

The Choice to be a Vegetarian

Yuzuki Ueda (NIT (KOSEN), Toyota College)

Why are you eating vegetables ? Because it's healthy? Or you don't like meat? Generally, the people who don't eat meat and seafood are called "vegetarian". And the word "vegetarian" does not come from English word "vegetable", but "vegetus" in Latin which means fresh or vigorous. I've just been in Germany until last March as an exchange student. And my host family was a vegetarian. So, I tried to live a life as a vegetarian.

Before I met my host family, I imagined that vegetarian was one of extremism like they eat only salad every day and they don't eat meat because they don't want to kill the animals. I didn't know enough about it. In addition, the word vegetarian is not familiar in Japan because many of traditional Japanese foods include fish and meat. Anyway, I met my host family, and I realized how ignorant I was about vegetarian.

Many of vegetarians said "We eat less meat because it's good for the environment." To live without meat and fish for the environment!? Have you ever done that by yourself? There are so many sushi restaurants and barbeque houses all over Japan and they are feast for us. Now, look at this figure. Industrial livestock release much carbon dioxide and methane gas and they lead to global warming. It is said that they account for 14 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions. Particularly, you are responsible for a belch and gas, disposal of excreta, and transportation of a large quantity of feed. And furthermore, deforestation is getting worse to develop wild land for grazing livestock. In other words, being a vegetarian contribute to protecting the environment.

In fact, how was my vegetarian life with my host family? I want to tell you honestly, it was more amazing than I thought! They knew many vegetarian recipes and I loved cooking and eating with them. Every once a week, my host family and I cooked Japanese food like these. We used *tofu* in the *Gyoza*, instead of meat. It was a first time to make them without meat, but they were really delicious! Through this experience, I noticed that we could enjoy the food originated in different ways of life, and I can respect our cultures each other.

However, I do not recommend you to become a vegetarian. When you have the vegetarian meal once a week, it may contribute to the environmental protection. But you can choose what you eat by yourself.

I think everyone has an unconscious prejudice because they don't know enough about it, just as I did. Don't forget the lesson I experienced. There are always some reasons behind human behavior and it is strongly associated with history, culture or religion. When you find out not only what they are doing but also why they are doing it, you can discover new facts. Thank you.