

# 2010-10-18 Buddhism And Vegetarianism

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## SPEAKERS

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I thought this evening, the topic could be a particular exploration of compassion. With the idea of leaving it as a question mark, what is? How is it that we live in a compassionate life? How do we express compassion? How do we respond to the world with compassion? And I think it's one of the profound topics. But in bringing that question mark to you, for you to consider, I'm going to do it in the form of a discussion of Buddhism and vegetarianism. Periodically people ask me about this. And so some people are interested in this topic. And there are a number of people who expect Buddhists to be vegetarian. Buddhism puts a tremendous emphasis on the first precept, it's critical precept of the five precepts is kind of like the template or the principle behind all the other precepts. The first principle is not to cause harm, sometimes translated as not to kill, but literally it means not to cause harm to breathing beings. So as usually take it to be animate objects, objects, animate beings. And so what does it mean to follow that precept? or What does it mean to be concerned about the compassion that is the rationale for even that precept? And since Buddhists are supposed to be, you know, not kill or not cause harm. It seems that it's pretty obvious and they shouldn't be involved in meat eating since that somehow involves the killing of animals. But we find that Most Buddhists are not strict vegetarians. In our tradition, the Theravada tradition, there seems to be a great admiration for vegetarianism. But it's not a like a hard and fast thing you don't find like this religious structure that says Thou shalt be vegetarian. And in some other schools of Mahayana, like subsidiaries of Mahayana Buddhism, there's some pretty strict teachings about being vegetarian. But our traditions there's not. So what's going on? And how does that fit into the first precept? How does it fit into that tremendous emphasis on cultivating and living a compassionate life? So a little bit the background for at least our tradition, which goes back to the time of the Buddha. There was a, the Buddha had a cousin, who apparently the tradition treats him as kind of like the evil cousin, who was also a monk in the Buddha's order. But he tried to take over the order. He was kind of jealous of his cousin, I guess, tried to find various ways to take over, power struggle. Even back then there were such things, even the Buddha had to deal with that. And one of the things that his cousin Devadatta did was, he was he couldn't quite take over the order, he created a schism and kind of peeled off a lot of the Buddhist monks follow him. And he did it by trying to create a monastic order that was much purer than what the Buddha had organized. And India especially they did being purity was very highly regarded and whoever was pure has got the most support and whatever. And so he had a number he had his new monks, his people follow much stricter, ascetic practices. Because if the idea being if you're really ascetic, then you are pure. And the Buddha was teaching the middle way between asceticism and indulgence. And so one of those rules that that Devadatta had was that the monks had to be vegetarian, not eat any meat. It was not unusual in India for that time. The Jains, a whole other spiritual tradition that was quite strong at the time of the Buddha. They were very strict vegetarians, they were very dedicated to the teachings of non harming Ahimsa. And part of their understanding of that was not to kill anything at all. And not to eat meat was part of their following that kind of teaching. So it was not unusual. So Devadatta made this

requirement of his people. And the Buddha then was under some pressure, I guess, to institute such a rule. And he said, No, we're not going to do that.

And he said, there are three conditions upon which a monastic may not eat meat, which actually, let's see, four but three primary ones. One is that it's called your say, this way, monastic is only allowed to eat meat if the meat is pure in three respects and is pure if the monastic has not seen, heard, or suspected that the meat the animal was killed, so they could have meat. So if you've seen or heard or suspect that the animals killed specifically for you, if you're a monastic, then you can't eat it. The fourth thing, which is kind of more minor, but still there, is that monastics apparently are not allowed to eat elephants, horses, lions, tigers, and snakes. So but otherwise, it's okay. I don't know what to what was going on back then. But those particular Animals.

So why only limit monastics or why not what why this kind of rule that you cannot, the only prohibition is against eating animals that have been killed for you. So the monastic order in Buddhism, the early tradition, they go, they would go out every day with our alms bowl bowl that was probably about twice as big as this bell that we have here. And they'd walk around the village you're walking around the countryside, and people would see that there are monastics with with a begging bowl and alms bowl, and people would drop food in it, monastics are not allowed to keep food overnight. They're not allowed to make their own food, cook for themselves. They're not allowed to go and pick, you know, they're allowed to farm. They have to completely rely on the food that's donated to them. Otherwise you don't eat. And so every day because they don't store it overnight and to get rid of it at 12 o'clock, they have to go and empty bowl. And if people feed them, then they eat if people don't, they don't eat that day. And there's lots of stories of monastics to go hungry for the day because no one made any offerings. And so they go through the villages with this bowl. And out of the goodness of people's hearts, they want to support them monastics, want to help them and support their lives and whatever. People who are normally cooking their food will, you know, for their own family, their own whole household will see the monastic walking down the road. And they'll come out and say Here, have some of my food, have some of the dishes I'm making for my family, some of the food that we have here. And if people were cooking meat, meat would be part of what they had in their in their home part of what they were cooking for themselves. And so they offer some of their own food. And it's a generous act. And it's a beautiful thing for someone to want to support someone else's doing a spiritual path, trying to liberate themselves, awaken themselves. It's a beautiful thing to be a monastic. So here's someone's lay person in the goodness of the heart is coming forth this beautiful offering of food. Should the monastic then say, I think Let me see others meat there. I can't take that, forget that. That would make the person, lay person not only feel lousy, feel bad, but it would kind of sever the benefits, the joy, the generosity, the benefits of them being generous. It would kind of feel kind of, I think, not very clean or very good to do that. The animal was not, you know, because they were cooking it for themselves for their family. They were not you know, they didn't animals are killed for the monastic. And after the animal is killed, it's no longer an animal, it's meat. So then if you know so then the monastic receives that and is grateful to be fed. And then so it goes through. So that's that's how the system is set up. So in that kind of context, you maybe understand why the Buddha said didn't want to prohibit his monastics from eating meat. Now, isn't that in a sense, they're compassionate, the monastics are compassionate for the donor for the welfare of the donor, the generosity of the donor, they want to honor that. Because the animal wasn't killed for them. They're not involved in the question of life and death. They might have a lot of compassion for the animal, but they're not, you know, engaged and involved directly in that, you know, that life and death issue. And so again, they're, you know, it's not really, their, you know, their business in a sense so that's how it is for the monastics. So what about for lay people? What about for lay Buddhists? So the very interesting thing about lay Buddhists is that it's in my reading of the book still stay in the time of the Buddha. So I read the ancient literature, the ancient scriptures in the time from

the time of the Buddha. It didn't seem that the Buddha felt it was really his place very often, to tell the people what to do.

Monastics were kind of like his close disciples, they did, they've done some very dramatic, you know, done an ordination into particular kind of very powerful training, religious training. And they conveyed certain kind of commitment to the Buddha to train under him. Lay people generally didn't do that. They might have gone for refuge, the Buddha Dharma Sangha, but didn't want to kind of in the same kind of, say here, you're my teacher, tell me What to do? So the Buddha seemed diverse I can tell somewhat reticent to tell the people how they should live their life. Because, you know, there's no obligation in Buddhism, there's no there's not like we don't have a God who sits above us all, who's you know, says, Thou shalt in any kind of way. The guidance for moral action in Buddhism is not some kind of commandments, but it really is in our own hearts. Each individual heart has to understand the principles and be the set had the sensitivity, the principles of compassion and sensitivity of compassion and empathy and find their own way. And it wasn't the Buddhist place to judge what other people do if someone needs me, if someone does anything, that's their business. You know, the Buddha is not in the business of judging people, the callin people what to do, and people do all kinds of unusual things in the world. And, you know, to this day, people do unusual things. And, you know, it's like, it's not like our business to go And judge each other or other people in other places in the world for how they what they do and, and, you know, so it didn't feel like it was his place, right? So he didn't really give strong ethical teaching in terms of, you know particular things how they people should live their lives, he did say, you know, it's really good if you didn't kill if you didn't steal, didn't lie and didn't engage in improper sexuality and harmful sexuality didn't think we're engaging in, don't engage in intoxicants. But you know, that was kind of very general how you live that and how well you live that and how you interpret that the Buddha kind of didn't have much to say. So, you know, if my interpretation here is accurate, you know, it wasn't his place to tell people that you should be vegetarian. So, you know, we don't have that kind of teaching you lay Buddhists should be vegetarian. What it means, which I think is quite beautiful is is left to us. In a way Buddhism constantly says it's left to you, you have to decide you have to find your way. There's a principle of if you want to be liberated, if you want to be free of your suffering, it's really helpful to follow certain useful tools, certain ways of living. But it isn't like that you have to live this way. It's more like if what you want is to learn, like for example, if you want to learn French, you better study French. If you want to become liberated, you better study that way of life that supports liberation. There's no obligation to get liberated. You know, like, you know, so, so. So it's kind of left to us. How do we find our way? How do we negotiate our way to look to Buddhism for a strict rule, and default, you know about vegetarianism of eating, I think is to misunderstand what Buddhism is trying to teach us. But it is not meant to be a rule based religion that now it can be a good Buddhist because I followed all these rules, and therefore that's how it is But rather what I like to believe is to be a Buddhist is to have concerned about liberation, to freedom, liberation from suffering, and concern with compassion to have that both both those motivations and priorities in one's heart. And then with those priorities and with those as a guidance, each person has to find their own way and he ation how do we live that how do we express that? Because Buddhism doesn't lay down this law, this is how it has to be. So the vegetarianism, we don't get this kind of snark tradition is very strict, that thou shalt be a vegetarian. At the same time, in many, many terrible countries, the lay people admire people are vegetarian, because it's kind of a natural connection between seen in connection between being compassionate and concerned for animals and not eating them.

Here in the West, in particular, Western lay Buddhists will often give monastics almost Always, not always, but genuinely given that they're monastic and they make offerings, vegetarian food. It just kind of seems like that's what you should do here at IMC. When we have potlucks, we ask that people bring vegetarian food not serve meat. It just seems like that seems right to us seems kind of odd to have

meat in a place like this. Occasionally someone doesn't know that we asked for that. And they come with a meat they lay it out on the table here potluck. And I think we then they do that we shouldn't say anything, we should let it be there. And those are those people who are okay with eating meat to be good to receive it and make them feel comfortable and appreciate it for what they offer. And maybe the following month, we can get the news and we'd rather not have that here. So how does that individual then negotiate this issue? How do we follow it? Again, one of the one of the suggestions in Buddhism is we're saying teachings is that to consider yourself superior to others. is a form of suffering for you. So to hold yourself as being a vegetarian for better than someone or pure than someone else, that's just suffering. That's not useful. And you see that the number of people who have who are vegetarians hold themselves that way against others. So Buddhism, you know, says, Look at yourself and look at what you're attached to. And if you're engaged in that kind of activity, that kind of way of thinking, try to free yourself from it. Some people think that if you're a vegetarian, you're somehow spiritually pure. And that also the Buddha says, If you believe that's kind of like magical thinking, and you don't become spiritually pure, a pure just being what you eat, you become spiritually pure in Buddhism, by what's in your heart, and that's what's in your stomach. And so if you're, if your heart is motivated by compassion and kindness and generosity and those things, then it's a it's a pure heart. But if you can all do all the you can eat all the vegetables in the world and be greedy and hate people and You know, and you know break all the other precepts and vegetarianism not going to help you. So Buddhism tends to focus on the heart, not the stomach. Now, when I was in Burma, I was a monk there was practicing there for a long time it was in a very long time before I was at a very large monastery. And there were, I don't know how many but hundreds of monks and nuns, lots and lots, and we would go for a meal every once a day, our main meal and it will be laid out there and then a lot of meat, there was a lot of pork. And mostly I avoided all the meat. I tried the best I can to avoid it. They had a fish chowder that I would eat but I okay after a bit kind of being kind of malnourished because the food wasn't very good after I started eating chicken The fish for the first time, since probably for but how many years, I've been a vegetarian pretty strictly for about I guess over 10 years by that time, for a part of the time I was a vegan and, and then I found myself kind of ending by strict vegetarian era in a Buddhist monastery in Burma. You know, a little odd, odd, I thought, but I just felt like I gotta get some protein in here. And when I was, and before that year before that I was in a monastery in Japan, a Zen monastery. And there the diet was even worse, and there wasn't any meat, really very little meat. I mean, there was just, you know, there was this whole story, but that there there was, and there I was also getting malnourished. And I didn't I didn't recognize the signs but this other monk said he pulled me aside one day he said Gil, I noticed that After the evening meditation for going to bed, you go to the kitchen and raid the cookie jar their cookie in order to have these candies had the Japanese special candy being candies. And they had a lot of them people donate to the monastery, so surplus of them and that would go there and I don't have much of a sweet tooth. It's not like my thing teach sugar locked and stuff. But I would go there and stuff myself with all this sweet and he came saggy, I noticed this about you. And one of the signs of protein deficiency is sweet tooth. And so what I did was I jumped over the monastery wall snuck out and went to a local grocery store and bought powdered babies milk.

And then every day at lunch, I would mix my concoction and drink that and then I stopped creating sugar. So that was in Japan, right so a year later I was in Burma. And there there was I couldn't go jump over the wall and get powdered milk. So that I started eating chicken I'm sorry to go on and on. But the point I was gonna say was that I eventually I went to our to our teacher who Pandita and I said to him, Look, there are hundreds and hundreds of monks here. And you guys serve all this pork, like the one of the main pieces of meals, pork, and usually swimming in oil, everything was swimming in oil. It's really amazing. We would take the vegetables and you know, at least you know out of this bowl of oil, shake out the oil, then patted on the head of the napkins and it was just amazing the diet and so we would so I went to the teacher that but and said, Look, you know in America, we have this idea of the



law of supply and demand. And you have such so many monks here, so many monastics here that I you know that you know, the butchers in town. They know who's coming to buy the meat monks don't buy the meat, but the lay people who run the monastery, go into the market and buy all this pork. So I said, Look, you know, don't tell me this, you know, supply and demand thing, right? You provide your the demand. So they're providing the supply. So they're sure they're calculating, they go out to the kill these pigs. So you know, because you can't have all these thousands of monks without affecting the supply and demand thing. And he failed. He didn't have a clue what I was saying. But many, many years later, I read that his teacher in a book wrote basically same thing recommending that monks not eat meat, because he said it was really hard for monks to be sure that the meat animal was not killed for them. That even they can't even suspect the animals being killed and hit some bad habits teacher said monk bested monks don't eat meat because they want to be sure that so anyway, he didn't express any understanding of the issue with me. So what do we do here in this country? You know, how do we do relate to this. So when I don't know what you'll do, but I know that I prefer not to eat meat, sometimes now I'll eat fish and chicken. I try not to eat anything else any, you know, beef or stuff like that. That just seems too much. But occasionally, some beef meal or some meat meal will appear in front of me. Like if I forget to order the vegetarian meal on the airplane, and they serve something or, or at someone's house, and they don't know that I prefer being a vegetarian. And somehow they go to all this trouble to make something and they put it in front of me and I'm not going to say, you know, please don't do you know, thanks for all the hard work and, but I can't eat this. So then I'll need it. You know, and That seems like the right thing to do. But what about the animals? What about the all the animals that don't want to get killed? But many animals who live in quite inhuman, inhumane situations? What is our relationship to them? Do we live oblivious, of how they live? Even if we eat meat? Do we say just out of sight, out of mind, that nothing to do with me? That's someone else's karma. Or they're just animals. It doesn't really matter. Or I'm busy. I think about that. What do we think about the extent of the world that extends beyond us that we're connected to, but we don't see. And there's a very big wide world they were connected to that, that we have impact on. And one of the things that's coming out that many people feel now strongly about, you know, the whole you know, the world the environmental issues in the world and is how much more You know how much nowadays, maybe we can't make big changes, but a lot of people making small changes makes a difference. And so how about all these animals, these animal farms where they live in terrible conditions in cages and you know, do what how we can what we consume and where we live? Does it have an impact on that? And what it what does your heart tell us about our relationship to that? One of the attitudes I had about eating meat, still have it in a sense is what am I willing to kill it with my willing to kill the cow, my willing to kill the chicken? I'm gonna eat it should not be willing.

And if you know, would you be willing to go to a slaughterhouse and put the slaughter gun to the, into the right between the eyes of the cow and, you know, look at the look of the cow in the eye and say, you know, you're for dinner. Some people would, and some people find that it's just some doesn't compute in the heart. It just can't do it. Do we do do we do that exercise of imagination? When we're not involved directly? Or does it really someone else just you know, that someone else is doing? In some countries and theravadan countries in Asia, it's understood that killing animals is very bad karma. So Buddhists don't want to do it. And so the butchers all are belong to a different religion. And so the Buddhists will go to the butcher and buy the meat. But you know, that's butchers karma that they killed it. It seems kind of odd, doesn't it? To me, it seems kind of strange. It seems like you're still participating in it. Maybe it's not karma is not as bad as the butcher But still, it seems doesn't seem quite ethical to me too. It seems even worse, somehow worse to let someone else do all your dirty work intentionally. So how is it for us and how do we consider the consider the extended world because it has Something we're interested in? Or is it nothing to do with compassion for us? Because compassion is maybe only close it close in order to feel like in a position to have to think about things that are so far away? And is

it in a position to be limited from what we want and our desires and all that? How do we grapple with this question of compassion and the expression of it? So one of the things I wanted to convey today is that the Buddhist tradition has because of historical reasons, doesn't come down with strong teachings about vegetarianism. To some degree, because laypeople look to monastics as the models of how to live a spiritual life because the monastics cannot be vegetarian. There's an assumption that it's okay for laypeople to build a vegetarian. However, the monastics are not allowed to be vegetarian. But lay people are. So in a sense, we have greater freedom than the monastics to choose our diet and how we live our life, which week we go, we go to the store and we can choose when we buy. So we have a whole different whole different set of considerations that lay people need to have the monastics don't. Monastics don't buy their food we do. So how do we consider that in what what are the choices we make? What are the trade offs? You know, some people feel that's unfortunate to kill an animal but I needed for my health. I count to it on I. And so there's kind of a trade off and people kind of are weighing the trade off and that's how some people do it. So that so the second thing I want to want to convey was the question the issue of not the answer should you shouldn't be vegetarian, but rather, I think it's really beautiful. That someone would ask the question, that someone would be concerned what is the right thing to do? Or what's the compassionate thing to do hear, you know, to grapple with it even if you're not satisfied with your answer. The fact that you agree someone will grapple and be concerned about that, I think is a beautiful thing. I wish more people in the world would grapple with these questions grapple with questions of life and death. So those are my thoughts. And what do you think? Do you have any comments questions that you'd like to make? Yes.

Well, this is kind of a silly question. But do you know if Buddha was ever asked about this question himself about from from a by a lay person, whether there were any with the karmic consequences of any, if any of eating meat

as far as I know, he was never asked that. He certainly said there were karmic consequences of killing animals. Yeah. So one of the forms of wrong livelihood because it's karma That is being a butcher butcher, meaning somebody kills that animal. But otherwise they wouldn't have ever asked as far as I know.

I remember one story the Dalai Lama told about when he attempted to be a vegetarian. The story was, he was at a monastery and they were cooking a meal and they served chicken for the meal. And he ate the chicken because the Tibetans typically, of course, ate meat. It's very difficult not to and then after the meal, he saw a bunch of chickens running around in the yard, and, boy, there must be one less chicken. He didn't feel quite right about that. Because he realized that there wasn't a grocery store. So that's where they got the chicken. And so, but he for health reasons, was then advised by his doctors, as That's what I heard that he should eat some. But then he said to have the greatest admiration. For people who are able to be vegetarian and I think even change the diet and the monasteries where possible to be vegetarian

the monastics have a lot of rules. And, and some of the rules have to do about eating like how you eat. And one of the rules for example, is you have this alms bowl and you put all your food in one bowl, all your dishes. So dessert salad, soup, entree, you know, everything goes in this one bowl. And then one of the that's one of the rules is you're not supposed to discriminate when you eat, you're not supposed to like eat all the you know, the dessert first or or, you know, save something for the end or you know, just just get your spoon in there and eat whatever comes out, you know, and, and because eating is for sustenance, eating is for the care and welfare of your body, not for beautification, not for pleasure just getting by in a nice way for the monastics, and so you know, you're not supposed to kind of kind of, you know, when it's in the bowl you're not supposed to pick and choose you're not supposed to. But one of

the really great rule is, you're not allowed to look into the bowl of your neighboring monk to see how he's doing, whether he's following that rule or not. And I think that's beautiful. He didn't look at the neighboring monks' bowl. You know, you don't go around looking at your neighbor's house and say, you know, you don't are your friend, even though they eat meat, you know, you know, I don't think it's a good thing to go and make people feel bad about themselves or judge them. You know, let them do what they do. But the point is to look at our own heart.

So I'm wondering if you might say more about vegetarianism as elitism, elitism historically with the interdependency of the Sangha, and the lay community and the Brahmins being the only strict vegetarians and then contemporarily as a massive trap to think your practice is supposed to look like something

where you said it, you say it then. But I said earlier in the talk that, you know, one of the hindrances is to consider yourself superior, which, you know, to hold yourself is better than everybody else because you're vegetarian, because you're suffering involved in that. And, and but it wasn't just the Brahmins who are vegetarian there was also the giants were vegetarian. So, you know, perhaps the Buddha was trying to break break some of those caste barriers to by refusing.

So, the most beautiful part of it for me, but I could just be remembering it incorrectly, is that if you cut away support from the lay community, any faction of it Then you'd have a more isolated, potentially more elitist, non interdependent Sangha. Where there I mean, beyond food, shelter security medicines. It's if foresight was for that

to be an interplay. So you're saying that if the monastics were vegetarian, then there are certain families, certain populations who wouldn't then participate because they eat meat. And so then the monastics wouldn't be integrated into the widest possible part of the society. There'd be barriers between that connection that that food connection between the monastics and the director. Yeah, so by being by being not by but by not having that kind of limitation. You can go anywhere you can receive anybody's donation support.

I know that some of the Western monastics or some of the metric Western Westerners who are monks and nuns, some of them strongly would prefer to be vegetarians, but they can't say it. You know, they can't they don't know. So but they would prefer that way.

Yeah. One of the things that's

very upsetting for me is to know that meat was bought. And then not even that it was thrown out as garbage. And that is very upsetting for me disrespectful to that life also. That's right.

Yeah. Good. So I will make a point of eating all the meat

right before it's being thrown. Yes. I was wondering how you felt physically when you began eating meat. I asked that because I know that after a long retreat when it's vegetarian, I usually feel pretty good. Of course, there's lots more stuff going on and then the diet but to keep always think, Oh, I should eat more vegetarian. diet I just wondered when going the other direction How did you feel physically? Yeah, I was curious that myself when I when I finally started eating some meat I said I don't really know I try not to eat beef but at some point I got kind of curious and hadn't eaten I hadn't eaten for a long time a little bit chicken but I was in for a long time 10 1215 years I'm not alone and so I tried eating a hamburger and I thought What's this gonna do to me I gotta get sick in my stomach it's my kids

don't have a digested digestive juices anymore to deal with this and I think I didn't feel bad. I didn't feel good. You know, just like that's how it was for me, but I don't know how it is for others, but I've never noticed any difference one way or the other for me

I want to tell you how I appreciate this talk. I've been trying to navigate this for the last year. So my husband is from Nebraska meat and potatoes all the way I have two small boys. And so it's kind of hard to navigate that. But I've been kind of in finding my own path and way to do that at home. But I'd kind of come to the point to the realization that I would never be a strict vegetarian because I had I come from a family and a culture where food is very strongly equated with not only hospitality, but love. Like this is an I could never ever picture a scenario where I would say no to something that one of my aunts had put in front of me. So I just wanted to say I appreciate that and I kind of felt like I was falling short somehow. But I hadn't also made that decision. That's just going to be where I fell. So thank you.

I have two sons at home. One who is a very strict vegetarian. He's from very young age he found that way. Um, so we don't have too much meat at home. But he he's like, won't anything and the other is a complete carnivore. If he had his choice, he eat meat all the time. And so the one who said, you know, would prefer to be a carnivore. I don't feel like it's my place to tell him he should be vegetarian. That's, that's I don't know why he's making that choice. That's his choice. And so like, we go to a restaurant, he ordered a hamburger, and I guess I'm paying for it.

People do their own choice this way.

So anyway, I have I mean, I was vegan for quite a while. And I'm not vegan anymore because I add fish oil for health reasons. But I just wanted to say that it never made me feel pure or superior in any way for a very simple reason that because of modern agricultural practices are what they are thousands of smaller creatures like birds and rodents died during harvest of things like grains especially, but even vegetables. So, actually, I think that eating meat you I mean, you might be responsible for less deaths and suffering then eating grains, and for a loaf of bread, maybe more creatures perished send for something like for hamburger, for instance. It's just something to keep in mind. I think. Here's the interesting story.

Somebody a superhero is old enough that I really remember Francis Moore lepay died for a small planet. So, she wrote a book in the early 70s, I think mid 70s called diet for small planet, where she was one of the first people at least, to popularize the idea that that meat eating was environmentally costly. And that eating grains was much more efficient way use less water, less land, less fertilizer, less all kinds of resources. And it's a quite the difference between you know, a pound of meat, protein from from meat and a pound of protein from soybeans or something else is quite dramatically difference in the resources that are used and as waters becomes scarcer as fertilizers become bigger issue, you know, in the pollution of it and all these, you know, oil that goes into farming. So the world would have plenty of food if people stopped eating meat because all that grain could be used in much more efficient ways. So she was popular, I said it and she had this cookbook called the diet for a small planet. So I was at going to school at UC San at UC Davis. I was a vegetarian. All my friends were vegetarians, and we were alternative agricultural activists on campus. I was studying agriculture and organic farming. And, and we were doing all this activist stuff on campus to promote organic farming and small scale farming, alternative farming all kinds of things. And so we had this lecture series, that we organized the students and we invited Francis Moore lepay to come and give a talk. And he was kind of quite famous back then. So we had to rent this huge auditorium. And the biggest auditorium on campus and all the people came. It was a big event. But before the event, we had a potluck. And we invited her to the potluck, everyone's going to come and so we all came all the students who all came with a vegetarian



dishes, and Francis Moore lepay showed up with rabbit meat And we kind of like looked at her and said, What? How could you and she and she said, Oh, this is a rabbit, I raised myself on the scraps from my kitchen. And that's a very efficient way, again, environmental way of having meat because that's going to waste anyway, it's better than composting it is to have it, you know, recycle through an animal. And so, you know, she was not interested in the ethics of killing, he was interested in the ethics of resource use, and he thought it was better to use resources that way. So that was a great moment. We expect all of you all expected her to be here to be vegetarian, and he showed up with a rabbit meat. And I became a vegan for a while. And before he knew what that word was, when one of the reasons was I lived for six months when I was 2021. On a dairy farm Small dairy farm in rural Norway. And, and from there, I learned that in order for a cow to make milk I mean I never thought about this maybe so you guys knew that sounds silly that I would know this but in order for a cow to make milk, it has to have caps. And it doesn't just then produce milk for years and years and years based on one calf. At some point it stops producing milk after a year and a half or something a year or something. And so for the cow to keep making milk, it has to keep giving birth to caps. Now half the caps are bulls and the life expect life expectancy of a bull in Norway was a year and a half because that's how long it took to fatten them up before they got slaughtered for me. So I saw that on the farm and I said wow eat my drinking the milk. puts me right into that industry that involves killing cows. Because tonkotsu glorious bull song called the glorious retirement in early age and you know, in some pasture, and I didn't feel comfortable being part of that whole cycle of killing that the milk required. So then for a while, I just wouldn't touch any dairy products. And since since then I've started to start eating dairy. And I don't know if I'm better off ethically or not, but or there's something but what it says about me that I no longer have that strong feeling about it. Maybe it's because of the distance from the farm, that I have that now. So last thing and last thing I'll say is that it's still a question mark. For me this issue I don't feel like I have it resolved. I don't feel like I have. I've

come to the best possible solution about what the in terms of dairy products or meat or whatever And but it will have come to it is not because of the lack of a lot of thought and consideration and care. It's just maybe don't have the final word yet for myself, I'm still in process with it. But I think it's beautiful to grapple. And some of you may have already come to decision and know pretty clearly how you are with it. And some of you maybe can still be nice to question it. And what I encourage you if you should question it is don't question yourself, question it from the point of view of guilt and shame. But really question it from the point of view of what's most beautiful in your heart. Question from the point of view of whatever compassion, wisdom, love you have for everyone, including yourself and the whole world. That that'd be the source of your question and your exploration. feeling guilt and shame is so waste of resources. So I hope this was interesting. And enough and thank you very much