

# The Meat-Free Life

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Spiritual consciousness is best sustained when the body is nourished with wholesome foods, obtained without harm to animals or the environment

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There are more than a few Hindus today who guiltily abandoned the vegetarian ways of their own parents and grandparents when they decided to be "secular" and "modern." But our ancient seers had it right when they advocated living without killing animals for food. Today vegetarianism is a worldwide movement, with adherents among all religions, daily gaining converts through one or more of the five basic reasons to adhere to a meatless diet: dharma, karma, consciousness, [health](#) and environment. Each is explored in this insight section, which concludes with the famous essay, "How to win an argument with a meat-eater."

Just how widespread is this movement? In the UK, polls show more than 15 percent of teenagers are vegetarians, and six percent of the general population. In America, eight percent of teens and three percent of the general population declare themselves vegetarian. It is a movement with a broad base, for one can find advocates as diverse as philosophers Plato and Nietzsche, politicians Benjamin Franklin and Gandhi, Beatle Paul McCartney and Rastafarian singer Bob Marley, actresses Brooke Shields, Drew Barrymore, Alicia Silverstone, and actors David Duchovny, Richard Gere and Brad Pitt. It's also helped that a multitude of rigorous scientific studies have proven the [health](#) benefits of the vegetarian diet.

## **Vegetarianism, an Ancient Hindu Ethic**

Vegetarianism was for thousands of years a principle of [health](#) and environmental ethics throughout India. Though Muslim and Christian colonization radically undermined and eroded this ideal, it remains to this day a cardinal ethic of Hindu thought and practice. A subtle sense of guilt persists among Hindus who eat meat, and even they will abstain at special times. For India's ancient thinkers, life is seen as the very stuff of the Divine, an emanation of the Source and part of a cosmic continuum. They further hold that each life form, even

water and trees, possesses consciousness and energy. Nonviolence, ahimsa, the primary basis of vegetarianism, has long been central to the religious traditions of India—especially Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Religion in India has consistently upheld the sanctity of life, whether human or animal.

The Sanskrit word for vegetarianism is *sakahara*, and one following a vegetarian diet is a *sakahari*. Hindu vegetarians commonly consume milk products, but not eggs, which are definitely a meat product, containing cholesterol which is only present in animal flesh. The term for meat-eating is *mansahara*, and the meat-eater is called *mansahari*. *Ahara* means "to consume or eat," *saka* means "vegetable," and *mansa* means "meat or flesh." The very word *mansa*, "meat," conveys a deep appreciation of life's sacredness and an understanding of the law of karma by which the consequence of each action returns to the doer. As explained in the 2,000-year-old *Manu Dharma Shastra*, 5.55, "The learned declare that the meaning of *mansa* (flesh) is, 'he (*sa*) will eat me (*mam*) in the other world whose flesh I eat here.' " There developed early in India an unparalleled concern for harmony among life forms, and this led to a common ethos based on noninjuriousness and a minimal consumption of natural resources—in other words, to compassion and simplicity. If *Homo sapiens* is to survive his present predicament, he will have to rediscover these two primary ethical virtues.

### **Is Vegetarianism Integral to Noninjury?**

In Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's book, *Dancing with Siva*, this question is addressed as follows: "Hindus teach vegetarianism as a way to live with a minimum of hurt to other beings, for to consume meat, fish, fowl or eggs is to participate indirectly in acts of cruelty and violence against the animal kingdom. The abhorrence of injury and killing of any kind leads quite naturally to a vegetarian diet, *sakahara*. The meat-eater's desire for meat drives another to kill and provide that meat. The act of the butcher begins with the desire of the consumer. Meat-eating contributes to a mentality of violence, for with the chemically complex meat ingested, one absorbs the slaughtered creature's fear, pain and terror. These qualities are nourished within the meat-eater, perpetuating the cycle of cruelty and confusion. When the individual's consciousness lifts and expands, he will abhor violence and not be able to even digest the meat, fish, fowl and eggs he was formerly consuming. India's greatest saints have confirmed that one cannot eat meat and live a peaceful, harmonious life. Man's

appetite for meat inflicts devastating harm on Earth itself, stripping its precious forests to make way for pastures. The *Tirukural* candidly states, 'How can he practice true compassion who eats the flesh of an animal to fatten his own flesh? Greater than a thousand ghee offerings consumed in sacrificial fires is not to sacrifice and consume any living creature.' "

Amazingly, some people define vegetarian as a diet which excludes the meat of animals but does permit fish and eggs. But what really is vegetarianism? Vegetarian foods include grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and dairy products. Natural, fresh foods, locally grown without insecticides or chemical fertilizers are preferred. A vegetarian diet does not include meat, fish, fowl, shellfish or eggs. For good [health](#), even certain vegetarian foods are minimized: frozen and canned foods, highly processed foods, such as white rice, white sugar and white flour; and "junk" foods and beverages—those with abundant chemical additives, such as artificial sweeteners, colorings, flavorings and preservatives.

According to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, "In my forty years of ministry it has become quite evident that vegetarian families have far fewer problems than those who are not vegetarian. If children are raised as vegetarians, every day they are exposed to nonviolence as a principle of peace and compassion. Every day they are growing up they are remembering and being reminded to not kill. They won't even kill another creature to eat, to feed themselves. And if they won't kill another creature to feed themselves, they will be much less likely to do acts of violence against people."

## **Vegetarian Animals**

Vegetarians come in all sizes and shapes, but the elephant is the largest of all, with a sophisticated social life, loving and affectionately caring for its own. Elephants live long, vigorous lives, have a very large brain and, of course, are renowned for their excellent memory. They do not suffer any weakness for not eating meat. In fact, so many muscular and the most intelligent animals the horse, the cow, giraffe, zebra, rhinoceros, the apes, and more—are lifelong vegetarians and friends of men. Lean animals, thin and wiry, who are feared by man and beasts alike, are all hunters and killers and eaters of flesh—tigers, sharks, hawks, wolves and the like. Similarly, no one fears a gentle vegetarian, but all have reason to fear the

unpredictable meat-eater. Scriptures admonish that it is wise to fear what should be feared.

## Food and Consciousness

Food is the source of the body's chemistry, and what we ingest affects our consciousness, emotions and experiential patterns. If one wants to live in higher consciousness, in peace and happiness and love for all creatures, then he cannot eat meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs. By ingesting the grosser chemistries of animal foods, one introduces into the body and mind anger, jealousy, fear, anxiety, suspicion and the terrible fear of death, all of which is locked into the flesh of butchered creatures. It is said that in ancient India meat would be fed to the soldiers during military campaigns, especially before [combat](#), to bring them into lower consciousness so that they would forget their religious values. They performed these deeds in fulfillment of a warrior's way—with not the least restraint of conscience. The inner law is ever so simple—not eating meat, fish, fowl or eggs is essential to awaken consciousness into the seven higher chakras (the *uttara-chakras*), up to the crown. Nonkilling—and noneating of that which is killed—is a must to pass from realms below.

## Dharma

How many there are who resent the very mention of becoming a vegetarian, being instinctively repulsed by the idea, for they intuit the road ahead. They sense that once the more *sattvic* diet of pure foods are taken in place of meats (and other dead foods, packaged, processed and cellophane-wrapped) they will feel a great guilt occasioned by their transgressions of dharma, as they have so well perfected over the years their *adharmic* ways. *Adharma* means all that stands against Indian spirituality, against the path of the good and the pure and the natural, against dharma in all of its intricate dimensions. None of the other *dharmas*—*stri dharma*, the duties of women; *purusha dharma*, the duties of men; *ashrama dharma*, the responsibility of one's stage of life; *varna dharma*, one's position in society; and *svadharma*, one's own perfect pattern—even when performed properly will have the same results without fulfilling this virtue. Even *Rita dharma*, cosmic order, is upset by man's insatiable, aggressive appetites expressed through flesh-consuming.

## Hindus Were the First Vegetarians

The book, *Food for the Spirit, Vegetarianism and the World Religions*, observes: "Despite popular knowledge of meat-eating's adverse effects, the nonvegetarian diet became increasingly widespread among Hindus after the two major invasions by foreign powers, first the Muslims and later the British. With them came the desire to be 'civilized,' to eat as did the saheeb. Those actually trained in Vedic knowledge, however, never adopted a meat-oriented diet, and the pious Hindu still observes vegetarian principles as a matter of religious duty.

"That vegetarianism has always been widespread in India is clear from the earliest *Vedic* texts. This was observed by the ancient [traveler](#) Megasthenes and also by Fa-hsien, a Chinese Buddhist monk who, in the fifth century, [traveled](#) to India in order to obtain authentic copies of the scriptures. These scriptures unambiguously support the meatless way of life. In the *Mahabharata*, for instance, the great warrior Bhishma explains to Yudhishtira, eldest of the Pandava princes, that the meat of animals is like the flesh of one's own son, and that the foolish person who eats meat must be considered the vilest of human beings [*Anu.* 114.11]. The eating of 'dirty' food, it warns, is not as terrible as the eating of flesh [*Shanti.* 141.88] (it must be remembered that the Brahmins of ancient India exalted cleanliness to a divine principle).

"Similarly, the *Manusmriti* declares that one should 'refrain from eating all kinds of meat,' for such eating involves killing and leads to karmic bondage (*bandha*) [5.49]. Elsewhere in the Vedic literature, the last of the great Vedic kings, Maharaja Parikshit, is quoted as saying that 'only the animal-killer cannot relish the message of the Absolute Truth [*Shrimad Bhagavatam* 10.1.4].'"

## Common Dietary Concerns

Those considering a vegetarian diet generally worry about getting enough nutrients, since the belief that meat is a necessary part of keeping strong and [healthy](#) is still extremely widespread. Recently a group of eminent doctors called the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), themselves members of the American Medical Association, have decided to change the US

consciousness on human nutrition, particularly among the medical community. The PCRM is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., consisting of doctors and laypersons working together for compassionate and effective medical practice, research and [health](#) promotion. Founded in 1985, the PCRM is supported by over 3,000 physicians and 50,000 laypersons. PCRM president (and vegetarian) Neal D. Barnard, M.D., is a popular speaker and the author of *The Power of Your Plate*. Armed with decades of [nutritional](#) research data, PCRM addresses these dietary concerns head-on:

"The fact is, it is very easy to have a well-balanced diet with vegetarian foods. Vegetarian foods provide plenty of protein. Careful combining of foods is not necessary. Any normal variety of plant foods provides more than enough protein for the body's needs. Although there is somewhat less protein in a vegetarian diet than a meat-eater's diet, this is actually an advantage. Excess protein has been linked to kidney stones, osteoporosis, and possibly heart disease and some cancers. A diet focused on beans, whole grains and vegetables contains adequate amounts of protein without the 'overdose' most meat-eaters get."

Other concerns are allayed by the PCRM as follows:

1. Calcium is easy to find in a vegetarian diet. Many dark, green leafy vegetables and beans are loaded with calcium, and some orange juices and cereals are calcium-fortified. Iron is plentiful in whole grains, beans and fruits.
2. Vitamin B12: There is a misconception that without eating meat one cannot obtain sufficient vitamin B12, which is an essential nutrient. This is simply not true. The PCRM advises: "Although cases of B12 deficiency are very uncommon, it is important to make sure that one has a reliable source of the vitamin. Good sources include all common multiple vitamins (including vegetarian vitamins), fortified cereals and soy milk."
3. During pregnancy [nutritional](#) needs increase. The American Dietetic Association has found vegan diets adequate for fulfilling [nutritional](#) needs during pregnancy, but pregnant women and nursing mothers should supplement their diets with vitamins B12 and D.
4. Vegetarian children also have high [nutritional](#) needs, but these, too, are met with a vegetarian diet. A vegetarian menu is "life-extending." As children, vegetarians may grow more gradually, reach puberty somewhat later, and live substantially longer than meat-

eaters. Be sure to include a reliable source of vitamin B12. Besides the fortified cereals and soy milk mentioned above, vitamin B12 is widely available in multiple vitamins, brewers yeast and other potent dietary supplements.

Those interested in supporting or learning more about the work of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine should visit: [www.pcrm.org](http://www.pcrm.org).

## **Converting to Vegetarianism**

Making the transition from carnivore to herbivore is not as hard as you might think. According to the book, *The New Vegetarians*, by Sonia Partridge and Paul Amato, 73% of vegetarian converts stated that the transition was not difficult. It is easier for people who do some homework on the subject and have a bit of cooking skill. The time it takes for people to totally convert varies greatly. About 70% of people make the transition gradually, while 30% stop all at once. A year is the most transition time to stop with red meat, which is almost always the first flesh to go, followed more slowly by fowl and fish.

One recommended method for the transition is to set a series of goals for yourself. Start simply with getting through one day without meat. Then, try one weekend, then one week. Make a realistic timetable for reaching them. Two to three months might be reasonable for some people while six months to a year might be better for others. Rewards can also help. For a major accomplishment such as a week without meat, treat yourself to a nice vegetarian meal out.

One can also take a formal Hindu vow of vegetarianism, *sakahara vrata*, available on-line at [www.hinduismtoday.com/in-depth\\_issues/veggie\\_vow/](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/in-depth_issues/veggie_vow/). The vow may be taken privately, before elders or parents or as part of a temple ceremony. It reads in part, "I accept the principle of *sakahara* as the method by which I may acknowledge my compassion, my *karuna*, for all living beings. As an act of dedication, I am resolved this day to begin (or continue) the regular practice of eating a strict vegetarian diet and not eating meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs."

The most common problem with conversion is not knowing enough about vegetarian diet. Some people who decide to be vegetarian, have no idea what to eat and end up with soggy vegetables and

undercooked brown rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They become discouraged and rightly wonder how they will survive. But decent vegetarian food isn't boring. A little research with books and websites will put your mind at ease. Get a vegetarian cookbook. Ask restaurant waiters which menu items are vegetarian.

Vegetarians are often asked "Don't you miss eating meat?" For about half of beginning vegetarians the answer is yes, according to *The New Vegetarians*. They miss the texture and flavor of meat in the early weeks and months. Almost everyone though, gets over this within six months to a year and for many it becomes nauseating even to think about eating meat. Eighty-two percent of fully adapted vegetarians say there is no way they would consider eating flesh again.

## **Conclusion**

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami writes, "Modern meats are killed by chemical treatment of the animals, the hormones of fear and chemistry of death before and during slaughter, killed again by refrigerating them, killed again by grinding them, killed again by preserving them, killed again by packaging them, killed again by freezing them, killed again by storing and shipping them, and finally really killed by cooking them to death. How can such so-called food nourish a human being? Why should we ever think of eating meat, fish, fowl, eggs, anything with eyes or, as some say, with two or more senses. The cock-a-doodle-doo who wakes us up in the morning is dinner on the table at night. How gruesome. How ruthless to thus forever close the eyes of an animal, or have someone else do it for them in order that they may buy the carcass, closing their eyes to the fact, which is even worse, and keeping their own eyes closed to that creature's suffering to consume it without conscience during jovial small talk over the dinner table. How easy in turn for such a person to turn and maim or kill a fellow human in the same way in times of stress as a natural reaction, in 'justifiable righteousness.' As the *Rig Veda* (10.87.16) proclaims: 'One who partakes of human flesh, the flesh of a horse or of another animal, and deprives others of milk by slaughtering cows, O King, if such a fiend does not desist by other means, then you should not hesitate to cut off his head.'

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# How to Win an Argument with Meat-Eater

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While it is certainly best to avoid an argument with the aggressive meat-eater, a lively discussion provides them useful information and could help save the environment, their [health](#) and solve the world's hunger problem—maybe even result in a "convert." But be forewarned, these carnivores may regard nonmeat-eaters as a timid lot who munch "rabbit food," and whose diet doesn't have the substance to make them strong, productive human beings. The following presentation explains the devastating effects of meat-eating both on individuals and on our planet. It is based on a poster entitled, "How to win an argument with a meat-eater," published by Earthsave, of Felton, California, giving facts from Pulitzer Prize nominee John Robbins' book, *Diet for a New America*. HINDUISM TODAY'S version details ten arguments against meat-eating and in favor of a vegetarian diet.

## The facts you need to change opinion

1. **The Hunger Argument:** Much of the world's massive hunger problems could be solved by the reduction or elimination of meat-eating because the needs of livestock pasture drastically cuts into the acres of land which could otherwise be used to grow food. Additionally, vast quantities of food which could feed humans is fed to livestock raised to produce meat.

This year alone, twenty million people worldwide will die of mal[nutrition](#). One child dies of mal[nutrition](#) every 2.3 seconds. One hundred million people could be adequately fed using the land freed if Americans reduced their intake of meat by a mere 10%. Eighty percent of the corn and 95% of the oats grown in the US is eaten by livestock. The percentage of protein wasted by cycling grain through livestock is calculated by experts as 90%. One acre of good farmland can produce 40,000 pounds of potatoes, or 250 pounds of beef. Fifty-six percent of all US farmland is devoted to beef production, and to produce each pound of beef requires 16 pounds of edible grain and soybeans, which could be used to feed the hungry.

2. **The Environmental Argument:** Many of the world's massive environmental problems could be solved by the reduction or elimination of meat-eating, including global warming, loss of topsoil,

loss of rain forests and species extinction. Trees, and especially the old-growth forests, are essential to the survival of the planet. Their destruction is a major cause of global warming and top soil loss. Meat-eating is the number one driving force for the destruction of these forests. Two-hundred and sixty million acres of US forestland have been cleared for crop land to produce the meat-centered diet. Fifty-five square feet of tropical rain forest is consumed to produce every quarter-pound of rain forest beef. An alarming 75% of all US topsoil has been lost to date. Eighty-five percent of this loss is directly related to livestock raising. Another devastating result of deforestation is the loss of plant and animal species. Each year 1,000 species disappear due to destruction of tropical rain forests for cattle grazing and other uses—driven by US demand. The rate is growing yearly.

**3. The Cancer Argument:** Those who eat flesh are far more likely to contract cancer than those following a vegetarian diet. The risk of contracting breast cancer is 3.8 times greater for women who eat meat daily compared to less than once a week; 2.8 times greater for women who eat eggs daily compared to once a week; and 3.25 greater for women who eat processed butter and cheese two to four times a week as compared to once a week. The risk of fatal ovarian cancer is three times greater for women who eat eggs three or more times a week as compared with less than once a week. The risk of fatal prostate cancer is 3.6 times greater for men who consume meat, eggs, processed cheese and milk daily as compared with sparingly or not at all.

**4. The Cholesterol Argument:** The average cholesterol consumption of a meat-centered diet is 210 milligrams per day. The chance of dying from heart disease if you are male and your blood cholesterol intake is 210 milligrams a day is greater than 50%.

It is strange but true that US physicians are as a rule ill-educated in the single most important factor of [health](#), namely diet and [nutrition](#). As of 1987, of the 125 medical schools in the US, only 30 required their students to take a course in [nutrition](#). The average [nutrition](#) training received by the average US physician during four years in school is only 2.5 hours. Thus doctors in the US are ill-equipped to advise their patients in minimizing foods, such as meat, that contain excessive amounts of cholesterol and are known causes of heart

attack. Heart attack is the most common cause of death in the US, killing one person every 45 seconds. The male meat-eater's risk of death from heart attack is 50%. The risk to men who eat no meat is 15%. Reducing one's consumption of meat, processed dairy products and eggs by 10% reduces the risk of heart attack by 10%. Completely eliminating these products from one's diet reduces the risk of heart attack by 90%.

**5. The Natural Resources Argument:** The world's natural resources are being rapidly depleted as a result of meat-eating. Raising livestock for their meat is a very inefficient way of generating food. Pound for pound, far more resources must be expended to produce meat than to produce grains, fruits and vegetables. For example, more than half of all water used for all purposes in the US is consumed in livestock production. The amount of water used in production of the average cow is sufficient to float a destroyer (a large naval ship). While 25 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of wheat, 5,000 gallons are needed to produce a pound of California beef. That same 5,000 gallons of water can produce 200 pounds of wheat.

Thirty-three percent of all raw materials (base products of farming, forestry and mining, including fossil fuels) consumed by the US are devoted to the production of livestock, as compared with two percent to produce a complete vegetarian diet.

**6. The Antibiotic Argument:** Another danger of eating meat is the fact that large amounts of antibiotics are fed to livestock to control staphylococci (commonly called staph infections). The animals being raised for meat in the United States are diseased. The livestock industry attempts to control this disease by feeding the animals huge quantities of antibiotics. Of all antibiotics used in the US, 55% are fed to livestock. But this is only partially effective because the bacteria that cause disease are rapidly becoming immune to the antibiotics. The percentage of staphylococci infections resistant to penicillin, for example, has grown from 13% in 1960 to 91% in 1988. These antibiotics and/or the bacteria they are intended to destroy reside in the meat that goes to market. The response of the European Economic Community to the routine feeding of antibiotics to US livestock was to ban the importation of US meat.

In February, 2001, Cornell University reported, "Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also known as mad cow disease, has now been officially identified in a dozen European countries including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. As a result, beef sales have fallen by as much as 50% in parts of Europe." It was the common practice of feeding cows ground-up sheep brains and parts infected with the related disease of scrapie which is believed to have started the mad cow epidemic.

**7. The Pesticide Argument:** Unknown to most meat-eaters, US-produced meat contains dangerously high quantities of deadly pesticides. The common belief is that the US Department of Agriculture protects consumers' [health](#) through regular and thorough meat inspection. In reality, fewer than one out of every 250,000 slaughtered animals is tested for toxic chemical residues. That these chemicals are indeed ingested by the meat-eater is proven by the following facts:

a. Ninety-nine percent of the milk of US meat-eating mothers, contains significant levels of DDT. In stark contrast, only 8% of US vegetarian mother's milk contains significant levels of DDT. This shows that the primary source of DDT is the meat ingested by the mothers.

b. The breast milk of meat-eating mothers has 35 times more chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides than the milk of nonmeat-eating mothers.

c. The average breast-fed American infant contains nine times the permissible level of the pesticide Dieldrin.

**8. The Ethical Argument:** Many of those who have adopted a vegetarian diet have done so because of the ethical argument, either from reading about or personally experiencing what goes on daily at any one of the thousands of slaughterhouses in the US and other countries, where animals suffer the cruel process of forced confinement, manipulation and violent death. Their pain and terror is beyond calculation. Most slaughterhouse workers are not on the job for long and have the highest turnover rate of all occupations. It also has the highest rate of on-the-job injury.

In the US alone, 660,000 animals are killed for meat every hour. The average per capita consumption of meat in the US, Canada and Australia is 200 pounds per year! The average American consumes in a 72-year lifetime approximately eleven cattle, three lambs and sheep, 23 pigs, 45 turkeys, 1,100 chickens and 862 pounds of fish!

**10. The Physiological Argument:** The final and most compelling argument against meat-eating is that humans are physiologically not suited for a carnivorous diet. The book *Food for the Spirit, Vegetarianism in the World Religions*, summarizes this point of view as follows. "Many [nutritionists](#), biologists and physiologists offer convincing evidence that humans are in fact not meant to eat flesh." The book gives seven facts in support of this view:

1. Physiologically, people are more akin to plant-eaters, foragers and grazers, such as monkeys, elephants and cows, than to carnivora such as dogs, tigers and leopards.
  2. For example, carnivora do not sweat through their skin; body heat is controlled by rapid breathing and extrusion of the tongue. Vegetarian animals, on the other hand, have sweat pores for heat control and the elimination of impurities.
  3. Carnivora have long teeth and claws for holding and killing prey; vegetarian animals have short teeth and no claws.
  4. The saliva of carnivora contains no ptyalin and cannot predigest starches; that of vegetarian animals contains ptyalin for the predigestion of starches.
  5. Flesh-eating animals secrete large quantities of hydrochloric acid to help dissolve bones; vegetarian animals secrete little hydrochloric acid.
  6. The jaws of carnivora only open in an up and down motion; those of vegetarian animals also move sideways for additional kinds of chewing.
  7. Carnivora must lap liquids (like a cat); vegetarian animals take liquids in by suction through the teeth.
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# More reasons for not eating meat:

## Reason 1

### Dharma

Vedic Scripture proclaims ahimsa, nonhurtfulness, is a primary religious obligation in fulfillment of dharma, divine law.

## Reason 2

### Karma

By involving oneself in the cycle of inflicting injury, pain and death, even indirectly by eating other creatures, one must in the future experience in equal measure the suffering caused.

## Reason 3

### Consciousness

By ingesting the grosser chemistries of animal foods, one introduces into the body and mind anger, jealousy, fear, anxiety, suspicion and a terrible fear of death, all of which are locked into the flesh of the butchered creatures.

## Reason 4

### [Health](#)

Vegetarians are less susceptible to all the major diseases that afflict contemporary humanity. Thus they live longer, [healthier](#), more productive lives. They have fewer physical complaints, less frequent visits to the doctor, fewer dental problems and smaller medical bills.

## Reason 5

### Environment

In large measure, the escalating loss of species, destruction of ancient rain forests to create pasture lands for livestock, loss of topsoil and the consequent increase of water impurities and air

pollution have all been traced to the single fact of meat in the human diet.

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## Saints and Scriptures Speak on Vegetarianism

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**Vedas, shastras and sutras alike decry the killing and eating of animals**

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*Scriptures of all Hindu denominations speak clearly and forcefully on nonkilling and vegetarianism. The roots of noninjury, nonkilling and nonconsumption of meat are found in the Vedas, Dharma Shastras, Tirumurai, Yoga Sutras, Tirukural and dozens of other sacred texts of Hinduism. Perhaps nowhere is the principle of nonmeat-eating so fully and eloquently expressed as in the Tirukural, written in the Tamil language by a simple weaver saint over 2,000 years ago.*

One who partakes of human flesh, the flesh of a horse or of another animal, and deprives others of milk by slaughtering cows, O King, if such a fiend does not desist by other means, then you should not hesitate to cut off his head.

### **Rig Veda Samhita 10.87.16**

Protect both our species, two-legged and four-legged. Both food and water for their needs supply. May they with us increase in stature and strength. Save us from hurt all our days, O Powers!

### **Rig Veda Samhita 10.37.11**

O vegetable, be succulent, wholesome, strengthening; and thus, body, be fully grown.

### **Rig Veda**

Those noble souls who practice meditation and other yogic ways, who are ever careful about all beings, who protect all animals, are the ones who are actually serious about spiritual practices.

### **Atharva Veda Samhita 19.48.5**

You must not use your God-given body for killing God's creatures, whether they are human, animal or whatever.

### **Yajur Veda Samhita 12.32**

The ignoble ones who eat flesh, death's agents bind them fast and push them quick into the fiery jaws of hell (Naraka, lower consciousness).

### **Tirumantiram**

In waves of ahimsa, all living beings cease their enmity in the presence of such a person.

### **Yoga Sutras 2.35**

Ahimsa is not causing pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one's mind, speech or body.

### **Sandilya Upanishad**

Having well considered the origin of flesh and the cruelty of fettering and slaying of corporeal beings, let one entirely abstain from eating flesh.

### **Manu Samhita**

The purchaser of flesh performs *himsa* (violence) by his wealth; he who eats flesh does so by enjoying its taste; the killer does *himsa* by actually tying and killing the animal. Thus, there are three forms of killing: he who brings flesh or sends for it, he who cuts off the limbs of an animal, and he who purchases, sells or cooks flesh and eats it—all of these are to be considered meat-eaters.

### **Mahabharata, Anu. 115.40**

He who desires to augment his own flesh by eating the flesh of other creatures lives in misery in whatever species he may take his birth.

### **Mahabharata, Anu. 115.47**

Those high-souled persons who desire beauty, faultlessness of limbs, long life, understanding, mental and physical strength and memory should abstain from acts of injury.



### **Mahabharata 18.115.8**

How can he practice true compassion who eats the flesh of an animal to fatten his own flesh?

### **Tirukural Verse 251**

Riches cannot be found in the hands of the thriftless. Nor can compassion be found in the hearts of those who eat meat.

### **Tirukural Verse 252**

Goodness is never one with the minds of these two: one who wields a weapon and one who feasts on a creature's flesh.

### **Tirukural Verse 253**

If you ask, "What is kindness and what is unkind?" it is not killing and killing. Thus, eating flesh is never virtuous.

### **Tirukural Verse 254**

Life is perpetuated by not eating meat. The clenched jaws of hell hold those who do.

### **Tirukural Verse 255**

If the world did not purchase and consume meat, there would be none to slaughter and offer meat for sale.

### **Tirukural Verse 256**

When a man realizes that meat is the butchered flesh of another creature, he must abstain from eating it.

### **Tirukural Verse 257**

Greater than a thousand ghee offerings consumed in sacrificial fires is to not sacrifice and consume any living creature.

### **Tirukural Verse 259**

All that lives will press palms together in prayerful adoration of those who refuse to slaughter and savor meat.

### **Tirukural Verse 260**

My opinion is well known. I do not regard flesh food as necessary for us at any stage and under any clime in which it is possible for human beings ordinarily to live. I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to our species."

**Mahatma Gandhi 1869 -1948**