

BUDDHIST FOOD CULTURE: REPRESENTATION OF AHIMSA IN SOCIAL LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Buddhism is based on the concept of Ahimsa. The founder of Buddhism was Lord Buddha who came during 563-483 BCE. Before him Lord Mahavira and Hinduism also practiced Ahimsa non-violence. The non-violence leads to the rights of living and non-living thing. It is dividing as Jiva and Ajiva in Buddhism. The concept of non-violence leads to the no harm towards animals and it leads to the vegetarianism. But there are two traditions of Buddhism. They are Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. One is very strict towards the vegetarianism, and other one is quite relax because of the circumstances. The both traditions are present in modern days China, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Burma and other South Asian countries which are Buddhist. Theravada Buddhist monks promote the concept of Pure Meat and give some conditions about it if they fulfill those conditions then they can consume that meat. The main condition is if the weather condition of that area can-not helps them like in mountainous areas etc. But Mahayana Buddhists are very strict to their concept of Vegetarianism. They never consume meat at any cost. They won't accept any kind of meat even if it is given to them in form of charity or any other ways.

Keywords: Ahimsa, Buddhism, Animal Rights, Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Vegetarianism

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Ahimsa* begins with Hinduism in ancient India. In early period of Hinduism *Ahimsa* was linked with the philosophies of Karma. But in early times the Hindus eat meat too. Thus the traces of vegetarianism are also finding in Pre-vedic era (1700-1100 BCE). In the context of Rg-veda we can clearly observe it. The protection of cow is an example of it. In Hinduism animal sacrifice for the religious purpose is allowed (Sen, 2020).

The concept of *Ahimsa* was existing in Indian Culture before the arrival of Buddhism. Jainism was the first religion which was promoting *Ahimsa* in India. Different scholars has discuss about *Ahimsa* with different definitions. Malaskara has explained *Ahimsa* as not the kill or not to Injure. He distinguish term of *Ahimsa* into two parts “a” which is a prefix and it stands for a negative perspective which means NO. Second part is “hims” which means TO KILL. So meaning of it according to him is “not to kill” or “not to injure” (G.P.Malasekera, 1997).

Similar teachings can be found in the teaching of Lord Mahavira of Jainism. It is to be said that *Ahimsa* was most practiced by the Jain religion in five most prominent ways i.e. control on tongue (means not to hurt anyone by words), restraint of mind (limited or unveil thoughts of mind), to be careful on roads, removing hurtful things from roads, and they should eat in the day timing to avoid consumption bugs. They divided *Ahimsa* into two parts for *Ajiva* and *Jiva*, non-living and living things respectively. They under this definition promote the protection for animals. They are against the animal sacrificing even for the religious practice (Nomnian, 2008).

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Buddhism is known as the peaceful religion. Lord Buddha was the person who started preaching a violent free society in India. Before Buddhism, Lord Mahavira of Jainism and Hinduism introduced the concept of *Ahimsa* “non-violence” which was in practiced too, but Buddhism with a new enlightenment has gave it a new life. Buddhism protects Human rights and rights of animals and plants as well. Buddhism and Jainism somehow follow the same threads of teaching about *Ahimsa* which generally lead them to the vegetarian society (Sekhar, 2003).

When we talk about *Ahimsa* that’s mean this non-violence is not only dealing with human lives but also dealing with non-human things especially with Animals. When they protect rights of they lead society to a vegetarian society. As we can observe in case of Hinduism they prevent the sacrifice of cow and also stop consumption of meat, but they still believe in animal sacrifice for religious purposes. They sacrifice goat in the name of their god. But when we study it in Buddhism and Jainism they totally prevent the animal killing not only for self-consumptions but also for the religious purposes (Kemmerer, 2004).

Buddhism and Jainism have a lot of similarities between their religion especially in the case of *Ahimsa*, animal rights and vegetarianism. Mahayana scriptures and Pali canon flew light on this issue. Especially in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, this entire chapter discuss about the eating of meat in Buddhism. In Buddhism we found two traditions one is *Theravada Buddhism* and second one is *Mahayana*. *Theravada Buddhism* is older one and mostly found in Malaya, Tibet, Burma etc. while *Mahayana* is mostly found in China and some areas of Buddhism (Davidson, 2003).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

R.K Pruthi describes about the effects of Buddhism art on Indian art. He also explains about the contribution of Buddhist art towards India. He points out some saying of Buddha and also defines Buddhist thought. He also focuses on the Karma and development of Indian civilization. He also talks about the effects of Buddhist culture on Indian civilization. He also confers about the living style of the Buddhist monks and culture of the India. In this book writer also defines about the *Ahimsa* (the non-violence).

Christopher Key Chapple has described about the non-violence and divided it into the different steps and also elaborate it different ways. Christopher Key Chapple is divided into two parts i) Non-violence, animals and earth. ii) The Non-violence self. In this first part the he described about the different violence on the non-human things like animals earth and plants. He also explains some example of it. In second part he defines about the self-violence like suicide and the *Ahimsa* in other books like Mahabharat.

Venerable Nārada Mahāthera totally focuses on the teachings of Buddha, which was love and peace and stop violence. He stated about the birth of the Buddha and end it on the causes due to which it was rapidly accepted in the world. He also describe about the concept of Dhumma and causes of this teaching. He talks about the royal patrons of Buddha and his ministry. He mainly light on the living style of Buddha which teaches simplicity to the Indian people and shoe equality to the all mankind. He writes briefly about the death of Buddha which is stated as The Buddha’s Parinibbāna (Death).

Diana writes about the role of women in the contribution of Buddhism and enlightenment of Buddhism. It normally consists of the myth and tales of good and bad daughters. She also tells us about the Buddha teachings seven daughters. At the same time it also describes about the Nuns and their role in the growth of Buddhism. Because of this Nuns Buddhism was spread in the women of India. On the other hand she describe about the equality of the women and men in the eye of Buddha. She also fled light on the violence on women and teachings of Buddha about it.

Nalinaksha talks about the different sects of the Buddhism in India which are came into being due to the different doctrine schools. Some of the sects of the Buddhism are Samitiya, Sinhalese, Kashmirians, Manjursi, etc. there is only a bit difference of tradition in these sects. Some of them are Chinese some belongs from Nepal and others from the local areas of Hindustan and Tibet (an area of china). He also shed light on the founders of these sects and explain that why these sects gave such names. He also defines the different traditions including Theravada and Mahayana traditions of Buddhism.

Gap of study

In this study we will flee light on the role of Buddhist's *Ahimsa* about Animals. In this research we will try to explore that how Buddhism protects the rights of animals under the definition of *Ahimsa* which lead the ancient world for the concept of Vegetarianism. It will also discuss about the vegetarian and non-vegetarian concept within Buddhist traditions of different food habits.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a based-on concept of Ahimsa. This concept is about the no-violence behavior of Buddhists, and their deal with eating in their daily life food habits. This can be observed in Hinduism and Jainism as well. While studying Buddhism we can witness its application in every aspect of life. Buddhism is further divided into two traditions. It explains about their two traditions Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists who are divided into vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism's concept which depends on the circumstances of Buddhist society. These societies can be found in various parts of this world.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research questions

- How the concept of Ahimsa reflects in the lives of BUDHIST?
- What are the rights of Animals according to concept of *Ahimsa*?
- How the food habits reflect the division of Buddhist Traditions?

Objectives

The main objectives of study are as follow:

- To discuss the aspects and impacts of *Ahimsa* on almost every religion of India
- To discuss about the leads of *Ahimsa* towards the concept of vegetarianism
- To discuss the effects of vegetarianism in world

Research methodology: This article is a qualitative research. Primary and secondary data will be use.

Data Collection

- **Secondary Sources**

This will include articles, journals, books, research thesis and websites which will help to understand the Buddhist food culture and its further Buddhists traditions. It will help us to understand both Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

- **Primary Sources**

Primary sources will be used in this research. The "Dhammapada" which was translated from the Pali by F. Max Muller and "The Sutta-Nipata" Translated from the Pali by V. Fausboll will help us to understand the two Buddhist traditions.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The Ming dynasty poet Tao Zhouwang wrote:

*A finger burned in boiling water delivers
a shocking pain to the whole body;
A needle prick into one's skin feels
as if knives are cutting all over one's skin.
When fish die, they sadly look for pity;
and when chickens die, they weep before the blade.
Such sad weeping is clear in every case;
it's just those that hear it recognize it not.
A cup of plain tea far surpasses drinking ambrosia;
and the fragrance of simple
fare surpasses dining on meat and wine.
(Yun, 2018)*

Ahimsa

"*Ahimsa* is a word of Sanskrit which means "**nonviolence or non-harm**". The teachings of *Ahimsa* is against the wars and violence towards the all living or nonliving things. It protects the rights of human, animals, earth, nonliving things etc. it present in all religions of this world in any shape. The

famous religions which promote *Ahimsa* in all over the world are Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism (Schmithausen., 2009).

Sohan Lal Jain Gandhi defines *Ahimsa* as the basic tenet of Jain Religion. He also defines *Ahimsa* as Non Violence or no harm. He also stated that *Ahimsa* in Jainism is also defines as ecological ethic. Lord Mahavira who was the founder of Jainism also said that the ecosystem or life on the planet is bound with each other and it is stand on the mutual support and cooperation. Sohan Lal also divides it into two parts just like Malasekera (Gandhi, 2012).

Dr. Gopalan also gave the similar philosophy about the definition of *Ahimsa* in Jainism. He is considered as the relation among the religion of Buddhism Vedic Hinduism and Jainism. He relates *Ahimsa* or Non Violence with the intentions of a person. According to him, *Ahimsa* is linked with acts, which basically headed by anyone's intentions. For this mind of a person should be free from all kinds of evil wills and intentions. He also said that avoid from an act doesn't mean that there is no intention of Harm (Gopalan, 1973).

The all religions are against the violence and wars and want peace in this land. *Ahimsa* is an essential thing for the human beings and other living and nonliving things. *Ahimsa* is also pronouncing as "**Ahimsa**" sometimes which means the same as *Ahimsa*." (Omvedt, 2003).

Buddhism shares the same roots of *Ahimsa* as Jainism does. Buddha taught about it during time period of 563-483 BCE. It also divides *Ahimsa* in two parts "*A*" of *Ahimsa* again like Jainism stands for No and "*Hims*" stands for to kill. So its meaning is not to kill or not to harm living things. Similarly as Jainism it divides into two parts like Ajiva and Jiva. Buddhist perspective encourages not taking life of anyone unnecessarily. Though in most parts of the world Buddhists couldn't prevent themselves by harming plants, but still they never harmed animals (Chapple, 1993).

As the Buddha stated,

*"Hatred will not cease by hatred, but by the love alone.
This is the ancient law."*

(Lord Buddha)

When we think about *Ahimsa* or nonviolence the concept of Buddhist nonviolence also come into our mind. The Buddhism is considers the most peaceful religion in the world. It not only teaches the rights of the human being but also of "pana" or creatures e.g. animals, birds, trees and mountains etc. first of all I will like to discuss about the rights of animals and nonviolence towards animals and birds.

Teachings of *Ahimsa* and Animals

Buddhism is known around the world for peace as it seeks peace even for the welfare of animals and also seeks harmony with nature. This article also argues about the Buddhists to be vegetarians. According to author, Buddhism is a tricky religion because it is practiced in different forms and different ways in different countries, and also because the Buddhist teachers teach religion in their own unique ways.

According to the historians, Buddhism gives much more rights to animals and birds as compare to any other religion of this world. A historian named as, *Lynn White* which himself a Christian appreciated the protection and rights of animals in the Buddhism, but he also believe that, nature can be also destroy for the service of mankind. Nonviolence towards "pana" or creatures can be observes by visiting a Buddhist country. As they free birds from the cages as a custom and for humanity and kindness. According to the Buddhism all the beings must be respected, and should be given proper and complete rights to them. Right of life is not only reserves for human being but also for animals and birds in the Buddhism. This is the main reason Buddhist appreciated the vegetarianism in different religions (Kemmerer, 2004).

As written in Sutta Nipata,

"Let him neither kill, nor did cause to be killing any living being." (Buddha)

Buddha was also against the injuring the plants and seeds as well. According to him enlightened came due to the showing kindness and nonviolence to the Pana. The nonviolence also belongs to the eight fold paths, underlying the right action and right livelihood. As the right action stops from taking the life and right livelihood refuse to allow the professions and trades of weapons and similar to them. It also prevent from hunting and butchering professions as these professions only hurts the animals and birds and opposite to the law of *Ahimsa*. According to the Buddha if a person is nature loving he will never hurt any animal only for the sake of his enjoyment (Schmithausen., 2009).

“Buddha is against the animal sacrificing as it is also clear from the Buddhist texts. Animals are slaughtering for the two purposes:

- For religious customs.
- For oil, meat and skin.

According to the Buddha slaughtering of animals for such purposes cannot permit in the Buddhism. According to Buddhist books it's not a great merit to slaughter the animals. Buddhism is also interesting to acknowledge the nature of animals. They also try to heal an animal if it gets injured. In Buddhist texts animals have a moral place under the law of “Karma” good or bad it's depend. However, according to science and biological facts, this has no reality in it. But in Buddhism animals play some characters like in the folktales of “Jatakas”. But these tales are acceptable due to their moral lessons to human being as an example (Asma, 2010).

The “Jataka Mala”, for example, is a fiction presentation the wickedness of smooth talk and greediness. It explains the act of a crow and a jackal, portray them as covetous life form that way out to dishonest smooth talk in array to increase foodstuff. As the Lord Buddha was against to hurting the animals similarly, he was against to the experiment on the animals. Vivisection these days is symbolized against the harms and cruelty on the animals during the experiments. But on the other hand it permits those experiments on the animals which are in the favor of the mankind and during experiments the animals don't face trouble and pain.” (Chapple, 1993).

The main precept of Buddhism is how you treat living things especially animals. This is known as *Pranatiapatadviratih*. In *Mahavagga* Buddhism claimed not to harm any living object intentionally.

Buddhist dietary culture of Vegetarianism

“The Buddhist concept of sentient of plants is not clear in early and later Buddhism. There are not such traces which can help us to understand and clear the Buddhist concept about the life of trees and plants. As a writer Lambert Schmithausen wrote in his book:

“Plants as a borderline case between sentient and insentient.”

(Schmithausen., 2009)

According to him the Buddha's concept of plants life is not clear but about the life of trees and plants questions are always rise. But as the Buddhism is the peaceful religion so it is against the cutting of the trees and plants. Buddha was not against the getting of fruits from the plants and trees. He also went to the forest when he left his royal palace. He was in favor of gaining benefit from the plants and trees like vegetable, fruits, and shadow etc. (Nomnian, 2008).

On the other side it protects the plants from cutting by saying good or bad *karma*. Bad karma is cutting the fruitful tree or any branch of that tree. And good karma is to plant new plants and trees for the service of the human being. Buddha's most sermons are also given in the shadow of the trees. Asoka which was the famous and great emperor of the Buddhism and due to whom Buddhism spread in the whole India also planted thousands of trees during his life time. Elsewhere, Buddhism also gives the same respect to the plants as it gives to the animals. According to this religion forest or a place surrounding with the plants and animals is an ideal place for the spiritual worship. For such purposes visits different forests especially the “Gosinga-sala” forest near “Vesali” (Schmithausen., 2009).

Buddhism as it is against harm for trees too Buddha only allows to eat those fruits which fall from tree by itself and not to pluck it from tree directly. As they are against the sacrificing of animal for food purpose they become totally vegetarians. The two traditions of Buddhism *Theravada Buddhism* and *Mahayana Buddhism*, both are against the sacrifice of animals. *Theravada Buddhism* is older tradition of Buddhism which in present time can be observed in China, Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka and south Asian countries. In these tradition animal sacrifices was totally banned. They couldn't sacrifice any animal for themselves or couldn't harm them (Fleischman, 2002).

In early time period of Buddhism, after Buddha and during his time too Buddhist monks were surviving on the donations which were given by clergy of the empire. It was not a bad thing to receive donation from anyone. While receiving donation from anyone they never feel shy because they were taught to rely on donation or charity or generosity of others especially from clergy. Even in modern time period in different countries like Chinese peninsula, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and other south Asian countries still practice this act. So monks accept whatever believers offer to them. It

was sometimes consist of meat too. The monks were told not to say no to their believers so *Theravadas Buddhists* consumed meat too (Davidson, 2003).

Theravadas monks only allow eating “pure meat” only. Pure Meat means an animal which is not killed for them, you didn’t observe its killing, you had no connection with its killing or you got no information about killing it. This is pure meat and if meat fulfills these conditions then it can be consumed otherwise not (Lama, 2001).

In Tibet too this is very common practice. Tibetan monks were not vegetarians. They were non vegetarian in fact in present time Tibetan Buddhists consume beef and lamb as part of their daily meal. The main reason of them to be non-veg was because of the cold weather of Tibet. If they followed the practice of other monks their survival could become difficult. In mountainous area of Tibet growing vegetables was almost a very difficult task. So it can be said that because of circumstances the practice of being vegetarianism can be prevented. This was the same challenge which was faced by the Japanese monks too, so they were and are not vegetarians (Kembel, 2003).

In *Mahayana Buddhism* they were and still they are very strict about vegetarian concept of Buddhism. Those monks never ask for alms because they believed in their own efforts for the collection of food. This Buddhist tradition is still present in China. They always prepare their own food, they grow it by themselves, or they bought it or they borrow it but won’t beg it from anyone. In *Mahayana Buddhism* a lot of things are forbidden like onion, garlic and alcohol. They not only avoided animal meat but they also prevent the use of silk and leather as they also come from animals (Holmes, 1967).

Many people think that vegetarianism is a trademark for the religion of Buddhism, and considered as it was the first religion which shifted vegetarianism from India to China. Thus China was a country which consumed meat so there were not strict instructions to forbid meat in start. Later on when teachings of Buddha started it’s influenced in China and as Buddha said in *Nievana Sutra* that meat consumption could destroy seed of empathy of a person, they stopped eating meat. Chinese emperor Wu who was an emperor of Liang Dynasty wrote an article entitled as “*Essays on Giving up Wine and Meat*” was about the promotion of vegetarianism. He not only encouraged it in his own life but also for the clergy of his empire. This was the main moment when Buddhist vegetarianism was started in China (Yun, 2018).

Confucianism became the main reason of spread of vegetarianism in China. Confucianism basically believes in love, kindness, family traditions, and benevolent piety. As the thinker of Confucian Mencius said,

*“Having seen an animal alive, one cannot bear to see it dead;
having heard its cry, one cannot bear to eat its flesh.*

This is why the gentleman stays away from the kitchen.”(Yun, 2018)

Furthermore, Confucian theory of avoiding eating meat and drinking wine during the mourning period after the death of anyone’s parents is quite similar with the traditions of Buddhism. So, practice of Buddhism to not harming animals, not captivating them combined with Confucianism became the reason of spread of vegetarianism (Yun, 2018).

The purpose of studying Buddhism isn't always to come to be a vegetarian, for consuming is not the crucial problem; it is the purity of the mind this is critical. If one’s words are packed with compassion and loving-kindness but the thoughts is packed with greed, hatred, and incorrect views, one could eat vegetarian food all day lengthy however nonetheless cross in opposition to one’s judgment of right and wrong! Thirty years in the past, vegetarianism in Taiwan turned into nowhere near as massive, and taking the 10-hour ride from the north to the south vicinity made dining quite a problem. That is why they established Fushan Temple in Changhua, relevant Taiwan, so that devotees travelling to and fro should have vegetarian meals. For the reason that then, vegetarianism has turn out to be a developing trend, now not simply in Taiwan amongst Chinese Buddhists, but everywhere in the global. In latest years, there are increasingly vegetarians in Western societies. This phenomenon is not always related to spiritual belief, on the grounds that most pick out vegetarianism for fitness motives (Kembel, 2003).

All the cafeterias in India’s educate stations now offer vegetarian meals. Traditionally meat-primarily based ingredients within the US such as hamburger and pizza now also are available in vegetarian variations, while you’ll be able to discover a vegetarian restaurant everywhere in Taiwan. Fo Guang Shan has Water Drop Teahouses that provide vegetarian meals at branch temples round the

world as a manner of giving something again for the accomplishments of all sentient beings. Running in aggregate with artwork galleries and bookstores, those teahouses no longer simplest provide vegetarian snacks but additionally increase the non-secular life of the devotees and feature garnered huge aid. All of those developments show what influence vegetarianism has had on humanity (Sen, 2020).

Whether a person eats meat or vegetarian food, what we devour is a reflection of our daily conduct. Some humans are mainly meat eaters, at the same time as some are in particular vegetarians, but others haven't any specific desire. Buddhism encourages humans not to take life and that means putting into exercise the Buddha's spirit of compassion (Kembel, 2003).

CONCLUSION

As far as Buddhism is known as peaceful religion, they follow its teaching to not to harm the animals or other living and non-living creatures. They use the concept of *jiva* and *ajiva*. Their habit of not harming animals leads them to the concept of vegetarianism. But there are two different traditions of Buddhism, that's why they are divided on the concept of vegetarianism. *Theravada Buddhist* move according to circumstances. That is why they are allowed to consume meat with some conditions top of them is weather conditions of their countries. They are mostly found in mountainous areas of the world. *Mahayana Buddhists* are totally against this concept and don't appreciate the concept of pure meat. According to them in this case you are violating the teachings of Buddha about *Ahimsa*. So they do not consume meat either it is pure meat or donated to them anyways.

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