



Japan was once a country of vegetarians who held the cow as the most sacred animal and the most fierce protector of this sacred animal was the 'Samurai' the great warriors of Japan who were feared throughout the lands for their martial arts, their bravery and their devotion to duty.

As the culture of Buddhism departed the shores of Vedic India it had a profound influence upon many countries including China and Korea and Japan and upon entering the lands of Japan around 1500 years ago emperors such as Tenmu banned the consumption of meat.

At once it became forbidden to engage in the consumption of meat from four legged animals such as cows and horses and dogs as well as domestic birds such as chickens and roosters and as each succeeding emperor enforced this Japan became a vegetarian country by the 10th century.



Throughout the lands of China and Korea the Buddhists monks adhered to the principle of ahimsa and non violence within their eating habits but these strictures were not placed upon the population as a whole while within Japan we find that the Emperor was very strict as he guided his subjects towards the Buddhas teachings of non violence.

The killing of mammals was considered to be extremely sinful while the killing of birds was considered to be moderately sinful and the killing of fish was considered to be somewhat sinful and in those days the Japanese ate the whale which in those times was seen simply as a big fish and not a mammal.

Japan also distinguished between animals reared in the household and those in the wild where to kill a wild animal was sinful but to kill an animal you had raised from birth was considered abominable, like killing a member of the family, hence the diet of the Japanese was mainly rice, noodles, fish and on occasions wild fowl.



During the Heian period which occurred between 794 and 1185 AD we find that within the 'Engishiki' which was a book of laws and customs, there was a required period of fasting for up to three days which was imposed as a penance for anyone who ate meat.

During this period of penance one was forbidden to look at the deities of the Buddha, which was seen as a sign of shame, and within subsequent centuries the 'Ise Shrine' passed even stricter laws where one who consumed meat had to fast for a period of one hundred days.

Such was the mood throughout the lands of Japan that even those who ate with someone who ate meat had to fast for twenty one days and one who ate with someone who had eaten with someone who had eaten meat must fast for seven days and in this way penances were performed to counteract the sinful reactions of eating meat.



The consumption of milk was not so common within the lands of Japan and among the peasantry the cow was used exclusively as a draft animal to plough the fields and although there is some evidence for the consumption of milk the cow was protected for its own sake and allowed to roam around the royal gardens in peace.

One product which they used was 'daigo' meaning 'the best part' a product which is found within the Nirvana Sutra where it describes the process as from cows to milk to cream to curdled milk to butter to ghee which is known as 'diago' the essence of milk and used symbolically as a metaphor for the final stages of enlightenment.

Another milk product was said to be 'raku' which was sugar mixed with milk and boiled down until it became a hard block which seems like a form of burfi and in an age before refrigeration this allowed for the transporting and the preservation of milk products.



Japan and its refined vegetarian lifestyle received its first blow in the year of 1549 with the appearance of Francis Xavier, one of the founders of the Jesuit order who, along with his Portuguese missionaries, began to preach their Christian faith and upon gaining support they gradually undermined the power of the Buddhist priests.

Jesuits within the lands of Japan observed an alien culture which was highly refined and developed, bathing each day at a time when Europeans would bathe once a month, if at all, and while the Jesuits were cautious observers they engaged in trade and gradually became increasingly prominent.

As the missionaries expanded they gradually introduced meat eating which was at first an 'accommodation' as it was said they needed meat to be healthy and now wherever people were converted to this new faith, the slaughtering of animals and the consumption of meat followed, we see this in 'waca' a Japanese word for 'meat' which is from the Portuguese 'vaca' meaning 'meat'.



One social class was called the 'Eta' a class of people who were considered unclean as it was their occupation to dispose of the dead carcasses and although they could never kill the cow they were allowed to make and sell leather goods from those which had died of natural causes and as these people were at the bottom of the social ladder they were easy to convert and engage within the growing meat industry.

The spreading of meat eating was however, only the beginning as the Portuguese were one of the leaders in world slavery and facilitated this through their port city of Nagasaki where thousands of Japanese women were enslaved and within correspondence between the King of Portugal and the Pope we find the negotiated price was 50 Japanese women for one barrel of Jesuit gun powder.

Jesuits had guns which they used through trade to convert many of the warlords who desired to conquer their enemies and within just a few decades it is estimated that over 300,000 converted and of course none of this had anything to do with a better lifestyle or a superior culture and philosophy, it was simply the use and abuse of power and of course as soon as the Jesuits gained power the Buddhist temples were desecrated as pagan and unholy.



Observing these pastimes of the peace loving and knowledge seeking Christians was the great Samurai master 'Toyotomi Hideyoshi' a warrior who had become suspicious of the Jesuits when he saw the Spanish conquer the Philippines and disgusted with their activities he met them and handed them the 'purge directive order of the Jesuits' a document which outlined the following points.

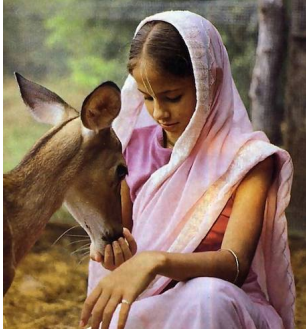
Number one was all Japanese slave trade must end and all Japanese women from around the world must be returned and number two was all meat eating must cease, the cow and horse must never be killed and three was all desecration of Buddhist temples must end and four was forced conversions would not be permitted.

As he enforced these proclamations he expelled the Jesuits from the country of Japan, a group of people and a culture which had lasted only 38 years before the people of Japan had them

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kicked out and we can contrast this with the culture of Buddhism which had been warmly embraced throughout the lands of Japan for over a thousand years.



Within the year of 1598 the great Samurai named 'Tokugawa Leyasu' began to assert his control as he recognised how Christian missionary activities were a trojan horse aimed at capturing the country of Japan and by 1614 he had banned Christianity entirely noting how they were 'corrupting goodness' and creating political divisions.

During the year of 1635 the Sakoku edict sealed off Japan to foreign influence where no Japanese were allowed to leave nor return, Japanese trading boats were set on fire and sunk, foreigners were expelled and for the next 200 years Japan remained isolated and politically stable and although in many ways repressed they were able to retain their traditional culture.

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Once again we can contrast the influence of Christianity upon the islands of Japan with that of the influence of the Buddhists whose culture had been embraced for over one thousands years creating peace and prosperity throughout the islands for both the humans and the animals.



Some 200 years later the Americans arrived with four warships entering into the bay of Edo and blockaded any food or supplies from entering the country as they demanded that Japan sign a treaty which opens them up for free trade and if not they would be destroyed and as they were no match for the American ships they had to agree, and following in their heavy footsteps came the English and the Dutch all forcing their way into free trade with Japan.

One small Buddhist temple was set aside to host the foreign visitors and this was converted into the first US consulate in Japan where General Townsend Harris had a cow brought to this consulate and after it was slaughtered upon the grounds of this temple he roasted and consumed the beef with a bottle of wine.

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The most sacred animal of Japan had been officially slaughtered and consumed upon the lands of Japan and gradually the old conventions were out and the Japanese shed their 'primitive' and 'backward' ways and in memory of this event the consul became known as 'the temple of the slaughtered cow'.



Slaughterhouses began to appear throughout the lands of Japan and in 1869 the Japanese ministry of finance established a company designed to sell beef to foreign traders and in 1872 the Emperor passed a law which broke two great traditions for Buddhist monks as they were now allowed to get married and eat beef and when the Emperor declared publicly how much he enjoyed eating mutton and beef everything changed.

1872 was also the year in which ten Buddhist monks stormed the imperial palace to assassinate the Emperor as they declared that this consumption of meat was corrupting and destroying the very soul of the Japanese people and it must be brought to an end.

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Five of the monks were shot and killed while the Emperor who survived the assassination attempts immediately disbanded the Samurai warrior class and replaced it with Western style military as they purchased weapons from the USA and Britain and the Samurai whose tradition protected the sacred cow was now coming to an end due to the slaughtering of the sacred cow.



Meat eating now became a sign of progress and modernity throughout the lands of Japan, a way of increasing the strength of the army, a way of creating economic wealth, but many of the public still regarded meat eating as low class, unclean and sinful.

As a marketing ploy they renamed the meat and boar became known as 'botan' meaning 'peony flower' deer became 'momiji' meaning 'maple' and horse became 'sakura' meaning 'cherry blossom' we see similar marketing in the west as parents take their children to enjoy 'happy meals' 'McNuggets' and 'whoppers' whimsical names which hide the violence.

During the U.S occupation (1945 - 1952) they established a school lunch programme managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) designed to improve the health of Japanese school children and give them an acquired taste for meat but a mysterious disease infected the children as rashes appeared all over their body and they realised that the Japanese kids were allergic to meat.



Over the decades meat eating and slaughterhouses increased as the U.S promoted meat throughout Japan with a view to increase their exports of beef and the 'desire beef' campaign was followed by the 'we care' campaign in 2006 and one headline within a U.S. newspaper read 'Japans soaring demand for cow drives U.S. exports'.

Japan was once a country of great mystery and culture and tradition blended with a reverence for nature which made it one of the most beautiful countries throughout the world but then they lost their culture to the meat eating ways of western ignorance.

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Ancient seers understood the subtle laws which governed the universe and knew how the violence within meat sows the seeds of future conflict and for over one thousand years the islands of Japan was protected from this by the Samurai, the great protectors of the sacred cow.