

A STUDY ON “VEGANISM” - A CHALLENGE IN INDIAN HOSPITALITY

INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Veganism is a practice of abstaining from the use of animal products, particularly in diet, and is also an associated philosophy that rejects the commodity status of animals. A follower of veganism is known as a **vegan**. The term was coined by Donald Watson. The paper highlights the totality of this concept barring the intricacies of the nutritional aspects in detail. The concept of vegan lifestyle and the challenges faced by going vegan in hospitality industry are focussed. The paper also brings out the various steps taken at

Introduction

Veganism is a practice of abstaining from the use of animal products, particularly in diet, and is also an associated philosophy that rejects the commodity status of animals. A follower of veganism is known as a **vegan**. Distinctions are sometimes made between several categories of veganism. *Dietary vegans (or strict vegetarians)* refrain from consuming animal products, not only meat but also eggs, dairy products and other animal-derived substances. The term *ethical vegan* is often applied to those who not only follow a vegan diet but extend the philosophy into other areas of their lives, and oppose the use of animal products for any purpose. Another term is *environmental veganism*, which refers to the avoidance of animal products on the premise that harvesting or industrial farming of animals is environmentally damaging and unsustainable.

Origin of Veganism

The term “vegan” was coined in 1944 by Donald Watson when he co-founded the Vegan Society in England, at first to mean "non-dairy vegetarian" and later the “doctrine that man should live without exploiting animals.” World Vegan Day is held every 1 November to mark the society's creation. Donald Watson, secretary of the Leicester Vegetarian Society, set up a new quarterly newsletter “Vegan News” in November 1944. He chose the word vegan himself. The first edition attracted over 100 letters from people who resolved to give up eggs and dairy. Vegan News changed its name to The Vegan in November 1945 and by now it had 500 subscribers. It published recipes, health news and a "vegan trade list" of animal-free products such as Colgate toothpaste, Kiwi shoe polish, Dawson & Owen stationery.

Research Methodology

The objective of this research paper is to highlight the concept of veganism, to understand the challenges faced by vegans and to find out how veganism is being promoted in hospitality. It is a descriptive research paper which is explorative in nature. The paper is conceptual paper based on literature review and secondary data. Primary data is very limited confined to interview of few eminent personalities from culinary sector.

Veganism in World

The first vegan society in the United States was founded in 1948 by Catherine Nimmo and Rubin Abramowitz in California, who distributed Watson's newsletter. In 1960 H. Jay Dinshah founded the American Vegan Society (AVS) and linked the concept of veganism with Gandhian Principles of Truth i.e. to promote the pillars of A-H-I-M-S-A, "non-harming" in Sanskrit.

A-Abstinence from Animal Products; H-Harmlessness with Reverence for Life; I- Integrity of Thought, Word, and Deed;

M-Mastery over Oneself (against greed, envy, and materialism; instead focus on enlightenment); S-Service to Humanity, Nature, and Creation; A-Advancement of Understanding and Truth

According to Joanne Stepaniak, the word vegan was first published independently in 1962 by the Oxford Illustrated Dictionary, defined as "a vegetarian who eats no butter, eggs, cheese or milk."

Vegan festivals

Legend has it that a Chinese opera troupe fell ill in the 19 century while on a tour to Phuket. One of the ailing performers realized they had simply failed to honour the Nine Emperor Gods (a tradition that falls during a nine-day period in the ninth month of the Chinese Lunar calendar) and returned to China to invite the gods back to Phuket. In a display of piousness, the troupe went in full abstinence—no eating of meat, no sex, no drinking, no swearing—their health improved, and a festival was born. In reality, the opera company picked a bad to time visit Phuket as a deadly epidemic had been sweeping the island for months.

In China, Taoists traditionally believed that the Nine Emperor Gods were the individual stars of the Big Dipper plus two smaller neighbouring stars who descended to earth to bring healing waters (i.e. rain). Celebrants wear white, light incense, ring prayer bells and parade in honour of the deities' arrival. Observers should expect to see entranced mediums walking the streets of Phuket with their faces and bodies pierced with thin long pins, knives, stakes, swords, and any manner of sharp objects. Local traditions and stories came into being. In the case of the Phuket Vegetarian Festival, the Chinese traditions of wearing white and parading continue, however, something unique has been morphed in its display and practice. Like Thaipusam, celebrants physically pierce and mutilate their bodies during the nine days to demonstrate the belief that the gods will bring healing waters and their physical wounds will be healed. A man with 20 blades jutting through his body, blood cascading down his white shirt is a stark sight for even the least faint of heart. Perhaps miraculously, both scarring and deaths are rare once the Vegetarian Festival has ended.

Participants, known as mah song (roughly translated as "horseback riding"), are considered to be mediums (the horse) who invite the gods (the riders) to enter and possess them while in a trance brought on by the ritual piercing, flaying, and mutilation. While bleeding and entranced, the mahsong visit Phuket's temples

(where the cutting takes place under the supervision of medical staff) and food stalls, where they participate in a variety of vegetarian dishes locally known asje. One of the most exciting aspects of the festival are the various, (and sometimes gruesome) ceremonies which are held to invoke the gods. Fire walking, body piercing and other acts of self mortification undertaken by participants acting as mediums of the gods, have become more spectacular and daring as each year goes by. Other events include hundreds of local residents running across a bed of burning coals, or climbing an eight meter ladder of sharp blades while in trance. Apart from the visual spectacle of this festival, the visitors can participate in specially prepared vegetarian cuisine made available at street stalls and markets around the island during this time. The vegetarian dishes are not easily distinguished from regular dishes - soybean and protein substitute products are used to replace meat in standard Thai fare and look and taste uncannily like meat.

Vegan Diets

Vegan diets tend to be higher in dietary fibre, magnesium, folic acid, vitamin C, vitamin E, iron and phytochemicals, and lower in calories, saturated fat, cholesterol, long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, calcium, zinc and vitamin B12. Well-planned vegan diets can reduce the risk of some types of chronic disease, including heart disease, and are regarded as appropriate for all stages of the life-cycle by the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council, and Dieticians of Canada. Because uncontaminated plant foods do not provide vitamin B12 (which is produced by microorganisms such as bacteria), researchers agree that vegans should eat B12-fortified foods or take a supplement. Dr. William Lambe is considered to be the father of vegan nutrition as he was the first to be specific about it way back in 1809.

Veganism in India

India can reasonably claim that it has been a vegetarian dominated country since many generations. Here, vegetarianism has always been associated with religion, mainly Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Today many young people enticed away from their religion by the consumer-driven western lifestyle, including western style junk-food. Attempts to turn them back to traditional lifestyles have not made much

progress, however, it is observed that over the last few years there is a remarkable rise in Indian adaptation of western-style veganism, especially among young people. There have long been Lacto-Vegetarian Societies in India, and International Vegetarian Union (IVU) was represented by them for 50 years up to 2006. The approach of these groups was traditionally to work within the Hindu and other smaller veg communities, offering valuable support to existing vegetarians and encouraging others Hindus to join them.

As far back as 1889 there were vegetarian societies in India, run by Indians. Mahatma Gandhi recorded in his autobiography that in 1891, while he was studying law in London, he read a book by Henry Salt which persuaded him that being vegetarian was important in its own right, not just because of the religious vow he made to his mother when he left India.

This did not negate his religious beliefs; it just gave his vegetarianism a separate identity. In 1931 Gandhi returned to London, and while being there he gave a talk for the London Vegetarian Society. During that talk he made it very clear that he would have preferred to live without any use of animal products at all. During his student days in London, Gandhi had attended an International Vegetarian Congress, and just before he returned home he said he hoped that such an event would be held in India. Sadly that did not happen until nine years after his death. This shows that this is not a new idea in India.

The first International Vegetarian Union (IVU) World Vegetarian Congress to be held in India was in 1957 and since then there have been several such meets in India. There were huge IVU Congresses in India, in 1967 and 1977 – opened by the Dalai Lama, who was vegetarian at the time. All of these were organised by the extraordinary Jayantilal Mankar. He was a leader of the Bombay Humanitarian League and took each of these Congresses to what were then Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras.

The Indian Vegetarian Congress was founded in 1959 and for most of its existence a very traditional lacto-vegetarian organization, now states as one of its objectives - “The IVC will spread awareness of the benefits of soy beans and endeavour to distribute soy milk whenever possible.” They have recently gone even further by co-opting Shankar Narayan, founder and President of the Indian Vegan Society (IVS) onto their board. The last IVU, World Vegetarian Congress in India was held in Goa

in 2006, organised by Jashu Shah, IVU Regional Coordinator, which included launching the Asian Vegetarian Union in 1999. In 2007, the first International Vegan Festival was held in India, and by October 2010 we were able to meet with a substantial group of vegan activists from all over India. Bangalore has its own local vegan society and a vegan animal rights group. One recent survey estimated an increase from 2,000 to 20,000 vegans since 2006. In 2010 The Telegraph of India newspaper finally caught up with what is happening and ran a story about the increase in veganism.

Veganism - a lifestyle

Going vegan is not just restricted to food but is extended to other aspects of life as being truly a vegan — discontinuing the use of all animal products, as well as practices that exploit animals. It is a lifestyle in which vegans extend their abstention to nonfood items.

Clothing

Vegans do not wear or use fur, wool, silk, leather, feathers, down, bones, or any other animal-based attire instead use either natural or synthetic non-animal materials. Synthetic furs are beautiful and durable and only a fraction of the cost of animal furs. From the environmental standpoint, they use far less fossil fuel to produce than does the raising or trapping, transporting, and processing of animal fur, especially considering the costly and energy-greedy, summertime, refrigerated storage needed to slow the decay of the dead animal matter in real fur coats. Genuine silk is obtained almost universally by first roasting or boiling the silkworm to death. Vegans do not use silk. Vegans use popular plant-based sources including cotton, rayon, hemp, linen, and bamboo. Vegans also use mineral-sourced synthetics such as nylon, polyester, and spandex that are readily available. Hemp and bamboo are becoming popular fabrics. There is an abundance of non animal shoe materials both natural and manmade and used worldwide. Natural and synthetic rubber, cork, cotton canvas, various natural and synthetic fibers, and many types of plastics are included in the assortment of shoe materials. Some stores carry exclusively vegan shoes—including ones that are poromeric (breathable imitation leather)—either in brick-and-mortar establishments or online.

Toiletries

Soaps, cosmetics, shampoos, and other toiletries generally contain animal oils or fats such as lanolin which is sheep-wool fat, beeswax, slaughterhouse tallow and its derivatives, and perfume ingredients that involve cruelty and slaughter. Perfumes often contain glandular secretions from animals. Various lines of products on the market do not contain such substances and are not tested on animals. Verifying suitable products used to require extensive research. Now typically one can check

the label for a vegan symbol or for words such as “no animal ingredients” and “not tested on animals.” Unfortunately it is still difficult to find vegan toiletries in supermarkets in many areas of the country.

Jewelry

Pearls, shells, teeth, tusks, horns, bones, feet, feathers, and the like usually involve the destruction of animals although they may occasionally be found shed by an animal or from an animal deceased by natural causes. Vegans affirm that there is no need to wear these items when there are many ways to adorn one’s self without hurting animals.

Household goods

Objectionable items here include animal-hair and wool rugs and carpets, down or feather pillows, feather dusters, woolen blankets, and animal-hair brushes and brooms. Animal-free substitutes for all these are in widespread use like nylon carpets, foam-rubber or kapok pillows, cotton or synthetic-fiber quilts, blankets, and comforters, plastic or fiber brushes, and straw brooms. Hemp and bamboo are becoming popular in household goods.

Sports

Hunting, animal fighting, animal racing, and fishing are cruel practices. Sports of many varieties can be played without any unwilling participation of the animal kingdom. True sport involves fun and fair play, not violence or sadism by getting a thrill out of killing something or bending it is the submission of true vegans.

Amusements

Vegans are opposed to animal circuses and to performing land animals, sea animals, or birds. We are aware of the years of cruel prodding and punishing that lie behind a performance act using animals kidnapped from their natural habitat. Some circuses with all human willing participants have been formed that offer amazing shows. Vegans also oppose zoos. Zoos are usually little more than prisons for once free land or sea creatures far from their natural habitat. Animals exhibit neurotic behavior in captivity. Many animals refuse to raise their young in this unnatural condition. National parks, animal sanctuaries, and true wildlife preserves are much better and more rewarding for all concerned.

Research and medicines

Drugs, vaccines, serums, and hormones are often made from animal matter. An ethical dilemma may be encountered when considering use of an animal product in this category following advice from a health professional. Millions of animals are used each year to test and develop drugs and techniques to cure disease. Vegans typically choose to use a healthy lifestyle as a defense against disease. Vegans often do not rely on drugs for cures, realizing that nature has provided safer ways of

building and maintaining true health with wholesome natural food, pure water, fresh air, sunshine, sufficient rest, ample exercise, and all other factors needed for physical well-being.

Vegan alcohols

It's easy to find vegan alcohol, but some research has to be done since beer and wine can be processed using animal products such as isinglass, egg whites, or gelatin. Unfortunately these ingredients are never listed on the labels, since alcohol is commonly exempt from the labeling requirements of other food products. Fortunately, virtually every brand of hard liquor—bourbon, whiskey, vodka, gin, and rum—is vegan. Nearly all distilled spirits are vegan except for cream-based liqueurs and products that mention honey on the label. Some of the most popular vegan alcohol brands: Absolute, Bacardi Rum, Grey Goose, Hangar 1, Malibu Rum, Svedka, Skyy Vodka, Budweiser, Coors and Coors Light, Miller Lite, High-Life, & Genuine Draft, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Yuengling, Wines like Charles Shaw (red wines only), Frey Vineyards, The Vegan Vine, Red Truck Wines and Yellowtail (red wines only; not white or rosé).

Veganism in Hospitality

There are a few initiatives taken up some stakeholders' tourism and hospitality industry for vegans. With the launching of Veggie-Hotels (a hotel association web worldwide) in 2011, the difficulty in finding hotels, Bed and Breakfasts or guest houses that naturally cater to the needs and desires for people with a vegan lifestyle has reduced. The founders of Veggie Hotels are Thomas and Karen Klein, travel journalists, and IT specialist Peter Haunert. This offers a platform that connects vegetarian and vegan guests and hosts worldwide. The accommodation units listed here are the ones that offer strictly vegan kitchens. Veggie Hotels are taking on a pioneer role in underlining the importance of sustainability and ethics in the tourism industry. The reduced carbon footprint of a vegetarian and especially a vegan diet attests to the positive environmental impact of Veggie Hotels. In addition, Veggie Hotels fulfill daily the ethical aspects of tourism that practices harmlessness toward animals. With Veggie Hotels you will find the whole range – from a vegetarian whole foods breakfast in a Veggie-Bed and Breakfast to a multi-course vegan dinner in a first-class hotel. A Veggie Hotel visit can help with transitioning to a vegetarian/vegan diet, or simply provide a taste of vegetarian cuisine. Most Veggie Hotels will accommodate vegan guests and can be easily identified with the 'detailed search' option. Some hotels offer an exclusively vegan menu, which means that no animal products are used at all.

Famous vegan restaurants/hotels in India:

1. Bean Me Up in Goa

Bean Me Up is a restaurant that serves only vegan and vegetarian food, using the freshest ingredients and their homemade tofu. They source their ingredients and provide their services with respect to the environment. The recipes are organic and gluten-free where needed.

2. Carrots - Bangalore's first vegan restaurant

Vegetarians in India, although making up about 30% of the population, are primarily, as far as their diet goes, lacto-vegetarians. Vegans (those who completely abstain from the use of any animal products, either in diet, clothing or anywhere else) in India though, comparatively are few and far between but the trend is growing. Health conscious Indians are turning vegans and it is expected that more will follow. To cater to this need, Carrots has started up in Bangalore. Gluten free food is available with GF indicator.

3. Green Hotel Restaurant In Mcleodganj

Again it caters to the growing segment of vegans in India. The delicacies include Tofu-cheese Momos, green teas, tofu chips, cereals, pancakes, soups, salads, and fresh fruit juice to name a few.

4. Talera Group Of Hotels

All six hotels under the Talera Group are vegetarian. This means that all the restaurants and cafes in each of the six hotels are vegetarian and comfortably vegan on request. Each hotel is suited to the specific needs of different travellers.

5. Kamat: Vegetarian Hotels And Restaurants (Karnataka)

It offers a huge number of dishes that do not contain ghee and outnumber those that do. Vegetable oil is used as the medium for cooking. Kamat has around 30 branches spread in and around the state of Karnataka. There is one branch each in Delhi and Hyderabad as well.

Challenges of going vegan

Many restaurants are not doing vegan food because of the following commonly stated reasons: - *No demand for it*: Most vegans will just look at the menu in the window, or on the website, and if they see nothing vegan they go somewhere else instead. Hence the restaurateurs see no demand. *Losing one awkward customer*

won't make any difference: Most vegans have mostly non-vegan friends and family. When they're deciding where to eat the one vegan will decide to choose the place. The restaurant doesn't just lose the one awkward customer, they lose all their friends and family as well. Add to that, most people like going back to the same restaurants, and repeat trade is crucial to the success of any business. Those friends and family are likely to keep going back to the one with vegan options that was chosen – even when the vegan isn't with them. *It is just too much hassle when there are so few vegans:* Most plant-food meals in restaurants are not eaten by committed vegans; they are bought by people who like the idea of vegan food but do not commit themselves to it in any consistent way. One of the biggest groups choosing vegan options are ovo-lacto-vegetarians - they are generally well aware of all the health and ethical issues around eggs and dairy products, and most are inclined to limit their consumption, but without much consistency. Given a choice between a restaurant whose vegetarian dishes are all smothered in cheese sauce, and one offering some vegan options, they will often prefer the latter. In most parts of the world there are still more ovo-lacto-vegetarians than vegans, but the impact of the internet and social network sites, has made a huge difference to attitudes in recent years. *There are no easy vegan recipes suitable for commercial restaurants:* Vegan cookbooks do tend to be written mostly for domestic use. The need is for cookbooks that are specifically for non-vegans chefs stating how to make it easier to provide vegan options in a non-vegan restaurant. In the UK for example, almost any café, pub or restaurant now has a choice of vegetarian meals, but outside of the bigger cities there is still very little without eggs and dairy products. As people are aspiring to become vegans, they are discovering, many physical, social and economic challenges.

1. *Insensitive behaviour from friends and family members:* It's not very accepted in our society not to eat meat. People consider as going vegan to be just a health fad.
2. *Expensive:* Substitutes like almond milk and rice milk can shock the taste buds, and vegan specialty and convenience foods can cost two to three times what their meat and dairy equivalents do.
3. *Hidden animal ingredients:* New vegans discover that many foods in grocery stores and on restaurant menus have hidden animal ingredients.

4. *Difficult to control the desire and adopt the vegan lifestyle*: New vegans say it's hard to give up favourite foods and adjust to the taste of substitutes for butter and dairy products. Giving up favourite foods is never easy, food scientists say, for it means overriding taste preferences imprinted on the brain during a lifetime of eating. It always takes more motivation to change any type of behaviour than to go on with old habits.

Conclusion

Researchers have found out that Dairy products are difficult to replace as the intrinsic attributes of dairy foods i.e. proteins and fats that are difficult to mimic in a non dairy substitute. More so happens because people start consuming these foods in infancy, the taste preference is deeply ingrained. Consumers do feel the difference between milk-based and soy-based products. Once their first reference is milk-based products, they tend to reject plant-based products made with oat and soy or other vegetable-based food. Vegan ingredients and cooking techniques can be overwhelming for beginners, even if the changes are relatively small. Methods for making vegan foods creamy or cheesy involve soaking and blending cashews. Society in India is still not understanding and accepting the vegan lifestyle though we practice Ayurveda since ancient times in our nation. Despite our country being 'the land of the sacred cow', and following the path of 'Ahimsa' – non-violence, still more than 50% of male calves are slaughtered as they are considered to be of no use to the dairy industry. In addition, this concept not new in India and was practiced by Mahatma Gandhi yet people are not aware about it. India has a huge canvas of rich heritage and diverse culture yet the Indian society is unwilling to practically adopt this lifestyle while they have a high desire for a healthy lifestyle. There is a need to spread awareness in the society regarding veganism as people in India do not generally know about the concept and they are following it just as to be the part of the motion. Very few numbers of outlets are present in India which serve completely and only to the Vegans. So, a major requirement is there to open lot of vegan food outlets to meet the needs of the people who are Vegans. Such diets have health benefits like no diseases related to gluten and no diseases related to lactose present in the milk. General public needs to be sensitized about the concept so that they don't make fun of the ones following it. This can be done if the subject is made interesting.

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