

The Buddhist Perspective of Vegetarianism



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佛教素食观



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Must all Buddhists
be vegetarians?

每位佛教徒都
必须持素吗？

No, but...

不，但是...

Why fuss over vegetarianism?

Though the Buddha never made it compulsory that all Buddhists have to be vegetarians, he strongly encouraged us to be. In the Bodhisattva practice of minimising harm to all beings and benefiting them as much as possible, the practice of vegetarianism as far as possible plays an essential role. We can see this in many of the Buddha's recorded teachings.

为何需要 推广持素呢？

虽然佛陀从来不强制每一位佛教徒持素，但他非常鼓励我们这么做。因为菩萨行需要积极减少对众生的伤害，并且尽量利益众生。所以，持素扮演着举足轻重的角色。我们在许多佛教经典均可看到这一点。

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If being vegetarian is so important on the Bodhisattva path, why was the Buddha not one?

The Buddha and the monastic community in his time were not total vegetarians as they consumed alms food offered by lay followers, whom they encountered “randomly” from place to place. Though the Buddha never requested specific food to be offered, he spoke against the intentional acquiring of meat for him and the Sangha. In this way, the Buddha neither directly nor indirectly caused the death of any being for his food. On the other hand, we have freedom of choice for our diet, since we do not eat alms food. Why not make the kinder and wiser decision?

若在菩萨道上持素是如此重要，为何佛陀本身不是？

在佛陀的时代，他与僧团因需要在不同地方托钵，信徒们所供养的食物不完全是素食。虽然佛陀没特别要求要信徒必须供养什么食物，但他反对特别为供养他与僧团而准备肉食。反而，我们拥有选择我们所要进食的食物，因为我们无须托钵。为何不做出个较善良与明智的选择呢？

Can't I be a good Buddhist who is not vegetarian?

Of course you can. One who eats meat can cultivate a pure heart just as one who is vegetarian might have an impure heart. But why not cultivate a pure heart while making the extra effort to further the practice of compassion by being vegetarian?

All true practitioners of the Bodhisattva path eventually relinquish meat-eating. In his previous lives, the Buddha as a Bodhisattva would rather cut his own flesh to feed an eagle than let it eat a smaller bird. All advanced practising Bodhisattvas are thus necessarily vegetarians, since they cannot bear the pain of sentient beings.

While nothing we eat makes us impure, our choice of diet is an action with implications. If our choice of diet arises from greed, sustaining the greed obviously makes us impure.



难道不是素食者就不能成为一位好的佛教徒吗？

当然可以。一个食肉者能培养一颗纯净的心，就如一位素食者可能拥有一颗不纯净的心。但为何不在培养一颗纯洁心的当儿，也付出额外的努力成为素食者，以延伸慈悲的修持？

所有真正行菩萨道的修行者终究会放弃食肉。佛陀在前世行持菩萨道时便曾经为救度一只小鸟免遭老鹰吃掉而割肉喂鹰。所有在菩萨道前进的菩萨们都必需持素，因为他们无法忍受众生苦。

我们吃的食物不会使我们心灵不净，但我们所选择的食物有其因果。若我们的食物选择出于贪婪，那维持贪婪必定使我们不净。



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Didn't the Buddha say there is pure meat?

The Buddha advised monks that meat should only be accepted when certain conditions are met. Meat may be eaten by one who does (1) not see, (2) hear of, (3) or doubt about the animal having been killed purposely for him to eat, (4) but is certain that it either died naturally, (5) and that its flesh had been abandoned by birds of prey.

佛陀不是说有净肉吗？

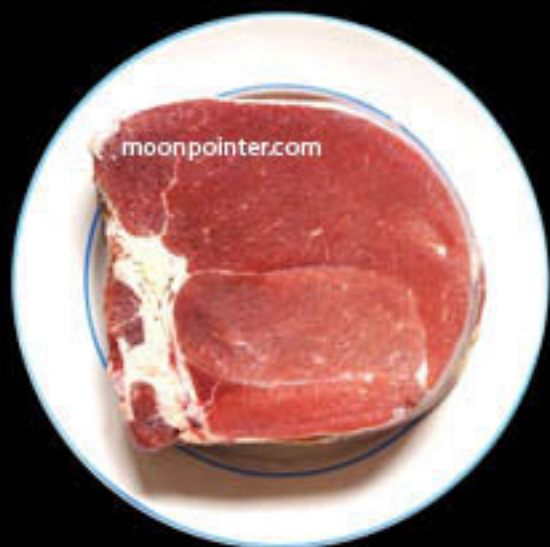
佛陀劝导僧人只应接受具备某种条件的肉食。可食用的肉类是 (1) 不见杀, (2) 不闻杀声, (3) 不为己杀, (4) 自然死亡, 与 (5) 鸟兽吃剩的。

Isn't meat from markets and restaurants pure meat?

No, because demand creates supply.

Once, a disciple of the Buddha asked a man why he kept buying meat. The man replied that he did so since the meat-seller kept selling meat. When the meat-seller was asked why he kept selling meat, he replied that he did so since the man kept buying from him. When the Buddha was consulted as to who was the one unskillful (in compassion and wisdom), he replied that both were unskillful.

Supply and demand is an obvious vicious cycle. The whole universe of meat-eating and animal slaughtering is an intricate web of interdependence, of related cause and effect. When we buy meat, we play a part in the circle of life and death of many other beings.



巴刹与餐厅售卖的肉是净肉吗？

不是，因为有需求就会有供应。

从前，有位佛弟子问一个人为何他要买肉。那个人则回答说这是因为肉贩一直卖肉。当肉贩被问为何他一直在卖肉时，他则回答说因有人一直在买肉。当佛陀被请教哪位是不善巧的（在慈悲与智慧上），佛陀则回答说两位都不善巧。

供应与需求很明显是个恶性循环。整个宇宙的食肉与动物宰杀是一个精细，因果互存的网。当我们买肉时，我们便在众生的生死循环中扮演一定的角色。



What is real pure meat then?

Here are some forms of meat that can be considered true pure meat:

1. Meat ordered or received by mistake.
2. Unintentionally leftover or discarded meat.
3. Meat from animals that have died naturally or accidentally for at least 8 hours (To ensure the consciousness has left the body).
4. Meat from random alms rounds as practised in the Buddhist tradition.



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什么才是真正的净肉？

以下可归类为净肉：

1. 错误订购或收到的肉类。
2. 无心剩下或被遗弃的肉类。
3. 死亡时间超过8小时的动物 (为确保动物神识已离开尸体)。
4. 依佛教传统托钵所得的肉。

Isn't killing vegetables taking life too?

Yes. However, plant life is not sentient life – plants are not beings with reason or emotion.

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杀植物不也是 杀生吗？

是的。但是，植物是无情众生 – 它们没有情感或理性思考的能力。

Doesn't growing vegetables kill many insects too?

This is not true if we choose organic food, which is grown without the use of pesticides (which can be harmful to humans too).

In comparison to eating non-organic vegetables, pesticides are used fifty times more when we eat meat - to kill pests to produce animal feed. It also takes up to ten kilos of vegetable protein to produce only one kilo of animal protein as meat! This is great wastage.

Much of our daily products also involve animals - such as leather shoes, fur coats, milk from cows, honey from bees, soap from animal fat, drugs with animal serum (that might be tested on animals)... However, there are many new products today that are free from animal derivatives. Given more choices, we are at liberty to make wiser decisions on how to live life in a more harmless way. Consider becoming a vegan!

Despite all we can do, merely to live is to deprive other beings of their food, habitat and/or life to a certain extent. Therefore, Buddhists practising the Bodhisattva path should do all they can in their ability to avoid killing, and to protect life instead.



种菜不也杀害许多昆虫吗?

若我们选择不用杀虫剂(对人类也有害)的有机食品,就能避免杀害昆虫。

若以肉食与普通菜相比,因要残杀喂养食料里的昆虫,肉食所使用的杀虫剂就比普通菜多出了五十倍。而且,十公斤植物蛋白质只能换取单一公斤的动物蛋白质!这是非常浪费的。

我们的日常用品很多都与动物有关 - 如皮鞋,毛皮衣服,牛奶,蜜糖,动物脂肪所制的香皂,含有动物清液的药物(也可能曾用动物测试)...可是,如今我们已拥有不含任何动物成分的用品。拥有更多的选择,我们能自由的做出明智的选择,过着无害于众生的生活。请考虑成为严格的素食主义者(vegan)!

纵然我们所做的一切,单纯的活着也就间接在剥夺其他众生的食物,居所与生命。所以,修持菩萨道的佛教徒应尽其所能的戒杀并护生。

Can you further convince me to be vegetarian?

Here are some good reasons –

1. **Personal Well Being** – No disease can come from a balanced vegetarian diet. Medical proof states that many diseases spring from meat-eating, while having a vegetarian diet can prevent and cure many diseases. Our body constitution is not ideal for meat digestion. For instance, our teeth and intestines are almost identical to that of herbivorous, not carnivorous animals. Eating animals which die in great fear and hatred, we devour their toxins of fear and hatred, which affects both our spiritual and physical health. The outbreak of many animal-related diseases that spill over to humans, such as bird-flu, is also related to the support for meat.
2. **Well Being of Animals** – Animals live imprisoned and tortured lives before the final horror of being slaughtered. While alive, they suffer from overcrowding, castration and countless other cruelties.
3. **Well Being of the Environment** – Rearing animals depletes the Earth's resources of energy, land, crops and water. It also creates large amounts of harmful animal sewage and greenhouse gases.
4. **Well Being of Fellow Humans** – More than two-thirds of the Earth's crops are used for cultivating animal feed to breed animals to be



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slaughtered for meat. No human starvation would exist if animal rearing for rich meat consumers is lessened, if the crops are directly used as food for citizens of poor countries.

5. **Peace on Earth** – Wars, riots and other forms of related mass human unrest are possible collective negative karmic results of mass-generated hatred when group-slaughtered animals, which die in great fear and hatred, are reborn as humans.
6. **Universal Filial Piety** – All beings have at one point or another have been reborn as our kin. Vegetarianism is thus a practice of filial piety. It is the practice of compassion and equanimity to all beings, recognising that they have Buddha-nature (the potential to become Buddhas) like us.

能进一步说服我成为素食者吗？

以下是一些很好的理由 –

1. **个人的安康** – 没有任何病症会从健康素食饮食方式而来。反而，医学证实许多病症都是因食肉而引发的。素食不但能预防疾病，并且更能疗治许多疾病。我们的身体结构并不适合消化肉食。例如，素食动物的牙齿与肠胃与我们的大致相同，并不像肉食动物一般。当我们服食在极大恐惧与憎恨下被宰杀的动物时，我们也服食了它们因恐惧与憎恨所释放的毒素。这将对我们的身心有

不良的影响。许多影响人类的动物病菌，如禽流感，也跟人类食肉有关。

2. **动物的安康** – 动物被宰杀前都受尽囚禁与身心折磨的痛苦。它们除了要忍受过渡拥挤的居住环境，还要忍受阉割以及无数的残暴待遇。
3. **环境的安康** – 养殖动物剥夺了地球的能源，土壤，农作物与水等资源。同时，养殖动物也制造大量的有害动物排泄物与温室气体。
4. **人类的安康** – 超过三份之二的地球农耕地都用在侍养供富有国家宰杀食用的家禽。若减少侍养供食用的家禽，并把可食用的农作物供给贫困国家的人民，人类将不会有任何饥荒。
5. **地球的和平** – 战争，暴动与其他人类的动荡不安可能是集体仇恨的累积的共业所致。当动物在饱受惊吓与满怀愤怒的情况下被集体宰杀时，它们所怀着的仇恨在投生为人后能引发以上的因果。
6. **全体孝道** – 在生死轮回中，所有众生都曾经是我们的亲朋好友。持素就是尽孝道。这是慈悲与平等体大悲的修持。这也认可所有众生与我们都拥有佛性 (成佛的潜能)。



What if vegetarian food is hard to find?

A reason why the Buddha never made vegetarianism a compulsory rule is his understanding that the living and karmic conditions of different people are different. For example, it is difficult for all Tibetans to be vegetarians as Tibet can hardly grow vegetables. However, major monasteries are increasingly becoming vegetarian today.

What happens if you cannot find vegetarian food readily? Does it mean you have no choice but to eat meat? Think again carefully... the path of compassion is not always easy to tread. It involves making many sacrifices. Being a committed vegetarian might mean having to go the extra mile to get vegetarian food.

若素食难找该如何？

佛陀没有强行制定必须吃素的一个原因是因为他了解人们不同的居住环境与业力。例如，西藏要种植蔬菜非常困难，所以当地的佛教徒便很难持素。不过，今日，越来越多寺院已实行了全素的饮食。

若您无法找到现成的素食该如何？是否意味着你别无选择而必须食肉？请再三思... 慈悲的道路并非平坦。它包含了许多牺牲。成为一位尽责的素食者意味着你必须积极的寻找素食。

Did you know the Buddha was actually vegetarian?

The Buddha later revealed that the meat he consumed in his entire life was manifested by his great compassion and psychic powers. That is to say, not only was the meat eaten already pure meat, it wasn't even real meat! In other words, the Buddha was a full practising vegan at heart with perfect compassion!

It is worth mentioning that the Buddha did not fall ill from eating meat, as it is so often mistaken. His last meal consisted of "sukara-maddava" – which is correctly translated to be (1) a pig's soft food, ie. food eaten by pigs, (2) "pig's delight" ie. a favourite food of pigs, (3) "pig-pounded", ie. food trampled by pigs. It was actually a kind of mushroom called truffles.



您是否知道佛陀其实是素食者？

佛陀后来陈诉他一生所使用的肉都是他以大悲与神通所显现的。这也就是说，那肉不仅是净肉，它根本不是真实的肉！换句话说，佛陀其实是个圆满慈悲的素食者！

值得一提的是，佛陀并非一般人所误解是因吃肉后而圆寂的。他的最后一餐是名为“输卡拉末达毗”的食物。它确实的翻译是 (1) 猪的软食 (猪使用的食物)，(2) “猪悦” (猪最喜欢的食物)，(3) “猪踏” (由猪践踏的食物)。它是一种叫块菌的菇类。

Why were some renowned Buddhists not vegetarian?

Some of these practitioners were advanced practising Bodhisattvas, who ate meat out of skilful means and compassion to benefit more beings indirectly. In fact, they might even be enlightened beings who were able to manifest “mock meat” like the Buddha. If one wishes to follow the practices of these masters, one has to be sure of one’s motivation. If it is not out of compassion and wisdom, it is plain greed for animal flesh and ignorance at play – nothing other than selfish rationalisation.

It is also a mistake to assume that eating meat will surely generate positive karmic



connections with the deceased animals, thinking we will surely be able to help them later. They would rather us to connect them to the Triple Gem while alive – not when they are on our dinner plates!

Animal liberation (life-releasing) is easily practised when we practise vegetarianism – which is simply liberating animals from our dining tables. It is actually somewhat spiritually hypocritical to save animals from slaughter while we eat them too.

为何有些成就者不是素食者？

有些修行者是高次第的实修菩萨，他们是出于善巧方便与慈悲，以利益更多众生而食肉的。实际上，他们可能是有如佛陀能化现“素肉”的神通力开悟者。若任何人希望实践这些大师的修行法，必须非常清楚自己的动机。若不是出于大悲大智，而只是贪爱众生肉与愚痴在作祟，这一切都只是自欺欺人。

若有把食肉当成是与众生广结法缘，从而在日后能度化它们的看法，这也是错误的理解。这些众生宁愿我们在它们活着时与它们结缘，而不是在餐桌上结缘！

放生将较容易通过持素来实践，那就是在我们的餐桌上放生。其实只要我们还在食肉，那放生其实是带着一些虚伪的。

I'm still unsure whether to be vegetarian...

Well... the Buddha left it to you to choose!

Remember – Buddhism is a free religion. Though there are always kinder and wiser choices you can make, you are also free to choose otherwise.

Reflect carefully – why are you putting off vegetarianism when it so obviously has all the plus points? Is it due to plain greed for the taste of meat? If you want to be sure you are not vegetarian not because of greed, the best solution is to be vegetarian and prove it to yourself. This is your personal spiritual challenge. We have to be totally honest with ourselves on the spiritual path. Remember this – your decision to be vegetarian or not will affect countless sentient lives in your lifetime.

我还不能确定 是否该成为 素食者...


切记... 佛陀让您自行决定！请记住 – 佛教是个自由的宗教。虽然

您往往有更慈悲与明智的选择，您也大可自行抉择。

请仔细反省 – 竟然素食主义很明显地拥有这么多优点，为何您还在推迟持素？是因为贪爱肉食的味道吗？若您肯定不是因贪而不成为素食者，最好的证明方法就是成为素食者。这是您自身的修行挑战。在修行上，我们必须对自己绝对的诚实。切记 – 您成不成为素食者的决定将会影响您一生中无数众生的生命。



May All Beings **Be Well & Happy**



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但原一切众生**早日离苦得乐**