

Animal Products

Yoga and Ayurveda teach the practice of ahimsa (non-violence) as the highest among spiritual practices for people. A non-violent way of living prepares people for meditation, yoga, and spiritual realization. Ayurveda advises reducing harm to living beings (and the environment) by abstaining from eating meat, fowl, fish, and eggs for health, happiness, and spiritual development. The Vedas teach that the harm inflicted upon animals creates negative karmas (pain) which will be returned to the person who eats meat. Large quantities of meat are too heavy to digest and introduce animal hormones into the body which adversely affects the consciousness of the person who eats meat. The Ayurveda scriptures do recommend a little meat, but only in the case of severe debilitation and even say that when the body requires meat to live that it does not result in bad karma to ingest it. Meat is considered tamasic (dulling, harmful) and not recommended as a regular food for humans.

The vegetarian diet is healthy. Adopting a diet of freshly cooked veggies, grains, nuts, and legumes has been shown in studies to reduce the cases of cancer, heart disease, hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, kidney stones, osteoporosis, allergies, and other chronic conditions experienced by the meat-eating public. Studies have shown that vegetarians live on average around 10 years longer than meat eaters. Vegetarian foods are cheaper than meat and are more efficient to produce. Though deforestation has had hugely detrimental effects on the Earth, it is a growingly common part of commercial meat production. In the US two hundred sixty million acres of forest have been cleared to support meat production. In South America many tropical rain forests are cut for grazing land and meat is imported to the US and other countries to help meet the growing demands. It is said that the same one acre of land could produce 40,000 lbs of potatoes or 250 lbs of beef. The grains eaten by livestock could feed millions of hungry people. It is said that a child dies in the world of malnutrition every 2.3 seconds. The usable nutrients of grains fed to animals are lost by meat production. 100 lbs of grain proteins are said to produce 10 lbs of meat protein. The grains fed to livestock could be more efficiently fed to starving people. Yet 95 % of the oats and 80 % of the corn grown in the USA are fed to livestock. It is said that over 50 percent of all water used in the USA (for any purpose) is used in livestock production.

We cannot build a happy or healthy life upon the suffering of other creatures. The commercial meat, fish, egg, and dairy industries are making billions of dollars off of the suffering of the animals. They treat the animals inhumanely and pump them full of hormones and chemicals. The outbreak of mad-cow disease and the subsequent outbreak of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (affecting humans eating infected cattle) which was caused by feeding cows bovine meat and bone meal is a good example of the reckless ways of the meat industry. When an animal is taken to the slaughterhouse, prodded into crowded, dark containers along with hundreds of other frightened animals and beaten and killed in the cheapest ways possible (often with little regard for the suffering of the defenseless animals), the animals understandably experience pain, fear, and anger. Though plants do feel pain, they do not have the complex nervous systems and brains to experience pain as animals do. When animals experience violent and fearful emotional states, the glands in their bodies produce certain chemicals which are locked into the flesh from the slaughtered animals. When people eat the meat of such animals their bodies are filled with these chemicals and as a result they experience an increase of anger, jealousy, anxiety, suspicion, and fear of death. It is little wonder why people cannot find peace in their meditations. We

recommend for all spiritual seekers a strict Lato-vegetarian diet. When the mind is peaceful, this will be reflected by our lifestyle, including food preferences. Until it is natural for people to act to minimize the suffering of all creatures, a vegetarian diet will help to reduce the energies of violence and fear which draw consciousness into the lower chakras.

This is why Yoga, Ayurveda, and Hinduism recommend a vegetarian diet and also why many other spiritual traditions throughout history have done so as well. Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism all promote a vegetarian diet. Traditional cultures throughout the world have tended to eat a largely vegetarian diet until very modern times. In ancient Greece there were quite a few active proponents of the vegetarian diet, most notably Pythagoras and Empedocles. Many of the mystical traditions within the Abrahamic faiths have also promoted vegetarianism. Many of the Early Christians and Gnostics were vegetarians. Many Orthodox and Coptic Christians are still largely vegetarian as are many orders of Christian monks and nuns. Numerous fasting days throughout the year for the Church used to be observed as days of vegetarianism. In the Jewish faith, there have been Kabbalists and Rabbis who have practiced and promoted vegetarianism since the middle ages and before based upon a passage in Genesis which is argued to permit people to eat fruits and vegetables but not meat. The Kosher dietary restrictions can tend to reduce meat consumption due to restrictions about eating meat with dairy and other foods, as do the Halal restrictions of Islam. Many Sufis and mystics within the Islamic faith practice and promote vegetarianism. Several major modern sects and traditions also promote a vegetarian diet, including the Seventh Day Adventists, the Baha'i, and the Rastafarians.

It is more important than with any other foods that people seek out organic animal products from reliable sources that treat their animals with compassion. Dairies which treat their cows well should be sought out.

Contact the farmers who produce your dairy and ask them how their animals are treated. Many farmers who treat their animals humanely invite the customers to visit their farms. Visit your local health-food stores and farmers markets and ask where you can get good quality, hormone, pesticide, chemical, and GMO-free foods. This is very important, because many diseases we are suffering from as a society are caused by mal-absorption which is being increased by the chemical additives that mass-marketed foods are laced with. What is good for marketing and profits is not always good for health. Milk is very heavy to digest. Ayurveda recommends fresh, raw, whole, unpasteurized, unhomogenized milk. Reduced fat milk is not recommended. Raw milk should be sought out where it is legal for its superior quality. And milk of heritage breeds should be favored if possible for the natural A2 proteins which are more digestible. Raw milk must be boiled to ensure safety from bacteria, contaminants, and diseases, but Ayurveda recommends boiling milk anyway to make it easier to digest. To help counter the heaviness of milk, Ayurveda recommends thinning it with water and boiling it with digestive spices like cardamom, cinnamon, or ginger. The milk may be cooked in a pan just until bubbles form on the top and the foam begins to rise in the pan. This greatly increases the digestibility of milk which Ayurveda teaches should not be taken cold or without cooking. Unfortunately, for those who enjoy it, cold dairy like ice cream is not recommended for health.

We as consumers have a right to healthful foods, and we should voice our opinion about the unnatural and dangerous food processing standards of the Meat and Dairy industry. The practices which increase profits are not necessarily best for our health. We must not become complacent and allow ourselves and our children to be harmed by these unsafe standards. We must not give our money to companies who recklessly endanger life, however cheap or enticing their products may be. It is our duty as health-conscious people to support the companies who provide safe alternatives. Organic foods are currently somewhat expensive compared to the products of the factory farms. We should buy them at all costs, however expensive they may become. We cannot save money by buying poison. We will lose the money we try to save to the doctors in the end, who may prescribe chemically-produced pharmaceuticals which may only exacerbate the problems. We should familiarize ourselves with the natural, healthful alternatives to nourish and heal ourselves, and take the time to seek them out before only the morticians can help our mortal bodies. These bodies have been gifted to us by the Lord to carry our divine Souls. We must learn to empathize and work compassionately for the peace of all living beings to realize the true gifts of this spiritual life. May our actions honor His creation and His gifts to us.

“How can he practice true compassion, who eats the meat of an animal to fatten his own flesh.”

Thirukural Verse 251

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

Mahatma Gandhi

“If a man aspires toward a righteous life, his first act of abstinence is from injury to animals.”

Albert Einstein