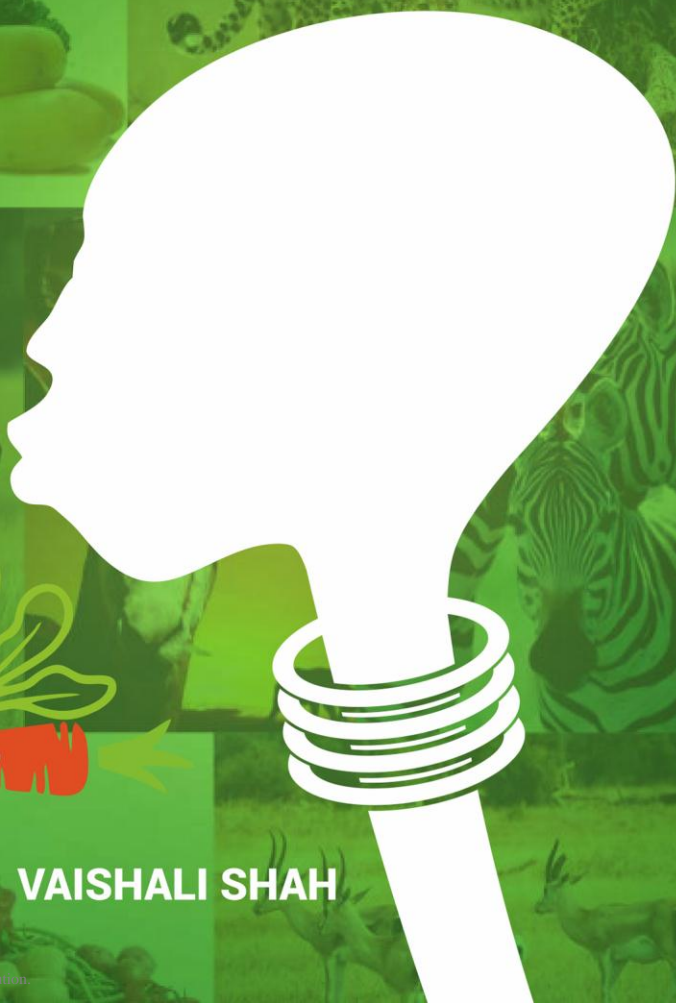


# THE VEG SAFARI

A Journey from Nature Abusing to Nature Worshipping



VAISHALI SHAH

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# The Veg Safari

Vaishali Shah



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# *The Veg Safari*

*Vaishali Shah*



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# Foreword



**T**he minute people hear the word Vegetarianism; it generates diverse feelings and responses. There are many people who feel that vegetables are not for them and others who feel that it is difficult to change over to a new and unfamiliar diet. Still others think that they are strong and healthy and would see no need of experimenting with something different such as vegetables.

So this work on the value and use of vegetables in our diet and the role it plays in our environment has come at the right time. The continent of Africa is endowed with rich soil on which plants of all kinds thrive; yet not much is said about their value neither are they exploited to the maximum for the benefit of humanity and environment. This book on vegetarianism bridges the gap in providing rich information on the value of such plants in our diet and more so, how they enrich our environment. It comes handy in explaining why vegetable diet is the way to go in this 21st century for productive healthy living and how the availability of vegetable as a component of environment promotes environmental conservation. Engagement on vegetable production also serves as an arm of enterprise as it promotes income generation among farmers.

Vaishali Shah is the founder of the Kenya Vegetarian Club, an organisation focused on promoting Vegetarianism and conservation of environment. Her



work, therefore, has addressed concerns regarding the perception of vegetarianism and she has tried to make it as interesting and as convincing as possible by presenting so many case studies from her personal firsthand experience. The organisation has since focused on distributing vegetable seeds as well as tree seedlings for planting in local communities and schools in Kenya. This noble task is contributing enormously to promote not just vegetarianism but also handhold locals into growing vegetables. By targeting children in schools, who are the future of a country and by imparting correct knowledge and perception about the use of vegetables, the result will be the creation of a nation of healthy and productive citizens. On this basis, Vaishali is best placed to have produced this book.

I congratulate her for this great work done and recommend the book to all who are serious about healthy diet, sound environment and entrepreneurship.

**Professor Jack Kamiruka**

**Director: Lake Basin College,**

**Kisumu-Kenya**

# Preface

**I**t is a beautiful journey to share with my readers about how a movement I started in Kenya to help people turn vegetarian helped me in return with abundance of joy and awareness. I am tempted to pen down my experiences which I have encountered in Kenya while promoting the concept of meat free diet. I hope my readers will cherish this journey and pick up something useful to practise in their daily life. The time has come when we should strongly bring about a change in the mindset of the people towards life, health, materialistic pleasures, career, business and family. This book is an attempt to reach out to such an audience who want to change for positive reasons but are a tad reluctant or are not motivated enough. Let's try to highlight the importance of a meat free world and enable people to accept this diet with more dignity in a positive manner.

Let us also not forget that animals too have a right to live, this is the fundamental right of every living being and we do not have the right to snatch this away from other beings just because they do not raise their voice. Kenya is rich in animal kingdom which has been encroached by various segments of the society for their vested interests. Their inability to speak or otherwise display feelings should not be construed as their inability to feel pain and suffering. In his book *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer establishes quite firmly that the basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical treatment; it requires equal consideration. People often question as to whether animals should have rights, the answer is an unequivocal yes, animals as

much as man deserve the right to lead their lives free of suffering and exploitation.

So the next time you reach out for that hamburger, spare a thought to the life that was snuffed out cruelly and mercilessly just for a minute's pleasure on your palate. Let us not become like one of those characters that the satirist Jonathan Swift describes

“Ever eating, never cloying,  
All-devouring, all-destroying  
Never finding full repast,  
Till I eat the world at last.”

Let's save our stomach from becoming the graveyard of dead animals and make Kenya a great nation to live in. Let me take you on a safari, a Veg Safari through the following pages and see where we stand currently and what we can do to make this beautiful nation the superstar of Africa.

## Chapter 1

# What is Vegetarianism?

**T**he concept of Vegetarianism itself is nothing new as there were votaries of vegetarianism in ancient India and Greece as early as 5th century B.C. While India has traditionally followed the principles of nonviolence and compassion towards other beings, it was practiced for medical or ritual purposes in ancient Greece and Egypt. However with the spreading of Christianity, vegetarianism lost its popularity. The founding of the Vegetarian Society, in Manchester, UK in 1847, brought it back to the public domain once again. Other countries like Germany followed suit. In the year 1908, The International Vegetarian Union, a union of the national societies was established. In the twentieth century, Vegetarianism as a concept grew in the West due to ethical and nutritional concerns while nowadays the resurgence is attributed mainly due to environmental and economic concerns.

I feel, the internet is the best thing to have happened to the world in recent times as events, information, exploitation; case studies have become available quite easily as references. This has made the world more aware about the impact of our actions on our health and environment. As the clock ticks by and doomsday warnings keep ringing out from environmentalists almost on a daily basis, there is greater awareness that we should collectively do something to stem this disaster

waiting to happen. This rising concern towards saving the planet has made the world think about the pro active actions required to be taken.

This is the reason that there is more than one club or organization or society promoting vegetarianism and veganism in the world. Latest figures show that there are more than 600 million vegetarians worldwide of which only a miniscule 5% make up the vegetarian population of Kenya that too mostly non-Africans. This is also the reason why I thought of establishing Kenya Vegetarian Club to help Kenyans turn vegetarian.



**Vegetable farming**

## **What is Veganism?**

Veganism is a way of life which seeks to exclude to the extent possible any form of exploitation of animals for purposes of food, clothing or any other reason. Vegans avoid all forms of animal products such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy, honey, leather and any other product tested on animals. The idea of Veganism was established in 1944 when ‘The Vegan Society’ was born. The word

appeared to have been used by people associated with the Alcott House Concordium at Ham Common, a school and community founded by the mystic James Pierrepont Greaves in 1838. Donald Watson of Leicester –later found The Vegan Society in all probability on the 5th of November 1944.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or PETA was formed in 1980 and they campaign against the use of animals in factory farms, laboratories, in the clothing and entertainment industries. They advocate a vegan lifestyle. By promoting a vegan lifestyle, one can develop a more compassionate, caring and humane world. It is not just about changing one's diet, it is developing a caring attitude towards all life forms.

At Kenya Vegetarian Club, we try to address these issues through seminars, presentations and discussions. We also try to give healthy alternatives to our members to wean them from flesh foods.

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## Chapter 2

# Why is it the need of the hour?

**M**edical science has proved that diet is the main culprit for many diseases. A vegetarian diet reduces the risk for many chronic degenerative diseases like obesity, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, certain types of cancer including colon, breast, prostate, stomach, lung and esophageal cancer. A healthy vegetarian diet is free from animal fat and cholesterol; on the other hand it is rich in fiber and antioxidants. Many foodborne illnesses can be avoided. Eating meat and animal food increases the risk of ill health as they are saturated fats with high levels of sodium. Besides they may also have potentially life threatening poisons and contaminants like hormones, herbicides and pesticides. Besides, their bodies may also harbor many viruses, bacteria and parasites like salmonella, trichinella and other worms. All these are consumed by those relishing their flesh. No wonder, meat-eating has been linked to cancer, heart disease, strokes, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, kidney stones, and many other such deadly diseases. By switching over to a vegetarian diet we are doing our bodies a great service as they are designed for plant food

Weight watchers should stick to a vegetarian diet. It is wholesome and full of nutrition. A Vegetarian diet is not only attractive but also colorful, look at the bowels of nature. It yields a diet that is rich in color and nutrition.

A balanced diet is highly energy giving and helps the eaters to ward off lethargy, be brisk and high on energy throughout the day.

The new generation workout specialists have created a big myth about eating beef to build muscles. They are misguided themselves and mislead the gym goers to eat beef to build the muscles and develop a personality of Hollywood stars.

But the journey of that meat from the farm to your plate takes a toll on the natural resources which could have been used for something else. Animals are fed with grains to end up on lunch plates, this can certainly be reversed and we will be reducing the burden on natural resources. Raising animals for food is grossly impractical and non viable because while animals eat large quantities of grain, soybeans, oats, and corn, they only produce comparatively small amounts of meat, dairy products, or eggs in return. Statistics reveal that more than 70 percent of the grain and cereals grown in developed countries are fed to farmed animals. It takes up to 13 pounds of grain to produce just 1 pound of meat, and even fish on fish farms must be fed up to 5 pounds of wild caught fish to produce 1 pound of farmed fish flesh. Farmlands are being plundered to fatten cattle for slaughter. Existing farms which find it difficult to raise food for human beings are slowly taken away to produce fodder to raise cattle. It is a losing battle for the hungry. The poor do not get one square meal a day. Whereas the rich spend millions on exotic dishes just to satisfy their whims. So we see how lopsided it is, while most of the world is starving, precious land is taken away to cultivate fodder for fattening the cattle that would end up in someone's plate eventually. If we have to set right this imbalance, then turning vegetarian is the only solution.

And of course the most valid of all reasons is the ethical one. Have you ever seen animals taken to the



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|| Why is it the need of the hour?

slaughter-house in trucks and then cramped in dingy pens and sheds? The incredible and often indescribable sadness in their eyes coupled with fear is enough to melt even the most wretched of hearts. Many choose to ignore this even if they are aware. Otherwise how can food packages containing animal products disappear from the supermarket shelves each day with such lightning speed? Consumers of animal flesh may not even be aware of these things, as it is like a habit something like- 'is there will have it'. I strongly feel that creating awareness is the key to bringing about a positive change. Consumers should make informed choices after knowing the pros and cons, the benefits of vegetarian diet.

While studying the economic standard of Kenyans I found that we have a list of expenses which we can avoid to get a better life and reduce the cost of the living. The measure taken to turn people vegetarian directly reduces the stress on government to improve the quality standard and help people directly.

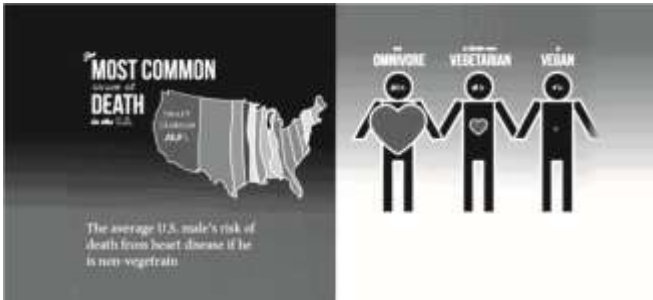
Slowly but surely, I firmly believe the world will rediscover the merits of vegetarianism

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## Chapter 3

# Problems of Personal Health

**T**he American Dietetic Association warns of the risks associated with meat eating. Those who consume non vegetarian food risk the dangers of heart disease, colon cancer, obesity, adult onset diabetes, gout, osteoporosis, kidney stones, gallstones, diverticular disease, lung cancer and breast cancer. Animal based food is high in fat and lacks fibre. This causes so many problems for the human body. Basically the human body is designed for ingesting and digesting plant foods, to force it to consume meat and make it a graveyard is to invite trouble.



Doctors recommend a diet with high fibre as this helps prevent incidence of colon cancer. High meat intake is almost always linked to colon cancer. Animal based food is high in protein. These cause the body to excrete

more calcium, oxalate and uric acids. These are responsible for the formation of kidney and gallbladder stones. Once again vegetarians have a lesser chance of getting these as plant based food is not high in proteins as animal food. A few studies have shown that vegetarian food benefits those with a history of asthma. It was also found that those suffering from multiple sclerosis could arrest the progression of the disease with a gradual improvement of their condition. Vegetarianism also reduced the risk of breast cancer in women by 25%.

Does one need meat for power and endurance? That's a great myth busted by many naturopaths and dieticians. It is well known that a vegetarian diet boosts energy levels and keeps us mentally alert. The fastest and the powerful animals are all vegetarians. So it is with human beings also. A well balanced nutritious diet that has all the categories in it helps in giving energy and nutrition. Plant foods contain significant amounts of vital B-vitamins, and folic acid. Fruits and vegetables are powerful sources of phytochemicals – nutrients that help every organ of the body work better.

Moving first from individuals and later families to whole communities, we find low fat vegetarian diet can keep them all fit and strong and can save larger community money as diet related illnesses decrease.

## **Experience**

While I was a regular in the gym, I found that most of the top trainers advise us to eat beef to build the muscles. I was really devastated to know how the youth and health professionals are misguided themselves and misguiding others with the myth about beef eating.

Our club approached few such health professionals and explained to them the toxin called Dioxin found in beef which can lead to so many diseases. The protein

required to build muscles are found in plenty in various vegetarian food like spinach, broccoli, bananas, sweet potatoes, nuts, beans and legumes.

We also need to understand the hype and misconception spread about proteins is purely to sell such products by some companies. Our daily requirements of protein can be had with only two spoons of any green gram or yellow gram which can be made into one bowl of soup after adding water while boiling with some salt and pepper.

### **Case study**

Let me tell you about Nitin Mehta from London

Nitin Mehta MBE was born in Kisumu, Kenya. At the age of 19 he settled in the UK. He graduated in 1980 from Goldsmiths College, London. Nitin has always had great pride in his Indian heritage. In 1980 he started the Young Indian Vegetarians Society which has played a big role in popularizing vegetarianism in Britain. There are over 5 million vegetarians and vegans in the country. He also helped set up vegetarian societies in Kenya, Mauritius and Portugal. He is closely associated with many animal welfare and vegetarian groups in India and also works closely with Maneka Gandhi, India's leading animal rights activist and Union Minister. There are many animal sanctuaries in Britain, looking after cats, dogs, horses, donkeys, sheep and cows. Over £300,000 has been donated to these sanctuaries over the years. In 1999 he received an MBE for his services to the community. He has also received an award from the Mayor of London for making a significant contribution to the city of London. He believes that Vegetarianism and Yoga are India's gifts to the world and all Indians should promote them both.

Nitin Mehta can be contacted on  
animalahimsa@gmail.com

This is how Indians are spreading the goodness of vegetarianism in the world today.



Many health problems faced by millions across the world can be solved by following proper diet and exercise. There are many edible plants peculiar to Africa which besides providing nutrition helps in curing many common ailments. Some plants also aid in improving the quality of the skin while some products are used in the local beauty industry. Some examples are the African eggplant, bambara bean, baobab, cowpea, Dika nuts, Egusi and varieties of millets. Vegetarian Fairs are organized in many countries to create awareness.

Yoga is also embraced by many locals and residents and the Declaration of 21st June as International Yoga Day has popularized this ancient exercise form in all parts of Africa. We have Yoga Festivals in Nairobi, Kenya and in many other places where people of all nationalities converge to show solidarity and pledge to exercise regularly for good health.

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The cause of vegetarianism is very dear to my heart and as a first step I set up the Kenya Vegetarian Club to help Kenyans turn vegetarian. Over the years, I have been passionately involved in carrying out many activities to save the environment. We need to create awareness about many aspects like the impact of animal-based foods on our natural resources, the consequence of depleting ozone layer, greenhouse effect, how to create self-sufficiency in food, how to involve locals in vegetable farming, how to promote tree planting and above all how to make each citizen responsible for the good of this planet and their personal health. This book is a record of my thoughts and experiences in this direction. I hope my readers will receive *The Veg Safari* warmly and feel motivated enough to join me in this mission of ensuring health and happiness to all.

**Vaishali Shah**



“ The minute people hear the word Vegetarianism; it generates diverse feelings and responses. There are many people who feel that vegetables are not for them and others who feel that it is difficult to change over to a new and unfamiliar diet. Still others think that they are strong and healthy and would see no need of experimenting with something different such as vegetables.

**Professor: Jack Kamiruka**  
Director: Lake Basin College,  
Kisumu: Kenya

#### Contact Us

Shrivedant Foundation,  
Kenya Vegetarian Club, po box 1390, kisumu 40100, Kenya.  
**Mobile :** +254737461439 **Email :** kvc@shrivedant.com  
**Website :** www.shrivedant.com | www.kenyavegclub.com

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