." That may be so, but can the Earth take care of them?

10. Q: No one was so up in arms about meat eating until recently, with the rise of industrialized farming and the cruel practices common in today's factory farms. Couldn't we go back to a simpler way of raising animals for food and support only small family-owned farms where animals are treated humanely?

SHARON: Farms, whether small or large, are places where slaves are kept. The animals are fattened up to be eaten, or exploited for their ability to make honey or milk, or for their fur, wool or body parts; they are kept as breeders to produce more animals who can in turn be exploited and ultimately sold, slaughtered, and eaten. Some people may argue that if the animals are treated humanely prior to being slaughtered, this justifies their confinement and slaughter. Is it ethical to rob beings of their freedom but give them a comfortable prison and provide them with food until they become fat enough to be slaughtered? Any way you look at it, farms are places where animals are kept in preparation to be slaughtered and ultimately eaten as food. The question might be put this way: Is it really that much better to make friends with animals before you kill them than to treat them as nameless, faceless objects before you kill them? From a yogic point of view, one must weigh the karmic consequences of perceiving others as mere objects to be used and the consequences of profiting from the suffering of others.

11. Q: Is there a difference between animal rights and animal welfare?

SHARON: Yes. Animal rights activists believe that animals exist for their own reasons, not to be used by human beings. Some animal rights activists take an abolitionist stance and feel that we have no moral right to exploit animals for any reason. Activist Ingrid Newkirk sums it up like this: Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment or for any exploitative purpose. Animal welfarists, on the other hand, do not believe that the lives of animals are important for their own sake. They believe that if we take care of animals and see to their welfare by providing them with a quality of life that gives them the appearance of happiness and health, it is okay to exploit them for our own purposes. Welfarists are concerned with the quality of the animals' lives before or even during their slaughter and want animals to be treated, and slaughtered, "humanely." Welfarists don't necessarily feel that it is wrong for humans to use animals for our own purposes.

12. Q: Are animals a lower life form than humans?

SHARON: It has been an obsession of human beings to create a hierarchy that places the human species on top and lumps all the "other animals" together beneath us. The resulting "speciesism" allows us to look upon animals as less deserving of all manner of rights and considerations than humans. To support this lower status, humans have argued that animals act instinctually; don't have souls; don't feel physical pain like we do; and lack self-consciousness, cognitive intelligence, emotional feelings, morality, and ethics. In fact, numerous scientific laboratory tests and field observations have led to the conclusion that animals are conscious, intelligent, emotional beings. They are not machines and truly feel physical pain when it is inflicted upon them. They are capable of experiencing a wide range of emotions, including loneliness, embarrassment, sadness, longing, depression, anxiety, panic, and fear, as well as joy, relief, surprise, happiness, contentment, and peace. At times some may exhibit behavior that shows a highly developed sense of morality and

ethics. They may not speak human languages, although some primates have been taught American Sign Language (ASL); they nonetheless have highly developed communication skills and vocal languages of their own that no human being has yet mastered, except maybe Dr. Doolittle.

13. Q: Why have human beings treated animals so poorly for so many years—enslaving, torturing, exploiting, and massacring them?

SHARON: That is the big question each of us must answer for the animals and ourselves. Perhaps we have treated them so poorly because we have the means to do so and can get away with it. Perhaps in a perverted attempt to feel powerful ourselves we exert power over others who are defenseless against our weapons of mass destruction (poisons, bombs, guns, spears, knives, forks, etc.). Perhaps, because of our unenlightenment, we do not know that what we do to others we ultimately do to ourselves. Perhaps because of our ignorance of who we really are, we strive for a sense of identity through dominating others. Perhaps we are so unconscious about our actions that we don't even realize the immense suffering we are causing to animals, the planet, and ourselves. Perhaps we have become so addicted to our greed-driven habits that we have lost our moral compass and don't know what is right and wrong. Perhaps we have just gone along with the crowd and haven't questioned our assumptions or our behavior in regard to our fellow earthlings. Perhaps common sense is not so common.

14. Q: Are all meat eaters bad people, all vegans good people, and all animals innocent victims?

SHARON: No. Everyone is caught in the web of his or her own actions and is bound by past karmas (actions). Good and bad are relative terms. Every action takes one to the next place. One's knowledge of karma should not be used to judge others. You should ask yourself: Do I like where I am going, or do I want to change my direction? Through yoga practice you can change the course of your life by purifying your karma. But to do that you must have an idea of where you've been and where you want to go. Patanjali tells us that if we practice aparigraha, (greedlessness) we will begin to understand not only where we have come from but where we are going and how our karmas have contributed to where we are now.

15. Q: What does it mean to be a spiritual person?

SHARON: All living beings are spiritual beings because all of life breathes. Breath is an indication that spirit is present. The words for spirit in the ancient languages of Aramaic (ruha) and Hebrew (ruach) also mean "breath." Even in English, breath is defined as "the vital spirit, which animates living beings." Our breath is connected to the air that every being breathes. By breathing consciously, we acknowledge our communion with all of life. There are atoms of air in your lungs that were once in the lungs of everyone who has ever lived. In essence, we are breathing (inspiring) one another. To be alive is to be breathing. To live and breathe with an exclusive focus on one's small self, disconnected from the whole, is the definition of egotism. The enemy of the spirit is the selfish ego, which thinks that happiness can be gained through causing unhappiness and disharmony to others. In many ancient languages, the word for enemy means "one who falls out of rhythm; one who is not working in harmony with the larger group."

Freedom from this disharmony can begin by letting go of the breath as "my" breath. As we let go, we enter into the shared life force, into a sense of harmony that connects us all: the breath, the Holy Spirit. If you want to know if someone is a "spiritual being" ask yourself, "Is he or she breathing?" If the answer is yes, then you know that you are in the presence of a spiritual being.

16. Q: Can you eat meat and still be a spiritual person?

SHARON: All breathing beings are spiritual; this includes everyone who breathes, whether they are animals or humans, carnivores or vegetarians.

17. Q: Can someone be a meat-eating environmentalist?

SHARON: If that someone is a human being, then in my opinion, no; it is a contradiction in terms. To be an environmentalist is to care about the environment and care about life on planet Earth. The raising of animals for food and all that it entails is the single most destructive force impacting our planet's fragile ecosystems. Our planet simply cannot sustain the greed of billions of human beings who are eating other animals.

18. Q: If the law of karma is true, then shouldn't we accept the fact that animals are suffering because of their karmas?

SHARON: It is true that every being is enjoying life or suffering as a direct result of his or her own past actions. The animals in the factory farms may have been meat-eating human beings in a previous birth; we don't know, and it is not our place to judge. Nonetheless, their suffering provides us with an opportunity to step in and alleviate suffering where we see it. By choosing to be kind instead of cruel, we can break the karmic chain of reacting to violence with more violence, contributing to a more peaceful future for everyone. Knowing the truth about the hell-realms that animals have to endure, it would be wise of us to do our best now not to plant the karmic seeds that would cause us to be reborn as an animal in one of those hell realms. What we do to others will come back to us. Sometimes this is referred to as "enlightened self-interest." But however you see it, choosing to be kind rather than to be cruel benefits everyone.

19. Q: How can you care about animals when there is so much human suffering going on in the world?

SHARON: For compassion to truly be compassion, it can't discriminate. Compassion has to be limitless; it has to extend to all beings. If yogis are to come to the realization of the interconnectedness of life, then we must free ourselves from the conditioning that has caused us to think it is all right to exclude all the other animals from our own goals of peace, freedom, and happiness. We must stop viewing ourselves as separate and disconnected from the rest of life, as if we are a special case and the laws of nature or karma do not apply to us. Besides, the way we treat animals is the root cause of all the human suffering in the world, from poverty, starvation, disease, and war to lack of clean air and water, not to mention all the varied forms of human emotional and spiritual suffering. By working to alleviate the suffering of animals you are working at the cause level of human suffering.

20. Q: Shouldn't we as spiritual practitioners try to live a more simple life and just eat normal food and not be picky? Veganism seems so elitist and complicated!

SHARON: It is a testament to the effectiveness of advertising campaigns funded by the animal-user industries that a diet that is bad for us and harmful to the planet is thought of as "normal" and a diet that promotes health, happiness, and well-being is thought of as alternative, abnormal, or faddish. In fact, these days it is relatively easy to find vegetarian options in many restaurants and supermarkets, though you may have to ask. Moreover, the fact is that it is much more complicated to confine, raise, feed, slaughter, process, package, and market an animal for food than it is to grow plants. Dealing with the health problems that inevitably arise with a diet of meat and dairy products: diabetes, cancer heart disease etc, can prove to be very complicated.

21. Q: I don't eat meat, but I eat fish. Isn't that all right? Isn't it true that fish are cold-blooded and don't feel pain?

SHARON: Actually, fish are very sensitive creatures with highly developed nervous systems. They feel pain acutely. If they weren't able to feel pain, they, like us, could not have survived as a species. Their nervous systems, like ours, secrete opiate-like pain-dampening biochemicals in response to pain. Here is an example that may help you understand just how sensitive a fish is. If you were a fish, and you were to touch a doorknob, you would be able to feel the presence of every person who had touched that doorknob during the course of a day. Have you seen how fish are able to swim in a school so precisely relating to their fish-fellows and never clumsily bump into one another? That's because they have a highly developed sense of feeling in their bodies, which enables them to feel not only the movement of the water against their skin but the presence of other beings who are close.

Fishing is not a benign activity; it is hunting in the water. Fish are complex beings who choose mates, use words to communicate, build nests, cooperate with one another to find food, have long-term memories, and use tools.

22. Q: At least if we choose to eat fish, it's cleaner for the environment and we aren't contributing to the ecological toll that eating beef or pork is causing, right?

SHARON: Wrong. Fishing is taking a huge toll on the planet's ecosystem. We are emptying the oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers as we fish them dry. Large factory trawlers indiscriminately scrape and haul up everything from the ocean floor, along with everyone unfortunate enough to get caught in the nets. Roughly one-third of what is dragged in is not profitable fish, but other sea animals, including turtles, whales, dolphins, seals, and sea birds. These beings are referred to by the fishing industry as "by-catch." Severely traumatized and wounded, these animals are subsequently thrown back into the ocean, dead or dying.

To meet the huge consumer demand for fish, the industry can no longer rely on hunting wild fish. Now we are doing to fish what was done to wild cows, sheep, goats, chickens, and ducks thousands of years ago: we are confining them in holding pens. These floating fish farms or hatcheries, like their land equivalents, are sites for genetic engineering. They contribute to polluting the ocean with toxic excrement and residue as any other farm would. Many genetically "altered" fish escape from the confines of the crowded floating concentration camps to mingle and mate with their wild fish cousins, causing horrible and irreversible damage to wild species.

Today's fishing industry supplies land farms with fish as well. Over fifty percent of the fish caught is fed to livestock on factory farms and "regular" farms. It is an ingredient in the enriched "feed meal" fed to livestock. Farm animals, like cows, who by nature are vegans, are routinely force-fed fish as well as the flesh, blood, and manure of other animals. It may take sixteen pounds of grain to make one pound of beef, but it also takes one hundred pounds of fish to make that one pound of beef.

23. Q: Isn't it natural to eat meat? Human beings have always eaten meat; even animals eat other animals. Shouldn't we try to live a more natural life?

SHARON: Some meat eaters defend meat eating by pointing out that it is natural: in the wild, animals eat one another. The animals that end up on our breakfast, lunch, and dinner plates, however, aren't those who normally eat other animals. The animals we exploit for food are not the lions and tigers and bears of the world. For the most part, we eat the gentle vegan animals. However, on today's farms, we actually force them to become meat eaters by making them eat

feed containing the rendered remains of other animals, which they would never eat in the wild.

Lions and other carnivorous animals do eat meat, but that doesn't mean we should. They would die if they didn't eat meat. Human beings, in contrast, choose to eat meat; it isn't a physiological necessity. In fact, we are designed anatomically to be vegetarians. Besides, lions and other carnivorous animals do a lot of things besides eat meat. They live outdoors, not in houses; they don't wear clothes or drive around in cars; they usually sleep for many hours after eating a meal. Why cite just one of the many things that they do and argue that we should imitate them? This doesn't make much sense.

Besides, there are many activities that human beings have been doing "forever." We might argue from that perspective that eating meat should be allowed to continue. Men have been raping women for thousands of years; does that mean that it is normal and should be allowed to continue? Human beings have been waging war and destroying the environment for long time. Just because it has been going on for a long time and become an unquestioned habit, does that mean it should be allowed to continue. Rape, war, slaughtering and exploiting other animals is not something hard-wired in us—these are learned behaviors, and that means they can be unlearned---and that's good news! So let's pick up our forks and/or chopsticks and let the peaceful revolution begin....