

# Buddhist Vegan Voices

Here are four statements by real-life Buddhist vegans who answered our 2021-2022 questionnaire. They are in no particular order.

*The views expressed here are those of the individuals themselves and are intended as stimuli for deep thinking, discussion and debate in RE lessons.*

## **Pete, 66 years old, lives in the UK, vegan for 10+ years**

**Pete says he is both an Atheist and a Buddhist. He practises meditation as taught by the Buddha. He is spiritual but not religious and does not consider Buddhism a religion.**

I originally chose lacto-ovo-vegetarian age 18 because I discovered my rich country in the Global North were buying grains from Global South countries whose people then went hungry. We gave that food to animals here which were then killed and eaten by wealthy people here. This seemed morally wrong, that some people should endure starvation because of historical inequalities. I also had concern over the environmental impact, realised it was better for human health and concern for the lives and sufferings of the animals was almost an afterthought.

I transitioned from lacto-ovo to vegan in stages. I lived in India for a while, where the definition of vegetarian does not include eggs, so I abandoned the ovo. Then I met some people who I respected who were vegan and gave up milk, butter and cheese. That was 30 years ago.

As well as food justice issues, I am now also vegan for the animals, for the environment and due to religious beliefs and teachings. Justice for humans too remains a prime motivator, land rights, land use, water distribution, legacy of Colonialism and injustice

I now believe that the practice of human supremacist domination of the Earth's ecosystem(s) has all of its roots in the human supremacist domination of other animals. Humans act as if they were superior or different because of Speciesism. Changing this mindset by really connecting with other animals is the easiest way to get in touch once again with the unity of all beings and our true place within the ecosystem. Ceasing to exploit them as if by human right or destiny is also the easiest, least costly, least impactful way for humanity world-wide to mitigate Climate Change.

To me, veganism is the only relevant ethical position available.

I work to end the unnecessary suffering of beings. To imprison, restrain, buy/sell, control the reproduction of, control the natural expression of their nature's of, to harm, coerce, and kill other beings just for food or clothing or entertainment for human beings is simply unnecessary. I do pursue political and social action to further the spread of plant-based diet and also the wider philosophy of Veganism.

The best thing about being vegan is having a life way which is in line with practice of ethics. The food is great too.

The worst thing about being vegan is abuse from non-vegans. Seeing slaughterhouse trucks going past, going in full and coming out empty, and knowing what happens in between. Feeling helpless to stop that.

Pete also recalled attending a vigil which took place when Animal Rebellion occupied Smithfield Market in London. He wrote: "we sat in silence and lit candles in memory of all the animals killed unnecessarily by humans".

## **Claire, 42 years old, lives in the UK, vegan for 3-5 years**

### **Claire is Buddhist and describes herself as 'spiritual but not religious'**

To me, veganism means reducing the misery and pain of the innocent in this cruel world. I have a vegan diet, don't buy leather, wool or silk, I look for vegan and cruelty free products, donate to animal rescue charities and take part in activism such as contacting my local MP to try to ensure she knows that the public care about animal welfare, to help push new laws through parliament.

The best thing about being vegan is knowing I'm no longer part of the problem.

The most challenging thing about being vegan is that I can't unsee the things I've seen in the documentaries. Those images broke me. I think people should know every step of what happens to animals to bring the food to their plates, so they can make informed choices.

## **Kath, 53 years old, Buddhist and says she is 'spiritual not but not religious'**

To me, veganism means doing no harm personally and active non-participation in any activity that involves animal cruelty or exploitation. Don't eat anything containing animal products, don't eat meat, dairy, eggs, don't wear leather or fur, don't use beauty or household products that are not vegan AND cruelty free. Support animal charities RSPCA, Donkey Sanctuary and PETA. Don't visit or support zoos, circus, aquariums, etc. Don't participate in animal activities on holiday like horse rides, etc.

The best thing about being vegan is the abundance of delicious foods that I know do not involve animal cruelty.

The most challenging thing is the amount of research needed to ensure that I buy products that are truly vegan. Also, other people asking ridiculous questions and being so closed minded to different concepts and ideas.

I think children should learn about veganism at school as it gives a rounded view of the modern world we live in, especially since modern factory farming methods are so closely linked to climate change which threatens ALL of us.

## **Derek, 69 years old, lives in the UK, vegan for 10+ years**

### **Derek is Buddhist and describes himself as religious**

I had been vegetarian for nearly 20 years and watched a video of chicks being sexed. These cute yellow little balls of fluff were chirping away as they were transported along a conveyor belt. Each chick was sexed and females put on one conveyor belt and males another. The camera followed the male chicks as they moved along and, at the end of the belt, fell into a macerator. That was the beginning of my journey to veganism. I am now also motivated to be vegan due to my religious beliefs, concern for the environment and personal health as well.

I have been Buddhist since I was 14 and our first precept is to refrain from causing harm. That has always been my main motivation. Concern for animal suffering and my religion go hand in hand. Over the years I have become more aware of the damage, caused by animal agriculture, to the environment. Any health benefits are purely coincidental.

Being vegan means that I am causing the least harm that I can. I don't eat or wear animal products and use vegan friendly household items. Don't take part in activism but donate to organisations that do. Hope that by example I can influence others. I sign petitions.

The best thing about being vegan is living life without taking it.

These days hardly anything is challenging for a vegan. It was different 30 years ago! If pressed I would say labelling on products could be more consistent.