

## Eating Animals: Implications from an Environmental and Buddhist point of view

Introduction: “Food is the first thing, morals follow on?”<sup>1</sup>

This quote is from a song titled “What keeps mankind alive?” written by the early 20 century German poet and playwright Bert Brecht and features in his *The Threepenny Opera*:

“You gentlemen who think you have a mission  
To purge us of the seven deadly sins  
Should first sort out the basic food position  
Then start your preaching, that's where it begins  
Your lot who preach restraint and watch your waist as well  
Should learn for once, the way the world is run  
However much you twist or whatever lies that you tell  
**Food is the first thing, morals follow on**  
So first make sure that those who are now starving  
Get proper helpings when we all start carving  
What keeps mankind alive?”<sup>2</sup>

(Berthold Brecht 1928)

The proper helpings were difficult to obtain for the majority of poor working class people in the first half of the last century. Quite like many living in poor countries now-a-days. Brecht was sympathizing with those who at the outset had to secure their livelihood before they could consider moral implications. “Food is the first thing, morals follow on ...” he said. Well, now-a-days food has become ubiquitously available. At least in Western (or northern hemisphere) countries as well as for well-off people everywhere on the globe it is offered in ever increasing varieties and quantities. Moreover, food has never in the history of mankind been so rich in fat, protein and sugar, even cheap compared to other goods. In the West no-one is starving from lack of energy, and in fact many are now developing illnesses associated with obesity and micronutrient deficiencies due to a highly refined, cheap, carbohydrate-based diet. s. According to Bert Brecht' logic one should think that morals will have improved simultaneously, right? Proper helpings for all, do they result in better human being? Well, the problems humankind are facing these days do suggest that the proper helpings didn't solve any moral issues. On the contrary, may it even be that the kinds of modern helpings are part of the problem? What is the contribution of modern day nutrition to the major challenges we face? This paper looks into some of these challenges both with regard to the environment as well as with regard to ethics.

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1 „Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral“, Berthold Brecht: Die Dreigroschenoper, Berlin 1928; The Threepenny Opera

2 Translation according to <http://notesfromdystopia.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/bertolt-brecht-what-keeps-mankind-alive/> 20.01.2014

## Climate Change and Global Warming

One of the major problems of modern humankind is the ongoing global warming. The Millennium Development Goal 7 refers to “*Ensure environmental sustainability*”. But since the early 20th century, the global air and sea surface temperature has increased about 0.8 °C (1.4 °F), with about two-thirds of the increase occurring since 1980. Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, global greenhouse gas emissions resume their upward path, confirming an ominous trend and calling for bold action, as the recent MDG report<sup>4</sup> puts it. Since 1990 the global emissions of greenhouse gases have increased by 46%. Every year the United Nations Millennium Development Goal report restates like a prayer wheel the urgent necessity of taking decisive steps against further global warming. At the same time, the negotiating nations fail to reach consensus for coordinated, international action year after year.

The consequences of global warming will most likely affect the livelihood and living conditions of millions of people. In many places on earth it already does to a great extent. For instance tropical islands states like Tuvalu or the Maldives are threatened by current and future sea level rise.<sup>5</sup> Low elevated islands like these will suffer coastal erosions and soon be submerged by the sea. Here the first victims of global warming have already lost land and homes. In the future, expected habitat inundation is likely to threaten vital infrastructure and human settlements of huge populations. More than 600 million people live in coastal areas below 30 feet (9.1 m) of sea level. A sea-level rise of just 400 mm in the Bay of Bengal would put 11 percent of the Bangladesh's coastal land underwater, creating 7–10 million climate refugees.<sup>6</sup> There is a widespread consensus amongst scientists that substantial long-term sea-level rise will continue for centuries to come.<sup>7</sup> This will eventually lead to mass migration and conflict over ever scarcer resources; leading to incredible suffering on a large scale.

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3 IPCC AR5 WG1 (2013), Stocker, T.F., *et al.*, ed., *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group 1 (WG1) Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report (AR5)*, Cambridge University Press, <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/> 20.01.2014

4 United Nations: The Millenium Development Goals Report 2013; p 42 ff

5 Current sea-level rise is about 3 mm/year worldwide. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), "this is a significantly larger rate than the sea-level rise averaged over the last several thousand years", and the rate may be increasing: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/sealevel.html>, 20.01.2014

6 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Current\\_sea\\_level\\_rise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Current_sea_level_rise), 20.01.2014

7 National Research Council: *Advancing the Science of Climate Change*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2010, [http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=12782&page=245](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12782&page=245), 20.01.2014

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that scientists were more than 90% certain that most of global warming was being caused by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases produced by human activities. In 2010 that finding was recognized by the national science academies of all major industrialized nations. The IPCC says that the largest driver of global warming is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and land use changes such as deforestation.<sup>8</sup>

Following the published speculations about the reasons for climate change, it is odd that one major contributing factor often does not even get mentioned: meat and dairy production. There are quite obvious consequences for the earth's climate and ecology following the production and consumption of animals. This has been the recent subject of a number of alarming studies. Whilst a huge number of humans (one in eight people) suffer hunger and even starvation, an increasing number of people consume an ever higher amount of meat every year.

### Meat production fuels global warming

“Livestock activities have significant impact on virtually all aspects of the environment, including air and climate change, land and soil, water and biodiversity. The impact may be direct, through grazing for example, or indirect, such as the expansion of soybean production for feed replacing forests in South America. Livestock's impact on the environment is already huge, and it is growing and rapidly changing. Global demand for meat, milk and eggs is fast increasing, driven by rising incomes, growing populations and urbanization.”<sup>9</sup>

According to a report published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization FAO, the livestock sector generates more greenhouse gas emissions as measured in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent than the whole transport sector: 18 percent<sup>10</sup>, whereas other studies assign much more. Livestock is also a major source of land and water degradation. Rapid growth in demand for livestock products has triggered a huge rise in the number of animals and the clearing of natural grasslands and forests for grazing. The ongoing rise in meat consumption around the world is increasing these harmful effects. Already now 70 % of the world's arable land is used to grow feed for livestock and thus having a direct impact on MDG 1 as well.<sup>11</sup> The world market prices for all major crops have been going up significantly and will most probably

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8 IPCC, Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis - Summary for Policymakers, Observed Changes in the Climate System, p. 10&11, in IPCC AR5 WG1 2013, [http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/uploads/WGI\\_AR5\\_SPM\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/uploads/WGI_AR5_SPM_brochure.pdf), 20.01.2014

9 FAO: Livestock's long shadows. Environmental issues and options, Rome 2006, p 3

10 Ibid, p xxi

11 Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, Le Monde diplomatique: Fleischatlas 2014, Berlin 2014, p 26 ff

continue to do so. Global agriculture is facing many challenges and global warming will further complicate these.

It is an often neglected fact that meat production requires much more input than plant crops. To obtain one kilogram of meat a multitude of feed is needed. One hectare arable land can grow crop to directly feed 30 people. If the same amount of crop is used as feed for livestock only 7 people can live from the output.<sup>12</sup> To produce meat pollutes the environment 10 times more than growing vegetables. Thus meat and dairy account for 80 % of all green house gas (GHG) emissions of agriculture. Water consumption for livestock and their feed as well as water pollution caused by livestock is hugely increasing. "Industrialized meat production is among the most damaging sectors to the earth's increasingly scarce water resources, contributing among other things to water pollution and degeneration of coral reefs. The major polluting agents are animal wastes, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers and the pesticides used to spray feed crops."<sup>13</sup>

Overall, the global livestock business contributes hugely to total anthropogenic GHG emissions. For example, to produce one liter of cow's milk makes 5 times more GHG emissions than one liter of soymilk. All the figures published by the FAO are so far conservative and do not consider all potentially harmful side effects. For example, the respiration of livestock has not been included, even though it accounts for 8.8 million tons CO<sub>2</sub> additional emissions. Recent analysis by Worldwatch (Goodland and Anhang) finds that livestock and their byproducts in reality account for at least 32.6 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, which is equivalent to 51 percent of annual worldwide GHG emissions.<sup>14</sup>

This means that meat and dairy production contributes more to global warming than any other human activity and thus counts as the number one single reason for climate change. The present global meat production of 300 million tons is likely to double until 2050 because of growing population, higher incomes, and the rising demand of emerging economies like China and India.<sup>15</sup> At least 80 % of growth in the livestock sector is from intensive, crowded, and often cruel industrial animal production systems that consume ever vaster amounts of feed and energy, in direct competition for scarce land, water and other natural resources. This means ever more strain on the ecological systems, more deforestation and decline of biodiversity.

This is scary. More and more people realize the need for environmental protection. Nowadays hardly any one doubts the reality of global warming. So what can we do? If we really care for the environment, if we want to do something against global warming, even if we only feel uncomfortable with the suffering it implies, then it is

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12 Greepeace: Landwirtschaft, was wollen wir essen? Hamburg 2009, p 9

13 Livestock's long shadows; FAO, Rome 2006, p 126 ff

14 Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang: Livestock and Climate Change, Worldwatch 2009, p 11

15 ibid, p 15

evident that by choosing to abstain from eating meat one would make a huge personal contribution to climate change. As the writer Jonathan Safran Foer puts it:

„In terms of our effect on the “animal world” - whether it’s the suffering of animals or issues of biodiversity and the interdependence of species that evolution spent millions of years bringing into this livable balance - nothing comes close to having the impact of our dietary choices. Just as nothing we do has the direct potential to daily cause nearly as much animal suffering as eating meat, no daily choice that we make has a greater impact on the environment.”<sup>16</sup>

### The suffering of sentient beings

This quote points to another important implication of eating meat. One has to kill them before eating. It is common sense that animals suffer. They have senses so it is obvious that they can suffer. Not only killing them for food is problematic moreover the modern methods of factory farming too. Intensive animal husbandry has led to a special breed of animals which combines huge gains in meat with lesser need for feed, coming along often with bizarre deformations.<sup>17</sup> They are kept in environments which are not appropriate for the species, cages are crowded which leads to stress and aggression. The top most concern of the farming industry is increasing profit; the suffering of living beings gets deliberately accepted. Transport to slaughterhouse and the slaughter itself are torturous and agonizing procedures. That is the lot of livestock. Strangely, there has been so much research over the past decades looking into animal behavior, intelligence and capacities. Not only for mammals but even for birds and fishes there are amazing results with regard to their social behavior, family life and intelligent problem solving. We know from pigs that they are as intelligent as three year old children; they are playful and develop various personalities. They are smarter than dogs. Many behavioral attitudes of animals are much less driven by instinct than previously thought of but rather complex and adapted to their particular environments. They even manage to teach the next generation what they have learnt. According to latest research animals empathize with others and they suffer incredibly when they get separated from their offspring.<sup>18</sup>

Despite these findings, the exploitation of animals has now reached a level of obscene brutality which totally ignores all scientific insights into their intelligence and the fact that they experience suffering. The numbers sound obscene, too: Every year 64 billion land animals and 1 trillion marine animals are killed for food.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Jonathan Safran Foer: Eating animals, New York 2009, p 73 f

17 Ibid, p 104 ff, to grow more breast meat has led to broiler breeds which can hardly carry their own weight.

18 Ibid, p 64 ff

19 <http://freefromharm.org/featured-articles/will-hold-you-in-my-arms-must-see-tribute-animal-victims/> 22.01.2014

The contemporary Western philosopher Jacques Derrida writes in his book *The Animal that therefore I am* about the cruelty and ruthless exploitation that humankind exerts on animals:

“Such a subjection ... can be called violence in the most morally neutral sense of the term. ... No one can deny seriously any more, or for very long, that men do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves, in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence.”<sup>20</sup>

This ruthless exploitation and silent acceptance of the cruelty it involves has started some 100 years ago. Since then the breeding and upbringing of livestock has been subordinated totally under the attempt of maximizing profit. The techniques have started in Western countries and are now creeping in to developing countries like China and India. Just one example for this development is the globally and increasingly popular chicken. The industrialized production of billions of chickens every year is a striking example for the implications of meat production of modern times. When we think of chicken we probably all see a picture of a rural idyll where chickens are pecking and strolling around near some farm house. Well, this image describes reality for only a very small minority of chickens. Now, there are two distinct breeds of chicken: one for flesh and one for eggs. The genetics of chickens have been intensively manipulated along with refining feed and drugs so that the weight of average “broilers” has more than doubled during the last century whereas their life time has halved. This means that the birds are hardly able to stand on their feet and are extremely prone to diseases.<sup>21</sup> Of course they cannot fly nor can they reproduce in a natural way. Factory farming means extreme crowded living conditions with no place to move which imply social stress for animals leading to constant suffering. Safran Foer says:

“To gain a sense of the radicalness of this change, imagine human children growing to be three hundred pounds in ten years, while eating only granola bars and ... vitamins.”<sup>22</sup>

The chickens bred for eggs on the other hand are genetically selected to produce ever higher numbers of eggs. Once their maximum output declines they get killed. Having two separate breeds for flesh and eggs implies of course that half of the population is futile; meaning that all male chicks of the egg species will be killed directly after hatching.

This exemplifies how intensive animal husbandry implies a lot of suffering for the animals. We have to acknowledge that we accept a huge amount of *dukkha* for animals if we eat meat. Even if we are vegetarian and only eat eggs or dairy we are part of the system that exploits animals and leads to their suffering and death. In the

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20 Jacques Derrida: *The animal that therefore I am*, New York 2008, p. 394

21 *Fleischatlas*: ibid p 22 ff

22 Jonathan Safran Foer: ibid p 107

West we can at least make sure that we buy free-range eggs only and dairy from organic animal friendly farms. But even then; the fact remains that a cow does not give milk unless she gives birth to a calf which will be separated from her. This means suffering too.<sup>23</sup>

We are so used to blocking out the knowledge of suffering of other living beings whilst being intensely aware of our own. We just don't want to know, it makes us feel uneasy. As the above quoted philosopher has said, we need to hide the cruelty from ourselves. So how much suffering do we think is acceptable? That is what everybody has to ask themselves. How much suffering will we tolerate for our food? This is a crucial question for any sensitive person but especially for Buddhists; a question which comes in addition to the implications of meat production for global warming we touched upon above.

Most people living in Western countries and urban areas of emerging economies have access to such a diverse range of food that all their nutritional needs can be catered for within the plant kingdom. Yet it is in such places that cheap meat is available and sold as 'fast food'. For such people, there can be no argument about lack of diversity in diet as a nutritional requirement for survival.

I'm aware that livestock is a basis of livelihood for many traditional, often poor communities. I'm not talking about those. I'm not asking rural societies to let go of their traditional livelihood if it makes sustainable use of the environment. It's not the coastal fishermen who are the problem. Nor the nomadic tribes whose cattle breeding is adapted to the regional environment and uses pasture which is otherwise unsuitable for agriculture. There are estimated 120 - 200 million pastoralists living on this planet; including small scale farmers the figure is around 600 million. Those aren't the ones who drive global warming. It's the industrial meat production in the West and emerging economies such as China, Brazil and India. China is a huge meat producing country on the fast track to ever more industrialized production. The meat we eat in cities, especially if it's cheap, has industrial background. That is the problem.

The carbon footprint we create by our lifestyle choices is both serious and unjust as they disproportionately harm the poor and disadvantaged populations.

### The Buddhist Perspective

As Buddhists, we strive to understand interconnectedness. The universal law of *pratītyasamutpāda* is a core insight of the Buddha. Out of ignorance comes all the rest. Thus can we ignore our own personal contributions to climate change and the suffering of animals?

The Buddhist path as we all know is about developing qualities in *śīlā*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* - in ethics, meditation and wisdom. The development of ethics is paramount prerequisite for the other two. Only if we follow the precepts according to the Buddha will we be able to progress to any extent in wisdom and meditation. The first precept

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23 Bodhipaksa: Vegetarianism, Birmingham 1999, p 12

“*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*” or “I undertake the training precept to abstain from killing living creatures” seems to give clear advice: We shall not kill or harm living beings. Nevertheless there are many Buddhists eating meat. So can we assume that the first precept does not apply to eating meat which is dead already? Or is it not applicable if the consumer asks someone else to slaughter on his behalf?

There are various examples in the Pali canon where the Buddha disapproves the whole issue of trading and slaughtering animals. For instance he gives clear advice to lay people with regard to their livelihood. In the *Vañijjāsuttaṃ* of the *Anguttara Nikaya* (V,177) he says:

*Pañcimā bhikkhave, vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā. Katamā pañca:  
Sattavaṇijjā, sattavaṇijjā, maṃsavaṇijjā, majjavaṇijjā, visavaṇijjā.  
Imā kho bhikkhave, pañca vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyāti.*<sup>24</sup>

"Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison. These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in."<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the Buddha has never categorically abolished meat eating. The reason for this is the fact that monks were reliant on alms, on whatever donation was given to them. The Vinaya makes it clear that the monk has to accept whatever is given to him. Most probably, that will have been typically vegetarian in the Buddha's times. One can also speculate that the Buddha might have foreseen that there are circumstances and places on earth where a strict vegetarian diet is not practicable even for a follower of the Enlightened One.

In the famous Jivaka Sutta the Buddha clearly points out the conditions under which the bhikkhus could or should not accept meat:

"Jivaka, I say that on three instances meat should not be partaken, when seen, heard or when there is a doubt (*that an animal has been killed for a monk*). I say, that on these three instances meat should not be partaken. I say, that meat could be partaken on three instances, when not seen, not heard and when there is no doubt about it."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore the Theravada position has emerged that the bhikkhu can accept meat which is '*tikotiparisuddha*', that is to say, pure in three respects. He mustn't kill the animal himself, he mustn't give an order for it to be killed, nor must he allow it to be killed especially for him.

Apparently it became interpreted in the sense that bhikkhus can otherwise eat that meat. A Vinaya precept which was meant to simplify the bhikkhu's life and to prevent him from being choosy developed into an attitude of indifference or even insensitivity with regard to the suffering of animals. To that extent, in Theravada countries, the majority of monastic and laity do not see harm in eating meat on a regular and customary basis.

But hasn't the Buddha described in the same Sutta the fivefold demerit one gains by killing an animal?

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24 "AN III\_utf8", edited by Access to Insight. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, [http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sltp/AN\\_III\\_utf8.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sltp/AN_III_utf8.html) . 22.01.2014

25 "Vanijja Sutta: Business (Wrong Livelihood)" (AN 5.177), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 3 July 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.177.than.html> , 22.01.2014

26 Jivaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 2.55, <http://www.vipassana.info/055-jivaka-e1.htm>, 21.01.2014

“Jivaka, if anyone destroys the life of a living thing on account of the Tathagatha or a disciple of the Tathagatha, he accumulates much demerit on these five instances.”<sup>27</sup>

So the point that he must not give the order to kill clearly means that to give an order to kill, is not according to the precepts, just like the act of killing. “So if a monk gives the lay people the order to kill ..., he is still responsible, and still incurs the unskillful karma, he might just as well, one might say kill himself.”<sup>28</sup>

Also Theravada scholars acknowledge that one becomes at least indirectly responsible for the killing. “Indeed, by eating meat, we can say that we are more or less indirectly, or partially responsible for the death of the animal. Of course, vegetarianism is highly recommended and commendable if we're talking about compassion.”<sup>29</sup>

Now here we are getting to a crucial point. The Buddha was famous for his compassion. The development of compassion is at the very core of Buddhist teachings and meditations. Over the historic unfolding of Buddhist traditions and regional adaptations we can observe a deepening of the ideal of compassion. The compassionate mind is the one who together with wisdom attains enlightenment - *mettā* or *karunā* and *paññā* / *prajñā* are the basis for *nibbāna*. In later Buddhist scriptures like the Lankavatara Sutta this becomes well established and accepted so that Mahayana traditions much more strongly suggest a vegetarian diet. The Mahayana consequently stresses the importance of abstaining from killing for food. The Bodhisattva out of compassion sees the suffering of all living beings and therefore quite naturally abstains from and objects killing them.

The law of *pratītyasamutpāda* describes dependent coproduction, or in simple words just cause and effect. It describes the fact that actions have consequences according to the motivation behind them. The Buddha said that when we act out of greed, ill-will or ignorance the fruit of this action will be unfortunate. Most people eating meat don't kill the animal themselves; they pay for someone else to do it. They do not get them killed out of ill-will. Nevertheless it is killed on behalf of the person subsequently eating it. But if we ignore that an animal has been killed on our behalf we cannot but

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27 Dhammasara: Jivika Sutta, What does the Buddha say about eating meat? Namely: “If he said, go bring that living thing of such name. In this first instance he accumulates much demerit. If that living thing is pulled along, tied, with pain at the throat, feeling displeased and unpleasant. In this second instance he accumulates much demerit. If it was said, go kill that animal. In this third instance he accumulates much demerit. When killing if that animal feels displeased and unpleasant. In this fourth instance he accumulates, much demerit. When the Tathagatha or a disciple of the Tathagatha tastes that unsuitable food. In this fifth instance he accumulates much demerit.” <http://www.dhammasara.webs.com/JivakaSutta.html>, 21.01.2014

28 Sangharakshita, Forest monks of Sri Lanka, <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/read?num=SEM065P3&at=text&p=7>, 25.01.2014

29 Dhammasara ibid

call this volitional ignorance. Ignorance has a strong negative karmic effect; the *karma vipāka* of our actions will be negative or unfortunate. There is no sensible reason to assume that a person commissioning to slaughter will not incur the *karma vipāka* of this act. The act of buying is therefore closely linked to the act of commissioning to slaughter. Or as described in economic theory there is a close interrelation between supply and demand.

Isn't it high time that we as Buddhists take the first precept more seriously: "pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi" or "I undertake the training precept to abstain from killing living beings"? That we develop more sensitivity for all life, for all beings, for the whole planet? How can we otherwise take the Metta Sutta seriously, where the Buddha suggests to his disciples:

*"Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe  
Evam pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam bhāvaye aparimānaṃ.*

Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life,  
even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings."<sup>30</sup>

Nowadays we might not only be concerned for the karmic consequence of the suffering of the killed animal. As we see more and more clearly, we have to take into account the global consequences of our eating habits, the extent to which these habits contribute to global warming. Karma means we create our own world, collectively, whether now or in future. The secret wisdom of karma has always been that when we harm others we simultaneously harm ourselves.

To follow the Buddha Dhamma means to take one step after the other, all sentient beings develop gradually, similarly ethical sensitivity develops gradually. To become more aware with regard to the implications of eating habits takes time. Of course the same applies for all our lifestyle decisions. We can change, we can develop more awareness, and we can learn to leave bad habits behind. Eating meat is just an unskillful habit.

## Conclusion

Thus, can we as Buddhists continue to ignore the global impact of our dietary choices? Or isn't it high time to realize that we can be an example in a changing world, an example for a lifestyle taking into account that animals can suffer and do not deserve to be exploited and killed?

Essentially, our dietary choices are the single most influential decisions with regard to green house emissions. Thus the individual decision to eat meat or dairy products is the most potent impact every individual person makes. It is our individual daily choice to which extent we contribute to the suffering of sentient beings and to the fuelling of climate change. It is my great hope that we as Buddhists and especially the Venerable Sanghas in Buddhist countries go ahead with giving an example. Who could better teach lay people about the implications of our diets? Please let us give

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<sup>30</sup> Karaṇīya mettā suttā, quoted from Sangharakshita: Living with Kindness, the Buddha's teaching on mettā, Birmingham 2004, p 109

an example and exemplify that we take the Buddha's advices and the precepts seriously. The laity will sooner or later learn that it is not appropriate to donate meat to the Venerable Sangha and will eventually stop doing so.

And we Western Buddhists have quite the same obligation if we want the Buddha Dharma in the West to be more than just a nice fancy lifestyle addition. There are far too many Buddhists in The West eating meat. I think that in the West we should rather take the implications for global warming and our historic responsibility even more serious and strive to become more and more vegan. It is so easy compared to the hardship that millions of underprivileged people will face due to an unmitigated global warming. We as Western Buddhists should feel obliged by the fact that the Western lifestyle has caused and is driving climate change. We should feel much more concerned about how to contribute to the mitigation of both climate change and the global *dukkha* created from this. Otherwise we may end up with a Buddha Dharma one friend in the Triratna Order has put as "Do-not-disturb-Dharma"; meaning a version of the Buddha Dhamma striving to develop insight while closing one's ears and eyes to the obvious consequences that one's lifestyle has.

Rather I'd like us to strive for more and more ethics in our day to day life, including our eating habits. Especially us in the West and the Venerable Sanghas in the East, we should feel obliged to give an example for the benefit of all being:

*"Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā;  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā*

Those who are born or those who are to be born,  
may all beings be happy."<sup>31</sup>

Dhammacarini Amoghamati Traud-Dubois

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31 Ibid p 78 f