

## The Benefits of a Vegetarian Diet

**A** lifetime commitment to a vegan or lactovegetarian diet is a prerequisite for initiation into the Quan Yin Method. Foods from plant sources and dairy products are permitted on this diet, but all other foods from animal sources including eggs should not be eaten. There are many reasons for this, but the most important comes from the First Precept, which tells us to refrain from taking the life of sentient beings, or **Thou shalt not kill**.

Not killing or otherwise harming other living creatures is of obvious benefit for them. Less obvious is the fact that refraining from harming others is equally advantageous for ourselves. Why? Because of the Law of Karma: **As ye sow, so shall ye reap**. When you kill, or cause others to kill for you, in order to satisfy your desire for meat, you incur a karmic debt, and this debt must eventually be repaid.

So in a very real sense, the keeping of a vegetarian diet is a gift which we give to ourselves. We feel better, the quality of our lives improves as the heaviness of our karmic indebtedness diminishes, and we are offered entrance into new subtle and heavenly realms of inner experience. It is well worth the small price you have to pay!

The spiritual arguments against eating meat are convincing for some people, but there are other compelling reasons for being a vegetarian. All of them are rooted in common sense. They have to do with issues of personal health and nutrition, ecology and the environment, ethics and animal suffering, and world hunger.

## Health and Nutrition

Studies of human evolution have shown that our ancestors were vegetarian by nature. The structure of the human body is not suited for eating meat. This was demonstrated in an essay in comparative anatomy by Dr. G.S. Huntington of Columbia University. He pointed out that carnivores have short small and large intestines. Their large intestine is characteristically very straight and smooth. In contrast, vegetarian animals have both a long small intestine and a long large intestine. Because of the low fiber content and high protein density of meat, the intestines do not require a long time to absorb nutrients; thus, the intestines of carnivores are shorter in length than those of vegetarian animals.

Humans, like other naturally vegetarian animals, have both a long small and large intestine. Together, our intestines are approximately twenty-eight feet (eight and a half meters) in length. The small intestine is folded back on itself many times, and its walls are convoluted, not smooth. Because they are longer than those found in carnivores, the meat we eat stays in our intestines for a longer period of time. Consequently, the meat can putrefy and create toxins. These toxins have been implicated, as a cause of colon cancer, and they also increase the burden on the liver, which has the function of getting rid of toxins. This can cause cirrhosis and even cancer of the liver.

Meat contains a lot of urokinase protein and urea, which add to the burden on the kidneys, and can destroy kidney function. There are fourteen grams of urokinase protein in every pound of steak. If living cells are put into liquid urokinase protein, their metabolic function will degenerate. Furthermore, meat lacks cellulose or fiber, and lack of fiber can easily create constipation. It is known that constipation can cause rectal cancer or piles.

The cholesterol and saturated fats in flesh also create cardiovascular disorders. Cardiovascular disorders are the number one leading cause of death in the United States, and now in Formosa.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death. Experiments indicate that the burning and roasting of flesh creates a chemical element (Methylcholanthrene), which is a powerful carcinogen. Mice given this chemical develop cancers, such as bone tumors, cancer of the blood, cancer of the stomach, etc.

Research has shown that infant mice fed by a female mouse having breast cancer will also develop cancer. When human cancer cells were injected into animals, the animals also developed cancer. If the meat which we eat daily comes from animals that originally have such disorders, and we take them into our body, there is a good chance we will also get the diseases.

Most people assume that meat is clean and safe, that there are inspections done at all butcheries. There are far too many cattle, pigs, poultry, etc, killed for sale every day for each one to actually be examined. It's very difficult to check whether a piece of meat has cancer in it, let alone check every single animal. Currently, the meat industry just cuts off the head when it has a problem, or cuts off the leg which is diseased. Only the bad parts are removed and the rest is sold.

The famous vegetarian, Dr. J.H. Kellogg said, "When we eat vegetarian food, we don't have to worry about what kind of disease the food died of. This makes a joyful meal!"

There is yet another concern. Antibiotics as well as other drugs including steroids and growth hormones are either added to animal feed or injected directly into the animals. It has been reported that people

eating these animals will absorb these drugs into their bodies. There is a possibility that antibiotics in meat are diminishing the effectiveness of antibiotics for human use.

There are some people who consider the vegetarian diet not sufficiently nourishing. An American surgical expert, Dr. Miller, practiced medicine for forty years in Formosa. He established a hospital there, where all the meals were vegetarian, for staff members as well as the patients. He said, "The mouse is one kind of animal which can support its life with both a vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet. If two mice are segregated, with one eating flesh and the other vegetarian food, we find that their growth and development are the same, but that the vegetarian mouse lives longer and has greater resistance to disease. Furthermore, when the two mice got sick, the vegetarian mouse recovered quicker. He then added, "The medicine given to us by modern science has improved greatly, but it can only treat illnesses. Food however, can sustain our health." He pointed out that, "Food from plants is a more direct source of nutrition than meat. People eat animals, but the sources of nutrition for the animals we eat is plants. The lives of most animals are short, and animals have nearly all the diseases that humankind has. It is very likely that the diseases of humankind come from eating the flesh of diseased animals. So, why don't people get their nutrition directly from plants?" Dr. Miller suggested that we only need cereals, beans and vegetables to get all the nourishment we need to maintain good health.

Many people have the idea that animal protein is superior to plant protein because the former is considered a complete protein, and the latter is incomplete. The truth is that some plant protein are complete, and that food combining can create complete proteins out of several incomplete protein foods.

In March 1988 the American Dietetic Association announced that: "It is the position of the ADA that vegetarian diets are healthful and nutritionally adequate when appropriately planned."

It is often falsely believed that meat-eaters are stronger than vegetarians, but an experiment conducted by Professor Irving Fisher of Yale University on 32 vegetarians and 15 meat-eaters showed that vegetarians had more endurance than meat-eaters. He had people hold out their arms for as long as possible. The outcome from the test was very clear. Among the 15 meat-eaters, only two persons could hold out their arms for fifteen to thirty minutes. However, among the 32 vegetarians: 22 persons held out their arms for fifteen to thirty minutes, 15 persons for over thirty minutes, 9 persons for over one hour, 4 persons for over two hours, and one vegetarian held his arms out for over three hours.

Many long distance track athletes keep a vegetarian diet for the time preceding competitions. Dr. Barbara More, an expert in vegetarian therapy, completed a one hundred and ten mile race in twenty-seven hours and thirty minutes. A woman of fifty-six years of age, she broke all the records held by young men: "I want to be an example to show that people who take a whole vegetarian diet will enjoy a strong body, a clear mind and a purified life."

Does the vegetarian get enough protein in his diet? The World Health Organization recommends that 4.5% of daily calories be derived from protein. Wheat has 17% of its calories as protein, broccoli has 45% and rice has 8%. It is very easy to have a protein rich diet without eating meat. With the additional benefit of avoiding the many diseases caused by high fat diets such as heart disease and many cancers, vegetarianism is clearly the superior choice.

The relationship between over consumption of meat and other animal

source foods containing high levels of saturated fats, and heart disease, breast cancer, colon cancer and strokes has been proven. Other diseases which are often prevented and sometimes cured by a low-fat vegetarian diet include: kidney stones, prostate cancer, diabetes, peptic ulcers, gallstones, irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, gum disease, acne, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer, hypoglycemia, constipation, diverticulosis, hypertension, osteoporosis, ovarian cancer, hemorrhoids, obesity and asthma.

There is no greater personal health risk than eating meat, aside from smoking.

## **Ecology and the Environment**

Raising animals for meat has its consequences. It leads to rain forest destruction, global heat rising, water pollution, water scarcity, desertification, misuse of energy resources and world hunger. The use of land, water, energy and human effort to produce meat is not an efficient way to use the Earth's resources.

Since 1960, some 25% of Central America's rain forests have been burned and cleared to create pasture for beef cattle. It has been estimated that every four ounce hamburger made from rain forest beef destroys 55 square feet of tropical rain forest. In addition, raising cattle contributes significantly to the production of three gases which cause global warming; is a leading cause of water pollution and requires a staggering 2464 gallons of water for the production of each pound of beef. It only takes 29 gallons of water to produce a pound of tomatoes and 139 gallons to produce a one pound loaf of whole wheat bread. Nearly half of the water consumed in the United States goes to the growing of feed for cattle and other livestock.

Many more people could be fed if the resources used to raise cattle were used to produce grain to feed the world's population. An acre of land growing oats produces 8 times the protein and 25 times the calories, if the oats are fed to humans rather than to cattle. An acre of land used for broccoli produces 10 times the protein, calories and niacin as an acre of land producing beef. Statistics like these are numerous. The world's resources would be more efficiently utilized if the land used for livestock production was converted to raising crops to feed people.

Eating a vegetarian diet allows you to "tread more lightly on the planet." In addition to taking only what you need and reducing excess, you will feel better when you know that a living being doesn't have to die each time you eat a meal.

## **World Hunger**

Nearly one billion people suffer from hunger and malnutrition on this planet. Over 40 million die each year of starvation, and most of them are children. Despite this, more than one third of the world's grain harvest is diverted from feeding people to feeding livestock. In the United States, livestock consume 70% of all the grain produced. If we fed people instead of livestock, no one would go hungry.

## **Animal Suffering**

Are you aware of the fact that more than 100,000 cows are slaughtered every day in the United States?

Most animals in Western countries are raised on "factory farms." These facilities are designed to produce the maximum number of animals for slaughter at the minimum expense. Animals are crowded together, disfigured and treated like machines for the conversion of feed into

flesh. This is a reality that most of us will never see with our own eyes. It has been said that, "One visit to a slaughterhouse will make you a vegetarian for life."

Leo Tolstoy said, "As long as there are slaughterhouses there will be battlefields. A vegetarian diet is the acid test of humanitarianism." Although most of us do not actively condone killing, we have developed the habit, supported by society, of eating meat regularly, without any real awareness of what is being done to the animals we eat.

## **The Company of Saints and Others**

From the beginning of recorded history we can see that vegetables have been the natural food of human beings. Early Greek and Hebrew myths all spoke of people originally eating fruit. Ancient Egyptian priests never ate meat. Many great Greek philosophers such as Plato, Diogenes and Socrates all advocated vegetarianism.

In India, Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized the importance of Ahimsa, the principle of not harming any living things. He warned His disciples not to eat meat, or else other living beings would become frightened of them. Buddha made the following observations: **Meat eating is just an acquired habit. In the beginning we were not born with a desire for it. Flesh eating people cut off their inner seed of Great Mercy. Flesh eating people kill each other and eat each other... this life I eat you, and next life you eat me... and it always continues in this way. How can they ever get out of the Three Realms (of illusion)?**

Many early Taoists, early Christians and Jews were vegetarians. It is recorded in the Holy Bible: **And God said, I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat; but for the wild**

animals and for all the birds I have provided grass and leafy plants for food. (Genesis 1:29) Other examples forbidding the eating of meat in the Bible: You must not eat meat with blood in it, because the life is in the blood. (Genesis 9:4) God said, Who told you to kill the bullock and the she goat to make an offering to me? Wash yourselves from this innocent blood, so I may hear your prayer; otherwise I will turn my head away because your hands are full of blood. Repent yourselves so I may forgive you. (Isaiah 1:11-16) St. Paul, one of Jesus' disciples, said in his letter to the Romans, It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine. (Romans 14:21)

Recently, historians have discovered many ancient books that have shed new light on the life of Jesus and His teachings. Jesus said: People who have animals' flesh become their own tombs. I tell you honestly, the man who kills will be killed. The man who kills living things and eats their meat is eating the meat of the dead men.

Indian religions also avoid the eating of flesh. It is said that, People can't get flesh without killing things. A person who hurts sentient beings will never be blessed by God. So, avoid taking flesh! (Hindu Precept)

The holy Scripture of Islam, the Koran, forbids the eating of dead animals, blood and flesh.

A great Chinese Zen Master, Han Shan Tzu wrote a poem which was strongly against flesh eating: Go quickly to the market to buy meat and fish and feed them to your wife and children. But why must their lives be taken to sustain yours? It's unreasonable. It will not bring you affinity with Heaven, but make you become dregs of Hell!

Many famous writers, artists, scientists, philosophers and eminent men were vegetarians. The following people have all embraced vegetarianism with enthusiasm: Shakyamuni Buddha, Jesus Christ, Virgil, Horace, Plato, Ovid, Petrarch, Pythagoras, Socrates, William Shakespeare, Voltaire, Sir Isaac Newton, Leonardo Da Vinci, Charles Darwin, Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Emile Zola, Bertrand Russell, Richard Wagner, Percy Bysshe Shelley, H. G. Wells, Albert Einstein, Rabindranath Tagore, Leo Tolstoy, George Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer; and more recently, Paul Newman, Madonna, Princess Diana, Lindsay Wagner, Paul McCartney and Candice Bergen, to name a few.

Albert Einstein said, "I think the changes and purifying effects that a vegetarian diet have on a human being's disposition are quite beneficial to humankind. Therefore, it is both auspicious and peaceful for people to choose vegetarianism." This has been the common advice of many important figures and sages throughout history!

## Master Answers Questions

**Q:** Eating animals is killing living beings, but isn't eating vegetables a kind of killing, too?

**M:** Eating plants is also killing living things and will create some karmic hindrance, but the effect is very minimal. If one practices the Quan Yin Method for two and a half hours every day, one can get rid of this karmic effect. As we have to eat in order to survive, we choose food which has the least consciousness and suffers the least. Plants consist of 90% water, thus their level of consciousness is so low that it hardly feels any suffering. Furthermore, when we eat many vegetables we don't cut their roots, but rather we help their asexual reproduction by cutting branches and leaves. The end result can actually be beneficial to the plant. Therefore, horticulturists say that pruning vegetation

helps them grow large and beautiful.

This is even more evident with fruit. When fruit ripens, it will attract people to eat it by its fragrant smell, beautiful color and delicious taste. It is in this way that fruit trees can achieve their purpose of propagating their seed over a wide area. If we do not pick and eat them, the fruit will become overripe and will fall to the ground to rot. Its seed will be shaded from sunlight by the tree above them and will die. So, eating vegetables and fruit is a natural tendency, which brings to them no suffering at all.

**Q:** Most people have the idea that vegetarians are shorter and thinner, and flesh eaters are taller and bigger. Is this true?

**M:** Vegetarians are not necessarily thinner and shorter. If their diet is balanced, they can also grow tall and strong. As you can see, all big animals like elephants, cattle, giraffes, hippopotamuses, horses, etc, eat only vegetables and fruit. They are stronger than carnivores, very gentle and beneficial to humankind. But flesh eating animals are both very violent and of no use. If human beings eat many animals, they will also become affected with animal instincts and qualities. Flesh eating people are not necessarily tall and strong, but their life span is very short on the average. Eskimos are almost totally flesh eating, but are they very tall and strong? Do they have a long life? This I think you can understand very clearly.

**Q:** Can vegetarians eat eggs?

**M:** No. When we eat eggs we are also killing beings. Some say that commercially available eggs are unfertilized, so eating them is not killing living things. This is only seemingly correct. An egg remains unfertilized only because the appropriate circumstances for its fertilization have been withheld, so the egg cannot complete its natural purpose of developing into a chicken. Even though this development has not occurred, it still contains the innate life force needed for this. We know

that eggs have innate life force; otherwise, why is it that ova are the only type of cells which can be fertilized? Some point out that eggs contain the essential nutrients, protein and phosphorus, essential for human bodies. But protein is available from bean curd, and phosphorus from many kinds of vegetables such as potatoes.

We know that from ancient times till now, there have been many great monks who did not eat meat or eggs, and still had a long life span. For instance the Ying Guang Master ate only a bowl of vegetables and some rice each meal, and yet he lived up to the age of eighty. Furthermore, egg yolks contain a lot of cholesterol, which is a major cause of cardiovascular disorders, the number one killer in Formosa and America. No wonder we see that most patients are egg eaters!

**Q:** Man raises animals and poultry, such as pigs, cattle, chickens, ducks, etc. Why can't we eat them?

**M:** So? Parents raise their children. Do parents have the right to eat their children? All living things have the right to live, and no one should deprive them of this. If we have a look at the laws in Hong Kong, even killing oneself is against the law. So, how much more unlawful would killing other living beings be?

**Q:** Animals are born for people to eat. If we don't eat them, they will fill the world. Right?

**M:** This is an absurd idea. Before you kill an animal, do you ask it if it wants to be killed and eaten by you or not? All living beings desire to live and are afraid to die. We don't want to be eaten by a tiger, so why should animals be eaten by humans? Human beings have only existed in the world for several tens of thousands of years, but before humankind appeared, many species of animals had already existed. Did they overcrowd the Earth? Living things maintain a natural ecological balance. When there is too little food and space is limited, this will cause a drastic reduction in

population. This maintains the population at an appropriate level.

**Q:** Why should I be vegetarian?

**M:** I am vegetarian because the God inside me wants it. Understand? Eating meat is against the universal principle of not wanting to be killed. We ourselves don't want to be killed, and we ourselves don't want to be stolen from. Now, if we do that to other people, then we are acting against ourselves, and that makes us suffer. Everything that you do against others makes you suffer. You cannot bite yourself and you shouldn't stab yourself. In the same way you should not kill, because that is against the principle of life. Understand? It would make us suffer, so we don't do it. It doesn't mean we limit ourselves in any way. It means we expand our life to all kinds of life. Our life will not be limited within this body, but extended to the life of animals and all kinds of beings. That makes us grander, greater, happier and limitless. Okay?

**Q:** Would You speak on vegetarian eating and how this can contribute to world peace?

**M:** Yes. You see, most of the wars that happen in this world are due to economic reasons. Let's face it. The economic difficulties of a country become more urgent when there is hunger, lack of food, or a lack of equal distribution of food among different countries. If you took the time to read magazines and research the facts about the vegetarian diet, then you would know this very well. Raising cattle and animals for meat has caused our economy to go bankrupt in all aspects. It has created hunger throughout the world — at least in the Third World countries.

It's not I who is saying this, it is an American citizen who did this type of research and wrote a book about it. You can go to any bookshop and read about vegetarian research and food processing research. You can read, "Diet For a New America" by John Robbins. He is a very famous ice-cream millionaire. He gave it all up in order to be a

vegetarian, and to write a vegetarian book against his family tradition and business. He lost a lot of money, prestige and business, but he did it for the sake of Truth. That book is very good. There are many other books and magazines which can give you a lot of information and facts about the vegetarian diet and how it can contribute to world peace.

You see, we bankrupted our food supply by feeding cattle. You know how much protein, medicine, water supply, manpower, cars, trucks, road construction and how many hundreds of thousands of acres of land have been wasted before a cow is good enough for one meal. Understand? All these things could be distributed equally to underdeveloped countries, then we could solve the hunger problem. So now, if a country is in need of food it probably invades the other country just to save its own people. In the long run, this has created a bad cause and retribution. Understand?

**As you sow, so shall you reap.** If we kill someone for food, we will be killed for food later, in some other form the next time, the next generation. It's a pity. We are so intelligent, so civilized and yet most of us do not know the cause of why our neighboring countries are suffering. It is because of our palates, our tastes, and our stomachs.

In order to feed and nourish one body we kill so many beings, and starve so many fellow human beings. We aren't even talking about the animals yet. Understand? Then this guilt, consciously or unconsciously, will weigh down upon our conscience. It makes us suffer from cancer, tuberculosis and other kinds of incurable diseases, including AIDS. Ask yourself, why does your country, America, suffer the most? It has the highest rate of cancer in the world, because the Americans eat a lot of beef. They eat more meat than any of the other countries. Ask yourself why the Chinese or communist countries don't have that high a rate of cancer. They don't have as much meat. Understand? That is what the research says, not I. Okay? Don't blame me.

**Q:** What are some spiritual benefits that we get from being vegetarians?

**M:** I'm glad you asked the question in this manner, because it means you only concentrate on, or care about, spiritual benefits. Most people would care about health, diet and figure when they ask about the vegetarian diet. The spiritual aspects of a vegetarian diet are that it is very clean and nonviolent.

**Thou shalt not kill.** When God said this to us, Hes did not say do not kill human beings, Hes said do not kill any beings. Didn't Hes say that Hes made all animals to befriend us, to help us? Did Hes not put the animals in our care? Hes said, take care of them, rule over them. When you rule over your subjects, do you kill your subjects and eat them? Then you would become a king with no one else around? So now you understand when God said that. We must do it. There is no need to question Hirm. Hes spoke very clearly, but who understands God except God?

So now you have to become God in order to understand God. I invite you to be God-like again, to be yourself, to be no one else. To meditate on God doesn't mean you worship God, it means that you become God. You realize that you and God are one. **I and my Father are one**, didn't Jesus say so? If He said He and His father are one, we and His father can also be one, because we are also children of God. And Jesus also said that what He does we can even do better. So we may be even better than God, who knows!

Why worship God when we don't know anything about God? Why use blind faith? We must first know what we are worshipping, just like we must know who the girl is we're going to marry before we marry her. Nowadays, it's customary that we don't marry before we date. So why should we worship God with blind faith? We have the right to demand that God appears to us, and to make Hirmself known to us. We have the right to choose which God we would like to follow.

So now you see that it is very clear in the Bible that we should

be vegetarians. For all health reasons, we should be vegetarians. For all scientific reasons, we should be vegetarians. For all economic reasons, we should be vegetarians. For all compassionate reasons, we should be vegetarians. As well, to save the world, we should be vegetarians.

It is stated in some research that if people in the West, in America, eat vegetarian only once a week, we would be able to save sixteen million starving people every year. So be a hero, be vegetarian. For all of these reasons, even if you don't follow me, or don't practice the same method, please be a vegetarian for your own sake, for the sake of the world.

**Q:** If everyone eats plants, will it create a food shortage?

**M:** No. Using a given piece of land to grow crops provides fourteen times as much food as using the same piece of land to grow fodder to feed animals. Plants from each acre of land provide 800,000 calories of energy; however, if these plants are used to raise animals which are then eaten as food, the animals' meat can only provide 200,000 calories of energy. That means that during the process 600,000 calories of energy are lost. So the vegetarian diet is evidently more efficient and economical than the meat diet.

**Q:** Is fish all right to eat for a vegetarian?

**M:** It's all right if you want to eat fish. But if you want to eat vegetarian, fish is not a vegetable.

**Q:** Some people say that it is important to be a good-hearted man, but it is not necessary to be a vegetarian. Does this make sense?

**M:** If one is truly a good-hearted person, then why does he still eat another being's flesh? Seeing them suffer so, he should not be able to bear to eat them! Flesh eating is unmerciful, so how can this be done by a good-hearted man?

Master Lien Ch'ih once said, "Kill its body, and eat its meat.

In this world there is no one more cruel, malevolent, atrocious and evil than this man." How can he ever claim that he himself has a good heart?

Mencius also said, "If you see it alive, you can't bear to see it die, and if you hear it groaning you cannot bear to eat its meat; so the real gentlemen keep far from the kitchen."

Human intelligence is higher than that of animals, and we can use weapons to make them unable to resist us, so they die with hatred. The kind of man who does this, bullying small and weak creatures, has no right to be called a gentleman. When animals are killed, they are terribly stricken with agony, fear and resentment. This causes the production of toxins that stay in their meat to harm those who eat it. Since the frequency of the vibration of animals is lower than that of human-kind, they will influence our vibration, and affect the development of our wisdom.

**Q:** Is it all right just to be a so-called "convenient vegetarian?" (Convenient vegetarians do not strictly avoid meat. They would eat vegetables out of a mixed vegetable and meat dish.)

**M:** No. For example, if food is put into a poisonous liquid and then removed, do you think it will become poisonous or not? In the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Mahakasyapa asked Buddha, **When we beg and are given vegetables mixed with meat, can we eat this food? How can we clean the food?**" Buddha replied, **One should clean it with water and separate the vegetables from the meat, then one can eat it.**

From the above dialogue we can understand that one cannot even eat vegetables which are mixed with meat unless one first cleans them with water, not to mention eating meat alone! Therefore, it is very easy to see that Buddha and His disciples all kept a vegetarian diet. However, some people slandered Buddha by saying that He was a "convenient vegetarian," and that if alms-givers gave meat, He ate

meat. This is truly nonsense. Those who say so have read too little of the Scriptures, or don't understand the Scriptures they have read.

In India, over ninety percent of the people are vegetarians. When people see mendicants in yellow robes they all know they should offer them vegetarian food, not to mention that most of the people have no meat to give anyway!

**Q:** A long time ago, I heard another Master say, "Buddha ate a pig's foot and then got diarrhea and died." Is this true?

**M:** Absolutely not. It was because of eating a kind of mushroom that Buddha died. If we translate directly from the language of the Brahmins, this kind of mushroom is called the "pig's foot," but it is not a real pig's foot. It's just like when we call a kind of fruit "longan" (in Chinese this literally means the "dragon's eye"). There are many things that by name are not vegetables but actually are vegetarian foods, such things as the "dragon's eye." This mushroom in Brahmanic language is called "pig's foot" or "pig's joy." Both have a connection with pigs. This kind of mushroom was not easy to find in ancient India and was a rare delicacy, so people offered it to Buddha in worship. This mushroom cannot be found above the ground. It grows under the ground. If people want to find it they must search with the help of an old pig which likes very much to eat this kind of mushroom. Pigs detect it by their smell, and when they discover one, they use their feet to dig in the mud to find and eat it. That was why this kind of mushroom is called the "pig's joy" or "pig's foot." Actually these two names refer to the same mushroom. Because it was translated carelessly and because people did not truly understand the derivation, the following generations have been caused to misunderstand and mistake Buddha for a flesh devouring man. This is really a regrettable thing.

**Q:** Some meat-lovers say that they buy meat from the butcher, so it's not killed by themselves, therefore, it is all right to eat it. Do You think this is right?

**M:** This is a disastrous mistake. You must know that butchers kill living beings because people want to eat. In the Lankavatara Sutra, Buddha said, **If there was no one eating meat, then no killing would happen. So eating meat and killing living beings are of the same sin.** Because of the killing of too many living beings, we have natural disasters and man-made calamities. Wars are also caused by too much killing.

**Q:** Some people say that while plants can't produce poisonous things like urea or urokinase, fruit and vegetable growers use lots of pesticides on the plants, which are bad for our health. Is that so?

**M:** If farmers use pesticides and other highly toxic chemicals like DDT on crops, it can lead to cancer, infertility and diseases of the liver. Toxins like DDT can diffuse into fat, and are usually stored in animal fat. When you eat meat, it means that you take in all these highly concentrated pesticides and other poisons stored in animals' fat, which have accumulated during the growth of the animal. These accumulations can be as much as thirteen times that in fruit, vegetables or grains. We can clean the pesticide sprayed on fruit surfaces, but we cannot remove the pesticides deposited in animal fat. The accumulating process occurs because these pesticides are cumulative. So consumers at the top of the food chain are the most harmed.

Experiments at the University of Iowa showed that of the pesticides found in human bodies almost all came from eating flesh. They discovered that the pesticide level in the bodies of vegetarian people is less than half that in meat-eaters. Actually, there are other toxins in flesh besides pesticides. In the process of raising animals, much of their food consists of chemicals to make them develop faster or to change their meat color, taste or texture, and to preserve the flesh, etc.

For example, preservatives produced from nitrates are highly toxic. On July 18, 1971, the New York Times reported, "The great hidden dangers to health for meat-eaters are the invisible pollutants in meat

such as bacteria in salmon, remnants of pesticides, preservatives, hormones, antibiotics and other chemical additives." Besides the above, animals are injected with vaccines, which may remain in their flesh. In this respect, the protein in fruit, nuts, beans, corn and milk are all more pure than the protein of meat, which has 56% water insoluble impurities. Research shows that those man-made additives can lead to cancers, other diseases or deformed fetuses. So it is even proper for pregnant women to eat a pure vegetarian diet to ensure the physical and spiritual health of the fetuses. If you drink lots of milk you can get enough calcium; from beans you can get protein; and from fruit and vegetables you get vitamins and minerals.