

佛教

The Horror of Taking Lives and Eating Meat



by
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During Emperor Wu's time, there was a high monk called the Venerable Zhi. Having attained the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Penetrations, he could clearly discern causes and effects. One time, a rich man asked him to recite Sutras at a wedding. Upon entering the house, he sighed and said:

*How strange! How very strange indeed!
The grandson marries the grandmother.
The daughter is eating her mother's flesh,
And the son is beating on a drum stretched with his father's skin.
Pigs and sheep are sitting on the couch,
And the six kinds of relatives are cooking in the pots.
People have come to offer congratulations,
But I see that it is truly suffering!*

What does this mean? *The grandson marries the grandmother.* Would you say this is strange or not? Right before she died, the grandmother of the family had held her grandson's hand, not being able to part with him. She said, "You all have your own families, but this little grandson of mine has no one to take care of him. Ah! What is there to be done?" Then she died. When she arrived at King Yama's court, King Yama gave her the following verdict, "Since you love your grandson so much, you might as well go back to be his wife and take care of him." And so the grandmother was reborn as her grandson's future wife. The workings of the law of cause and effect in this world can be quite frightening.

The daughter is eating her mother's flesh. Outside the house, a girl was eating a pig's foot with great relish, not realizing that the pig had been her mother in its previous life. *And the son is beating on a drum stretched with his father's skin.* Venerable Zhi then took a look at the musicians who were beating drums and blowing on their trumpets and flutes. What excitement! One man was banging away vigorously on a drum stretched with mule hide, not knowing that the mule had been his father in a previous life.

Venerable Zhi looked at the people sitting on the couch and said: *Pigs and sheep are sitting on the couch.* Then he looked in the pots and said: *And the six kinds of relatives are cooking in the pots.* All the former pigs and sheep that had been slaughtered before were now getting even and eating the people who had eaten them before! The six kinds of relatives who had eaten those pigs and sheep were now being chopped up and cooked in the pots to pay off their debts. *People have come to offer congratulations, But I see that it is truly suffering!* Everyone thought it was a happy occasion, but the Venerable Zhi only sighed and said, *This is really suffering!* People take suffering to be joy!

After hearing this story you should understand the horror of killing and eating meat. Let us look at the Chinese character for meat (肉). Two people (人) are inside the character for meat (肉). The person inside is linked to the one outside. Living beings eat the flesh of living beings. If you really think about it, it is people eating people. Thus it is best to be vegetarian. However, we shouldn't use names such as "vegetarian chicken," "vegetarian duck," and "vegetarian abalone" for vegetarian dishes. If we are vegetarians, why can't we forget about meat? The mere use of such names plants seeds of defilement. Vegetarian dishes shouldn't be called by non-vegetarian names.

Some people who came to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas this time have vowed to become lifelong vegetarians. This is a very good thing, because this way one severs unwholesome affinities with living beings in the six paths. If you don't eat them, they won't eat you; if you don't kill them, they won't kill you. The cycle of karmic retribution will thus be purified. "What benefits are there in being vegetarian?" someone asked. I said, "There aren't any. You're taking a loss while you're alive." Because vegetarian food isn't as tasty as meat, you take a loss by being vegetarian during your life. However, if you don't keep a vegetarian diet, then you will take a loss after death. It's like a scale. You have to figure out for yourself which side is heavier and which is lighter.

Why will you take a loss after death if you eat meat? Well, your body is composed of the foods you eat. If you eat vegetables, you will smell like vegetables; if you eat onions, you'll smell like onions; drink milk, and you'll smell like milk; eat cheese, and you'll smell like cheese. If you eat some garlic, your breath will smell of garlic.

The things you eat become part of your body. If you eat a lot of a certain thing, your body will become very similar to it. Therefore, if you eat a lot of pork, you will become a pig. Eat a lot of beef, and you will become a cow. This accords with science and logic. The meat you eat incorporates with your body, and after you die you turn into that kind of animal. If you

smell like a pig, for instance, after you die King Yama takes a sniff and says, "You smelly thing, you should be reborn as a pig." The same goes for sheep, cows, chicken, and dogs. That's what I mean by being cheated after death.

You can investigate this carefully. Why does a butcher of pigs have eyes resembling those of a pig? It's because he had been slaughtered as a pig many times in the past, and now he has come to seek revenge. Although he is human, his eyes are those of a pig. Cattle butchers have the eyes of a cow. The law of cause and effect is never off. There is a verse:

*For hundreds of thousands of years,
The stew in the pot has boiled up
A resentment very hard to level.
If you want to know why
There are wars in the world,
Just listen to the haunting cries that come
From a slaughterhouse at midnight.*

The grief and hatred brewed up in a pot of meat stew is as deep as the ocean. It could never be fully described. The wars and massacres in the world are brought about by the convergence of the evil karma of living beings, causing beings to undergo retribution at the same time. If you listen carefully to the cries of misery coming from a slaughterhouse in the middle of the night, you will realize the horror of the ceaseless killing that goes on in there.

Scientists have discovered that people who eat a great deal of meat tend to get cancer. This is because the resentful energy in the bodies of slaughtered animals accumulates in the bodies of those who eat meat and eventually turns into a harmful toxin. We should cut off this relationship of causes and effects with animals and stop the vicious cycle of creating offenses against cows, sheep, chickens, and other animals. Then we will gradually be able to lessen the inauspicious energy in the world.

At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we want to uphold the Proper Dharma and avert the crisis of killing in the world. We want to slowly and imperceptibly avert this disaster. Therefore we advocate: not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, not drinking, and not taking drugs. At the very least, we should observe the Five Precepts and maintain our purity in that regard. Since you have come to this treasure mountain, don't leave empty-handed! ■