

## **To Be or Not To Be a Vegetarian**

IBDSCL, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017, by Nancy

Hello everyone, I am glad that you can be here in this lovely Sunday morning to share and discuss Buddha Dharma with me. Recently some visitors asked me about the Buddhist diet and as we all know, diet is an important part of our life, so today I would like to say something about diet, and let you understand your diet and your choices, then you may choose, to be a vegetarian or not.

At the beginning, I would like to spend few minutes to tell a famous Buddhist story. During Emperor Wu's time, there was a high monk called the Venerable Zhi. Having attained the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Penetrations, he could clearly discern causes and effects. One time, a rich man asked him to recite Sutras at a wedding. Upon entering the house, he sighed and said:

How strange! How very strange indeed! The grandson marries the grandmother. The daughter is eating her mother's flesh. And the son is beating on a drum stretched with his father's skin. Pigs and sheep are sitting on the couch, and the six kinds of relatives are cooking in the pots. People have come to offer congratulations, but I see that it is truly suffering!

What did he mean? The grandson marries the grandmother. Would you say this is strange or not? Right before she died, the grandmother of the family had held her grandson's hand, not being able to part with him. She said, "You all have your own families, but this little grandson of mine has no one to take care of him. Ah! What is

there to be done?" Then she died.

When she arrived at King Yama's court, King Yama gave her the following verdict, "Since you love your grandson so much, you might as well go back to be his wife and take care of him." And so the grandmother was reborn as her grandson's future wife. The workings of the law of cause and effect in this world can be quite frightening.

The daughter is eating her mother's flesh. Outside the house, a girl was eating a pig's foot with great relish, not realizing that the pig had been her mother in its previous life. And the son is beating on a drum stretched with his father's skin. Venerable Zhi then took a look at the musicians who were beating drums and blowing on their trumpets and flutes. What excitement! One man was banging away vigorously on a drum stretched with mule hide, not knowing that the mule had been his father in a previous life.

Venerable Zhi looked at the people sitting on the couch and said: Pigs and sheep are sitting on the couch. Then he looked in the pots and said: And the six kinds of relatives are being cooked in the pots. All the former pigs and sheep that had been slaughtered before were now getting even and eating the people who had eaten them before! The six kinds of relatives who had eaten those pigs and sheep were now being chopped up and cooked in the pots to pay off their debts.

I know some people might feel uncomfortable after hearing this story and yes, please do remember this uncomfortable sense when you cannot help yourself try to taste a lamb or steak. I would not spend too much time on this story, since you are a Buddhist

who believe karma, believe cause and effect, just try to ask yourself, will those animals hurt when I eat them? Then you will have your answer, to eat them or not, it is your choice.

Back to the 2500 years ago, when the Buddha was in the world, he encouraged people to be vegetarian, but he didn't force them. Why? Because some people were very fond of good flavors. If the Buddha had insisted that his disciples be vegetarian, those people wouldn't have dared to leave the home life. But for the monks, their diet principle was 'I eat whatever people offer.'

What's the difference between eating and not eating meat anyway? People who eat meat have more desires and random thoughts. It's not easy for them to attain samadhi. People who don't eat meat, however, are content and have fewer desires and random thoughts. Vegetarians have purer blood and energy. Meat contains a turbid energy because it comes from something filthy and turbid. Therefore, people who eat meat find it difficult to uphold precepts, develop wisdom, and attain samadhi. You want to uphold precepts, but your mind is filled with false thoughts, so you cannot follow the rules and attain samadhi, and you are restless whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Since you cannot attain samadhi, you have no real wisdom. If you have true wisdom, nothing presents a problem. Eating meat takes you down to the path of ignorance, and not eating meat takes you along the path of wisdom. That's the difference.

According to the Buddha's teaching in many sutras, if you want to have true wisdom,

you should be content and reduce your desires. Don't eat so much meat. If you eat too much pork, your own flesh combines with that of pigs and you form a cointegrate with them. It would really be surprising if you didn't become a pig yourself one day! If you eat too much beef, you form a cointegrate with cows and develop affinities with them, and you'll very likely be reborn as a cow. Eating dog meat, you will become a dog. Eating rat meat, you will turn into a rat. Your body retains affinities with whatever kind of meat you eat, and eventually you'll become that kind of animal. Your physical energy turns into the energy of pigs, cows, or whatever animal you eat. Your blood becomes that kind of blood; your energy becomes that kind of energy; and your flesh becomes that kind of flesh. Wise people should give deep thought to this!

It makes sense, right? Scientists have discovered that human's DNA could be effected by food's DNA, such like a chicken or a bite of rice, and people who eat a great deal of meat tend to get cancer. This is probably because the resentful energy in the bodies of slaughtered animals accumulates in the bodies of those who eat meat and eventually turns into a harmful toxin. We should cut off this relationship of causes and effects with animals and stop the vicious cycle of creating offenses against cows, sheep, chickens, and other animals. Then we will gradually be able to lessen the inauspicious energy in the world.

In our Zen center, we want to uphold the Proper Dharma and avert the crisis of killing in the world. Therefore, we advocate: no killing, no stealing, no engaging in sexual misconduct, no lying, no drinking and no taking drugs. All the master's disciples, at very least, have to observe the Five Precepts and maintain our purity in that regard.

So, without question, we are all vegetarians and will continue to purify ourselves. How about you?

Thank you for listening.