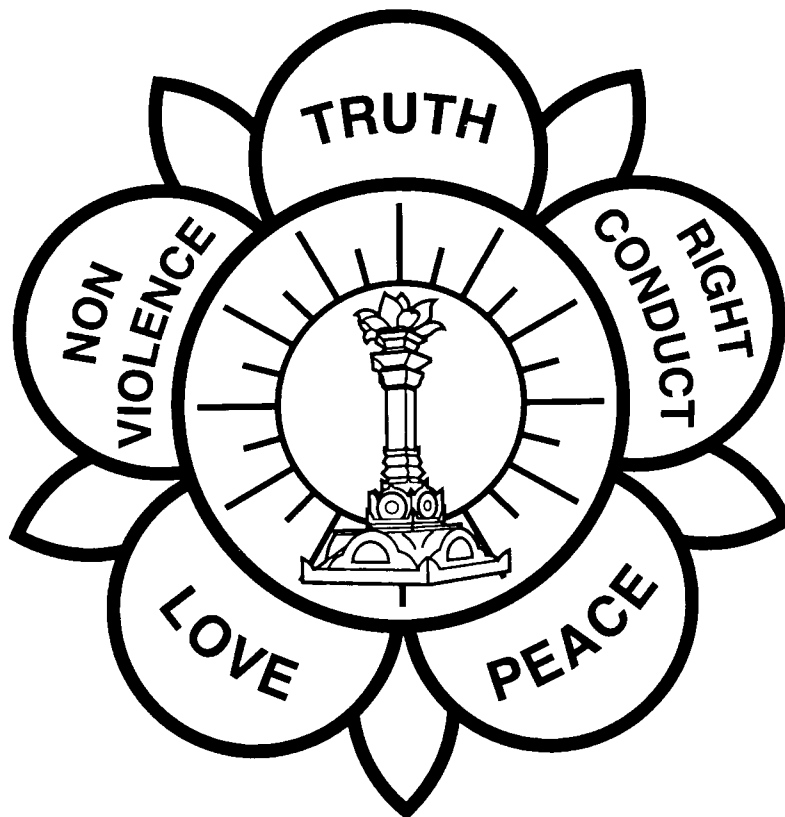


Sathya Sai Baba Centers of Northern California & Nevada
Special Study Circle Series:
On Vegetarianism and Being A Vegetarian



Sai Ram!

On Vegetarianism and Being A Vegetarian

Introduction:

Man and animal are two distinctly different species. It is true that man is also an animal, however, his power of discrimination is sufficiently unique to earn him a separate category. Man, the bible points out, was made in the image of God. Our beloved Swami says Man is the only creature capable of attaining liberation. Only man, He further adds is entitled to experiencing bliss or Ananda. To sum it all, Bhagawan Baba, furthers says, *“Man is no different from God.”* Given this level of understanding shouldn't we expect ourselves to behave differently from an animal? Shouldn't Man be expected to carry forth a leadership role on this Earth?

Buddhist and Buddhism are two simple words and all of us understand quite readily that a Buddhist is but a part of 'Buddhism'. At first glance, Buddhist, and Buddhism; Moslem and Islam; vegetarian and vegetarianism are all simple and similar pairs of words. Yet we hopefully see the difference in dimension in the word pairs. The noun form – Buddhism, and Islam, (vegetarianism included) carries significant depth and dimension. While a Buddhist supposedly practices Buddhism, it is not clear or obvious where he may be aligned (or not) with his religion. Alignment implication in such an instance would cover in thought, word and action isn't it? What is Buddhism in thought, word or action? Vegetarianism, in like manner does it have

a counter in thought, word or action? Is vegetarianism to be looked upon as a religion? What are the pillars or foundations of vegetarianism? (Religions of the world in contrast share a common foundation.)

The basic building block of Hinduism is Sanathana Dharma. From Swami's discourses it is also apparent that Sanathana Dharma is the foundation of all practiced religions today. More clearly Jainism, Buddhism, etc. are off shoots of Hinduism. Vegetarianism is not to be mistaken as a religion. What is a religion?

A vegetarian can be thought of as one that practices vegetarianism. Who is a vegetarian? Is there such a description as vegetarian thought, or vegetarian word or vegetarian action? When Swami encourages Vegetarianism, what does He mean? Why is vegetarianism so important for our living God to encourage this discussion? This paper describes and discusses several of the questions and also attempts to share religious based arguments in favor of being a vegetarian.

Why Vegetarian?

Why be a vegetarian? All religions speak of mercy, love and compassion as important values to be practiced. And, if Man was made in the image of God, (Bible) or as Swami says we are GOD, where

is the mercy or compassion in the killing of an animal?

There is strong medical evidence in support of a vegetarian diet. And our beloved Swami also prescribes a vegetarian diet for all of us. But there is more to this than just that – or is there? Is a vegetarian diet just the plain and simple “end all”? That is, be a vegetarian and relax there is nothing more left for one to do. A vegetarian is guaranteed “moksha” - is this sensible?

“*Hurry, Worry, Curry*”(International Cardiac Specialty Symposium, Feb., 1993.), Swami says is the primary reason for cardiovascular problems. Is there a message on vegetarianism embedded in this simple statement from Swami? Hurry is action. Worry is anxiety or ‘thought’. ‘Curry’, well is the material that results or adds to our plight and is what we ask for and consume. On a simpler note, as it is our beloved Swami’s words we can surmise we need to be careful of what type of vegetarian food we ask for and consume, and our behavior is perhaps just as important!

A Buddhist practices Buddhism and conceivably attains Nirvana. What is to be expected by a practicing vegetarian? Vegetarianism is certainly not a religion; it works more on a direct cause and effect relationship. Ask a practicing fellow vegetarian who transitioned from a carnivore on improvements or changes seen in oneself.

Vegetarianism works on the individual in measurable ways and it helps the spiritual aspirant to pursue his real goal. What is Man’s real goal? (What does Swami say Man is here to do?) Vegetarianism works on all without credence to what religion is being practiced. Swami has clearly pointed out that He is here only to help us in being a better Christian, Hindu, or whatever. For this reason it would be appropriate to review one’s own scripture to capture what is really written and how some of our spiritual Gurus may have interpreted the written message.

Fortunately, for all of us members of the Sai family, we have our own *Sadguru* to help guide and educate us with better understanding. While vegetarianism works as evidenced through real physical measurements the mechanics of the

process is rather complex and is being unraveled and understood only now by scientists. Can a scientist provide a metric or express the quantity of happiness? Faith, once again dear members encourages us to take Swami’s words and deploy into action.

A rapid review of ‘why vegetarianism’ is in order through some of the worlds religions:

- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Hinduism

Christianity:

Jesus’ message is one of love and compassion. But there is nothing compassionate about the killing of an animal however ‘humanely’ done for the sake of eating meat.

Some limited quotes taken from the bible that support a vegetarian diet:

- "Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.'" Genesis 1:29
- Do not eat the meat of strangled animals. Acts 15
- The private vow Paul took, many Biblical scholars believe, is the Nazarite vow, which included besides hair cutting, abstention from animal flesh. This Nazarite diet is described in Numbers. This is the vow that Samson with his great strength took. Corinthians I: 8,12-13 (Paul) If meat makes my brother stumble I shall never again eat meat.
- Daniel I: Daniel was put in prison by Nebuchadnezzar. He ate only pulses (beans) for 10 days while others ate flesh. Nebuchadnezzar noticed that he fared better than the others.
- The Biblical command "Thou Shalt Not Kill" is reason enough to change diet. (The interpretation is not conditional, "applicable to humans only".)
- In Genesis, the dominion humankind was given over animals. This is not a justification to eat them... for we are also given dominion over our biological children. The Greek word

from which dominion was translated is "kratos" as in the Greek word democracy, the rule of the people. To rule does not mean to kill.

Judaism:

Jews worship God who is referred to as 'Harachamon' (the compassionate One), a creator whose compassion is over all His creatures. This is recited 3 times daily at synagogue services Jews are to be "rachmanim b'nei rachmanim" (compassionate children of compassionate ancestors). A distinguishing mark by which a Jew may be identified is one of compassion. Is compassion to be found anywhere in the killing of an animal? Proverb 12:10 states, "The righteous person regards the life of his or her animal." In Judaism, one who is unnecessarily cruel to animals cannot be regarded as a righteous individual. The Holy book refers to several great Jewish heroes as those that showed kindness to animals, and praises them. Isaac's wife Rebecca was judged suitable because she was very kind in providing water to the camels of Eliezer, Abraham's servant. Torah laws too address compassion to animals. A farmer should not plow with an ox and an ass together, as the weaker animal would suffer pain in trying to keep up with the stronger. Animals, as well as people, are to be allowed rest on the Sabbath day; its importance is indicated by inclusion in the Ten Commandments and its recitation as part of kiddush (sanctification ceremony) on Sabbath mornings.

In view of such powerful teachings it is a spiritual imperative to be a vegetarian!

Islam:

Islam means peace. Islam teaches mercy and compassion. The Holy Quran speaks clearly about the special lives of animals:

"Seest thou not that it is Allah whose praise all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise, and Allah knows well all that they do. (Sura 22:41)

There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have We omitted

from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end. (Sura 6:38)

The Quran thus speaks of animals as communities and nations unto their own. The animals have their journey, and there is thus no mercy or compassion in the killing of animal for the sake of its meat.

Hinduism:

Briefly the reasons not to eat meat or not to be a 'mansahari' are found around four areas.

1. Dharmic or spiritual laws: Ahimsa, the law of non-violence calls for one's obligation to God and God's creation as defined by Vedic scripture.
2. The Karmic consequence. By involving oneself in the cycle of inflicting injury, pain and death even if indirect via the consumption of meat.
3. Spiritual consequence. By ingesting the grosser chemistries of animal food one introduces into the body and mind, anger, jealousy etc., locked in with the butchered animal.
4. Ecological reasons. The universe was made with the 5 elements, and willful destruction for the sake of eating meat can affect an imbalance in the elements resulting in destruction of the ecology.

Role of Religion and Culture:

Religion and Culture are distinctively different but often confused by many to mean the same. The practice of religion is based entirely on scripture, whereas culture takes on a more regional picture and is associated with practice. Religion never degrades, whereas culture goes through transitions. Could culture have had its roots in "kala' and 'aachar'?

What is consumed by a bunch of people - is that religious or cultural?

"The proper care of children is the foundation of culture", "a stitch in time saves nine", "Health is wealth", "You are what you eat" are proverbial statements. Health and Happiness go together. The body is a temple, says Sai Baba, so how do we maintain a perfect physical and mental health?

The common state of health especially of young people gives rise to great anxiety. Diseases break out at an increasingly younger age. The heart and vascular diseases and cancer, is on the increase. At the recent (July, 2001) First International Conference on Educare Swami declared once again the need for observance of the laws of nature, which were put into effect by God. Maintaining balance of the five elements and five senses, he indicated was ahimsa or non-violence. Non-violence is nothing but not in violation of the laws of nature. Good eating habits – does this have anything to do with our subject? And how?

Most diseases are toxic caused by an incorrect way of living, eating and food selection. Interestingly enough the nurturing process (during plant growth) as well as how the food is processed, including the state of mind of the cook bear an important relationship on how the food could impact the consumer. For the modern book-educated traditional scientist this is rather hard to follow. Vegetarian in simplicity, (Vegan or otherwise) is associated with what is eaten, the bigger picture of vegetarianism is however associated with the processing and the rest!

Today man has no notion of ingesting the right food for his health and development of his spiritual faculties for gaining his ultimate goal i.e., becoming conscious of his higher self.

On a simpler note all of us readily recognize and accept the sugar level in ones diet particularly the diabetic. Here the cure is right type of food in conjunction with the right level of exercise. Bhagavan states the importance of not just a vegetarian diet but wholesome *satvic* food. With *satvic* food one can resist more diseases and attain a longer life. With more energy he is able to focus longer on the important spiritual exercise.

How many types of food are there? What is the significance of the various food groups? And what is *satvic* food? The oldest living sacrament and foundation of all spirituality is the Veda. The Vedas have extolled the value of a good diet. The west, has only recently accepted that it is possible to live (and function better) on a purely vegetarian diet. The Vedas provide a clear prescription to be

inculcated. The acceptance of such diet in practice reflects a change today in the western culture.

From the Bhagavad-Gita

In the Bhagavad-Gita we find solutions by which one can overcome the handicap of past karmas and make real spiritual progress. Swami covers in explicit detail in *Geetha Vahini, in pages 238-246*. “Krishna! You say that the daivic (Divine) and asuric (demonic) natures of man are the consequences of acts and feelings impressed upon the individual births. Since it is impossible to escape from such impressions, what is the fate of those who are condemned to carry out this burden with them? Are there any means by which this can be avoided? Or can their consequences be mitigated? If such exist, please tell me about them so that I may save myself thereby,” enquired Arjuna in order to draw out from the Lord.

“Krishna gave an immediate answer. ‘There is no paucity of means. Listen. There are three types of *gunas: satvic, rajasic and tamasic*. They are based on the *antahkarana*, the inner consciousness. That too, is dependant on the intake of food. You are what you feed on: your activities shape your nature. So, at least in this birth by regulating *ahara* and *vihara* (food and activity), man can overcome the asuric (demonic) tendencies that tend to prevail upon him. He can promote *satvic* tendencies through planned self-effort’. The Lord to the eager inquirer, Arjuna, tendered this advice lovingly.

“Arjuna was thrilled with joy when he heard that man has the means of saving himself; he longed to inform himself further. Krishna showered grace through His enchanting smile and condescended to reply. ‘Arjuna! Food is the chief formative force. The soiled mind dulls the brilliance of moral excellence; how can a muddy lake reflect clearly? The Divine cannot be reflected in the wicked or vicious mind. Food makes man strong in body; the body is intimately connected with the mind. Strength of mind depends on the strength of body too. Moral conduct, good habits, spiritual efforts, all depend upon the quality of the food; diseases, mental weakness, spiritual slackness, all are produced by faulty food.’ ‘Krishna!’ Asked Arjuna, ‘pray tell me the constituents of *satvic, rajasic and tamasic* foods.’

“Arjuna! For food to be *satvic* it should be capable of strengthening the mind as well as the body. It should not be too salty, too bitter, too sweet, or too sour. It should not be taken while steaming hot. Food, which fans the flames of thirst, should be avoided. The general principle is that there should be a limit, a restraint. Food cooked in water should not be used the next day; it becomes harmful. Even if fried the articles should be consumed before they develop unpleasant odors. *Rajasica* food is the opposite of *satvic*. It is too salty, too sweet, too hot, too sour, and too odorous. Such food excites and intoxicates.’

“Lord, excuse me if I appear impertinent; I ask with a desire to know, that is all. By merely a change in food habits, can character be changed from one *guna* to another? Or, has something more to be done to supplement the purification process? Tell me, if there is anything more.’

“My dear brother-in-law! If transformation of character were so easy, the wickedness of and vice of the *danava* nature, could have been wiped off the surface of the earth in a trice. Of course there are some more things to be done. Listen. There are three kinds of purities to be observed: purity of provision, purity of the vessel in which the food is prepared, and purity of the persons serving the prepared food.’

“It is not enough if the provisions are pure and of good quality. They should have been procured by fair means; no unfair, unjust, untrue earnings should be used for one’s maintenance. These are fouled at the very source. The source as well as the course and the goal must be equally pure. The vessel must be clean, free from tarnish. The person who serves must not only be clean in dress, but also clean in habits, character and conduct. He should be free from hate, anger, worry, and indifferent while serving the dishes; he should be cheerful and fresh. And he must be humble and full of love. While attending upon those who are eating, he should not allow his mind to dwell on wicked or vicious ideas. Mere physical cleanliness, or charm, is no compensation for evil thoughts and habits. The *sadhaka* who has to secure concentration has to be careful about these restrictions. Otherwise, during

dhyanam the subtle influences of the wicked thoughts of the cook and servers will haunt the *sadhaka*. Care should be taken to have only virtuous individuals around. Outer charm, professional excellence, reduced wages; these should not be allowed to prejudice you in favor of harmful cooks and attendants. Examine carefully their habits and character.

“The food you eat is an important constituent of the physical and mental stuff with which you have to struggle in the spiritual field. Purity of mind can be and has to be supplemented by bodily purity, as well as purity in its important function, speech. That is the real *tapas*: physical, mental and vocal.

“The mind should be free from anxiety and worry, hate and fear, greed and pride. It should be saturated with love for all beings. It has to dwell in God. It has to be restrained from pursuing objective pleasures.

“ ‘Now, for the physical *tapas*. Use the body and its strength and capabilities for the service of others, for the worship of the Lord, for the singing of His glory, for visiting places hallowed by His name, for regulated exercises in breath control, for holding the senses away from deleterious paths, and for treading the path of God. The service of the sick and distressed, the observance of moral codes and such beneficial acts must make it sacrosanct.

“ ‘Vocal, *tapas*, too has to be engaged in. Avoid talking too much; desist from false statements; do not take delight in backbiting and in scandal mongering; never speak harshly; speak softly and sweetly; speak with the memory of *Madhava* ever in the background of the mind. Of these three, physical *tapas*, mental *tapas* and vocal *tapas*, even if one is absent the *Atmic* effulgence (*Atma Jyoti*) cannot radiate light.’”

According to Bhagavan good living is to be associated with fresh, raw uncooked, unradiated fruits, nuts, coconuts, vegetables, roots, tubers and soaked or just germinating pulses. Good living is also practicing a control over our senses – desires – and one needs to eat in moderation. Foods grown without the aid of artificial promoters – fertilizers,

inhibitors, regulators or other chemicals are the best kind of satvic foods.

Vegetables may be cooked partially, provided they are consumed immediately thereafter. Small quantities of uncooked biological germ-free milk, and its products at low temperatures, such as yogurt, buttermilk, and butter are also *satvic*. Buttermilk is better than milk.

Small quantities of starch containing food stuff such as '*ragi*' and rice for example in the form of liquid gruel, or rice soaked in curds are also right. The rice may be cooked but it is important to consume these as immediately as possible. For hygienic reasons often only cooked food may be eaten. A meal may be considered *satvic* only when one eats in limited quantities and with right mental attitude.

The toxins that are in the body need to be gotten rid off. The process of switching to *satvic* foods also needs to be done gradually to assist with ones digestive system. (Recall the example given by Swami on how a drug addict ought to begin the quitting process.)

A *satvic* diet is not simply a vegetarian diet imbibed through the mouth. *Satvic* food needs to be ingested by way of all senses, especially the tongue. Eating with *satvic* feelings and thought, chewing well, eating slowly, moderately, and in silence with like-minded people in a clean surrounding. Eating once or twice a day and fasting once a week, and maintaining a *satvic* habit in life are important. Regulated sleeping habits, disciplined spending of spare time, good music, sufficient exercise, good exposure to sunlight, fresh air, pure water and wholesome living environment constitute a *satvic* diet.

"The body is a chariot wherein God is installed; it is being taken along in procession. Let us consider some points on which we have to be vigilant in order to avoid breakdowns on the road. Fast one day in the week. This is good for the body as well as for the country. Do not eat a dozen plantains, half a dozen *puris* and drink a quart of milk and call it a fast! Take only water, so that all the dirt is washed away. Do not crave for fruit juice or other liquids. Even physical machinery is given rest; they

cannot run forever, continuously. What then shall we say of this delicately organized human body! It is not a sign of culture to overvalue the body by overindulging in its whims. It is a sign of barbarism. (*Sathya Sai Baba, Prasanthi Nilayam, October 12, 1969*)

The Divine in the form of three qualities – *satvic, rajas and tamas*, permeates the universe. Man is subject to the universal laws of nature. The human mind is in dynamic equilibrium by the three *gunas*, it is important therefore to recognize this balance of power. *Tamas* gives rise to blankness in the mind, the *rajoguna* provokes our monkey-mind, the *satvic* gives rise to one-pointed contemplation. Only he who is saturated in *satvaguna* can witness the image of the *atma* within.

The first step for man to take is put an end to *tamas* that fosters dullness, leading man into wrong path. To remove *rajas* and promote the *satvic*, healthy eating habits and good company are essential.

Swami illustrates the needs of other senses to work simultaneously in *satvic* ways by narrating the events that took place on the battlefield from the Bhagavad Gita. "Arjuna, who was listening with head bent and with great concentration to information being shared by Lord Krishna, asked Him thus, "What exactly is true listening and true seeing? Please tell me this in some detail. I can then follow the instruction.' He asked in such a pleading tone that the Lord smiled kindly at him and said 'Satvic listening is seeing worshippers of the Lord, seeing portraits of saints and sages, attending festivals in temples etc.

Rajasic seeing is seeing scenes of luxury, pictures of sensuous joy, of pompous pageantry, of the exhibition of power and status and display of egoistic authority. Taking delight in the description of sensuous scenes and incidents, in the demonstration of power and authority, in the assertion of might and prowess, these are to be classified as *rajasic* listening. Others take delight in listening to gruesome adventures, stories of wicked ogres and vicious deeds. Such are *tamasic* individuals. They admire cruelty and horrifying scenes and they take pleasures in keeping such pictures before them. They worship demonic,

bloodthirsty gods, and they revel in the lore of ghosts and evil forces.'

"Dear Readers! This is the heart of the Bhagavad-Gita. The body and life in it are based on food and sustained on food, *anna*. So, food decides the level of attainment, high or low. Nowadays, emphasis is not being laid on discipline and regulated *nishta* (behavior), but only to the *nashtha* (food). However great and learned a person may be, however much he pays attention to the teachings of the Vedanta and takes care to spread them, if he neglects the strict code laid down for the food, that is the very basis of the body and its functions, he cannot succeed.

The *padartha sudhi* (purity of provisions), *paka sudhi* (of the cook), *patra sudhi* (of the container) and of what has been prepared, these are not attended to. They feel content when their stomachs are filled and hunger is appeased. The first temple they visit are the restaurants, when dawn breaks, where idli and sambhar are offered to the atmarama. How can such gourmands have concentration? Who pays attention to details of *padartha sudhi*, etc in restaurants? Without doing this, people complain aloud that they do not have success in concentration, and suffer great confusion!

Ahara and vihara (food and recreation) should both be very carefully regulated according to the Gita, but little heed is paid to its teachings, nor is it considered essential. There are people who swear by the Gita, who expound it for hours together and preach it, but only a few put the teachings to practice. The verses fill their heads but they are powerless to meet the one hundred twelve reverses of life with philosophical cheer. *Ananda and shanti* can be secured only when food and recreation can be cleansed and purified.

"Darkness and light cannot co-exist, *kama* and Rama cannot be in the same place together, they are like fire and water. How can one escape an evil reaction if the *Gita* is held in one hand and hot tea or coffee or a lighted cigarette or *beedi* or a pinch of snuff is held in the other? Some even justify their unregulated lives by declaring that whatever is eaten, however eaten, wherever eaten the stuff is

rendered pure and acceptable on account of the raging fire of *gnana* which they have in them!

"How can a bitter fruit be transformed into a **sweet one even if it is dipped** in a series of holy rivers? How can people who only speak on the Gita be saturated with the sweetness of its message? What really happens is that those who listen to such hypocrisies lose even the little faith they have in our Scriptures and become hardened disbelievers.

"How can a person who feels helpless to restrict and regulate his food habits be trusted to restrict and regulate his senses? If he cannot limit and control his feeling, how can he limit and control the senses? Can the nose that falls down during a cough survive a sneeze? How can one who is too weak to climb stairs, climb to heaven's heights? When a man is a helpless victim of coffee or cigarettes or snuff, how can he muster strength and courage to overcome the more powerful foes: anger, lust and greed? When he cannot renounce dirt, how can he renounce desire? Become master of the tongue and then you can master sex. They are firmly interconnected, as close as the eyes and the feet."

(*Sathya Sai Baba, in Geetha Vahini, pp. 238 – 246*)

Rajasic food generates virulent thoughts. By consuming non-vegetarian food we develop brutal mentalities. Those who are practicing meditation must abstain from meat. We should also remember constantly that ahimsa is the supreme dharma. (*Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1979 (93-96)*).

Animals did not come for the purpose of supplying food to human beings; they came to work out their own life in the world. "Dirty thoughts come with fish." (*J. S. Hislop, Conversations with Sri Sathya Sai Baba, pg 26-27.*) "Fish are tamasic items of food." (*Sathya Sai Baba, in Ramakatha Rasavahini, 385.*)

SATVAGUNA	RAJOGUNA	TAMOGUNA
White	Red	Black
truth, love, righteousness, equanimity, non-violence, wisdom, beauty, goodness, brotherliness, bliss, clarity, tolerance, purity, patience, self-confidence, harmony, unity, faith, devotion, holiness	activity, aggression, production of illusions, willfulness, emotionality, ambition, power, lust, anger, jealousy, pride, malice, hatred, greed, conceit, trickery, likes and dislikes, unrest, haste, adventure, quick temper	passivity depression, ignorance, fear, attachment, ego, possessiveness, lack of vision, lowering of the intellect, argumentativeness stupidity, dullness, sloth, indolence, sleepiness, submission, cruelty, obstinacy
poison in the early stages and nectar while coming to fruition	in the beginning nectarine, later sliding into misery	unconcerned with the problem of the world, darkness, heedlessness
unselfish, unconditional, divine love (prema)	love for superiors, people in power and rich people	based on physical relations, attachment to one's own kith and kin or possessions, confined to a small circle
4 am - 8 am and 4 pm - 8 pm	8 am - 4 pm	8 pm - 4 am

Satvic Food

Satvic Food is what is offered to God, that which puts one onto the path of *dharma*.

Pure, Natural, Raw Uncooked Food

Raw biological fruit
Raw biological nuts (soaked in water)
Coconut kernel and fresh coconut milk
Raw biological sesame seeds
Fresh biological roots and tubers
Fresh uncooked biological vegetables (if necessary half cooked)
Raw biological ground kernels (soaked in water)
Raw biological pulses, such as soya beans
Mung beans and lentils (soaked in water)
Sprouting pulses
A little rice soaked in water
Ragi gruel
Foods with natural oil content
A little honey (not heated)
Jaggery (Raw sugar)

A little raw milk (from cattle tended with love and wisdom)
A little buttermilk
A little yogurt
A little curds
A little butter

Buttermilk is better than milk

Pure water

Pure air

Not too much
Not too warm
Not too salty
Not too sweet
Not too sour
Not too bitter
Not too spicy

Eat moderately
Eat in Silence
Eat at regular intervals
Eat slowly
Eat in a clean room

Eat in good company
Eat in the right attitude of mind

One meal per day
Fast one day per week
Do not drink during meals
Drink a lot of pure water between meals

Pure sights, sounds, smells, and touches
Pure environment

Sufficient exercise (walking, cycling)
Sufficient rest and sleep
Sufficient Sunlight

Swami speaks of the importance of maintaining the balance of five senses and five elements only then He says can the 5 values be upheld. *Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1973 (131-138)*. How does this work or function with vegetarianism?

Man is endowed with the five sensory organs connected to the five faculties of *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha* (sound, touch, sight, taste and smell). The preservation and the development of these sensory faculties depend on the *satvic* food taken through the mouth. The type of *satvic* food that we take is determined by the fancies of individual taste. We feel satisfied when we take the right type of food through our mouths. But we forget that we absorb an incorporeal type of food through the other sensory organs also. The wholesome effect of *satvic* food will be nullified if we listen to bad talk, indulge in bad talk, look at bad things, come into physical contact with bad things, and smell bad things. Mind and body are tainted, contaminated and polluted by evil. Thus, *satvic* food alone is not enough for the spiritual regeneration of man. We should not speak of evil. We must avoid condemning others and praising ourselves. Self-adulation and self-glorification retard spiritual development. We must feed our sensory organs with wholesome food, wholesome sounds and wholesome sights. The tongue is meant to sing the glory of God. The ears are meant for feasting on the glorious manifestations of the Divine.

"Each organ of perception must be provided with its proper spiritual sustenance. Thus, *satvic* food does not mean the moderate consumption of milk, curds, *ghee* and fruits alone, but the enjoyment provided by noble thoughts, sacred sounds, holy sights, and spiritual discussions as well. We must develop *satvic* sight and spiritual vision. We must have *darshan* of the beauty of nature and the Divinity of idols in temples. We should avoid all distracting sights and sounds. We should not look at anyone with an evil eye. Evil thoughts develop an evil eye. The eyes are the windows of the heart. *Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1979, (91-98)*

Mental health is preserved and promoted by attention to three *gunas*. Physical health is regulated by three humors: *vata* (life-force i.e.,

wind), *pitta* (bile or fire) and *kapha* (phlegm or water). The practice of spiritual discipline – *namasmarrana* and meditation provides all that is necessary for good mental development.

The knowledge or Veda to confer life (*ayu*) is *ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* can prolong life and protect one from hazard. *Ayurveda* affirms purity of mind as essential to good health. Without purity of mind, we cannot achieve even a small thing. By the unclean food that we take in, we expose our body to unnecessary ills (*Summer Showers in Brindavan 1978, (189-193)*). In nature birds and animals set their health compass via ingestion of the right kind of food. The right process appears to be one of 'prevention is better than cure'.

Why diseases happen:

The breakdown of discipline – faulty foods and faulty activities, is primary cause of disease. Bad thoughts, bad habits, worry, jealousy, despair, all cause a disturbance to the natural clock within and aggravate further. Fear, anger, affection are all linked with attachment. The body is easily damaged by the imbalance intake of *tamasic* or *rajasic* foods (elemental balance). Cancer, heart disease etc are on the increase due to deleterious habits such as smoking, drinking, subjecting oneself to unnecessary tension etc. Heart damage is more prevalent amongst non-vegetarians. "Main cause of cancer is commercial sugar." (*Sathya Sai Baba, at Prasanthi Nilayam Discourse, August 10, 1983.*)

"The food types that you **eat should be nourishing and** nutritious. What people are eating **today has absolutely no innate** power to sustain them. For the upkeep of the body **you need vitamins** and proteins. When you look at the protein content in the food that which is not cooked contains the largest amount. Take, for instance, pulses like mung *dhal* and soya bean. Here the protein content is quite a lot. The way of eating them is to soak them in water and then, when they are chewable, eat them.

"What do we do? Get rid of all the protein! Boil them! Subject them to various types of transformation by adding oil and various other ingredients. In the process, we deprive them of their basic content. You are now feeding the plants, the

vegetables with artificial manure, and they really do not have the innate strength, which they ought to have. The present fertilizers are full of defects. As a result, you find an increase in the number of cancer cases and heart complaints." *Sathya Sai Baba, Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam, August 10, 1983.*

Food and Character:

Ultimately the food that one eats dictates what you are. Lasting friendship can only exist if both people eat *satvic* food. Hence to realize the higher self or *atma* the *atma* within, it is imperative that we adopt a *satvic* lifestyle. It is the food that one consumes that determines the state of ones mind. Swami says, "Eating an animal is to imbibe animal qualities." You can recite all the Vedas, study the Vedanta and exercise every spiritual practice but keep in mind that all this has to go along with purifying of ones heart and conscience and that is where food is of overwhelming importance.

The place where the food is cooked, the state-of-mind of the person that is cooking, and company where the food is imbibed all have subtle influences on the nature and emotions of the one who eats the food.

The gross part of the food is excreted out as feces. The subtle part of the food takes the form of blood. The part between subtle and gross takes the form of muscle in our bodies. The part that one refers to as essence takes the form of mind. (*Sanathana Sarathi, December '92 (308).*)

In like manner the water we drink should be pure. If the water is pure it is excreted out as urine, and the subtle part forms *prana* (life, life-breath, life force, essence of life), Water thus takes the form of life. Food takes the form of mind. Now we begin to understand the close linkage of mind and food we consume or drink.

Food and Character:

"The Mohammedans call God Allah, The Christians call Him Father, Son and Holy Spirit, And the Hindus call Him Shiva, but there is only one God. The Almighty is also called Paramatma (Universal Soul). The peoples' inner yearnings express themselves in different names. The names may be different, but there is only one Almighty God. He is

the one who disposes of the destiny of all people, Regardless of the name that they choose to give Him. He is the giver of all life, prosperity, health, and experiences; In short, He is the giver of all. God is One believe in this.

"Humanity is an inseparable Oneness. Still we see that men have differences of opinion, there are constant conflicts between different religions, there are tensions between the castes, and that one country is the enemy of another. What is the cause of all these conflicts? This question can be asked nowadays as this question is very important, and has great relevance.

"You will discover that every object around you is composed of *sat* (being), *chit* (consciousness) *ananda* (bliss), *rupa* (form) and *nama* (name). The last two of these are form and name; these two are given to nature. All in nature changes constantly and only has a temporary form and name. There is no permanence in nature. Nothing in nature has a fixed name or form. *Sat, chit* and *ananda* are Divine attributes, Divine characteristics. In the language of the *Vedanta*, these three Divine attributes are called *asthi, bhuti* and *priya*. These three Divine attributes are unchangeable and permanent. The last of the three is bliss, *ananda*.

"The word *ananda* has a great meaning for man. The acquisition of this bliss is the goal and fulfillment of the life of man. There are three types of bliss: the first is the type that is derived from knowledge and teachings (*vidyananda*). *Vidyananda* supports life. The second type of bliss concerns bodily existence with nature in this world (*vishayananda*). Man hastily tends to look for material and bodily pleasures, whereas they are not enthusiastic in their search for *vidyananda* and neglect this bliss. *Vidyananda* and *vishayananda* are not permanent. Both their forms of bliss are supported on the foundation of *Brahmananda* (Divine bliss).

"We speak of warm water, but warmth is not a quality of the water; it is fire that gives the water warmth. Just like heat and water, the first two forms of bliss are not associated with *Brahmananda*; *Brahmananda* is closely linked to God (*Brahman*).

Another example, *laddus* are made from flour of lentils. This flour is not sweet. By mixing sugar with the flour, it becomes sweet and we are left with *laddus*. People think that bliss is a result of their own efforts. This is not true, because bliss is not attached to the bodily existence. It is the Divine bliss that man experiences through his body that makes him happy. In all times of peace and happiness, it is this *Brahmananda* that you are experiencing. The main cause of your happiness is the bliss of God, it is His will. Happiness and peace are manifestations of God.

"In the same way, we remain striving for the joy of *vidyananda* and *vishayananda* as long as we do not possess divine bliss. **We attach much importance to these two forms of bliss.** Still, they are only worldly capacities. All feelings concerning material things are temporary. These feelings pass quickly, but we should not ignore them. We have come to this world, so we should at least respect these two forms of bliss, until we come to possess Divine bliss. We pay attention to the starlight and moonlight until the sun rises. Afterwards, we pay them no further attention. *Brahmananda* is the basis of *vidyananda* and *vishwananda*.

"What do we have to do to obtain Divine bliss? Which *sadhana* (spiritual practice) should we engage in? What is the reason for our taking all the conflicts around us to be true? All people are equally subjected to life, birth and death and belong to the same genus, isn't that so? What is the cause of all the conflicts and differences? People have always wanted to know the answer to this question. Why are there demons on the one hand, and immortals on the other? There are certainly not many who inquire along these lines. Once we know the cause we shall probably become successful in our efforts.

"The cause of all these conflicts and differences is *aharam* (food). The food that you eat causes all these differences, as it is the food that you eat that determines what you are ultimately.

"There are three qualities in the food that you eat; *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Some people eat only *satvic* food, others just *rajasic* food, while others eat *tamasic* food. Some eat a combination of *satvic* and

rajasic food, while others eat a combination of all three types. We can detect these food-combinations in man's behavior. So we can speak of *satvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* behavior, and what the people eventually become explains all the differences of opinion and conflicts. Because everyone does not eat the same food, they do not all reach the same level of understanding. The food that people eat results in differences of opinion. To compare the example of two people's behavior we can use two brothers, sons of the same mother. Even in this case, the difference in their behavior is determined by the different food they eat.

"*Ravana* and *Vibhishana* had the same mother, but *Ravana* was not given to the same thoughts and holiness that *Vibhishana* was given to. The reason for this was the fundamental difference in the food they ate. Two people can only have a good understanding with each other if they eat the same types of food as their fundament.

"There can never be good contact between two people if one eats only *satvic* food and the other only *rajasic* food. Temporarily, they may be able to hang on to a superficial relationship but, eventually, they will separate. A lasting friendship can only exist when both people eat only *satvic* food. Water can be mixed with water, but not with oil. The mutual relationships between *satva*, *tamas* and *rajas* can be compared to the relationship between water and oil.

"If you wish to have a lasting relationship and friendship with God, your habits and thoughts must be *satvic* and fundamentally *Divine* in nature. God is by nature pure *satva*. If you want to have friendship with God, you must exert yourself to strengthen the *satvic* qualities in yourself, and your behavior ought to reflect the *satvic* qualities, for God is by nature *satvic*. It is the food that determines the condition and form of the mind. And it is the mind that has to seek refuge in God.

"There are people who experience God's closeness for some time, but it is possible that these feelings of closeness do not last for a long time. The connection with God can only last as long as there are *satvic* feelings. If the *rajasic* nature in man tends to take over the guidance of the *satvic* nature, he

will slowly lose his relationship with God. If his holiness and purity decrease he will certainly become separated from God. Such people remain looking for the causes of this separation. The person himself is responsible for the breaking of the relationship with God; God cannot be blamed for it. To make the relationship with God lasting and permanent, you must develop the *satvic* qualities in yourself.

"People of all times and of all quarters should strive to eat *satvic* food; only then will they be able to obtain the link of brotherhood with God. What exactly do we mean by *satvic* food? Flour, milk, fruit and beans are *satvic* food. Food that makes men happy, that is attractive, juicy, oily, nice, tasty and delicious can often be labeled as *satvic* food. This food has a subtle element that we call *satvic* as it is concerned with vital strength. *Satvic* food can be associated with oil, but not with fat!

Cause of Ill Health:

Out of the 8.4×10^6 species living on earth, 8,399,999 species such as birds and other animals live directly off what is provided by God and hence generally do not suffer from diseases. When there is an outbreak what really has happened? *Sathya Sai Baba, Prasanthi Nilayam, August 10, 1983.*

Birds and beasts do not adopt destructive cooking processes that rob the food of life promoting essences or *prana*. Hence man really invites himself to calamity! *Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol XI, 148-151*

Our ancestors consumed food only twice a day. The ascetics ate just once, they declared, Swami points-out, that "*Man who ate once-a-day was a yogi, those eating twice-a-day was a bhogi (enjoyer) and those eating 3 times-a-day was a rogi (sick).*" Eat in moderation and live long. (*Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol XI, 148-151.*)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Swami's encouragement to vegetarianism is a little more than just the practice of being a vegetarian. Carrying forth a vegetarian diet nonetheless is valuable, and as science would show there is remarkable improvement in the quality of one's life. However, following the

principles of vegetarianism that includes eating right, thinking correctly and acting as expected of an evolved species paying attention to maintaining balance of the elements, senses and the *gunas* will only assist man in his quest to realize the *atma*. Commonly held notion that 'Man is born to prepare for his death' is not at all right. Man is born, and he had no say with it. Man does die and he plays no role in electing when. However, it is in between that he has the role to live 'rightfully'. (*Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol XI, 148-151.*)

Now we are able to better understand how close the links are between the mind and the food that we eat and drink. Hence there is a need for the spiritual aspirant to keep a watchful eye on the prescription concerning food. "You will not be able to make progress in your spiritual discipline if you do not control your eating habits," reminds our Swami.

Swami also reminds us to offer the food we consume to God. "Therefore, just before taking your food, you should pray and offer the entire meal to God, in order to cleanse and purify it. The prayer, which is offered before eating, is not for the benefit of God, but for our own benefit; it will purify your food by evoking God's blessing. Before saying the prayer; the food is merely food; but once you offer it to the Lord, it becomes *prasadam*, consecrated food. This prayer removes all the defects and flaws in the vessels and in articles of food, as well as removing any negative influence acquired during the cooking process. (*Sathya Sai Baba, Discourses on the Bhagavad Gita, compiled and edited by A. Drucker, 39-42.*)

Food For Thought (An area to record your personal thoughts):