

eggs as well as on dairy products. Naturally, I opted for that one, but my colleagues insisted that I become a lacto-vegetarian. So I guess that's me for a week.

## MONDAY

The bet is still on. Today, I ate half a broccoli in the morning. For lunch, a plate of rice with 'daal' and 'shobji' not only made me miserable, but left the cafeteria

in the next week.

Meanwhile, on my way to and from work, all the restaurants – the burger joint I went to every other day, my favourite biriyani place and the fried chicken corner which was my second home – seem to haunt me and hit my heart with a hammer. Being a vegetarian is too rich for my blood.

## TUESDAY

I think the only good I am doing is making my mother happy. She has always insisted to go easy on the red meat. Half disbelieving that I secretly eat some at the office during lunch she is nevertheless glad that I at least have a veg

would be able to pull off the challenge.

Also, I am feeling light. No, I have not become thinner. I did not lose weight. But I just 'feel' light. Healthy. Energetic.

## THURSDAY

I suspect that the cafeteria cook has conspired with my colleagues and joined in the wager against me. For two days straight, he has been making special lunch: yesterday's menu was polau-korma and today, he made egg fried rice, fried chicken and a vegetable curry, which had slices of beef in it!

The heartless man left me with plain rice and daal, which I ate without a word while my colleagues continuously ridiculed me. I went to a Korean restaurant for dinner, and for the first time, I requested a refill for kimchi. God bless the Koreans, an ingenious people who had made magic out of cabbage. I whereby announce that kimchi is my favourite vegetarian dish. I peacefully munched away while my girlfriend tried to figure out this new side of me.

## FRIDAY

Being a vegetarian is difficult in our country. What! Have I failed? Well, I'm about to say. Many foods do not have a proper list of ingredients on their packet. Sales people do not know much and arouse even more confusion. But I was careful and survived.

Just two days prior to winning the bet, my biggest hurdle came along. A wedding!

With fingers crossed, I went there tonight to discover that all they have is kachchi biriyani and chicken curry! And before I could sneak out, my relative grabbed me and sat me down on a table.

I thought of Phileas Fogg from Around the World in Eighty Days. How would the calm and calculative man have handled the situation? He once thought about getting a hot air balloon to get to a destination. Well I could use a hot air balloon right now to escape from here, I thought.

In time, I was served. The fantastic smell of the biriyani was too difficult to resist. Plus it would be rude to leave the table.

"Why aren't you eating?" one of the guests asked as I was staring down on the biriyani with a profundity on my face that matched those of art critics when they examine paintings.

"I am a vegetarian," came the reply. Moment of truth. Awkwardness.

He frowned at me. I frowned at him. And then I remembered how I used to judge and smear vegetarians.

I didnot break my pact: robotically got up from the table and left. Took a stroll in the parking lot. A chauffeur offered me his packet of biriyani which I politely refused and went home with a heavy heart and an empty stomach.

## SATURDAY

Today has been the last day of my one-week challenge. I emerged - to the utter surprise and sheer respect of everyone - victorious! I have shaken hands and received congratulations from numerous people - as if I have won a national award. Even I cannot believe that I made it. I have won the wager, and my boss promised me kachchi biriyani tomorrow in my honour.

My dear diary, this is the last entry of my journal. And while I look forward to my boss's treat, something else is working up at the back of my head. I have rather come to enjoy the vegetarian diet, and I feel healthier now. After a week of restraint, my expectation from meat has gone up the roof. What if I don't like it anymore?

## DAY EIGHT

There was not supposed to be an eighth entry on this journal. Things were not supposed to be like that. My mother had cooked paratha-mangsho in the morning to mark my victory. But I passed and had the paratha with some bhaji with pickles on the side. My mother grew worried.

As promised, my boss ordered kachchi biriyani from Star Kebab. Yes, I ate some. How did I feel, you ask? I loved it no doubt. But I had a sickening feeling. My metabolism jerked up while my digestive tract seemed to have woken from hibernation.

It is now dinner time and mum cooked tehari. In any given day, I would impatiently walk up and down the kitchen, eagerly waiting for it to be served. Not today. Today I am utterly confused.

Shall I become a vegetarian forever? There is a thought.

By M H Haider

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed



etarian  
dinner at  
home.

## WEDNESDAY

It's the fourth day and I have never been this far without meat. And you will find it hard to believe, but I think I am adapting. I went to an Indian place for lunch, where I had 'dosa' and 'palak paneer'. The hearty meal brought back life in me. For the first time in the week, I became confident that I

a manager in deep thought. I was his cash cow: his greatest customer. I promised him, while I paid the bill, which was the lowest I have ever paid, that I would make up for his loss



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■ বাডু বাম এখন আকর্ষণীয় গ্লাস বোতলে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে।