

Vegetarianism Perspective in Mahāyāna Sutras

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Abstract: *Vegetarianism in Buddhism brings very practical and valuable values and benefits. This is a beautiful lifestyle, a culture of elegant eating, elegant, and full of humanity. The issue of vegetarianism with the love of all species, respect for life, equality, and environmental protection also embodied the Buddhist spirit that is true to its religion.*

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1. Introduction

In all *Mahāyāna* Sutras, there is no sutta allowed to eat meat by the Buddha. Not only that, but the Buddha also clearly stated the ban on eating meat. This is understandable because it is from the *Mahāyāna* canon that the Buddha explicitly proclaims that all sentient beings are equal because they all have Buddha-nature and will all be enlightened in the future.

Humanity has entered a new millennium with great advances in science, people have a relatively full material life with more amenities. However, it is through this comfortable and modern way of life that man created and fell into countless crises and conflicts such as ideal crisis, belief, the crisis of nature, conflict religion, ethnic conflict,... The main cause of these crises and conflicts, according to social scientists, may be rooted in the current imbalanced lifestyle between the promotion of material life and the deterioration of the literary world. chemistry, morality, spirit. According to religious experts, the root of this situation is the lust, craving, and the killing of humans. Therefore, to balance the current life, towards a healthy spiritual life is essential for society. This implies a significant part of the important role of religion because most of the spiritual-cultural background of mankind is greatly influenced by the philosophy of life and practice of religion.

It is no coincidence that Buddhism was recognized by the United Nations as a religion of peace, of love and equality in 1999, Buddhism has shown this in many different areas in its practice and the practice of monks and Buddhists. One of these areas, the issue of vegetarianism with the love of all species, respect for life, equality, and environmental protection also embodied the Buddhist spirit that is true to its religion.

1) The Origin of Vegetarianism in Buddhism

The in English term Vegetarianism, meaning vegetarianism was first born in 1847, but in fact, the concept of vegetarianism has existed for thousands of years. In India, the spirit of fasting was raised early, in Jambudvīpa (India during the Gotama Buddha period), Jainists (also known as Jainism) were guided by *Mahāvīra*, understood as absolute Taoists practicing the vegetarian method. The Jain monks and followers are strict vegetarians and always try to overcome all senses and emotions, do not do anything that

can cause death, suffering, damage to people as well as all other creatures whether they are worms or ants.¹

When it comes to the origin of vegetarianism in Buddhism, there is still no consistency in perspective or history. Vegetarianism in Buddhism is explained in two ways:

The first tendency is that, until the 13th year after his enlightenment, the Buddha mentioned the problem of real life in the sangha in the spirit encouraged disciples to follow the fasting regime on food. The reason is that during the first 13 years since the Buddha's enlightenment, the Sangha practice group was very good and the number was not crowded, until the 13th year, the *Sangha* increased so many problems arose, from which Buddha new restrictions, along with a number of other regulations in the *Sangha*, including culinary issues. The concept of eating boys (ie the pure son, today called vegetarian) of Buddhism was born from there. Although in the early years of his mission, the Buddha did not mention the fasting, he always taught his disciples the spirit of compassion, equality, and respect for the life of all beings. The Buddha began to apply these spiritual teachings to encouraging the restriction of killing sentient beings by using the three pure lives and eventually coming to a complete end, using only use foods that come from plants.

In the Vinaya, the third precepts of the Bodhisattva precepts also explicitly forbid the eating of sentient beings: "*All flesh of all sentient beings cannot be eaten. Comment on flesh-eaters who lose their time in compassion and caste-like Buddha-nature; all beings see away from this person. Meat eaters have countless sins. Therefore, all Buddhists should not eat all the flesh of all beings. If he tries to eat meat, this Buddhist commits a misdemeanor.*"²

The Buddha advised his disciples not to kill, because all living creatures are afraid of death, and consider life to be the most precious thing in the world, to respect and protect animals, they also have the right to live, to have the right to share the environment on earth, where people are. Thus, following this tendency, the vegetarian spirit in Buddhism existed as soon as the Buddha was alive, and later, continued to be encouraged and developed later. In particular, this spirit was promoted to the height of King Asoka (269 - 232

¹Nguyen Tan Đac, 2000: *Indian Culture*. Ho Chi Minh Ci Ty, p.162

²Thich Tri Tinh (2011), *BrahmajālaSutta*, Religious Publishing House, p.27.

BC), who had greatly promoted the spirit of vegetarianism and the prohibition of the killing of Buddhism in India strongly. The king himself practiced vegetarianism and advised people not to kill animals to eat every day. He made many edict inscriptions on stelae that forbade people to kill animals for spiritual sacrifices. This practical work of King Asoka has contributed to bringing vegetarianism deeply into contemporary Indian society and developed to this day.³

2) Vegetarian Perspective in ŚūraṅgamaSūtra

In the *ŚūraṅgamaSūtra*, the Buddha preached very clearly about the harmful effects of *Citta*. He advised his disciples to go beyond the habit of killing and developing immeasurable compassion by the practical action of using vegetarian life, that is, moving towards a vegetarian culture, spiritual culture, and culture morality. Because the act of killing will be one of the causes that sentient beings drift along the continuous stream of *Saṃsāra*.

Thus, if in the mind of every being in the six paths there does not arise the thought of killing the creature, not proceeding to the act of killing, but always spreading compassion to all beings, loving others as well as oneself himself, then, of course, he will cut back and forth in the six paths of reincarnation. Therefore, that being will no longer be dependent on the continuous karmic retribution of the stream of *Saṃsāra*. On the contrary, if with the mind of killing, even if one attains the mind of meditation, it will only become a great force of demons, astronauts, or murder. Certain sentient beings with the mind will not achieve enlightenment, if in later life if anyone eats meat but witnesses the enlightenment, it is just an argument. Many people justify their meat-eating habit by saying that the Buddha allowed the five senses to be used. Buddha explained:

Hey Ananda! The reason we temporarily give Bhikkhu stilts to eat five types of meat, this is due to our divine power, which has no life. Because the land of *Brahmin* is more humid, with more sand and stones, vegetables and plants are not born, so I temporarily turned out to be compassionate, pretending to be meat, for you to eat. But unfortunately, after the Tathagata passed away, the man named Buddhist once again ate the sentient beings.⁴

This was just a skillful means in the harsh environment of India at that time, vegetables were difficult to cultivate, so Buddha temporarily turned out, pretending to be meat for his disciples to use. But today, many people rely on this to explain and argue for their predatory views. In particular, they are based on *Pāli* texts, not seeing the restraint of banning meat, only mentioning the use of the five senses. For this reason, most of the male Buddhist monks have argued that there is no prohibition on eating meat and fish in the scriptures of the Southern ideology even though there is a ban on killing. Buddhist monks explain: "If the Buddha felt that the meatless food was in accordance with the rules, he would have declared it and at least was recorded in the

TripitakaPāli, but what this did not see the Buddha mentioned.⁵

Before Buddha *Nirvana*, He also said: "Hey Mahakassapa! Starting from today onwards, the Tathagata does not allow the saints to eat meat, if the people bring it to the offering, it must be seen as the flesh of their children. Tathagata prohibits the disciples from eating all kinds of meat."⁶

Therefore, they believe that vegetarianism or meat-eating does not make people pure, clean, and attain enlightenment. In other words, whether vegetarian or not, people still have the opportunity, and the ability to achieve true purity, enlightenment. Purity depends on the mind of the person, not on anything from the outside. For *Theravāda* monks, a person's purity can be judged by "limiting and eliminating food desires", not from the concept of the food one eats. *ĀmagandhaSutta* of the *SūtraPiṭaka(Khuddaka-Nikāya)* states that: "It is not to not eat meat fish, or appearances, or rituals, but to purify a person, not respectfully believing in the teachings."⁷

Therefore, for monks belonging to the *Theravāda* Buddhist sect, there is no difference between eating vegetables, fruits, or meat fish, the so-called fasting comes from the mood of longevity. They recognize that it is only a source of food with the same function to provide nutrition and nourish the body, and if you can practice, keep your mind and mind when you use it, whether meat or not, will also become pure. calm, gentle. That is why, for the *Theravāda* monks, any animal that is killed (by themselves or others) and then offered as food is not allowed for a monk, but on the contrary meat or fish that were bought by the faithful in a market, sold in a public place for all to consume would be allowed by the Buddha and used by monks.

On the other hand, if it is assumed that the purchase of fish meat from a market in a public place is of the three humiliation and the monk is allowed to use it, it is not reasonable. Because, one who buys meat, or meat-based products, means that he has created essential causes, that is, creating demand; for others to kill these animals, which is to be provided on-demand, meaning that animals such as cows, goats, pigs, chickens, etc. are slaughtered for slaughter to be eaten enjoy. If no one eats meat, it is clear that these animals will not be killed. By agreeing to eat meat served by another person, a person who eats meat is the cause for others to kill animals. Carnivorous action is to encourage the associated industries to commit atrocities and cause the deaths of countless animals. So, if each person consumed pure vegetarian food, those who slaughtered the butchers for sale would switch to a better career.

Because life is so precious, Buddha always respects life, any life, from the life of insects to the life of plants. Through recorded scriptures, he did not dump his leftovers on green lawns, or in the water, there were small insects. With this

⁵Tam Dieu(2007), *Ibid*, p.38.

⁶Thich Tri Tinh, *MahāparinibbānaSutta*, volume 1, Minh ĐangQuangVihara Published in 1990, pages 137-138.

⁷Jan Sanjivaputta (ThichThien Minh translated Vietnamese) (1992), *Ibid*.

³Nguyen Tan Dac (2000), *Ibid*, p. 208.

⁴*Ibid*.

spirit, along with the texts from the classic Tripitaka, placing Buddhism in relation to the circumstances of Indian society at that time, the author believes that the spirit of chastity has been around since Buddha's time. Because, for no reason, a compassionate Buddha who loves sentient beings as a red child eats them. But because there were some special circumstances and in order to open the means to ease sentient beings, the Buddha accepted the monks' real life with the contemplation of mindfulness, in the spirit of the three pure humiliation, but not common. Although they are not obliged to increase their vegetarian diet, the Buddha still upholds the spirit of chastity, with the policy of not killing and compassion for all beings, respecting the life of creatures.

Here are the reasons not to eat meat spoken by the Buddha in Mahāyāna Sutras:

- "All sentient beings from the past until now, in turn, according to predestined relationships, became relatives of each other, thinking that this flesh is their previous life, so they should not eat meat.
- Donkey meat, mules, camels, weasels, dogs, buffaloes, horses, humans, animals, etc., because many butchers are mixed, therefore meat should not be eaten.
- As hunters, butchers, animals smell the stench they immediately frightened, dogs sees resentment barking wine, so should not eat meat.
- Because of the austerities do not arise from the heart, so should not eat meat. Because making the mantra unattained, therefore you should not eat meat.
- Because the slaughterers see the appearance of the animal form the discrimination, indulge in the taste, so do not eat meat. Meat eaters are rejected by the gods, so they shouldn't eat meat. Because it makes your mouth stink, so you should not eat meat. Because people have many nightmares, they should not eat meat.
- Because of the deserted place, the wolf tigers smell dangerous, so they should not eat meat. Because eating erratic, should not eat meat. Because making monks not being bored out, so should not eat meat. It is often said that when you want to eat and drink, you should think that this is your child's meat or think it is poison, so you should not eat meat. Letting Buddhists eat meat is no right place.

2. Conclusion

Through cuisine, the values of culture, history, customs, traditions, arts of a people, religion, country, region, and region, are clearly expressed. At the same time, thanks to human emotions, there are many opportunities to get closer together, because of that, vegetarian cuisine brings significant values in culinary culture as well as in social life. The way to choose food that does not kill the life of sentient beings is a symbol of good morality. As a result, human behavior is sanctified, the soul is also purified, gradually leading to a life of upward, merciful, overcoming the habits of killing, cultivating immeasurable compassion.

Thus, vegetarianism in Buddhism brings very practical and valuable values and benefits. This is a beautiful lifestyle, a culture of elegant eating, elegant, and full of humanity. However, we should not completely eliminate

vegetarianism, but have a superficial view of meat-eaters. In fact, meat-eaters still have a spirit of good direction, sharing benefits for social communities and they still absorb nutrients from nature, if they know how to eat methodically, know how to flexibly balance science about the food source. However, the author still believes that the meat-eating environment is often exposed to the killing of animals, in order to get meat for meals, the values of goodness, the love of meat-eaters will have more or less harm. reduced, and not as full as vegetarians.

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