

The Future Lies in Vegetarianism

the past few decades vegetarian diets have rapidly gained popularity, with millions of people becoming vegetarian the world over.

Still the debate about the advantages of a vegetarian diet continues. Research studies continue to show that a vegetarian diet is good not only for human health but also makes economic and ecological sense, besides being ethically sound.

That a vegetarian diet is good for the heart is well-known. Studies also suggest that a vegetarian diet may have beneficial effects for kidney and nerve function in diabetics, as well as for weight loss; that eating more fruits and vegetables can slow down, and even reverse, age-related declines in brain function and in cognitive performance; that vegetarian seniors have a lower death rate and use less medication than those who eat meat.

Eating meat is a wasteful way of feeding homo sapiens. For the sake of producing meat, grain that could feed people is fed to livestock instead. Figures from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) show that every 100 pounds of grain fed to

produce, compared with 2,000 litres for soybeans. Animal protein also demands heavy expenditure of fossil-fuel energy — eight times as much as for a comparable amount of plant protein. And the US lives! — population — cattle, chicken, turkeys, lambs, pigs etc — consumes five times as much grain as the US human population. But the livestock in that country outnumbers humans about 25 to 1, according to a report published a few years ago.

Then, there is the ethical aspect of vegetarianism. Centuries ago, Pythagoras famous for his contributions to geometry and mathematics, said "Oh, my fellow men, do not delude your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples bending down the branches with

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part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies, and ventured to call food and nourishment the pets that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived... It is certainly not lions or wolves that we eat out of self-defense; on the contrary, we ignore these and slaughter harmless, tame creatures without stings or teeth to harm us. For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life they are entitled to by birth and being."

Even modern studies suggest that a vegetarian diet has a positive effect on the mind. A study conducted by Arizona State University psychology

more scientific and 'humane', and so such slaughter is not all that bad.

But the life of an animal bred for meat is an unnatural one. It involves artificial breeding, castration and/or hormone stimulation, feeding of an abnormal diet for fattening purposes, and ultimately, slaughter. Electric prods, tail twisting, abject terror and fright, are still very much a part of the most 'modern' animal slaughtering.

Screaming animals are stunned by hammer blows or electric shock. They are hoisted into the air by their feet and moved through the meat factories on mechanized conveyor systems. Still alive, their throats are sliced and their flesh is cut off while they bleed to death.

Leo Tolstoy wrote that by killing animals for food, "Man suppresses in himself, unnecessarily, the highest spiritual capacity — that of sympathy and pity toward living creatures like himself — and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel." He also warned, "While our bodies are the living

cattle produces only one pound of meat. Information compiled by USDA also shows that over 90 per cent of all the grain produced in America goes to feed livestock — cows, pigs, sheep, and chicken — that winds up on dinner tables.

Rich nations not only use their own grain to feed livestock, they also use protein-rich plant foods from poor nations. According to Dr. Georg Borgstrom, an expert on food, one-third of Africa's groundnut crop goes to feed cattle and poultry in western Europe.

In poor countries, a person consumes an average of four hundred pounds of grain a year, most of it eaten directly. In contrast, the average European or American consumes 2,000 pounds a year, by first feeding almost 90 percent of it to animals for meat.

According to estimates, bringing down meat production by just ten percent would release enough grain to feed 60 million people.

According to David Pimentel, an ecologist, vegetarianism is also much more environment-friendly than meat-based diets. "In terms of caloric content, the grain consumed by American livestock could feed 800 million people."

Grain-fed livestock consumes 100,000 litres of water for every kilogramme of food they

on the vines. There are sweet-flavoured herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied mild or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter, only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of those, because horses, cattle, and sheep live on grass." In an essay titled *On Eating Flesh*, the Roman author Plutarch wrote: "Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstinence from flesh? For my

rucnara stem and Carol Nemeroff reported that salad eaters were rated more moral, virtuous and considerate than steak eaters.

In Britain, a study on prison inmates found that vegetarians were less violent and unruly than non-vegetarians.

It is widely believed that this is so because the hormones released by the animals in a state of terror while they are being slaughtered enter the bloodstream of humans who consume the meat and result in aggressive behaviour.

Many people argue that the killing of animals for meat is now

graves of murdered animals, how can we expect any ideal conditions on earth?"

When we lose respect for animal life, we lose respect for human life as well. Pythagoras had said, "Those that kill animals to eat their flesh tend to massacre their own."

Whether it is for ethical reasons or for the sake of the environment or out of economic compulsions, it is increasingly becoming clear that the future of humanity lies in adopting vegetarianism. The sooner we understand this the better it will be for the human race. »{«

(Purity Features)



Kurukshetra : Dadi Janki addressing a programme on 'Ishwariya Vardan - Aap ke Naam'.
On stage are B.K. Amirchand, B.K. Laxman and others.