

Interfaith Vegan Coalition

ZOROASTRIAN ADVOCACY KIT



Demonstrating the Zoroastrian Ideals of Harmlessness and Universal Lovingkindness



QUOTES

From Writings of Zoroastrian Head Priest Adarbad Mahraspandan

Perhaps the most explicit call for Zoroastrians to be vegetarian is found in the sayings of Adarbad Mahraspandan [Zoroastrian high priest and prime minister during the reign of Sasanid King Shapur II (309-379 CE)] which states:

“Abstain rigorously from eating the flesh of kine and all beneficent animals (gospandan) lest you be made to face a strict reckoning in this world and the next; for by eating the flesh of kine and other domestic animals, you involve your hand in sin, and (thereby) think, speak, and do what is sinful; for though you may eat but a mouthful, you involve your hand in sin, and though a camel be slain by (another) person in another place, it is as if you (who eat its flesh) had slain it with your own hand.” [Adapted slightly for consistency from the translation by R. C. Zaehner in *The Teachings of the Magi* (London, 1956) pp. 110 ff. 13-15 and brought to our attention by Zaneta Garratt.]

From the High Priest Atrupat

High Priest Atrupat-e Emetan (Adarbad, son of Emedan) who officiated after the Arab invasion states in Book 6 of the 11th century CE Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Dinkard: “Be plant-eaters (urwar khwarishn i.e. vegetarian), O you people, so that you may live long. And stay away from the body of useful animals. As well, deeply reckon that Ohrmazd the Lord, has for the sake of benefiting useful animals created many plants.” (Translation by Eduljee) The admonition of High Priest Atrupat-e Emetan in the Dinkard verse may relate to meat-eating in general and appears to encourage the practice of vegetarianism as a means of promoting good health and long life. In this lone passage, the head priest may also have been trying to say that vegetarianism is consistent with Zoroastrian ideals.

Other References to non-meat eating - From the Frashogard

Frashogard, a journal of the Ilm-e Khshnoom movement, states that at frashogard (Avestan frasho-kereti i.e. making-anew or the final renovation) death will be no more with the connotation that humankind will then become vegetarian.

From the Bundahishn

In the Middle Persian Bundahishn at 30.1 we have, “On the nature of the resurrection and future existence it says in revelation, that, whereas Mashye and Mashyane, who grew up from the earth, first fed upon water, then plants, then milk, and then meat, humans also, when their time of death has come, first desist from eating meat, then milk, then bread and then until they die, they will exist on water. 2. Thus in the millennium of Hoshedarmah, the strength of appetite (az) will thus diminish, and human beings will remain three days and nights in superabundance (sirih) through one taste of consecrated food. 3. Then they will desist from meat food, and eat vegetables and drink milk....” Of particular interest to us here, is the sequence of learning to eat meat last and giving it up first.

In Chapter 39 of Bundahishn manuscript belonging to Tehmuras Dinshawji Anklesaria of Bombay (as cited by E. W. West in 1880), “the Arabs rushed into the country of Iran in great multitude... and their own irreligious law was propagated by them and many ancestral customs were destroyed, and eating of dead matter was put into practice. ...From the original creation until this day, evil more grievous than this has not happened....”

COMMON WORDS & MEANINGS

Vohu Manu = Good Mind

Anghre Manu = Devilish Mind

Ahura Mazda = Divine Being (God)

Gathas = Scriptures recited by Zoroaster

DOCUMENTARIES AND VIDEOS

“**Cowspiracy**” and “**What the Health**” can be seen on *Netflix*

“**Earthlings**” is a very intense video that shows the unbelievable cruelty endured by animals at human hands. If you plan to show it, you need to give people fair warning. While it has caused many people to go vegan on the spot, it can be traumatic to watch, and viewers need to be given great compassion and care while watching it.

<http://www.nationearth.com/earthlings-1/>

“**A Life Connected**” is a short, 11 minute, but powerful and feel-good video online at <https://vimeo.com/13317130>

“**The Metaphysics of Food**,” by Will Tuttle. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7nJaMg86cw>

“**Peaceable Kingdom**” and “**The Witness**” can be watched free online at www.tribeofheart.org

“**A Prayer for Compassion**,” by Thomas Jackson, <https://aprayeforcompassion.com>.

ARTICLES

Vegetarianism in Mazdayasni Zarathushti Religion:

“Does the religion enjoy eating flesh foods?”

Written by Pervin J. Mistry for the Month of Bahman *

“The concept of vegetarianism since long has been an interesting subject for discussion in the Parsi community and the Zoroastrian Religion. As majority of the members of the Parsi community are non-vegetarians, the general belief therefore prevails among several members of the community, as well as among the members of other communities, that the tenets of the Zoroastrian Religion themselves might be in support of the concept of non-vegetarianism. But this belief is then a serious blunder. In the past as well as in the present times, it has been explained that even though the majority of the members of the community may be having non-vegetarian food, according to the tenets of the Zoroastrian Religion, vegetarian is the only natural food for mankind.” Ervad Dr. Rooyintan Peshotan Peer writes these memorable words in the Preface of the book, “Vegetarianism – From Zoroastrian Religious Point of View”, written by – Ervad Dr. Peshotan Framarz Peer.

There is irrefutable proof that in the beginning, mankind only subsisted on vegetarian food. The Immortal Shayeran–e Shayer of Iran, Firdowsi Tusi, writes in the Shahnameh that it was Ahriman (devil), disguised as a cook named Iblis, who first served the tyrannical King Zohak, dishes made of the flesh of birds and animals. Ahriman’s evil intent was to destroy all life on earth so the Divine Event of Frashogard will not be achieved. It is important to note that as humans, our teeth do not resemble teeth of carnivorous (meat eating) animals, and by nature, are herbivorous creatures possessing teeth similar to the herbivorous or plant eating creatures.

According to the Holy Avesta, any dead body, whether it is the corpse of a human or animal, is putrid. This decomposition is referred to as “drij-e nasu” which is harmful to the health of the living. Therefore, if a dead body is putrid, what must happen in the stomach of a person when this putrid food is eaten? Certainly, many diseases are caused by eating non-vegetarian food. In this regard, Ervad Dr. Peshotan Peer quotes Dr. J.H. Kellogg, M.D.: “To believe that a man despite

BOOKS

Vegetarianism – From Zoroastrian Religious Point of View, written by - Ervad Dr. Peshotan Framarz Peer.

WEBSITES

<https://authenticgathazoroastrianism.org/2012/03/05/zoroastrian-dietary-laws-animal-friendship-and-stewardship/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetarianism_and_religion

<https://zoroastrians.net/2014/06/15/the-parsee-vegetarian-and-temperance-society/>

eating non-vegetarian food can be considered righteous is to consider a man covered with layers of mud as clean. Bacteriologists clearly understand that the dust on the road is cleaner than a piece of flesh i.e. there are less bacteria in the dust on the street than in a corresponding pound of flesh.”

Asadi Toosi who wrote the “Kersasp Nameh” writes that the hero Kersasp once met a Brahmin sage and inquired as to why he sits alone on a mountain, why does he cover his body with leaves of a tree and what does he eat? The sage replied that our stay in this world is of a few days, the innocent diet of vegetables and a simple dress is sufficient to cover the body. He added, why kill innocent animals and make this stomach a graveyard of ‘animals’? Instead of caring for the body, one should take greater care of the soul. For this body will ultimately perish, how long will you struggle for the body?

From the religious point of view, it is unquestionably ascertained the Holy Avesta is full of references prohibiting the killing of innocent, domesticated animals.

Dasturji Saheb Erachji of Navsari, states in his book, Rehbar-e-Din-e Zarthoshti writes: “eating meat seems improper according to our scared religion. He adds, “In the ceremony of afringan, it is required to offer dry fruits, flowers, milk and water ... whereas our people offer meat, fish, chicken, etc.; such things are not valid. This is mentioned in the book ‘Behram Firoz Nameh’.”

Mr. Behramgor Tehmuras Anklesaria, (as reported in Jam-e Jamshad of 12-2-1909): “Zarathushtra’s parents did not partake meat of any kind. They subsisted only on milk and vegetarian diet, and in this manner, Zarathushtra’s own body was not made of the flesh of any animals. Clear direction is given ‘not to kill any animals’. Further, he adds, “From several of our present customs we can observe that ancient Zoroastrians were not partaking of non-vegetarian food. We too at present, in the name of religion, do not eat flesh food for many days in a year. What is the reason for this? The reason is this, in such times that the Zoroastrians started partaking flesh food after coming in contact with other communities, prior to that time they did not eat flesh at all; and for this reason some high priests, observing the spirit of the religion, might have given a directive to the Zoroastrians to abstain from eating flesh on certain occasions, and hence we observe some days as meatless days. For three days after death, flesh is not eaten because according to Vendidad flesh is putrid and it cannot be taken in the houses of worship where ceremonies are being performed. The ancient Zoroastrians never ate flesh foods. Their foremost diet was vegetarian. Our people did not eat anything other than plants (vegetables and fruits); also they used matters grown only from the soil.



As a minimum requirement to adhere to the spirit of the religion wherein meat eating is considered to be unhygienic and an offence perpetrated against Bahman Ameshaspand, we are asked to refrain from eating flesh foods during certain days every month. i.e. on Bahman, Mohor, Gosh and Ram, as also during the whole month of Bahman. This is because Bahman Ameshaspand (angel) is in charge of the entire animal Kingdom which includes birds (chicken) and fish.

Gatha ha 34.3 states: “O Ahura Mazda! With humble adoration we offer votive offerings unto Thee and Asha. Within (Thy) Dominion (O Ahura Mazda) all living creatures are nourished on account of Vohu Manah. That person is fully sagacious who in every respect offers prayers to Thee and to those belonging to Thee (i.e. the Yazatas).” Bahman Ameshaspand is Vohu Manah; Asha is Ardibehesht who resides in all living things, including plants and animals – further, ha 34.4 reveals Asha Vahishta is the punisher of the evil doers; conversely, Asha Vahishta is the mighty, swiftest, courageous, ever giving delight, giving help in various ways (or miraculously), the giver of courage to the righteous.

Gatha 5.20 “I who am Ahura Mazda, bring rainfall towards the plants, for the sake of food for the righteous persons, and for the grass and fodder for the cattle of the good creations; (so that) my men may eat cereal food and the cattle of the good creations may eat grass and fodder.”

Gatha ha 34.11 (similar teaching is also given in Zamyad Yasht, para 96): “Both Khordad and Amardad (are) for thy food. Devotion (or Perfect Mentality) increases through the sovereignty of Vohu Manah and through Asha’s Truth. Through them (are) strength and vigour. O Ahura Mazda! Thou art the expeller of malice and harm.”



Gatha ha 32.12 where the words “geush morenden” appear, Kangaji translate as: “Ahura Mazda regards them as wicked who through (false) teachings prevent men from (doing) best actions, (and) destroy the life of cattle in jokes and jests (i.e. without any reason) (and) who by forsaking truth prefer wealth obtained through deceitful means, (and who) (are) the Karapans (i.e. those who do not accept the commandments of the Zoroastrian Religion) and (are) the desirers of the authority of the Druj (i.e. the liar).” It is to be noted that Bahman’s adversary is ‘akoman’, evil thoughts, which tempt mankind to take the life of innocent animals and eat their flesh.

Gatha ha46.4 states: “The man of evil strength, a sinful person, destroying the life through his wicked deeds prevents the supporters of righteousness and the cattle of the province as well as of the land from movements. O Ahura Mazda! Whoso overthrows such a (wicked person) from (his) power or from life, that man will open widely the paths to them (i.e.) to the cattle and of good wisdom.” (Kangaji’s translation) Here, cattle and good wisdom are taken together. One who liberates the cattle from the evil man frees the paths of wisdom!

Ervad Saheb Phiroze Masani a sinner obstructs the helpers of righteousness and cattle of the city and the country from free movement (and prevents free movement of animals, such person harms his life)”. (Vegetarianism – From Zoroastrian Religious Point of View) In short, the sinners who ruin or take someone’s life, prevent the progress of life. The animals too are given a number of years of life predetermined by God. By killing them before their time, is a grave sin. These animals, wailing at the time of their death, curse their killers/tormentors.

Ustad Saheb Behranshah Navroji Shroff penned an article on vegetarianism from the point of view of our religion in the Frashogard magazine. This article was translated into English and a separate booklet was published by the Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society. Ustad Saheb writes: “Ultimately, while ending this subject, as mankind, we ought to remember, that this vegetarianism is not a modern discovery but this

exalted rule on the subject of diet is permanent since the beginning of the creation. Zoroastrianism which is known as the science of sciences and knowledge of knowledges, in that splendid religion, this concept of vegetarianism has been accepted as a great infallible rule of nature and as an essential tarikat (practice). Hence the false notions that vegetarianism has become popular because of study of other religions or by teachings of science from the West, then this mistaken thought should be driven out of our mind, and hereafter let us remember that the lesson of vegetarianism is for all mankind. (As per the infallible natural law)”. Frashogard, Mankind’s Natural Diet – according to Zoroastrian Ilm-e-Kshnoom; author, Mr. Behramshah Navroji Shroff.

**(Explanations about Bahman) There are specific names for each of the twelve months in the Zoroastrian religion. There are also specific names given for each day of the month.*

Bahman Month is an auspicious month when Zoroastrians are encouraged to partake in a wholesome vegetarian diet for the month.

Bahman Day in the Bahman Month is considered a most auspicious day when most Zoroastrians abstain from eating meat and prepare special vegetarian meals for the day.

Bahman Day also comes in the other eleven months of the year and people are encouraged to eat only vegetarian meals that day as well.



Follow Up Support for You

SHOULD YOU NEED IDEAS, SUPPORT,
ADVICE, ETC., PLEASE EMAIL:

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