

6. The Meat-Free Diet Project

Today, everyone should give up meat eating, whether one deems himself a devotee or not. Why? Meat eating promotes animal qualities. It has been well said that the food one consumes determines one's thoughts. By eating the flesh of various animals, the qualities of these animals are imbibed. How sinful it is to feed on animals, which are sustained by the same five elements as human beings! Sathya Sai Baba, Discourse, 23 November 1994 In Sanathana Sarathi, Dec 1994

Swami says that eating meat promotes animal qualities, affects the environment adversely and brings on health problems. Truly, one of the most significant changes we can make in our lives is to follow Swami's directive, given above.

Effect of meat-eating on the environment

• **Meat eating and rainforest destruction.** The U.S. imported 136 million kg of beef from Central and South America in 1987. In Central America, creating grazing land for cattle was the leading cause of rainforest destruction. About 323,750 square km are destroyed annually.

... more carbon dioxide is being let into the atmosphere. Normally, plants and trees absorb and assimilate the carbon dioxide and supply oxygen by the natural process of photosynthesis. But because there is deforestation to an alarming extent, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has considerably increased. Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi 36, February 1993, p. 45.

• **Meat eating and water consumption.** The following table shows how much water it takes to produce various foods. Water is a precious commodity in many parts of the country.

0.5 kg Tomatoes	— 87 litres
0.5 kg Lettuce	— 87 litres
0.5 kg Apples	— 185 litres
0.5 kg Oranges	— 242 litres
0.5 kg Beef	— 19737 litres!

• **Meat eating and world food production.** 90% of the soy beans and 80% of the corn grown in the U.S. is eaten by livestock. Every 2.3 seconds, a child dies of starvation/malnutrition—from lack of food. How much more food the world would have if everyone were vegetarian and there was no need for so much livestock!

Effect of meat eating on health

Consider the following (from John Robbins's *Diet for a New America*) :

- 40% of all cancers in the U.S. are diet related.
- 68% of all diseases in the U.S. are diet related.
- Beef is the food that is most likely to cause cancer from herbicide residue.

... it is significant to note that those who live on vegetarian food are less prone to diseases, whereas non-vegetarians are subject to more diseases. Why? Because animal food is incompatible with the needs of the human body. Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Showers 1990, page 34

But for attaining the four aims of human life—right conduct, prosperity, fulfilment of desires and liberation (dharma, artha, kama, moksha)—the basic requirement is health of body and mind. Disease means feeling uneasy, disturbed, on account of the upsetting of one's temper or balance or equilibrium, which affects the physical as well as mental condition. This happens for two reasons: faulty food and faulty activities. Sathya Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Speaks VII, 22, page 24

What you can do

1. If the “cold turkey” approach (giving up meat abruptly) doesn't work for you, then cut back gradually. Get a vegetarian cookbook that discusses vegetarian diets and learn some new meatless recipes that involve rice and beans,

pasta, lentils, soy, etc. Look for helpful “transitional” cookbooks, which explain how to go from meat-eating to being vegetarian. The prepackaged veggie burgers and “not dogs” are getting better and better; try them.

2. Lobby your work/school cafeteria for more meatless dishes.

3. In Europe, MacDonalDs offers a veggie-burger—but not in the U.S. because of a perceived lack of interest. So, keep asking your fast-food chains to offer vegetarian alternatives.

4. Buy produce at your local farmer’s market. Generally, local produce is grown with fewer pesticides, which is better for the environment. It also supports your local economy.

5. Ask your local grocer to carry more organically grown produce.

*To earn the goodwill of the Master, there is one recipe: obey His orders without murmur. I am telling you My truth, not in self praise but so that you can understand Me. If I do not tell you about Myself, who can? Grace is showered on all who obey my instructions and follow orders. But the number of such is very small, even though my orders are light and easy. **Sathya Sai Baba**, *Sathya Sai Speaks II*, 33, page 184.*