

[The Meat-Free Life](#)

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WHAT IS HINDUISM?

The Meat-Free Life

Five good reasons to be a vegetarian and 10 arguments against eating meat

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 Rastifarian 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.

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/v Reggie_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 reasearch 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, acording 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 Subramuniaswami 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.'

How to Win an Argument with Meat-Eater

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 malnutrition. One child dies of malnutrition 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 scarpie 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.

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.

Saints and Scriptures

Speak on Vegetarianis m

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

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-eati
ng 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

s).

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,
understandin

g, 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