



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2023



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 7.580



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The Vegan Movement and Perceptions on Animal Life in A Contemporary World

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ABSTRACT: **Veganism** is the practice of abstaining from the use of animal product—particularly in diet—and an associated philosophy that rejects the commodity status of animals. An individual who follows the diet or philosophy is known as a **vegan**. Distinctions may be made between several categories of veganism. Dietary vegans, also known as "strict vegetarians", refrain from consuming meat, eggs, dairy products, and any other animal-derived substances. An ethical vegan is someone who not only follows a plant-based diet but extends the philosophy into other areas of their lives, opposes the use of animals for any purpose, and tries to avoid any cruelty and exploitation of all animals including humans. Another term is "environmental veganism", which refers to the avoidance of animal products on the premise that the industrial farming of animals is environmentally damaging and unsustainable.

Well-planned vegan diets are regarded as appropriate for all stages of life, including infancy and pregnancy, as said by the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council, the British Dietetic Association Dietitians of Canada, the New Zealand Ministry of Health, and the Italian Society of Human Nutrition. The German Society for Nutrition—which is a non-profit organisation and not an official health agency—does not recommend vegan diets for children or adolescents, or during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The components of a whole-foods plant-based vegan diet including legumes, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts—along with little to no consumption of refined foods and animal products, are widely acknowledged to be highly beneficial for both avoiding and treating type 2 diabetes, also known as metabolic syndrome; some evidence suggests that a vegan diet can help with weight loss, especially in the short term. Vegan diets tend to be higher in dietary fiber, magnesium, folic acid, vitamin C, vitamin E, iron, and phytochemicals, and lower in dietary energy, saturated fat, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acid, vitamin D, calcium, zinc, and vitamin B₁₂.^[h] As a result of the elimination of all animal products, a vegan diet may lead to nutritional deficiencies that nullify any beneficial effects and may cause serious health issues. Some of which can only be prevented with fortified foods or dietary supplements. Vitamin B₁₂ supplementation is important because its deficiency can cause blood disorders and potentially irreversible neurological damage; this danger is also one of the most common in poorly-planned non-vegan diets.

KEYWORDS: vegan, animal life, movement, contemporary, world, vegetarians, environment, sustainable

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past couple years, the vegan movement has been on the rise in the U.S. Although it is hard to determine how many people are actually vegan in the United States, as different websites claim different statistics,[1,2] it is an overarching theme that more and more people are choosing to limit their animal product intake. As veganism is starting to go mainstream, it has become easier and more convenient to access vegan options.

In Berkeley, there is an increasing number of restaurants that specialize in vegan meals, such as the Butcher's Son in Downtown Berkeley, Sanctuary Bistro in West Berkeley, and Animal Place's Vegan Republic on University Avenue. UC Berkeley has also tried to make vegan options more available to students with Café 3. According to the Cal Dining website, "Café 3 features a newly designed menu that intentionally increases the ratio of plant-centric foods to animal products, without compromising flavor. The menu focuses on food that is at the intersection of delicious, nutritious, and sustainable, and does not include pork and shellfish. Whether you're looking for vegetarian, vegan, or kosher food options, this 'dining hall for all' aims to provide more options for our diverse student community." The vegetarian options still include eggs and other animal products but no meat or fish, vegan options do not include any animal products including dairy or honey, and kosher food options are prepared in accordance with Jewish dietary laws.[3,4]

At first, veganism was closely bound to the animal-rights movement. Most of the student groups on campus that push for veganism are animal advocacy groups such as the Berkeley Organization for Animal Advocacy as well as

environmental groups that are concerned that meat production is contributing to global climate change and water shortages.

Veganism, however, has now shifted more and more towards a “lifestyle movement.” Many people are now choosing to go vegan due to the claimed health benefits of limiting animal products. According to Juliet Gellatley, director of the vegan and vegetarian group Viva, “People might be prone to heart disease or want to get their cholesterol down,” and this leads them to turn to new diets such as veganism. A plant-based diet has been shown to protect bones, strengthen the heart, and lower the risk of some cancers. Many health benefits are still claims, and there is still much research to be done regarding veganism as a diet choice. While some health benefits have been confirmed by nutritionists and food scientists, such as reduced cardiovascular risk when avoiding meat, other nutritionists are worried that going vegan may not be for everyone and that people may find themselves lacking sufficient nutrition if they are not careful when taking on a vegan diet.[5,6]

Going vegan requires a lot of planning to make sure a healthy diet is maintained. Some information about supplements such as different types of vitamins can be found online. For example, several health-related websites such as Medical News Today mention the importance of supplements — including vitamin B-12, calcium, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids, and zinc — when going vegan to avoid the development of chronic diseases. Most of these compounds can usually be found in animal products, but vitamin pills and alternatives are becoming more available. A healthy vegan diet would include a variety of foods, whole grains, new plant-based proteins, iron, and the vitamin supplements mentioned above. Many vegans eat a large amount of tofu as a protein source. Tofu is cultivated by coagulating soy milk and pressing the curds into white blocks. Tofu has been shown to be a rich source of protein, iron, calcium, and antioxidants, which make it a common replacement for meats and cheeses in the vegan diet. It is also important to find a supportive community of people who share similar diet patterns when making radical diet changes. In Berkeley, there are several meeting spots where vegans gather to discuss their experience with veganism and share advice about certain good vegan restaurants and good diet replacements they have found. A vegan diet is essentially the strictest form of vegetarianism. That is, in addition to avoiding animal flesh, vegans also cut out dairy, eggs and animal-derived ingredients, such as gelatin whey and casein. And as is the case with most beliefs, there are fully-committed vegans and those who are passively giving the diet a try.

While it was widely regarded as a fringe movement not so long ago, veganism has gone mainstream. And whether for health, ethical or environmental reasons, today’s consumers have an incredible array of products at their disposal to help them achieve their vegan goals – which collectively could make a significant impact. According to University of Oxford research, if the world went vegan, it[7,8] could save eight million human lives by 2050 on dietary improvements, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture by two thirds, and lead to healthcare-related savings and avoided climate damages of \$1.5 trillion. While it’s hard to peg an exact number of people who are fully committed to a vegan diet, as many as 6% of U.S. consumers say they are vegan — a six-fold increase compared to just 1% in 2014, according to research firm GlobalData. As much as 3% of the global population may adhere to some form of veganism. Against this backdrop, the vegan market is gaining momentum. According to the Vegan Society: The alternative protein industry raised \$3.1 billion in investments in 2020 – three times more than in any single year in the industry’s history. Plant-based meat, egg and dairy companies received \$2.1 billion in investments in 2020 – the most capital in any single year in the industry’s history and more than three times the \$667 million raised in 2019. Average annual growth in global food and beverage launches with vegan and plant-based claims grew 21% and 58% between 2015-2019, respectively.

As with most changing food dynamics, millennials are leading the push towards veganism, accounting for a third of all vegans. And while everyone has their reasons, making the shift to a vegan lifestyle has never been easier – not only because of widely available vegan products, but the ability of food producers to closely mimic the flavors and textures of everything from milk and ice cream to beef and seafood. Essentially, if one is willing to pay the higher costs for alternative proteins and other products, making the switch to veganism has never been simpler. And as food makers achieve production growth and economies of scale, lower product prices are likely to attract even more consumers.[9,10]

II.DISCUSSION

The Redwood City, California-based company’s eponymous soy-based burgers were sold in more than 11,000 grocery stores nationwide last year — a 77-fold increase over 2019. On the foodservice side, about 30,000 outlets in the U.S. carry Impossible Foods’ products. Now, getting back to the various levels of commitment to the diet, hardcore vegans won’t touch the Impossible burger because one of its key ingredients, soy leghemoglobin, had to go through an FDA

approval process which required animal testing. More flexible vegans, however, are willing to purchase an Impossible Whopper at Burger King without mayonnaise and overlook any other non-vegan food that the soy-based burger may have come into contact with during the cooking process. With that, and sales at an all-time high, Impossible Foods announced in February a 20% price cut for 17,000 grocery stores in the U.S., saying it will ultimately undercut the price of ground beef from cows. In other moves indicating that the company is focused on long-term growth by targeting vegans and non-vegans alike, the company announced this month its first mainstream, mass-market advertising campaign, "We Are Meat." Impossible Foods also announced the hiring of former Apple creative leader Steve Turner as chief experience officer to further build brand awareness. Conditions are certainly advantageous for veganism growth. People are more health conscious and increasingly aware of climate change; vegan options are widely available at grocery stores and restaurants alike; [11,12] innovative products can make consumers feel like the plant-based meat they're eating is the real thing; and higher-cost vegan fare is likely to come down in price as food manufacturers achieve production growth and economies of scale.

"If you really want to kill the most things, be a vegan because the farmer who protects your beans kills everything." It's quite possible that eating less meat might mean less suffering. "But a death is a death. Suffering is suffering, regardless of whether a human was involved, directly, or not. All impacts of our actions need to be considered. And this I think goes to the heart of the matter. What actions produce the least suffering? Some commentators believe that annual crops produce more suffering for more animals. The view is that life is life, that life begets life, and to live we must consume something that has lived, with impacts on other forms of life well beyond our circle of thinking.

"Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals." However, a meat-eating diet is responsible for vastly more suffering and death than a vegan one. The comparison is not even close. And don't forget that around **99%** of our animal products come from factory farms and not from ethical farmers like Matt Evans and Joel Salatin of **Polyface Farms**. [13,14]

There are several different forms of vegetarianism :

- **Lacto vegetarians:** eat dairy but avoid meat, fish, and eggs
- **Ovo vegetarians:** eat eggs but avoid meat, fish, and dairy
- **Lacto-ovo vegetarians:** eat dairy and eggs but avoid meat and fish
- **Vegans:** avoid meat, fish, dairy, and eggs

Veganism is the strictest form of vegetarianism. All vegetarian diets exclude meat, but only vegans restrict their diet to include plant-based foods only. This means that vegans avoid all animal-based foods, like meat, fish, eggs, and dairy. They often avoid animal byproducts, too, such as gelatin. Many vegans also choose to avoid products produced by bees, such as honey. [15,16]

III.RESULTS

According to Menaka Gandhi, everyone's life is strewn with incidents wherein they have a chance to become bigger than themselves, to be nobler and kinder and happier. Some people don't recognize these opportunities but they return again and again – so you still have time to open your eyes. However some people go in the opposite direction – they take the chance that life gives them and they abuse it and strangle it till the little luck they have squeezes itself out the window and runs for its life. They then intellectualize their decisions and blame their loss of munificence on someone else. Take for example someone who has the good fortune to be born finally into a vegetarian household. Why they would lapse into a carnivorous diet and pick up disease, obesity, bad odor, and bad karma is beyond me. But people do. Every now and then, I see people from proud vegetarian families eating meat. When confronted, they do look terribly sheepish and come up with such weird excuses that I thought I would list them for you. These are a selection of the reasons spouted by ex-vegetarians for breaking the faith. [17,18]

"I belong to the privileged Brahmin class. I need to do something to show my solidarity with the downtrodden Dalits and my antagonism to my own class. So I will eat what they eat – meat." (So why not live in the same place and manner they do? Or even better, invite them to share in your own privileges? But that would be asking too much of our fashionable leftist!) "We don't want to look old fashioned. We need to keep up with the times. It's far more sophisticated to eat shrimp and steak than vegetables and dal." (Even if the rest of the world is going the other way?) "My college friends say I am a nuisance at picnics and shouldn't be such a fanatic." (So you should suffer cold e

coli-ridden chicken sandwiches just to go along with the gang. Giving up your beliefs to suit others' convenience is pathetic. If they don't value you, change your friends, not your food)."I can't get protein any other way and I need to put on weight." (Soyabean and dal are the highest sources of protein. All the world's biggest and most powerful animals, elephants, rhinos, giraffes, bulls and horses are vegetarian). Food is a personal choice. I retain my individuality within the family by choosing what I eat. (How about choosing not to wear clothes? Or speaking in a different language? Or sleeping during the day instead of the night? Or working as a coolie – or would that be too way out?)."One should have a balanced diet. Otherwise even the brain gets very one-sided." (Great then include drugs, alcohol, tobacco, insects, mud, worms and human flesh—that's proper balance)."I eat the most conscientiously raised meat I can find; and I don't eat much of it. I'd be vegetarian if I lived in the West where they have those terrible factory farms. In India, humans and animals live together more naturally." (So you check out where every restaurant you eat at procures its meat from? And you've visited poultrys where chickens are grown in cages and injected antibiotics and hormones. And you've never seen trucks overloaded with animals dead or dying from overcrowding or market chicken shops)."It's traditional, mainstream and if everybody eats it, it can't be bad." (And you also approve of dowry, corruption and casteism because they're traditional, mainstream and since everybody practices them, they can't be bad, right?) "My wife/husband eats meat and I can't cook separately because it's too exhausting." (Why not just lump everything together -- soup, main course, dessert because it's too exhausting to make them separately? And why not share clothes to reduce washing and ironing. Put the whole family in one room to reduce cleaning area. All the more reason to cook vegetarian because it's what both people can eat. Should your partner want meat, let him/her go hunt for it).[19,20]

"I was vegetarian when I was young but I'm not that young, bleeding heart activist anymore. One has to be practical." (So the only time to be concerned about anything is when you are young and powerless. As soon as you are in a position to make a difference, you must not. And given that meat is bad for health, economy and environment, what makes it a practical choice?)"It's more important for me to be someone that is respectful and considerate rather than concentrate on dietary preferences" (And killing animals and destroying the environment is the way to demonstrate respect and consideration?)"The papers say that vegetarians will have strokes if they don't get Vitamin B12 which is in meat (there's much more in soya bean but you don't want to know).[21,22]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

Research has shown that a vegan diet can help do the following:

- Promote weight loss
- Reduce your risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol levels
- Lower your chances of getting certain types of cancer, such as colon cancer
- Manage diabetes by lowering A1C levels

To have a healthy diet of any kind, you need important nutrients. While many of these may have been plentiful when you ate dairy and meat, you'll need to find new ways to incorporate them into your diet as a vegan.

- **Protein:** Animals aren't the only sources of protein. Soy products (e.g., tofu and edamame) are also packed with protein. Other good sources include seitan (made from gluten), chickpeas, lentils and nutritional yeast.
- **Vitamin B12:** A lack of vitamin B12 can make you feel tired and weak. Getting enough vitamin B12, though, can be challenging for vegans because it can't be found in plants. To get your fill, stock up on fortified cereals, fortified rice and soy drinks — or take a supplement. The recommended daily amount for most adults is about 2.4 milligrams, but check with your doctor to see what's right for you.
- **Essential fatty acids:** A lack of essential fatty acids has been associated with problems related to brain health, such as cognitive impairment and depression. To get your essential fatty acids, pile up the whole grains and leafy green vegetables (e.g., kale, spinach and collards). And try snacking on a small handful of unsalted nuts, like almonds, walnuts or pistachios (just watch your portions; nuts are high in calories).
- **Iron:** Red meat and egg yolks reign as the richest sources of iron. But they also are high in cholesterol. Good plant sources of iron include black-eyed peas, tofu and dried fruits (fresh fruit has iron, too, you just get more iron from dried fruit because you eat more).
- **Vitamin D:** Ten to 15 minutes of sunlight exposure a day can give you a vitamin D boost, as can fortified orange juice and soy.[23]

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