



# CALMER MIND, LESS DESIRE

by Liao Ying-Chin, Critical Care Nurse Practitioner, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital

My family believes in typical Daoism. Since I was a child, on New Year and all the festivals, we must offer abundant meat to the deceased and our ancestors. The elders at home believe only eating meat can get energy and strength. Especially when we are sick or after giving birth to a baby, we must consume fish, meat to restore our energy.

## Being Vegetarian and Feel for the Animals

Ten years ago, I came to know Tzu Chi because of work. Occasionally, I would hear Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings at work. Master always reminds eating vegetarian food, no killing of animals and wishes the world free from disasters. I just listened but did not really put myself into it. Therefore, I did not take any actions.

However, something amazing happened. After I met my husband, I found out his parents are all senior Tzu Chi members. They are all vegetarians. This was a big challenge for me, especially after we married. Every time when I prepared for lunch and dinner, I worried what I was going to do. I did not know how to cook vegetarian.

I truly appreciate the guidance from my mother-in-law, and the tolerance from my father-in-law. They always said, "It doesn't matter! We can eat whatever you cook." My mother-in-law often told me the benefits of being a vegetarian. She also shared with me how people have changed after they became vegetarians. The most beneficial change is being healthier.

Although I was not opposed to vegetarian food, I could not conquer my desire for meat. I always have vegetarian food at the workplace and home, but when I am out by myself, I just eat whatever I want to eat.

The first time I truly had feeling about eating vegetarian food was back three years ago when I attended the Tzu Chi 45th "Water Repentance" performance. The performance required vegetarian food for six months. My mother disagreed with this idea. She said, "You are not so healthy, how could you eat vegetarian food?"

She often thought my health was not good, lack of energy. I explained to her vegetarian food would not make a person less healthy. My parents-in-law are very healthy and they are all vegetarians. Therefore, I started taking vegetarian food for six months.

On the day of the performance, I involved myself fully into it. I listened to the sutra, learned signed language and watched all the performances on stage. I was very touched yet feared of the consequences (bad karma). Normally, I do not feel anything when I eat meat and fish. However, after I saw the performance I learned how the animals were slaughtered because of us. How fearful the animals when they are slaughtered. It was cruelty. At that moment, I told myself I have to be a vegetarian. Even though I never kill any animals directly, but by eating their carcasses, it is like killing them indirectly.



### **There Is a Heart and Will, There Is Strength**

Eating vegetarian food is not so hard but having a pure heart and peaceful mind is. All our problems are mainly the result of “Greediness,” that we persistently fail to conquer our greed. Our insatiable desires often lead to wrong doings. It is just like overcoming obstacles to become a vegetarian. It is because of the irresistible cravings for better taste (greed) that leads us to meat, and that means killing other living beings for our own enjoyment.

Livestock is commercialized nowadays. In order to speed the growth of animals for consumption, animals are fed hormones raised with technology. We get sick after eating animals’ carcasses that are raised abnormally.

The most beneficial change after becoming a vegetarian is the mind. I can better control myself and less influenced by desire. I do not get anxious or temperamental because my mind is at ease. The most important thing is bad karma is reduced while the mind is much tender and soft.