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## The Vedic Observer

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day

### *Peace Talks Paradox*

*by Suhotra Swami*

For a growing number of people on both sides of the Atlantic, the nuclear arms buildup is *the* issue of the eighties. Events just won't let us forget our seemingly inexorable march toward Armageddon: A TV movie called *The Day After* becomes a national event and shows 100 million Americans, in graphically gory detail, what a nuclear strike would do to the people in and around Kansas City. The start of the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe brings hundreds of thousands of protesters into the streets there. And the breakdown of the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) talks in Geneva, followed by threats of a Russian arms buildup, apparently insures an eventual U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

The Russian walkout at the INF talks especially points up what many see as the root of the nuclear crisis: the two-faced morality of leaders who talk of peace and prepare for war. The Cruise and Pershing II missiles are a bargaining chip, says President Reagan and his advisors, a response to the Russians' deployment of SS-20 missiles that threaten all of Europe. If NATO doesn't deploy the new missiles, the argument goes, the Russians will see us as patsies and walk all over us—and the nuclear war will become *more* likely. Therefore, in the interests of peace we have to install the missiles, while, of course, continuing the peace talks in Geneva.

But critics of this two-faced morality argue that from the start it worked against the interests of world peace by linking disarmament talks with armament policy. The INF conference, they say, was thus reduced to a mere cosmetic gesture, a futile charade acted out mainly to allay the darkest fear of a jittery world. What is that fear? That perhaps the superpowers aren't at all serious about peace. Perhaps they actually mean to have a war. What other conclusion can we draw as new weapons continue to be rolled out and mounted upon launching ramps on both sides of the Iron Curtain?

The nuclear arms buildup reveals only the tip of the iceberg of the two-faced morality that pervades our modern civilization. In basic and cruelly honest language, although we dress ourselves up nicely as sophisticated men and women and speak the pious platitudes of civilized formality, underneath this thin veneer lurks a pack of savage beasts who live by the law of the jungle.

We march for peace, holding hands in human chains to symbolize the linking together of the human race. We sing wistful songs that express the dreamy vision of a world united—a vision that would become reality if only a few selfish politicians weren't making trouble for the rest of us with their terrible weapons. Yet, worldwide, we humans daily gorge ourselves on the carcasses of millions of slaughtered creatures, a feast of death that is not only savage but also unnecessary, wasteful, unhealthy, and irreligious.

But alas, the argument that our taste for the blood of innocent creatures has something to do with man's brutality to man has long fallen on deaf ears. Such fanatic vegetarian idealism may have appealed to such fools as George Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi, Leonardo da Vinci, Diogenes, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, but it is totally irrelevant to the rest of us. Pass the roast beef, please. We are civilized!

The human animal, whose teeth aren't designed to rip out throats, who has no claws for tearing flesh, whose digestive tract is ill-suited for meat, is nonetheless the most bloodthirsty creature of all—and the most proud of it. His crafty intelligence can devise the most tortuous twists and turns of logic to justify his cruelty.

And eating meat isn't the end of our barbarity toward animals. In the name of medical science, researchers in vivisection laboratories deliberately torture, cripple, blind, poison, dismember, and kill thousands of helpless creatures every day. All this is supposed to advance the cause of humanity. But what is so special about the human animal that his cause should advance at the expense of so many other creatures? How is it moral to kill a chimpanzee so that we can (perhaps) better understand how to save the life of a baby? How are a chimpanzee and a baby different? Both have two arms, two legs, and a head. In many respects, a chimpanzee is more intelligent than a baby. By what right does arrogant mankind deem it humane that the top of a chimpanzee's skull be opened while it is still alive so that electrodes can be surgically implanted in its brain?

The two-faced moralist will retort, "This is a specious argument. Everyone knows that the baby will grow up. The chimpanzee will never be anything more than a dumb animal, whereas the baby might become a scientist or a world leader."

And what, then, of the human fetus? Can't he also grow up to be a scientist or a world leader? If we are so concerned about the extraordinary worth of the human being, why are there 55 million abortions every year worldwide? That is more than the total number of deaths in World Wars I and II combined. In the time it takes you to read this article, some two hundred abortions will have taken place.

No matter how one dresses up this slaughter with sanctimonious phraseology, the fact remains: It is slaughter. Even the slaughterers themselves know it. A recent study published in *Time* shows that of the unmarried American men who arranged for their girlfriends to have an abortion, 26% secretly thought it was murder, and 81% couldn't help feeling guilty about the child that might have been born. But modern two-faced morality rules that it is more important to give facility to men and women for unrestricted sexual enjoyment than it is to stop the cold-blooded murder of their unwanted offspring.

Now the ugly storm-clouds of nuclear annihilation loom on the horizon of our human "civilization." Some of us march in demonstrations, collect signatures, block military traffic, and make long-winded speeches. But who is *really* willing to stop the slaughter? Who is *really* willing to stop playing the game of two-faced morality'?