My Journey into vegetarianism
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It has been 3 months (July 27th 2003) since I became a vegetarian again. I was actually a vegetarian (by religion) before for almost 20 years. I became a non-vegetarian when I became atheist. If I didn't talk to Jennifer Polan, I wouldn't have thought about the choice I have, to become a vegetarian and start feeling like a more responsible human being. When I was a non-vegetarian, my eyes were shut to what I ate; I had never thought of where that food was coming from. When I was thinking of becoming a vegetarian, the basic questions that came to my mind are

- Why shouldn't I be a vegetarian when I still can survive being one and I can let other animals live on this earth with equal rights that I have today?
- What in this world that could make me a non-vegetarian, when I can get tastier food in a vegetarian diet?

I could easily get the answers to the above questions. And the answer was "Become a vegetarian!!! ". Being vegetarian is not related to religion. I am not religious and I gave up my religion a long time back. This thought made me feel a more responsible and a better person inside. When I made the choice there were more questions in my mind.

- Do I have to give up my "food pleasures"? Did I really enjoy eating meat?
- Would I be having "limited choice" in the food? If yes, would I be losing lot of calories and eventually good health?

"Food Pleasures!!!!" I never really found meat tastier than vegetarian food. I became non-vegetarian when I became a secular person and I continued it when "I couldn't find enough vegetarian food". The answer for second question was, "Yes, I would have narrow choice". In these 3 months period I realized that the choice "is not as narrower as I initially thought". My "spirit is much broader" now. Nice trade off! I didn't know much about nutritional facts to think about what would happen to my health at that point of time. I had a philosophical answer that led to a question for non-vegetarians. "Are non-vegetarians healthy by choosing to have meat in their meal?" So I continued sticking to my decision!!!

Being a non-vegetarian is just about "a much wider choice in the food". But, being a vegetarian is more than choice of food. It is a feeling of helping other animals live and coexist with us. And, it is a pleasure to give "equal rights" to animals to give birth as they want it and when they want it. Most of the animals that exist today took birth for being killed and for being served in a non-vegetarian platter. Even that thought sounded disgusting to me. Then I realized that I couldn't presume any "dead animal", which most of the non-vegetarians prefer to call just "meat", in my body anymore.

Though that thought could make me take the decision, becoming a vegetarian was not that easy as it was when I used to be a vegetarian. It is not because of my cravings for meat. It is because "My eyes were shut and I lost my ability to find a vegetarian diet". At that time I just wished I could go back to my country, as it is very easy as it is very easy finding foods that fit into a vegetarian diet there. It was really a distress to me "to see myself getting so used to a diet, which I disgust the most now". I just didn't want to give up at that point. If I gave up, I also had to give up my self-esteem (for ignoring my responsibility

towards other animals) and I also had to estrange my spirit with my body (since my body doesn't want non-vegetarian diet anymore).

In the course of becoming a vegetarian, I have faced lot of questions and arguments from my friends who are non-vegetarians. Thanks to them for bringing up more intelligent conversations and making me understand more about vegetarian diet. I provide some of the questions they asked and some answers for them. I couldn't answer the questions straight away, as they needed thinking. And I didn't want to ignore the questions as they might make me understand more about vegetarianism. Thanks to Jennifer for giving me good insight for the answers.

- What do you eat then? I get my proteins from meat. Where do you get proteins in the vegetarian diet?
  There are varieties of vegetables in the market. I started with eating salads, which doesn't need any kind of cooking. Eventually I began to cook tasty vegetarian dishes. You can find lot of varieties of vegetarian foods in many restaurants like Mexican, Italian, and Indian etc. It just needs determination for finding vegetarian food and concern for animals. Whenever I feel like eating non-vegetarian food, I just think about my pet and imagine someone wants to eat him. That gives me lot of ideas for vegetarian food. I can get vitamins, proteins and minerals from lot of vegetable like beans, peas, spinach, variety of fruits etc.
- Aren't you killing trees for your food? How can it be different from killing animals?
  Plants do not feel pain, as they don't have central nervous system unlike the animals do feel pain when they are killed or hurt. And think about all the chemicals they secrete inside their body while they feel the pain and fear to death, which will eventually be part of a non-vegetarian food.
- Eating meat is part of "food chain". If everybody starts eating vegetables, we will run out of food resources on this earth. How would you balance this food cycle?
  "Food chain" basically consists of four parts: The Sun, The producers (Green Plants), The consumers (Herbivores and Carnivores) and The decomposers (Fungi). "Food chain" is a natural phenomenon of eco system. Most of the animals that are killed for non-vegetarian food are reared and killed specially for meat eaters. How can such food be a part of natural "Food chain"? And the vegetables ("producers" according to definition of "food chain") are fed to these animals, which are forced to take birth and exist for meat-eaters. This creation of animals for meat is actually against "food chain" unlike most of the non-vegetarians think or love to think for an excuse to eat meat.