

# What Is Buddhism?

Buddhism began over 2500 years ago when a man sat under a Bodhi tree and became enlightened. Known as the Buddha, or enlightened one, he spent the next 40 years teaching what he had discovered. Today there are an estimated 500 million to one billion Buddhists in the world.




## The Dharma

The Buddha taught that the purpose of his teachings, called the dharma, was to show a path to the end of suffering. The foundation of the teachings is morality, and it is only by developing morality that one can then discover for oneself the wisdom of the dharma. Central to Buddhist morality is the notion of compassion.

Buddhist ethics is found in what are called precepts, and most important among these is the First Precept – Do Not Kill. Importantly, and what separates Buddhism from most other spiritual teachings, is that Buddhist morality applies to all of the beings who share the earth – humans and animals alike.

**“[People] who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country, or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend this world.”**

- Surangama Sutra



# Animals

Many people don't have the opportunity to spend time with animals, particularly farmed animals. When we get to know turkeys, chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, cows, aquatic animals including fish, and all other sentient beings, we find that each animal is an individual with a personality, and preferences. They all have a strong desire to live as any human. Animals are smart, sensitive, emotional and they also form bonds.



Like us, they want to be free from suffering. Unfortunately, despite their sensitivity and capacity to suffer, we often fail to extend to animals the same compassion we try to extend to people. Instead, they are treated as commodities, here solely to meet our own human needs.

The biggest way we exploit animals, of course, is by eating them. Throughout the world, more than 80 billion land animals are killed for consumption every year. In the United States alone more than 10 billion land animals are killed annually. If we add the billions of animals living in water who are killed, this number brings the total to 55 billion sentient beings. Should Buddhists be contributing to this?



# Animal Farms

Most people are not aware of the way farmed animals are treated today. The farms of the past have been replaced by factory farms, whose only consideration is profit. 99% of all farms fall into this category. Conditions on these farms are harsh and inhumane. Hens raised for their eggs come from hatcheries, where they have their beaks seared off and then spend their entire lives crammed into wire cages without enough room to even stretch their wings. Male chicks - incapable of laying eggs - are tossed into garbage bags to either suffocate or are ground up alive. Dairy cows are continuously impregnated against their will so that humans can take the milk that was meant for their calf. The male offspring of dairy cows - referred to as veal calves - are taken from their mothers at birth and spend their entire lives confined in crates, unable to move, and fed an anemic diet, all to ensure that their flesh is tender. Cows born as females are taken from their mom to return to the dairy industry.

Finally, once their usefulness is gone, when hens can no longer produce enough eggs and cows can no longer produce enough milk to keep profits high, the animals are killed.



Jo-Anne McArthur / We Animals Media

## Right Eating

The teachings of the Buddha are based on the central ideas of non-harming and compassion. The Buddha recognized that all beings suffer, and it was because of his infinite compassion that he dedicated his life to helping all beings be free from suffering.

Extending compassion to animals starts with one thing that everyone can do immediately – stop eating them! It's important to realize that whether you kill an animal yourself or pay someone else to do it, in order for you to eat an animal it has to be killed.

The Buddha said:

*“Let him not destroy, or cause to be destroyed, any life at all, or sanction the acts of those who do so. Let him refrain even from hurting any creature, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world.”*

- Dhammika Sutra

# Environment

Animal products are significantly more resource-intensive than plant-based foods. Eating more vegan food conserves water and reduces air/water pollution, prevents species extinction, cuts greenhouse gas emissions, and reduces livestock emissions. Eating more plant-based foods reduces energy consumption, helps stabilize the ocean and replenishes the sea, and protects the rainforest. Production of a meat-based diet requires more than ten times the water required for a non-vegan diet. Studies show that adopting a vegan diet can be enough to stop and reverse the harmful effects of climate change including rising sea levels, floods, melting glaciers, and droughts. If everyone on the planet would go vegan, livestock emissions would stop entirely, single-handedly ending the biggest contributor to climate change. "Raising livestock for human consumption generates nearly 15% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, which is greater than all the transportation emissions combined." -United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization



Animal agriculture causes air pollution, forest fires, drought, ocean dead zones and floods.

## Why Vegan?

The term vegan/plant-based refers to someone who not only refrains from eating animals but also does not consume products that come from animals. Whenever animal products such as eggs, milk, and honey are used for food and drink, animals are harmed and killed. This is true even on the most “humane” of farms, which often deceptively call themselves “cage-free”, “free-range”, “organic” or “sustainable.”

Whenever someone eats an animal product, he or she is contributing to the suffering of an animal. In order to live a life of compassion, it is important to not cause suffering, and this means eating a vegan or plant-based diet.

***Eating vegan is a triple gem of its own kind.***

- REASON #1 Eating plant-rich meals reduce suffering and is an act of compassion and non-harming.
- REASON #2 Eating plants help lessen our impact on our planet in so many ways.
- REASON #3 Eating a whole food, plant-based diet is a healthy diet for each yogi.

**MAY ALL BEINGS BE FREE FROM SUFFERING.**

# Buddhists Monks and Teachers Speak Out

The lineage of vegetarian and vegan monastics and teachers is long and distinguished. The following are noteworthy Buddhists who are either DVA members or extremely supportive of DVA and its mission:

“It has always been my preference to be vegetarian since I became a Buddhist... If one has this deep quality of compassion that one does not want others to suffer and one knows that either ordering meat or consuming meat is going [to] bring about even the cruel upbringing and the slaughter of animals, that out of compassion one would adopt vegetarianism.”

- Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

“I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

“After witnessing the slaughter of an animal, I cried and made a vow to be a voice for him.”

- Ven. Geshe Phelgye, Member of DVA's Advisory Council

“I have a deep belief that collectively we need to move towards plant-based eating for the sake of our world”

- Tara Brach, Member of DVA's Advisory Council

“Animals are my friends, and I don't eat my friends.”  
- Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo quoting George Bernard Shaw, Member of DVA's Advisory Council

“To practice compassion, to practice loving friendliness (Metta), to appreciate and develop the joy of life... purely because of my conscience, I thought it would be much better if I become a vegetarian.”

- Ven. Henepola Gunaratana



## Health

Scientific research shows that plant-based diets are associated with better health and lower disease outcomes. Vegan diets offer a range of health benefits: Plant-based foods lower blood sugar levels, reduce blood pressure, and improve kidney function while helping reduce our risk of suffering from cancer and other diseases like type 2 diabetes. Eating vegan can also help you achieve a healthy body weight. Vegan diets are linked to a lower risk of heart disease and they are rich in nutrients your body needs. It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that vegan diets are healthy at all stages of life. Additionally, nearly all pandemics have been caused by humans eating animals.

# Compassionate Recipes

Many people are surprised and delighted by the variety of foods available from non-animal sources. You might also be surprised at just how tasty a plant-based diet is! You can find thousands of simple, delicious recipes – as well as gourmet fare – online and in the huge number of animal-friendly cookbooks. It's exciting how many compassionate alternatives exist these days. You can even "veganize" your own traditional foods!

Here are some you might try.

Breakfast:

- Oatmeal with berries, apple, and cinnamon
- Cold cereal with soy, almond, oat, hemp, or rice milk
- Toast or bagel with peanut butter or almond butter
- Fruit salad or green smoothie
- Vegan yogurt with chopped fruit and berries
- Vegan pancakes
- Tofu or Just Egg© Scramble with vegan bacon

Lunch:

- Avocado, sprout sandwich with tomato, cucumbers & mustard
- Chana Masala
- Potato salad with vegan mayo
- Bean and veggie burrito

Dinner:

- Mac and Cheese with nondairy cheese
- Quinoa with beans and veggies
- Chickpea salad sandwich
- Pasta Primavera with Marinara Sauce
- Udon soup with soybeans and broccoli
- Tempeh stir fry with a variety of veggies

Search online by adding the word ‘VEGAN’ in front of any meal you want to make.



# Dharma Voices for Animals

Dharma Voices for Animals (DVA) is a 501c3 non-profit organization with members in over 50 countries. Our purpose is to raise awareness of animal suffering within the worldwide Buddhist community. We are the only international, Buddhist animal rights/advocacy organization.

Our activities and resources include:

- *Projects:*
  - United States ~Encouraging diet shifts with US Buddhist centers ~ Plant-Rich Menus Guide - A printable web-based resource for centers ~ Circle of Compassion financial incentive grants and awards program for transitioning menus and serving vegan foods ~ Tabling and outreach events
  - Sri Lanka: ~Hundreds of presentations at schools, women's groups, and army bases of the benefits of taking animal products out of their diet ~ Working to pass a modern updated animal welfare bill ~ Published first vegan cookbook
  - Thailand ~ Seminars and cooking classes to educate the monastics & lay followers on the health benefits of a vegan diet
  - Vietnam ~ Dharma talks & cooking classes at temples encouraging compassionate diets ~ Supporting new vegan restaurant ventures ~Producing multi-media content
- "Animals and the Buddha" - Watch for free on YouTube or scan the code below.
- *Eyes & Ears:* This program assists people in making changes to their local Buddhists Centers. Please visit our website for more information on how to convert your local centers.

Become a Member and be a Voice for Animals. We Depend Upon Donations Yet No One Is Turned Away Due To Lack of Funds.

[Dharmavoicesforanimals.org/join](https://dharmavoicesforanimals.org/join)

All of DVA's services and materials are provided free of charge. Please **scan this QR code** if you would like to donate to support our efforts. All donations are tax-deductible.



Bringing Awareness to the Suffering of Animals

# ANIMALS AND THE BUDDHA

A film by Dharma Voices for Animals



All beings fear danger,  
Life is dear to all.  
When a person considers this,  
He does not kill or cause to kill.

- The Buddha in the Dhammapada



To access DVA's resources and additional information, scan this code.



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