

*A balanced view of the motives
behind dietary preferences*



How to choose wisely among the infinite variety of options?

Only the true philosopher, one who is en rapport with his spirit, can make the right choice.

Dāmodar K. Māvalankar, “The Best Food for Man.” First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. V (7), April 1884, pp. 171-72. Republished in Sven Eek (*Comp. & Annot.*) *Dāmodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1965; pp. 418-21.

[The following is a comment by Dāmodar on an article by Purmeshri Dass, F.T.S., in its turn commenting on an article in *The Theosophist*¹ by Mrs. Anna Kingsford, M.D., F.T.S., entitled “The Best Food For Man.” Purmeshri Dass’ article takes an even stricter stand than does Mrs. Kingsford herself for the cause of vegetarianism, and criticises her for advising that cheese, milk, butter, and eggs may be properly used to fill out a vegetarian diet. — *Sven Eek.*]

I beg to remind my brother that Theosophy admits of no dogmatic assertion of the fitness of things; therefore no particular kind of food is ordered imperatively, neither is there any that is “forbidden” or “prohibited” in the strict sense of the terms. The Occultist, after careful investigation of all the facts and circumstances of the *whole* case and their impartial consideration with a broad and enlightened vision, *recommends* a certain course of action as the best. He always takes his stand in the middle, and, surveying the lines pointing to the extremities, comes to a decision. There are people who argue that destruction is the order of the universe, that everywhere we see one creature preying upon another, itself being the food of a third, and that it is therefore perfectly natural for people to kill animals for food. There are others who say that everywhere is to be seen in nature a feeling of love, an affection — the mother taking care of the children and so on. Therefore no life should be destroyed. There are not a few who say that they use animal food merely because they find animals already dead or killed, but that on no account would they allow slaughter intended solely for themselves. A dispassionate consideration of these three arguments is now necessary.

¹ December 1883, March, 1884

- ① The first class show that they have not risen above their animal nature. Otherwise they would see that this beastly tendency, this desire for the assimilation of animal food with their physical frames, has the effect of chaining them down to a physical plane from the meshes of which no rising is possible unless a more human feeling begins to assert itself.
- ② The latent spark of this noble feeling is inherent in animals too, for if they did not have it, they would not feel that tenderness towards their young which they manifest. This class, therefore, we must leave out of consideration for the present.
- ③ The sophistry of the third class is self-evident. Our answer to them is that they must remember that an appreciable decrease in the number of flesh eaters must have the effect of lessening the number of slaughtered animals. If they use the flesh of dead animals, they may just as well be asked to follow the example of the Chinese who do not spare the flesh of dead persons.

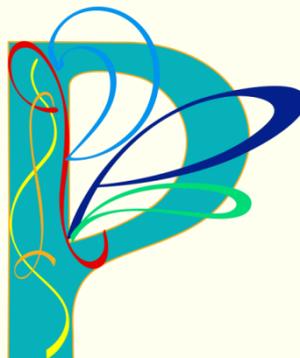
We must now divert our attention to the second class. If the theory that no life should be destroyed be carried to its legitimate extent, the very existence of man would become impossible, for even the air he breathes is full of animalculæ, which he must inhale when the respiratory process is in operation. Nay — we can go still further: the ONE LIFE permeates *all*; each and every atom has latent life in it, and therefore every atom we displace in our movements is an injury to life. The great problem is how to get out of this difficulty. The Occultist recognises the important fact that everything in nature progresses gradually and nothing is achieved by starts or jumps. At the same time he realises that destruction and creation are relative and interchangeable terms, since destruction relates only to form — the substance remaining always permanent — and that the destruction of one form is the creation of another. These relative ideas therefore cease, when the phenomenal and the noumenal are blended together into THE ONE SUBSTANCE. The aim of the Occult Student is therefore to gradually progress on the path of perfection, so that he may get out of this world of forms and be merged into the ARŪPA TOTALITY. This is not the work of a day, nor of a few years, but of *ages*. He therefore gradually by a special training induces in himself such conditions as would enable him to rise higher and higher on the path of perfection. He does nothing violently: he only anticipates, by his knowledge, the usually slow processes of Nature, and he conforms his mode of living to the then conditions of his existence, bearing also in mind that it is but temporary since a higher state of existence requires a better mode. The neophyte gradually leaves off eating until he reaches a stage where no food is necessary. And the ultimate stage is that where all relativity ceases and he identifies himself with the ABSOLUTE EXISTENCE. So long, therefore, as we are in the phenomenal world, we cannot but guide our actions by the law of relativity and have always to make a choice between two evils. A true philosopher, one who has put himself *en rapport* with his *Buddhi*, makes the right choice. It is for this reason that Occult Science is useful. It gives its votaries a right sense of discrimination and enables them to adopt only that course which would not come in the way of progress, while ordinary humanity, engulfed in the trammels of *Avidyā*, gropes in the dark and many a time does exactly the opposite of what may be conducive to progress. This should not be assumed to mean an occultist is infallible; but by his superior knowledge he is in a better posi-

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tion to do what is right than one whose perceptions are clouded by *Maya*. This explanation, I believe, is sufficient to show that *no hard and fast rules can be laid down for general guidance*. There is an infinite gradation of progress towards the ABSOLUTE, where alone all difference can come to an end.

As regards the use of animal food, the answer to the first class of men under consideration covers the point.

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