

# AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

---

**Volume: 5**

**Issue No. 1**

**February 2021**

---

**EDITOR IN-CHIEF**

Dr. Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Dr. Masitoh Ahmad

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Dr. Syed Arabi Aidid, IIUM.

Dr. Hassan Basri Mat Dahan, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia,  
Nilai, Negeri Sembilan

Dr. Kamaruzaman Yusuff, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,  
Kota Semarahan, Kucing.

Dr. Kamar Oniah, IIUM.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali, IIUM.

Dr. Noor Amali Mohd Daud, IIUM.

Dr. Adibah Abdul Rahim, IIUM.

Dr. Haslina Ibrahim, IIUM.

Dr. Siti Akmar, Universiti Institut Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Dr. Thameem Ushama, IIUM.

## INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Muhammad Afifi al-Akiti, Oxford University, UK  
Dr. Abdullah M. al-Syarqawi, Cairo University, Egypt.  
Dr. Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, Kwara State University, Nigeria.  
Dr. Anis Ahmad, Riphah International University, Islamabad.  
Dr. ASM Shihabuddin, Uttara University, Dhakka, Bangladesh.  
Dr. Fatimah Abdullah, Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey.  
Dr. Ibrahim M. Zein, Qatar Foundation, Qatar.  
Dr. Khalid Yahya, Temple University, USA.

© 2017 IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.  
eISSN:26008432

### Correspondence

Managing Editor, *Al-Itqān*  
Research Management Centre, RMC  
International Islamic University Malaysia  
P.O Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Tel: +603 6196 5558  
Website: <http://journals.iium.edu.my/al-itqan/index.php/alitqan/index>  
Email: [al-itqan@iium.edu.my](mailto:al-itqan@iium.edu.my)

Published by:  
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia  
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298  
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

# Table of Contents

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī's Concept of <i>Ibtilā'</i> : Its application to Stress Management	<i>Che Amnah Bahari</i> <i>Waleed Fekri Faris</i> <i>Mardiana Mohamad</i>	5-18
An Overview of the Concept, Meanings, Nature and Significance of Islamic Da'wah	<i>Abdul Salam Muhammad Shukri</i>	19-49
Meat-Eating vs. Vegetarianism: the Practice of <i>Karuna</i> in Theravada Buddhism and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism	<i>Nur Suriya Mohd Nor</i>	51-63
AKH-I Model and Psychosocial Issues during Covid-19 Pandemic	<i>Noor Azlan Mohd Noor</i>	65-84
Hamka's Action Guide for Corporate Social Responsibility	<i>Fatimah Abdullah</i>	85-100
Exploring the Ethical Dimensions and Principles of <i>Raḥmatan Lil- 'Ālamīn</i> in Contemporary Context	<i>Hakimah Ahmad Sabri</i> <i>Fatmir Shehu</i>	101-119
An Entrepreneur (Khadijah (R.A) In the Prophetic House: Lesson to the Contemporary Muslim Women of Katsina State	<i>Abubakar Sani</i> <i>Bilyaminu Muhammad</i>	121-135
The Position of Modernist Thought on (the belief) in Angels	<i>Mohammad Salih Abdullah Hakki</i> <i>Masitoh Ahmad</i> <i>Asma Uthman al-Muhammady</i>	137-158

## Author Guidelines

Manuscript article can be either in English, Malay or Arabic using software Microsoft office (Word, and Excel), Font 12 Times New Roman. Only tables, figures and appendix can be written using Font 10, Times New Roman.

If there is a usage of Quranic verses or Hadith from Prophet P.B.U.H., it only needs to be done by translation only.

The manuscript should be in 1.5 single spacing and justified, with the margin of 2.5cm.

Article needs to have a title and author's name and second author's name along with the full address (institution's or university's address, e-mail, handphone's number, office's number, fax together with the second author's details).

Every article must include an abstract in Malay and English. The length of the abstract is no more than 150 words including 5 keywords.

The length of each article must not exceed 6000 words.

The Arabic words in manuscript should be in a transliterated form.

Reference for each article must be written according to **Chicago Manual**.

Notification Letter :

Letter of Acceptance – editorial board will send an e-mail to the author to notify that the manuscript is received.

Letter of Acceptance/Rejection for Publication – editorial board will send a letter by an e-mail to the author to notify if the manuscript judged by the panels is approved or declined to be published.

Letter of Publication – editorial board will send a letter by e-mail to the author if the article has been judged, repaired, and corrected to be published in the college's journal.

Certificate of Appreciation– editorial board will send a certificate of appreciation by mail to the authors who have sent their articles.

## Meat-Eating vs. Vegetarianism: the Practice of *Karuna* in Theravada Buddhism and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism

Nur Suriya Mohd Nor \*

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to discuss the practice of compassion (*karuna*) according to Theravada Buddhism and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. The researcher also emphasises on the practice of *karuna* among these two traditions with special focus to meat-eating and vegetarianism. This research applies qualitative methodology, in which the researchers use nonnumerical data that includes content and critical analysis on written materials such as books, articles, and internet sources. The findings reveal that both traditions emphasis on compassion, but they are different in terms of their practice. Theravada Buddhism believes that meat-eating is not against the practise of compassion, while Chinese Mahayana Buddhism practises vegetarianism as a way to show their compassion towards the others.

**Keyword:** Theravada Buddhism, Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, Meat-eating, Vegetarianism, Monastic.

### Introduction: The Practise of *Karuna* in Theravada Buddhism and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism

The Chinese Mahayana Buddhists believe that all sentient beings are identical in nature to Buddhas. All sentient beings have the potential to realize full enlightenment and to manifest *Buddhahood*. A person walking the path to full *Buddhahood* must cultivate deep compassion for all beings as if they were of one body with himself or herself.

The word compassion in Sanskrit is *karuna*.<sup>1</sup> *Karuna* or compassion is the important quality of a *Bodhisattva*. *Karuna* designates the quality of heart which emphasizes love and respect for all sentient beings.<sup>2</sup> Compassion also means feeling of sympathy for people who suffer and wish to end their suffering.<sup>3</sup> Mahayana Buddhism greatly emphasizes

---

\* Assistant Prof. Dr. Department of Uşûl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, Selangor. Email: nursuriya@iium.edu.my

<sup>1</sup> Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, edited by Nyanaponika (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Edward A. Irons, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Facts on File, 2008), p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> Garma C.C.Chang (trans.), *A Treasury of Mahayana Sutra: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra*, (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), p. 472.

compassion, equal to wisdom. The immeasurable compassion of the *Buddhas* and *Bodhisattvas* are reflected in their continuous attempts to assist sentient beings.<sup>1</sup> Compassion or *karuna* is one of the four sublime moral virtues known as the Pure Abiding or *Brahmaviharas*.<sup>2</sup> Both the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists teach the same four *Brahmaviharas* or ways to lead a Life of Holiness.<sup>3</sup> This is a group of four virtuous states which include *metta* i.e. friendliness or loving-kindness, *karuna* i.e. compassion, *mudita* i.e. goodwill or sympathetic joy, and *upekkha* i.e. equanimity or indifference to pain and pleasure.<sup>4</sup> Compassion (*karuna*) is the essential quality of a *Bodhisattva* and strongly emphasizes wisdom (*prajna*) in Mahayana practice. Compassion and wisdom lead to the individual cultivated awareness of the sufferings of others.<sup>5</sup> Sympathetic joy or *mudita* is a means to focus on other's joy and pleasure, rather than their misfortunes. According to Mahayana Buddhism, the greatest joy is the consciousness of the liberation of other people from suffering. The person should manifest *mudita* in the meditation and spread it out in all directions.<sup>6</sup>

Theravada and Mahayana promote the same four *Brahmaviharas*, but they are different regarding the order in which the virtues are recommended to be observed.<sup>7</sup> Theravada Buddhism mentions that a Buddhist first needs to cultivate friendliness or kindness. A Buddhist should treat the other beings as if they are his friends and try to give what is best for them.<sup>8</sup> Then, if a Buddhist can empathize with their suffering and feel the pain as if it was his own, this is compassion.<sup>9</sup> Later, he can celebrate with others in 'sympathetic joy' when he feels happy at others happiness and joy than feeling sad at their misfortune.<sup>10</sup> In the *Sigalaka Sutta*, the Buddha mentioned that a sympathetic friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways: "he does not rejoice at your misfortune, he rejoices at your good fortune, he stops others who speak against you, and he commends others

---

<sup>1</sup> Garma...

<sup>2</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Brahmavihara Dhamma*, translated by U Min Swe, (Petaling Jaya: Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Roger J. Corless, *The Vision of Buddhism*, (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Roger J. Corless...

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, p. 278.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards..., p. 348.

<sup>7</sup> Roger, p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> Roger...

<sup>9</sup> Roger...

<sup>10</sup> Roger...

who speak in praise of you.”<sup>1</sup> Finally, he can develop equanimity, so that whatever happens to him, whether others praise or blame him, he is not turned away from the path to liberation.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Mahayana comprehends the terms slightly different, thus taught them in different order.<sup>3</sup> Instead of friendliness, Mahayana teaches compassion first. Compassion is explained as the wish to eliminate suffering from beings. Then, one moves on to friendliness as the wish for happiness of all beings.<sup>4</sup> Mahayana perceives compassion as the removal of sickness, and the friendliness as the giving of health. The last two virtues, sympathetic joy and equanimity are said to necessitate each other and considered as a single virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1.1  
List of the Pure Abiding in Theravada and Mahayana<sup>6</sup>

The Pure Abiding ( <i>Brahmaviharas</i> )	
Theravada	Mahayana
Friendliness (metta)	Compassion (karuna)
Compassion (Karuna)	Friendliness (maitri)
Sympathetic Joy (mudita)	Sympathetic Joy (mudita)
Equanimity (upekha)	Equanimity (upeksha)

As stated in the *Upasaka Sutra*, most of the Lay *Bodhisattva* precepts of the Chinese Mahayana Buddhism propagate non-harming either oneself or others, or animals. This can be seen in the first major precept which refrains a *Bodhisattva* from taking or destroying the life of others. This precept instructs a *Bodhisattva* not to kill others because he should be always compassionate and leads others to liberation. The sixth minor precept encourages a *Bodhisattva* to observe the Six Days of Vegetarian

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Walse (trans.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)*, (henceforth *DN*), (London: Wisdom Publication, 1987), 31:24.

<sup>2</sup> *DN*.

<sup>3</sup> Roger, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> Roger...

<sup>5</sup> Roger...

<sup>6</sup> Roger...

Fasting since the meat eating would destroy great compassion and kindness and the seed of the Buddha nature.

In accordance to the *Bodhisattva* precept of not harming the others, the Chinese Mahayana Buddhists practice vegetarianism as a way to show their compassion towards the others i.e. animals. They perceive everything in the ecosystem as equal in value. All living things and non-living things are regarded as having an equal dignity and intrinsic value because they have the Buddha nature.<sup>1</sup> They do not identify humans as special creation over the other creatures including animals, plants, and etc. In the Buddhist six realms of rebirth, humans are listed in the third group, while all other animals are listed in the fourth group.<sup>2</sup> Humans are listed in the higher group than animals because they are smart, have a greater freedom, and capable of understanding than animals. The animal realm is the only other realm that humans can observe. The animals include all land animals, birds, fish, worms, and insects. Their lives are generally short due to their lack of intelligence, being food for other creatures, and by enslavement to humans.<sup>3</sup>

It is a fact that the main reason for the killing of animals is to provide food for other creatures including humans. Yet, this is seemed to be against the Buddhist teaching which avoid any actions which are likely to be harmful and cause suffering. This is clearly mentioned in the first precept of the Five Lay Buddhist Precepts which is to avoid taking the life of beings. This precept applies not only to humans, but to all living beings. All beings have a right to their lives and this right should be respected. With regards to the first precept, the rest of this paper would discuss the controversial issues in Buddhism including non-harming of animals, meat eating, and vegetarianism with special focus to the differences between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism.

### **Non-harming of Animals**

As mentioned previously, the first of the five basic precepts clearly mentions that a Buddhist has to avoid from taking life of living beings.<sup>4</sup> This is similar to the pan-Indian value of *ahimsa* or non-injury.<sup>5</sup> *Ahimsa* is

---

<sup>1</sup> Alastair S. Gunn and Ruth Walker, *Buddhism and Environmental Ethics in Context*, (Petaling Jaya: Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, 2003), pp. 36-39.

<sup>2</sup> Nanamoli (trans.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)*, (henceforth *MN*), (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *MN*.

<sup>4</sup> *DN*, 31:4.

<sup>5</sup> Nyanatiloka, p. 31.



equivalent to Buddhist terms *Avihimsa* which means ‘harmlessness’, ‘non-violence’, and ‘absence of cruelty.’<sup>1</sup> Nyanatiloka mentioned that the ‘thought of harmlessness’ or non-equality is one of the three components of the right thought which is the second path of the Eightfold Path.<sup>2</sup> The Sri Lankan villagers reviewed in a study, gave their opinions that the first precept obliges them not to kill the animals.<sup>3</sup> Since the main reason of killing of animals is for the food, it is difficult for a Buddhist to fully observe the first precept. Yet, according to Theravada, a Buddhist should strive to minimize intentionally causing injury to living beings.

As an alternative, monks, nuns, and laymen in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism also follow strictly vegetarian diet.<sup>4</sup> However at the time of Buddha, vegetarianism was practiced by Jains, although they noticed that the vegetables eaten by them also having a soul (*jīva*).<sup>5</sup> There is no such precept mentioned about vegetarianism during the time of the Buddha, but it is among the forty-eight secondary precepts for monastic *Bodhisattva* precepts<sup>6</sup> and twenty-eight minor precepts for Lay Bodhisattva precepts in the Mahayana tradition. This precept is also supporting the first precept to undertake the training to abstain from taking the life of other living beings. The eating of meat would be considered indirectly a contribution to the taking of life. Thus, the followers of the Mahayana tradition will strictly go against eating meat and practicing vegetarianism. Although the Theravada tradition is practicing the first precept, they have different views on the issues of meat eating and vegetarianism.

### **Theravada Buddhism: A Pro Meat-Eating and Anti-Vegetarianism**

Meat eating in Buddhism is a very sensitive topic. Both Theravada and Mahayana traditions have different views on this issue. According to Theravada Buddhism, Buddha has clearly stated his position on meat eating especially for monks and nuns. This can be seen in several

---

<sup>1</sup> Nyanatiloka...

<sup>2</sup> Nyanatiloka...

<sup>3</sup> M. Southwold, *Buddhism in Life: The Anthropology Studies of Religion and the Sinhalese Practice of Buddhism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Heng-ching Shih, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1992), p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> Martine Batchelor, *The Path of Compassion* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1992), p. 3. Also see, Buddhist Text Translation Society (USA), *The Brahma Net Sutra*, <http://www.purifymind.com/BrahmaNetSutra.htm>, retrieved July 26, 2011.

evidences from the *Sutrapitaka*<sup>1</sup> and the *Vinayapitaka*<sup>2</sup> where Buddha instructed a monk or nun to accept whatever food is offered in receiving alms offered, with good will, including meat.

The evidences from the *Sutrapitaka* show that Buddha permitted all the monks and nuns to eat meat. These can be found in *Majjhima Nikaya* 55, *Anguttara Nikaya* 5.14, *Anguttara Nikaya* 8.12, and *Amagandha Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipata*.<sup>3</sup> In *Majjhima Nikaya* 55,<sup>4</sup> the *King's Physician*, *Jivaka Komarabhacca* has an argument with the Buddha when he came to see him. After paying homage, *Jivaka* asked the Buddha whether it is true that he has heard they slaughtered living beings for the Buddha, and the Buddha knowingly ate meat prepared for him from animals killed for his sake.<sup>5</sup> The Buddha denied it and mentioned that:

“Jivaka, I say that there are three instances in which meat should not be eaten: when it is seen, heard, and suspected (that the living being has been specifically slaughtered for oneself)...I say that there are three instances in which meat may be eaten: when it is not seen, heard, or suspected (that the living being has been specifically slaughtered for oneself).”<sup>6</sup>

From the Buddha's argument, Theravada tradition believe that a monk may eat meat with the three conditions; he has not seen, heard, or suspected that the animal has been killed specifically for him.

In the *Anguttara Nikaya* 5.44,<sup>7</sup> Buddha and his disciples ate meat when he accepted an offer of a variety of good things including pork cooked with jujube fruit from a layman, Uggā. Besides, *Anguttara Nikaya* 8.12<sup>8</sup> is one of the texts which clearly show that Buddha and his disciples ate meat. It is also clear that the meat which was allowable to eat was meat from an animal that was already dead when it was purchased, but not if the animal

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sutras* are the texts that record the teachings of the Buddha between the time he gained the enlightenment (*nirvana*) and his death (*Mahaparinirvana*).

<sup>2</sup> *Vinaya* is a systematic rules or precepts for monks and nuns (those who assumed monastic order) voiced by the Buddha and these rules were compiled soon after his death (*Mahaparinirvana*) and were then memorized.

<sup>3</sup> Amaganda Sutta, <http://www.aimwell.org/Books/Suttas/Amagandha/amagandha.html>, retrieved August 2, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> *MN*, 474.

<sup>5</sup> *MN*.

<sup>6</sup> *MN*.

<sup>7</sup> F.L. Woodward (trans), *The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikaya)*, (henceforth *AN*) (Lancaster: The Pali Text Society, 2006), vol. III, 41.

<sup>8</sup> *AN*, vol. IV, p. 129.

was alive. Theravada commentaries explain that the Buddha was making a distinction between destruction of life and eating of already dead meat.

The Buddha *Kasyapa* countered the argument of a vegetarian *Brahmin* in regard to the evil of eating meat in the *Amagandha Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipata*.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha listed acts that cause real moral adulteration and emphasized that the eating of meat is not equivalent to those acts. The Buddha said: “Taking life, beating, wounding, binding, stealing, lying, deceiving, worthless knowledge, adultery; this is stench. Not the eating of meat.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the evidences from *Vinayapitaka* are found in *Pratimoksha*,<sup>3</sup> *Pacittiya* 39.<sup>4</sup> In *Pacittiya* 39, a monk is prohibited to ask for special food. But, an exception is permitted in the *Pratimoksha* when the monk is sick. Under such conditions, the monk is allowed to ask for oil, honey, dairy product, sugar, meat, and fish.<sup>5</sup> In the *Amagandha Sutra*, the Buddha mentioned that taking fish by itself does not make a man become impure.<sup>6</sup> The Buddha said:

“Neither meat, nor fasting, nor nakedness, nor shaven heads, nor matted hair, nor dirt, nor rough skins, nor fire-worshipping, nor all the penances here in this world, nor hymns, nor oblation, nor sacrifice, nor feast of the season, will purify a man overcome with doubt.”<sup>7</sup>

*Majjhima Nikaya* mentioned that there is no strict rule in Buddhism that the Buddhist should not take fish and meat. The Buddha only advised the Buddhist not to kill intentionally or should not ask other to kill any living being for them.<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to Theravada tradition, meat and fish were allowed to the monk as well as to the layman.

As stated in the *Mahavagga*, there are ten types of meat which are not-allowable to the monks; the flesh of human, elephants, or horse, as people considered these animals as royal signs; the flesh of dog and snake, as people regarded them as disgusting; and the flesh on lions, hyena, bear, tiger, and panther, as they would smell on might cause the eaters and to be

<sup>1</sup> *Amaganda Sutta*, <http://www.aimwell.org/Books/Suttas/Amagandha/amagandha.html>, retrieved August 2, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Amaganda Sutta*...

<sup>3</sup> *Pratimoksha* is part of the *Vinaya*, the part of the Buddhist canon which deals with the discipline for monks and nuns.

<sup>4</sup> I.B. Horner, *The Book of Discipline* (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, vol.II, 2004), p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Horner, *The Book of Discipline* ...

<sup>6</sup> *Amaganda Sutta*.

<sup>7</sup> *Amaganda Sutta*...

<sup>8</sup> *MN*, 474.

attacked by them.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the followers of Theravada believe that it is allowable to eat meat of other animals such as pork, beef, and chicken provided that the three conditions for 'allowed meat' are fulfilled. It is also mentioned that clear meat soup is permitted to a sick man.<sup>2</sup> Other evidences can be seen when Buddha refused to accept suggestion from a monk; Devadatta who asking him to implement five new rules, and one of the rules was that monks are forbidden to eat fish and meat. The Buddha said:

“Fish and meat are completely pure in respect of three points: if they are not seen, heard, or suspected to have been killed specifically for oneself.”<sup>3</sup>

From the above-mentioned evidences, the Theravada tradition comes out with several reasons on why meat eating is allowable by the Buddha.<sup>4</sup> The first reason is that there is no direct *karma* of killing. The Buddha said: “Fish and meat are completely pure...” It means that there is no killing *karma* (intentional act) of killing if the animal is not seen, heard, or suspected to have been killed specifically for oneself. Yet, without these three conditions, the direct or unwholesome *karma* is engaged, and this type of meat is prohibited.

Although the Buddha permitted meat eating, he forbids a layman from trading in flesh<sup>5</sup> such as selling pigs, deer, chickens, and cattle for slaughter in the *Vanijja Sutra, Anguntara-Nikaya* 5:177.<sup>6</sup> This is considered as directly encouraging killing and will create an unwholesome *karma*. Secondly, Theravada tradition views vegetarianism as incompatible with the Buddhist monks' lifestyle.<sup>7</sup> As discussed in the *Pratimoksa*, a monk is supposed to go on begging for his meal unless he is invited to a meal, the meal is brought to the monastery, or the meal is cooked in the monastery. He is forbidden to cook food, accumulate food overnight, or involve in agriculture to support him. Thus, mendicancy is one of the foundations of the Buddhist monastic life. It is therefore a familiar scene to see not only

---

<sup>1</sup> I.B. Horner (trans.), *The Book of Discipline*, “Mahavagga,” (Lancaster: The Pali Text Society, Vol. IV, 2007), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> I.B. Horner (trans.), *The Book of Discipline*, “Mahavagga”...

<sup>3</sup> I.B. Horner (trans.), *The Book of Discipline*, “Cullavagga,” (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, vol. V, 2001), p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> Dhammavuddo Thero, *The Buddha's View on Meat Eating* (Penang: Chee Khoon Printings, 2008), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> “Monks, these five trades ought not to be plied by a lay disciple. What five? Trade in human beings, trade in flesh, trade in spirit, and trade in poison.”

<sup>6</sup> AN, vol.III, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Dhammavuddo, p. 7.

forest monks, but also city monks begging for food everyday in a Buddhist country such as in Thailand. Since a beggar must not be a chooser, vegetarianism is not compatible with the monastic life. This may probably another reason why Buddha refused to accept Devadatta's request as mentioned in the *Vinaya* code.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, vegetarianism also indirectly encourages killing of animals. This is due to the reason that sometimes the farmers have to kill the animals because they eat the vegetables or the fruits from trees planted by farmers. The farmers have to kill monkeys, squirrels, foxes, caterpillars, snails, ants, and other insects to protect their crops. Yet fertilizers for vegetables and fruits tress often used dried, ground fish bones, and other fish scraps. Also the use of honey and cow's milk involve some kind cruelty to the bees and cows. All these clearly show that it is hard not to be engaged one way or another in the killing on animals. Thus, those who practiced meatless diet should aware of this and abstain from being over-critical of pro-meat eating.<sup>2</sup>

Theravada Buddhists also against vegetarianism because they believe that animals are still killed even if all human practice meatless diet. This is due to the fact that animal's population growing faster than humans and they could easily become a menace to human survival. This can be seen in some parts of Africa where elephants were protected animals many years ago. Yet nowadays they have multiply sufficiently to become a threat, and their numbers should be reduced under the protection of law. Eventually, practicing meatless diet cannot prevent killing of animals. However, it is commendable to practice vegetarianism out of compassion, but not to the extent of being extreme about it.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, the Theravada assumes that many Chinese Buddhists incorrectly think that the practice of vegetarianism is a part of the Mahayana teachings, and confuse the concept of '*Chi Su*' (vegetarianism) with '*Chi Zhai*' (not eating after noon until the next dawn). In the early Buddhism, '*Chi Su*' is explained as to be unprofitable ascetic practice of external sects. This concept is only practiced by Chinese Buddhism (*Han Chuan*), not the Mahayana Buddhism (*Bei Chuan*) since Japanese and Tibetan Buddhists are not vegetarians. This may be due to the order of the Chinese Emperor Laing Wu Di who commanded Buddhist monks and nuns to practice vegetarianism.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dhammavuddo..., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Dhammavuddo..., p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Dhammavuddo..., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Dhammavuddo..., p. 11.

### **Chinese Mahayana Buddhism: An Anti-Meat eating and Pro - Vegetarianism**

Heng-ching Shih mentioned that among all traditions of Buddhism, probably the Chinese tradition is the only one observing strict vegetarianism, based on the Buddhist doctrine of no-killing and compassion.<sup>1</sup> As an anti-meat eating and pro-vegetarianism, the Mahayana tradition relates three types of “purified meat”<sup>2</sup> to the nurturing of compassion. According to them, if we see the suffering of the dying animal or the cry of the suffering animal, we should be compassionate towards them and try to ease their suffering. It is against the principle of suffering if we do not help them, and indeed, even go ahead to eat their meat.

The Mahayana tradition counters the views of Theravada tradition on meat eating with the evidences from Mahayana *Sutras* such as *Surangama Sutra*, *Lankavatara Sutra*, *Brahma’s Net Sutra*, and *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*. An important Mahayana *sutra*, *Surangama Sutra* mentioned that the Buddha was against the meat eating as he said:

“If a man can control his body and mind and thereby refrains from eating animal flesh and wearing animal products, I say he will really liberate.”<sup>3</sup>

As stated in the Chapter Eight of the *Lankavatara Sutra*, Buddha spoke very strongly against meat-eating. He said:

“The Blessed One said this to him: For innumerable reasons, Mahamati, the *Bodhisattva*, whose nature is compassion, is not to eat any meat.” Among the reasons are; “for fear of causing terror to living beings, Mahamati refrain himself from eating flesh,” “meat is not agreeable to the wise, it has a nauseating odour, it causes a bad reputation, it is food for the carnivorous,” “from eating meat arrogance is born, from arrogance erroneous imaginations issue, and from imagination is born greed,” and “meat-eating is condemned by the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and *Sravakas*; if one devours meat out of shamelessness he will always be devoid of sense.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Heng, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Did not see the animal being kill, did not hear the cry of the animal being killed, and did not suspect the animal was killed specifically for the monks or nuns.

<sup>3</sup> Lu K’uan Yu (trans.), *Surangama Sutra* (Sri Lanka: Brighthill Buddhist Centre), [http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/surangama.pdf](http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf), retrieved August 2, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> *The Lankavatara Sutra*, 211-225.

On the other hand, the Scripture of *Brahma's Net* mentioned very clearly that eating meat is a serious offence. The Buddha said:

“Disciples of the Buddha, should you willingly and knowingly eat flesh, you defile yourself by acting contrary to this less grave Precept. Pray, let us not eat any flesh or meat whatsoever coming from loving being.”

In the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*, the Buddha mentioned that “the eating of meat extinguishes the seed of Great Kindness.”<sup>1</sup> He prohibited all and every kind of meat and fish consumption although the animals found are already dead.<sup>2</sup> He rejected the idea that a monk who goes out for begging and receives meat from a donor should eat it.<sup>3</sup> The Buddha said:

“...it should be rejected...I say that even meat, fish, game, dried hooves, and scraps of meat left over by the others constitutes an infraction...I teach the harm arising from meat eating.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is clear that there are strong supports from the *Mahāyāna Sūtras* for a meatless diet. In fact, many Mahāyāna cultures especially in China prohibit monks to eat meat. When Buddhism spread to China, the idea of compassion was developed further in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the *Bodhisattva* vow of not eating meat was strongly emphasized and made compulsory. Therefore, Chinese Mahāyanist monastic are vegetarian, and so many devotees who have taken the *Bodhisattva* precepts.<sup>5</sup> However, as stated in the *Upasaka Sūtra*, the Lay Chinese Buddhists should observe only Six Vegetarian Days only.<sup>6</sup> In Korea and Japan, there are several meats eating, although they are a number of monks in each country who adhere to the stricter interpretation of the *Sūtra* and *Vinaya* codes.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, meat eating is accepted in Tibetan Buddhism. This can be seen in their marriage ceremony where buffalo meat is an essential item of the feast food in that ceremony.<sup>8</sup> Probably because Tibetan people traditionally lived

<sup>1</sup> Charles Patton (trans.), *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*  
<http://www.zhaxizhuoma.net/DHARMA/Tripitaka/MahāparinirvānaMahāyāna.htm>,  
 retrieved August 2, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Patton...

<sup>3</sup> Charles Patton...

<sup>4</sup> Charles Patton...

<sup>5</sup> Charles Patton...

<sup>6</sup> Charles Patton...

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, p. 545.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 218.

as nomads and it was difficult to grow vegetables in the high altitudes, thus it was difficult to be vegetarian.

From the above discussions, it seems that the Buddha said different things at different times and this may sound that he contradicted himself. According to Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha was not against the meat eating and did not require the Buddhists to be vegetarians. While, the Mahayana tradition especially Chinese Mahayana Buddhists believe that the Buddha was against the meat eating, thus they made vegetarian diet as compulsory. The injunction not to take a life as requiring vegetarianism is subject to reinterpretation in different cultures. The choice is up to the Buddhists either to eat meat or practice meatless diet. Yet, the pro-meat eating should follow the Buddha's guidelines of the three conditions for allowable and unallowable meat. A beggar monk must not be a chooser, and he has to accept what is being offered including meat. A layman has more freedom to choose their food. So, the choice is up to them. Some people are unable to be strictly vegetarian because of their disability or their health. However, if one is a follower of the *Bodhisattva* path, and truly compassionate, one should not eat meat. It is praiseworthy if they want to practice meatless diet, but it is essential not to be too critical of others.

## References

- A. Irons, E. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. New York: Facts on File. 278. 2008
- Amaganda Sutta, <http://www.aimwell.org/Books/Suttas/Amagandha/amagandha.html>. Retrieved August 2, 2011.
- Batchelor, M. *The Path of Compassion*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press. 3. 1992.
- Buddhist Text Translation Society (USA). *The Brahma Net Sutra*. <http://www.purifymind.com/BrahmaNetSutra.htm>, Retrieved July 26, 2011.
- C.C.Chang, G. (trans.). *A Treasury of Mahayana Sutra: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra*. London: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 472. 1983.
- Dhammavuddo Thero. *The Buddha's View on Meat Eating*. Penang: Chee Khoon Printings. 50. 2008.
- Gellner, D.N. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 218. 1992.
- Harvey, P. *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 159. 2000.
- Heng-ching Shih. *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. 52. 1992.
- Horner, I.B. *The Book of Discipline*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society. vol.II. 164. 2004.
- Horner, I.B. (trans.). *The Book of Discipline*. "Cullavagga." Oxford: The Pali Text Society. vol. V. 100. 2001.
- Horner, I.B. (trans.). *The Book of Discipline*. "Mahavagga." Lancaster: The Pali Text Society. vol. IV. 30. 2007.
- J. Corless, R. *The Vision of Buddhism*. New York: Paragon House. 89. 1989.



- Lu K'uan Yu. (trans.). *Surangama Sutra* (Sri Lanka: Brighthill Buddhist Centre).  
[http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/surangama.pdf](http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/surangama.pdf), retrieved August 2, 2011.
- Mahasi Sayadaw. *A Discourse on Brahmavihara Dhamma*. U Min Swe (trans.).  
Petaling Jaya: Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society. 1985.
- Nanamoli (trans.). *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)*.  
Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. 45. 1995.
- Nyanatiloka .*Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*. Nyanaponika  
(ed.). Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. 95. 1980.
- Patton, C. (trans.). *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*.  
[http://www.zhaxizhuoma.net/DHARMA/Tripitaka/MahaparinirvanaMahayana](http://www.zhaxizhuoma.net/DHARMA/Tripitaka/MahaparinirvanaMahayana.htm)  
.htm, Retrieved August 2, 2011.
- S. Gunn, A. and Walker, R. *Buddhism and Environmental Ethics in Context*. Petaling  
Jaya: Centre for Civilisational Dialogue. 2003.
- Southwold, M. *Buddhism in Life: The Anthropology Studies of Religion and the Sinhalese*  
*Practice of Buddhism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 66. 1983.
- Walse, M. (trans.). *The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)*. London:  
Wisdom Publication, 1987.
- Woodward, F.L. (trans.). *The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikaya)*. Lancaster:  
The Pali Text Society. vol. III. 41. 2006.

# AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

---

**Volume: 5**

**Issue No. 1**

**February 2021**

---

**EDITOR IN-CHIEF**

Dr. Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Dr. Masitoh Ahmad

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Dr. Muhammad Afifi al-Akiti, Oxford

Dr. Muhammad Kamal Hassan, IIUM

Dr. Syed Arabi Aidid, IIUM.

Dr. Hassan Basri Mat Dahan, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia,  
Nilai, Negeri Sembilan.

Dr. Kamaruzaman Yusuff, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,  
Kota Semarahan, Kucing.

Dr. Kamar Oniah, IIUM.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali, IIUM.

Dr. Siti Akmar, Universiti Institut Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Dr. Thameem Ushama, IIUM.