

Escape from Desires, Become a Vegetarian

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Human beings are born kind and pure. But we are easily influenced by our desires, greed and ignorance that makes us create bad karma.

As Buddhists, we believe in an afterlife. If we did not do good in the present life or waste it, we might not have the chance to be human in our future life. There are three lower realms out of the six possible destinies -- hell, hungry ghosts and animals. We all know that we have to properly respect and cherish living creatures but why do we still allow animals to endure beatings and be eaten by us? Some people say they feel unhappy or miserable if they do not eat meat; others even eat meat that is still dripping with blood. This is how human beings cannot stop themselves from creating negative karma. Can we say these people are heartless? No, they are good people and they do good deeds for others. But, if you ask them to control their appetite and stop eating meat, they just cannot accept it.

Everything sounds simple but to be human and vegetarian is not easy. For example, there is a custom among Taoists that, in order to prepare for a certain ceremony, they must have vegetarian meals for the three days before in order to purify their minds. Then, three days after, they kill many animals. Don't you think that they have it the wrong way round? Three days before, they all know they have to purify their hearts through being vegetarian – but, three days later, they allow these creatures to suffer. This is “ignorance” -- when human beings cannot untie the knot of ignorance. They cannot control their minds through wisdom. There are good people who know that they should do good deeds and help others but are not vegetarian. It is truly an example of “ignorance”.

This is the article from “Daily Journal of Dharma Master Cheng Yen (Winter 2001)”.