

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

At a gathering some evenings ago the question was asked: *Is a Theosophist a vegetarian or a meat eater?*

A theosophist may be a meat eater or a vegetarian, but vegetarianism or meat eating will not make one a theosophist. Unfortunately, many people have supposed that the sine qua non for a spiritual life is vegetarianism, whereas such a statement is contrary to the teachings of true spiritual instructors. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man," said Jesus. (Matt. xvii.)

"Believe thou not that sitting in the dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men; believe thou not that life on roots and plants. . . . Oh devotee, that this will lead thee to the goal of final liberation," says the Voice of the Silence. A theosophist should use his best judgment and always be governed by reason in the care of his physical psychic and mental health. As regards the matter of food the first question which he should ask himself is "What food is necessary for me to keep my body in health?" When he finds this out by experiment then let him take that food which his experience and observation show him to be best adapted to his physical and mental requirements. Then he will be in no doubt as to what food he shall eat, but he will surely not speak or think of meatarism or a vegetablearianism as being qualifications of the theosophist.

How can a real theosophist consider himself a theosophist and still eat meat when we know that the desires of the animal are transferred from the flesh of the animal to the body of the one who eats it?

A real theosophist never claims to be a theosophist. There are many members of the Theosophical Society but very few real theosophists; because a theosophist is, as the name implies, one who has attained to divine wisdom; one who has united with his God. When we speak of a real theosophist, we must mean one having divine wisdom. Generally, though not accurately, speaking, however, a theosophist is a member of the Theosophical Society.

The one who says he knows the desires of the animal to be transferred to the body of one who eats it proves by his statement that he does not know. The flesh of the animal is the most highly developed and concentrated form of life which may be ordinarily used as food. This represents desire, certainly, but the desire of the animal in its natural state is much less baneful than desire in the human being. Desire in itself is not bad, but only becomes bad when an evilly disposed mind unites with it. It is not the desire itself which is bad, but the evil purposes to which it is put by the mind and to which it may induce the mind, but to say the desire of the animal as an entity is transferred to the human body is an incorrect statement. The entity called the kama rupa, or desire-body, which actuates the body of the animal, is in no way connected with the meat of that animal after death. The desire of the animal lives in the blood of the animal. When the animal is killed, the desire-body passes out of its physical body with the life blood, leaving the flesh, made up of the cells, as the concentrated form of life which has been worked up by that animal from the vegetable kingdom. The meat eater would have quite as much right to say, and be more reasonable if he did say, that the vegetarian was poisoning himself with prussic acid by eating lettuce or any of the other poisons which abound in vegetables, than the vegetarian could truly and correctly say that the meat eater was eating and absorbing the desires of the animals.

Is it not true that the yogis of India, and men of divine attainments, live on vegetables, and if so, should not those who would develop themselves avoid meat and also live on vegetables?

It is true, that most yogis do not eat meat, nor do they who have great spiritual attainments, and who usually live apart from men, but it does not follow that because they did, all others should abstain from meat. These men have not spiritual attainments because they live on vegetables, but they eat vegetables because they can do without the strength of the meat. Again we should remember that those who have attained are quite different from those who are trying to begin to attain, and the food of the one cannot be the food of the other because each body requires the food most necessary to it to maintain health. It is pathetic as it is amusing to see that the moment an ideal is perceived the one who perceives it is likely to suppose that it is within his reach. We are like children who see an object far away but who ignorantly reach out to grasp it, unmindful of the distance intervening. It is too bad that would-be aspirants to

yogiship or divinity should not imitate the divine characteristics and the spiritual insight of divine men instead of aping the most physical and material habits and customs, and thinking that by so doing, they also shall become divine. One of the essentials to spiritual progress is to learn what Carlyle calls "The Eternal Fitness of Things."

What effect does the eating of vegetables have on the body of man, as compared with the eating of meat?

This is largely determined by the digestive apparatus. Digestion is carried on in the mouth, stomach and intestinal canal, aided by the secretions of the liver and pancreas. Vegetables are digested chiefly in the intestinal canal, whereas the stomach is principally a meat digesting organ. The food taken into the mouth is there masticated and mixed with saliva, the teeth indicating the natural tendency and quality of the body as to its being herbivorous or carnivorous. The teeth show that man is two-thirds carnivorous and one-third herbivorous, which means that nature has provided him with two-thirds of the entire number of his teeth for eating meat and one-third for vegetables. In the natural healthy body this should be the proportion of its food. In a healthy condition the use of one kind to the exclusion of the other will cause an unbalancing of health. The exclusive use of vegetables causes fermentation and yeast production in the body, which bring in all manner of diseases that the human is heir to. As soon as fermentation begins in the stomach and bowels then there are yeast formations in the blood and the mind becomes unsettled. The carbonic acid gas which is developed affects the heart, and so acts on the nerves as to cause attacks of paralysis or other nervous and muscular disorders. Among the signs and evidences of vegetarianism are irritability, lassitude, nervous flushes, impaired circulation, palpitation of the heart, lack of continuity of thought and concentration of the mind, a breaking down of robust health, an oversensitiveness of body, and a tendency to mediumship. The eating of meat supplies the body with the natural force which it requires. It makes of the body a strong, healthy, physical animal, and builds up this animal body as a fortress behind which the mind can withstand the onslaughts of other physical personalities which it meets and has to contend with in every large city or gathering of people.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]

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