

VEGETARIAN DIET

There are several forms of vegetarian lifestyle

- A lacto-vegetarian eats milk, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, grain, and beans but not meat, fish, shellfish, eggs, or poultry.
- A lacto-ovo-vegetarian eats the foods eaten by a lacto-vegetarian, but also includes eggs.
- A strict vegetarian eats vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, grain and beans only.
- A vegan uses nothing from any animal source. They eat only vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, grain, and beans, and do not use anything derived from an animal including leather, fur, or honey.
- Some people who only eat poultry and/or fish may call themselves a vegetarian but technically are not.
- Most vegetarians do not use alcohol and many do not use stimulants like coffee.

The reasons for becoming vegetarian are even more varied than the forms of diet.

1. Many do it for health reasons such as to prevent heart disease or cancer or to loose weight.
2. Many more follow a vegetarian diet for humane reasons – not wanting to have animals killed on their behalf. Robert Burns said, “Animals are my friends, and I don’t eat my friends.”
3. Some avoid animal products for the sake of lessening their karma. This means following the rule to, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Another way of looking at it is that every murderous action has repercussions for which we are accountable either in this life or the hereafter.
4. There is some research that indicates that an animal just before its death released a lot of adrenaline, which can adversely affect one’s psyche or disposition.
5. Some follow a vegetarian diet for spiritual reasons other than just karma.

Spiritual Basis for a Vegetarian Diet

One mystic explains it this way in *The Master Answers*, Maharaj Charan Singh, 1966, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, Punjab, India.. All that we see in this physical world can be divided into five divisions or categories, based on the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether. The human body is made up of all five elements, but the soul, the Essence of the Lord, which is separate from the five elements gives it life. Because only the human body contains all five elements, it is called the top of creation.

The first division is that of the plant kingdom, the main or active element of which is water.

The second is that of insects, reptiles and worms, which live under the ground. They have most active in them the elements of earth and fire.

The third division consists of fowl, including all types of birds, and the three elements most active in them are water, fire and air.

The four-legged animals, such as cows, buffaloes, horses and the like belong to the fourth category. Earth, water, fire and air are active in this class. They lack only ether, which gives the power of discretion.

Human beings are in the fifth class, at the very top of creation, as all five elements are activated in them.

Within each divisions feelings are in proportion to the number of elements that are active and the degree to which they are active. For example if you walk on the grass or pluck a flower from the yard of your neighbor there will be no punishment; although, she may frown at you to show her displeasure. If you kill one of her chickens, she may file a suit and you may be fined; if you kill her horse, you may be imprisoned; and if you kill her son or daughter, you may be hanged or receive some other form of capital punishment.

However, in this world, we can never live on the dead; the living can live only on the living. We cannot live by eating stones, nor can we live just by drinking water or by breathing air. Life has to live on life. So the saints and mystics advise us to live on fruits and vegetables. They belong to the first division, and even they have souls; but the karma involved by eating them is not as great as that which we would incur by living on or in any way be responsible for destroying the life contained in those belonging to the other categories.

Yet it is impossible to live in this world without some so-called innocent killing; as for instance, when we walk or drive we kill insects; when we breathe we kill insects, though they are not visible to the naked eye. We are killing by talking and even when shaking hands. Whatever we are doing, we are killing. This room is full of souls.

If you are given a hundred and eighty pounds of weight to carry, you will be crushed under it and will not be able to go even a step. So saints always advise us to collect the least amount of karma. That means that because we have to live, and we can live only on the living, we should try to collect the least possible load. That is why we depend upon plant life, for which we incur a very insignificant amount of karma or burden, and which can be cleared with even one or two days' meditation.

If on the other hand we are meditating and still living on animals which have been killed to appease our appetites, what we are doing is only balancing the debt created by eating fish, fowl or animals.

How can we ever get rid of the load we are already carrying from animals eaten in our past? We are advised not to collect anything for the future, and whatever we have already collected we are to clear with meditation. Then only can we go back to the Lord in this very life through the tenth door, the third eye.

If we kill, we will be killed. We should never forget that. Christ said, "Thou shall not kill" and elsewhere he said "Love thy neighbor." All creatures are our neighbors. The surrounding in which we are living, that is the whole universe is our neighbor. When you love or care for anybody, you do not kill that individual; and when we love the whole creation, we cannot kill intentionally nor could we find it in our heart to have it done for us by someone else.