

## Vegetarianism in Buddha Teaching

Cho Nwe Soe

### Abstract

This paper attempts to prove "Vegetarianism in Buddha Teaching." Nowadays all over the world there appear many people who follow the practice of vegetarianism, they yet found out to hold different views. This article attempts to convey the original essence of Buddha's teaching as regards vegetarianism. Regarding taking meat *Āmagandha Sutta* is very important. This *sutta* is mentioned in *Sutta Nipāta* of *Khuddaka Nikāya*. It was preached firstly by the Buddha named *Kassapa* and retold by *Gotama* Buddha.

**Keywords:** Vegetarianism, *Āmagandha*, Buddha teaching.

### Introduction

Nowadays, all over the world there appear many people who follow the practice of vegetarianism, they yet found out to hold different views. Some people become vegetarians on account of their health situations whereas for most people do not, vegetarianism based on their religious belief. This paper attempts to convey the original essence of Buddha's teaching as regards vegetarianism. Regarding taking meat *Āmagandha Sutta* is very important. This *Sutta* is mentioned in *Sutta Nipāta* of *Khuddaka Nikāya*. It was preached firstly by the Buddha named *Kassapa* and retold by *Gotama* Buddha. In the *Āmagandha Sutta*, a Brahmin once accused of *Kassapa* Buddha having taken food made up of rice together with well-prepared flesh of bird, and, therefore, having eaten *Āmagandha* (what defiles one). But *Kassapa* Buddha explained to him again and again that meat-eating of flesh was not *Āmagandha*, or something what defile one. Bad mind and wicked deeds defile a man; and neither hymns nor oblations, nor sacrifices, nor penances, can purify a mortal of such defilement.

### Teaching of the Vegetarianism (*Āmagandha Sutta*)

The Buddha preached about the Vegetarianism in *Āmagandha Sutta*. Before our Blessed One was born to preach the way to *Nibbāna* to the whole world, the Brahmin *Āmagandha* had gone to the *Himalāya* with five hundred young Brahmins who entered the Order of ascetic monks. They used to abstain from wrong-doing and subsisted on the roots of the forest and never partook of the flesh of animals because of being strict vegetarians.

Now it comes to pass that these ascetics, who did not use salt, lime juice and other condiments were attacked by jaundice. Therefore they came down from their hermitage in search of salt and acids on when they arrived at the village, arrival the habitants of the village welcome them with joy. They had sufficiently received the alms day to day and then they said to the villagers to permit and go to the *Himalāya* forest. There upon the villagers offered them oil, rice and so on. and taking these the ascetic departed for their abode.

Now after our Buddha was born in the world, and was preaching his noble doctrines in the Order, he arrived and took up his abode in the *Devānaṃ Vihāra* of *Sāvatti*. From thence accompanied by the great community of *Bhikkhus* he went to the village for the benefit of the ascetics having seen thus need with his divine eye of wisdom. These upon the dwellers of that seeing the Order of monks accompanying the Buddha arranged agreed aims giving the amassment one after accepting alms delivered a sermon.

Now when those ascetics came as used to the village, the inhabitant seeing them did not entertain them as usual. The ascetic then questioned "Are not these villagers charitable how it is?". Then the villagers are said that this village suffered from calamity famine, nowadays which does not suffered from famine. The Buddha was born in the world that Blessed Lord for the sake of humanity, was preaching and came to this village and also preached.

Hearing about this village, the *Āmagandha* ascetic had arrived to the Buddha and he said the righteous one who mates these millet, beans and peas, edible leaves and roots, the fruit of any creeper, "Obtain justly, do not tell lies for the sake of pleasure."

Moreover, the ascetic said to the Buddha, "You who eat whatever given by other, which is well prepared nicely, got up pure and made of rice, he eats *Āmagandha*". The Buddha replied to the ascetic that you said that, the change of *Āmagandha* did not apply to me while eating rice with well-prepared bird's flesh and inquire the meaning of this from you of what hind was your *Āmagandha*.

Destroying living beings, killing binding, stealing, speaking false hood, worthless reading, intercourse with other's wife, these are *Āmagandha* but eating of the flesh is not *Āmagandha*.

Thus the Buddha preached this again and again, then the *Brāmaṇa* who was accomplished in the hymns of the Vedas understood it, the Muni who's free from defilement independent and difficult to make clear in various stanzas.

Having heard Buddha's well spoken words, which are free from defilement and send away all pains.

### **Vegetarianism in Buddha teaching**

According to *Āmagandha Sutta* in Buddha teaching, once upon a time, a hermit who practised vegetarianism approached the Buddha. He inquired whether the Buddha ate *Āmagandha* or not. The Buddha asked him: "What is the *Āmagandha*?" "The *Āmagandha* is meat", he replied.

"*Āmagandha*" literally means "odour of flesh". It has the connotation of putridity and repugnant sense of uncleanness. Therefore this hermit used the term "*Āmagandha*" for the word "meat".

Then the Buddha explained that the meant was not true for *Āmagandha* but all mental defilements and all unwholesome deeds were really *Āmagandha*.

The Buddha says:

- (1) Taking life, beating, cutting, blinding, stealing, lying, fraud deceiving, pretended knowledge, adultery- this is *Āmagandha* and not eating flesh.
- (2) When men are unrestrained in sensual pleasure are greedy in tastes, are associated with impure actions are of nihilistic view, crooked, obscurantist – this is *Āmagandha* and not eating flesh.
- (3) When men are rough and harsh, backbiting treacherous, without compassion, haughty, ungenerous and give anything to anyone: this is *Āmagandha* and not eating flash.
- (4) Anger, pride, obstinacy, antagonism, hypocrisy, envy, ostentation, pride of opinion, intercourse with unrighteous – this is *Āmagandha* and not eating flesh.

(5) When men are of bad morals, refuse to pay debts slanderers, deceitful in their dealing pretenders, when the vilest of men commit foul deeds – this is *Āmagandha* and not eating flesh.

According to Buddhism, purification of all mental defilements is very important to attain *Nibbāna*. One must attempt to purify one's mind. The purification of mind can only be achieved through cultivation of good within himself. To achieve purification you must establish *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom) within yourself. Only through morality, concentration and wisdom you are able to achieve the purification of your mind. You can neither be defiled nor purified through eating meat or vegetables.

The Buddha did not exhort His followers to become vegetarians or non-vegetarians, but He admonished them to eat food in moderation in food. Whatever good you eat, vegetables or meat, you must control thirst for taste.

May the readers realize the true perspective of being a good Vegetarianism?

### Evaluation

This paper is extracted from the *Āmagadha Sutta*. As aforesaid *Āmagadha Sutta* gives Vegetarianism of motif in Buddhism. Buddhism neither condemns nor praises the Vegetarianism. It never says the vegetarianism is right or wrong. It only says that you should eat food, vegetable or meat in moderation.

### Conclusion

In this paper, there appear many people who follow the practice of Vegetarianism yet found out to hold different views. Some people become vegetarians on account of their health situations whereas for most people, Vegetarianism based on their religious belief. There may be different ideas how they follow this practice. How do people make a decision of consuming food as regards the life of the animals? Basically, vegetarians can be classified into different categories. As a vegetarian, some consume egg but do not drink milk whereas some avoid eating egg but drink milk. Still some people abstain from partaking any by-products of animals such as milk, egg, etc. but love to use materials made of animal skin, etc. In case of some, they refrain from either consuming or using any products of animals. According to Theravada Buddhism, its adherents are neither encouraged nor insisted to be a vegetarian. Since not a compulsory practice, neither vegetarians are praised nor non-vegetarians to be blamed. The purpose of consuming food in Buddhism is to sustain one's life and body while partaking any kind of food which should be blameless and remove craving on food. As Buddhism throws light on *Majjimapāṭipadā* (Middle Way) as its one and the only practice to attain final liberation, it wisely advises its adherents to avoid extremes.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound thanks to Dr Tin Htwe, Acting Rector of Hinthada University and Dr Mar Lar, Pro-rector of Hinthada University, for their kind permission to carry out this research paper. Special thanks are due to Professor and Head of Oriental Studies Department, Dr Soe Mya Hla Thu Zar for her support and encouragement.

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