

## EATING NON-VEGETARIAN FOOD

### Question:

Killing an animal is a ruthless act. Why then do Muslims consume non-vegetarian food?

### Answer:

Vegetarianism is now a movement the world over. Many even associate it with animal rights. Indeed, a large number of people consider the consumption of meat and other non-vegetarian products to be a violation of animal rights.

Islam enjoins mercy and compassion for all living creatures. At the same time Islam maintains that Allah has created the earth and its wondrous flora and fauna for the benefit of mankind. It is upto mankind to use every resource in this world judiciously, as a *niyamat* (Divine blessing) and *amanat* (trust) from Allah.

Let us look at various other aspects of this argument.

### 1. A Muslim can be a pure vegetarian

A Muslim can be a very good Muslim despite being a pure vegetarian. It is not compulsory for a Muslim to have non-vegetarian food.

### 2. Quran permits Muslims to have non-vegetarian food

The Quran, however permits a Muslim to have non-vegetarian food. The following Quranic verses are proof of this fact:

"O ye who believe! Fulfil (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals with the exceptions named." [Al-Quran 5:1]

"And cattle He has created for you (men): from them Ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits, And of their (meat) ye eat." [Al-Quran 16:5]

"And in cattle (too) ye have an instructive example: From within their bodies We produce (milk) for you to drink; there are, in them, (besides), numerous (other) benefits for you; and of their (meat) ye eat." [Al-Quran 23:21]

### 3. Meat is nutritious and rich in complete protein

Non-vegetarian food is a good source of excellent protein. It contains biologically complete protein i.e. all the 8 essential amino acid that are not synthesized by the

body and should be supplied in the diet. Meat also contains iron, vitamin B1 and niacin.

#### **4. Humans have Omnivorous set of teeth**

If you observe the teeth of herbivorous animals like the cow, goat and sheep, you will find something strikingly similar in all of them. All these animals have a set of flat teeth i.e. suited for herbivorous diet. If you observe the set of teeth of the carnivorous animals like the lion, tiger, or leopard, they all have a set of pointed teeth i.e. suited for a carnivorous diet. If you analyze the set of teeth of humans, you find that they have flat teeth as well as pointed teeth. Thus they have teeth suited for both herbivorous as well as carnivorous food i.e. they are omnivorous. One may ask, if Almighty God wanted humans to have only vegetables, why did He provide us also with pointed teeth? It is logical that He expected us to need and to have both vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian food.

#### **5. Human beings can digest both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food**

The digestive system of herbivorous animals can digest only vegetables. The digestive system of carnivorous animals can digest only meat. But the digestive system of humans can digest both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. If Almighty God wanted us to have only vegetables then why did He give us a digestive system that can digest both vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian food?

#### **6. Hindu scriptures give permission to have non-vegetarian food**

- a. There are many Hindus who are strictly vegetarian. They think it is against their religion to consume non-vegetarian food. But the true fact is that the Hindu scriptures permit a person to have meat. The scriptures mention Hindu sages and saints consuming non-vegetarian food.

- b. It is mentioned in Manu Smruti, the law book of Hindus, in chapter 5 verse 30

"The eater who eats the flesh of those to be eaten does nothing bad, even if he does it day after day, for God himself created some to be eaten and some to be eater."

- c. Again next verse of Manu Smruti, that is, chapter 5 verse 31 says

"Eating meat is right for the sacrifice, this is traditionally known as a rule of the gods."

- d. Further in Manu Smruti chapter 5 verse 39 and 40 says

"God himself created sacrificial animals for sacrifice, ....., therefore killing in a sacrifice is not killing."

- e. Mahabharata Anushashan Parva chapter 88 narrates the discussion between Dharmaraj Yudhishtira and Pitamah Bhishma about what food one should offer to *Pitris* (ancestors) during the *Shraddha* (ceremony of dead) to keep them satisfied. Paragraph reads as follows:

"Yudhishtira said, "O thou of great puissance, tell me what that object is which, if dedicated to the *Pitris* (dead ancestors), become inexhaustible! What *Havi*, again, (if offered) lasts for all time? What, indeed, is that which (if presented) becomes eternal?"

"Bhishma said, "Listen to me, O Yudhishtira, what those *Havis* are which persons conversant with the rituals of the *Shraddha* (the ceremony of dead) regard as suitable in view of *Shraddha* and what the fruits are that attach to each. With sesame seeds and rice and barely and *Masha* and water and roots and fruits, if given at *Shraddhas*, the *pitris*, O king, remain gratified for the period of a month. With fishes offered at *Shraddhas*, the *pitris* remain gratified for a period of two months. With the mutton they remain gratified for three months and with the hare for four months, with the flesh of the goat for five months, with the bacon (meat of pig) for six months, and with the flesh of birds for seven. With venison obtained from those deer that are called *Prishata*, they remain gratified for eight months, and with that obtained from the *Ruru* for nine months, and with the meat of *Gavaya* for ten months, With the meat of the buffalo their gratification lasts for eleven months. With beef presented at the *Shraddha*, their gratification, it is said, lasts for a full year. *Payasa* mixed with *ghee* is as much acceptable to the *pitris* as beef. With the meat of *Vadhrinasa* (a large bull) the gratification of *pitris* lasts for twelve years. The flesh of rhinoceros, offered to the *pitris* on anniversaries of the lunar days on which they died, becomes inexhaustible. The potherb called *Kalaska*, the petals of *kanchana* flower, and meat of (red) goat also, thus offered, prove inexhaustible.

So but natural if you want to keep your ancestors satisfied forever, you should serve them the meat of red goat.

## **7. Hinduism was influenced by other religions**

Though Hindu Scriptures permit its followers to have non-vegetarian food, many Hindus adopted the vegetarian system because they were influenced by other religions like Jainism.

## **8. Even plants have life**

Certain religions have adopted pure vegetarianism as a dietary law because they are totally against the killing of living creatures. If a person can survive without killing any living creature, I would be the first person to adopt such a way of life. In the past people thought plants were lifeless. Today it is a universal fact that even plants have life. Thus their logic of not killing living creatures is not fulfilled even by being a pure vegetarian.

## **9. Even plants can feel pain**

They further argue that plants cannot feel pain, therefore killing a plant is a lesser crime as compared to killing an animal. Today science tells us that even plants can feel pain. But the cry of the plant cannot be heard by the human being. This is due to the inability of the human ear to hear sounds that are not in the audible range i.e. 20 Hertz to 20,000 Hertz. Anything below and above this range cannot be heard by a human being. A dog can hear up to 40,000 Hertz. Thus there are silent dog whistles that have a frequency of more than 20,000 Hertz and less than 40,000 Hertz. These whistles are only heard by dogs and not by human beings. The dog recognizes the masters whistle and comes to the master. There was research done by a farmer in U.S.A. who invented an instrument which converted the cry of the plant so that it could be heard by human beings. He was able to realize immediately when the plant itself cried for water. Latest researches show that the plants can even feel happy and sad. It can also cry.

## **10. Killing a living creature with two senses less is not a lesser crime**

Once a vegetarian argued his case by saying that plants only have two or three senses while the animals have five senses.

Therefore killing a plant is a lesser crime than killing an animal. Suppose your brother is born deaf and dumb and has two senses less as compared to other human beings. He becomes mature and someone murders him. Would you ask the judge to give the murderer a lesser punishment because your brother has two senses less? In fact you would say that he has killed a *masoom*, an innocent person, and the judge should give the murderer a greater punishment.

In fact the Quran says:

"O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good" [Al-Quran 2:168]

### **11. Over population of cattle**

If every human being was a vegetarian, it would lead to overpopulation of cattle in the world, since their reproduction and multiplication is very swift. Allah (swt) in His Divine Wisdom knows how to maintain the balance of His creation appropriately. No wonder He has permitted us to have the meat of the cattle.

### **12. Cost of meat is reasonable since all are non-vegetarians**

I do not mind if some people are pure vegetarians. However they should not condemn non-vegetarians as ruthless. In fact if all Indians become non-vegetarians then the present non-vegetarians would be losers since the prices of meat would rise.