

# MEALTANGO

Delicious Home Food Delivered

[HOME](#) [RECIPES](#) [FOOD FESTIVALS](#)



## Veganism- separating the grain from the chaff | An interview with Dr. Nandita Shah



By [Amita Gadre](#) in [Food Festivals](#) © October 31, 2017

Veganism is on the rise and with world Vegan Day approaching (1st November, if you didn't know that already!), Mealtango has been catching up with noted Vegans to know more about the diet, lifestyle, and benefits of being a Vegan.

Last week, we caught up with Dr. Nandita Shah, India's leading authority on Veganism.

Dr. Nandita spoke to Mealtango about her journey on the vegan path and dispelled some myths about veganism along the way. It sure changed our way of viewing Veganism!

### When did you realize you wanted to be a vegan?

I decided I wanted to be vegan even before I had heard the word vegan. In the early 1980s, I learned that calves are separated from their mothers, and often made into calf leather in order that we can consume milk. I was shocked to hear that even colostrum, the first milk of the cow was sold as a delicacy, and I could relate to it because my grandmother had served it. The cruelty of the dairy industry hit home.

### Could you tell us about the early days and the struggles?

When I realized that I wanted to give up dairy I also realized how addictive dairy really is. I didn't want to give up those pleasures. I loved my buttermilk, desserts, and cheese. I went into a kind of denial about the reality of dairy initially. It was also a struggle because socially nobody wanted to know the truth. If I tried to avoid dairy, others would suggest that there was nothing wrong with it. It took me a meeting with a friend, who refused to have the butter toffees that were sitting on my coffee table because they contained butter. It was then that I realized that this was the only way for me. To refuse it

100%. Since I started doing this my life changed for the better and so did my health.

***When I realized that I wanted to give up dairy I also realized how addictive dairy really is!***

#### **Why do you advocate veganism? What are the benefits – health and otherwise?**

Being a doctor I soon recognized the immense health benefits of a whole food plant-based diet. These have been documented in medical literature long before I became vegan, but I had just not read or recognized this before. Even Dr. Benjamin Spock, a famous pediatrician and the author of the best-seller *Baby and Child Care* wrote about the harmful effects of dairy. Meat and dairy are similar in our body – high-protein high-fat and no fiber, and so they cause the same lifestyle diseases.

In India, we know that vegetarians and non-vegetarians get the same disease. This is because both meat and milk are not foods that nature designed for human beings. Let me explain – when we see fruits and vegetables we are instinctively drawn towards them and feel like picking them and eating them. When we see a chicken, goat, cow, pig or even a fish, our mouths don't water. These just aren't attractive, aren't instinctual. Our digestive tract is designed for plants. But we have been conditioned to consume them and we have been taught that we are omnivores!

***Meat and dairy are similar in our body – high-protein high-fat and no fiber, and so they cause the same lifestyle diseases.***

Every mammal produces milk only for its young, and cows are no exception. No animal suckle on the teats of another species, but we do. Yet every infant, when it is first given cow's milk, vehemently refuses. Instinctually we know that it's not our food. Eating meat and dairy is akin to putting diesel in a car that runs on petrol. It never works. But our body always works to heal itself, and so changing to whole plant-based diet automatically begins the healing process of any lifestyle disease.

#### **What about nutrient deficiencies risk with veganism – protein, calcium and vitamin B-12?**

Vegans do not risk deficiencies of protein or calcium! Remember that we are just the one of the many herbivores on the planet. Where do elephants, cows, horses, or gazelles get their protein or calcium from? Every single cell contains protein. Protein is the nutrient for growth and repair. We definitely do not need more protein as a percentage of our diet than an infant does because an infant is growing at the fastest rate. The amount of protein in fruit juice is similar to the amount of protein in human milk, which signifies that even if we were to consume only fruits we would have more than enough protein. But if we have beans and grains and greens we have excess and never a deficiency of protein. Today we have more diseases of protein excess than deficiency.

***Vegans do not risk deficiencies of protein or calcium! Where do elephants, cows, horses, or gazelles get their protein or calcium from? Every single cell contains protein.***

**Calcium**– Today most of the people who suffer from osteoporosis have been consuming dairy all their lives. Yet we believe the myth that milk gives us calcium. All beans, greens, and seeds and nuts contain calcium. Sesame seeds contain 10 times the amount of calcium as cow's milk but nobody talks about this. The reason people are suffering from calcium deficiency today is that of vitamin D deficiency, or consumption of acidic foods like tea coffee colas, sugar alcohol vinegar, and animal proteins along with ready-made packaged foods.

**Vitamin B12** is indeed a problem. But it's a problem for everyone, not just vegans. Vitamin B12 is only made by bacteria. In our current super hygienic lives, surrounded by EMFs (electromagnetic frequencies – microwaves) we are likely to get a deficiency of this. Supplementation is a solution.

#### **It is said that veganism is more expensive than the available dairy and meat options. Is that true? If so, what are some innovative ways to offset the expenses?**

Oh no, not at all. Even though dairy and meat are subsidized, fruits and vegetables and grains are usually cheaper. In general vegetarian food is less expensive than non-vegetarian, so dropping the dairy cannot raise expenses. Having dairy and meat substitutes that are ready-made may be expensive, and this too is temporary because the marketing costs are more. If you make these products at home they are definitely less expensive than the non-vegan versions.



**How does one manage to be a vegan in today's hectic lifestyle and the lack of time to cook?**

Our traditional Indian food, daal, chawal, roti, subzi is already vegan or can be made so. In fact, you can walk into almost any restaurant in India and explain that you want vegan food and get it.

**Do we have many vegan ready to eat items or meals in India?**

Very many. Basic Indian food is vegan as I already explained, but today it is mixed with dairy almost everywhere. However here are some vegan items - idli, dosa, uttapam, samosa, ragda, pattice, bhel puri, pani puri etc.

**What are precautions in eating out that a Vegan should follow?**

I guess all they need to do is check the ingredients. This is something anyway everyone should do. We often don't know what we are putting into our bodies.

**Are there any adverse side effects or withdrawal symptoms of veganism?**

Not that I know of.

**Today most of the people who suffer from osteoporosis have been consuming dairy all their lives. Yet we believe the myth that milk gives us calcium.**

**How would you guide people into turning vegan - ease into it or switch over immediately?**

Whichever way they like. And of course depending on how sick they are. The sicker they are the more immediate I would suggest making the change.



**Would it be helpful to vegans if there is home-cooked vegan food made fresh to order, delivered to your home?**

Yes

**What is the one thing you wish people knew about Vegans and Veganism?**

Vegan only means herbivorous like 100's of other animals. That it's the food natural to our species.

**How is being a vegan in India different from other parts of the world?**

India is still at the infancy stages of understanding we veganism because vegetarianism is so popular. Therefore it can be difficult to explain in many social situations or restaurants.

**Is it easy to keep oneself on track when turning vegan? What about the temptations around and cravings? Would it not impact a person's social life?**

Whenever we want to do something, it's easy to stay on track. I know many vegetarians who travel all over the world and continue to remain vegetarian without any temptations, cravings, or impacts on their social life. It's a question of mindset. When the mind is set on vegan it becomes easy. And now it's easier than ever because most countries in the world have many more vegan restaurants than India does.

**What is the one favorite vegan dish you would recommend to anyone wanting to understand vegan food?**

I cannot say. There are so many!

Dr. Nandita Shah is the recipient of the prestigious [Nari Shakti Award](#) 2016, the highest award for women in India, for her pioneering work in the field of health and nutrition from the President of India, the honorable Pranab Mukherjee.

She is the Founder, Director, and a trustee of [SHARAN](#). She founded SHARAN in 2005 with the vision of helping people connect with animals and nature in order to heal themselves and the planet. Dr. Shah first became vegan because of ethical issues.

*Mealtango is celebrating World Vegan Day with a [special menu](#) of delicious home cooked dairy-free, freshly cooked, vegan food.*



October 31, 2017

**Veganism- separating the grain from the chaff | An interview with Dr. Nandita Shah**



October 23, 2017

**World Vegan Food Day celebrations with Mealtango**



October 9, 2017

**6 delicious Diwali gift ideas that are NOT boring Mithai!**



September 25, 2017

**Celebrate International Coffee Day with Mealtango**

FOLLOW US



RECENT POSTS

- [Veganism- separating the grain from the chaff | An interview with Dr. Nandita Shah](#)
- [World Vegan Food Day celebrations with Mealtango](#)
- [6 delicious Diwali gift ideas that are NOT boring Mithai!](#)
- [Party food? No worries, Order Now!](#)
- [Become a Mealtango Chef – How and Why](#)

RECENT COMMENTS

- [Mealtango on Why I started Mealtango... Our C.E.O speaks....](#)
- [Mealtango on Why I started Mealtango... Our C.E.O speaks....](#)
- [Mealtango on Why I started Mealtango... Our C.E.O speaks....](#)
- [Vinit Taneja on Why I started Mealtango... Our C.E.O speaks....](#)
- [contextual links building on Why I started Mealtango... Our C.E.O speaks....](#)

SEARCH

ARCHIVES

- [October 2017](#)
- [September 2017](#)
- [August 2017](#)
- [July 2017](#)
- [June 2017](#)
- [March 2017](#)
- [February 2017](#)
- [January 2017](#)
- [January 2016](#)
- [December 2015](#)
- [November 2015](#)
- [October 2015](#)
- [September 2015](#)
- [July 2015](#)
- [May 2015](#)