

# Plutarch's Animal and Vegetarian Treatises and the Concept of *Maghata* in Sinhalese Culture\*

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## Abstract

Plutarch's concern for animal life, in treatises devoted to the significance and preservation of animal life in the *Moralia*, expand upon his appreciation of simplicity in human life, specifically in the form of abstention from the unnecessary slaughter of animals and the consumption of their meat. The present paper studies a similarity between Plutarch's concern for simplicity in human life by the rejection of the slaughter of animals and indulgence in a meat diet, and its appearance in Sinhalese literature. The Pali meaning of *maghata* is not to kill. *Maghata*, as part of a broader project for introducing Buddhism into Sinhalese culture, assumes the specific form of concern for animal life. *Maghata* was introduced into Sri Lanka by approximately the first century CE in the form of a ceremonial ban on the slaughter of animals and in the abstention from meat on special observance days (*upavasa maghata*) as well as the sympathetic treatment of animals by providing them food, drink, medicine, and security. The theme became explicit in the context of thaumaturgy. Plutarch's concern for animal life, in treatises devoted to the significance and preservation of animal life in the *Moralia*, expands upon his appreciation of simplicity in human life, specifically in the form of avoiding the unnecessary slaughter of animals and the consumption of their meat. The present paper studies a similarity between Plutarch's concern for simplicity in human life by the rejection of slaughter of animals and indulgence in a meat diet, and that of Sinhalese literature.

**Key-Words:** Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, Exegesis, Humanist Translations.

In Loving Memory of My Father,  
Professor Sucharitha Gamlath

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ur attitude toward animal life and its preservation is one of the chief concerns of modern ecology, such an important topic today. One can, possibly, learn much from the vegetarian writings of Plutarch and of Sinhalese literature. Plutarch's sympathy for the humane treatment of animals is revealed in the reference by one of his speakers, Autobulus, to the Pythagorean theory of not injuring animals, and to Empedocles, who regarded such treatment as a crime (*De sollertia animalium* 964E-F)<sup>1</sup>. In his own person, Plutarch suggests killing animals could be murder. If the transmigration of souls exists, the soul of a human being might be in the animal about to be killed (*De esu carniū* 998F-999A).

Plutarch dismisses the legend of the mythical crimes of cannibalism (*De Iside et Osiride*, 996 B-C; *De esu carniū* 997 E-F). His interpretation of the myth of the Titans agrees with the traditionally held primal sin of bloodshed. He is aware that the practice of bloodshed can be associated with the guilt of cannibalism through the possibility of the transmigration of souls into animals (*De esu carniū* 996B-C; *De Iside et Osiride* 379 F-380D; *De E apud Delphos* 388E) and through the concept of the kinship of all living beings (*De esu carniū* 993B-996 B-C),

doctrines shared both by Orphics and Pythagoreans. As Nilsson wrote:

Thus it seems certain that the Pythagoreans originally knew only the special prohibitions which are connected with old popular superstitions, and that the general prohibition is later and probably due to Orphic influence; for in regard to Orphism it is attested for an early age. This is illuminating. For in Orphism the prohibition of killing animals and eating their flesh has a deeper reason. If the body was the tomb of the soul, the body was unclean and must be avoided. The prohibition may be referred to the uncleanness of the body, or to the crime of the Titans, but usually its reason is said to be the belief in metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul into animals, a belief which is ascribed to the Pythagoreans as well as to the Orphics<sup>2</sup>.

The objective of the Pythagoreans may not have been the same:

Rather, the discrepancies in the data can be explained as the normal features of any social group, particularly one whose practices are distinctive from those of the larger society. In any collection of people, there will be differing levels of participation in practices and

<sup>1</sup> See GILHUS (2006), p. 38, citing RIEDWEG (2002), and p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> NILSSON (1935), pp. 206-207; cf. also BURKERT (1985), pp. 296-304.

allegiances. That is, there are degrees of self-conception (as members of a group) and identification (with the group and its practices). Some Pythagoreans abstained from all meat and sacrifice while others made concessions, larger or smaller, to traditional practice. The point is that Pythagorean practices required at least some modification of normal animal sacrificial, and this would have had significant social consequences. Detienne and Burkert argue that by questioning the practices of animal sacrifice, Pythagoreans questioned all the social relationships and hierarchies that were based on these practices. In short, their rejection of animal sacrifice was a rejection of the main tenants of ancient Mediterranean religion and society, in particular the idea of reciprocal exchange with the gods. This conclusion is challenged, however, by Rives, who points out that our sources link the Pythagorean rejection of animal sacrifice mainly with abstinence from animal meat<sup>3</sup>.

In his acknowledgement of *daimones*, Plutarch reflects Pythagorean sentiments

closely allied to the sin of bloodshed. As Frederick Brenk observes:

Plutarch's early writings then reveal an acquaintance with at least one strain of Greek religious mysticism, the fall of the soul for a primal sin and its reincarnation in human or other bodies. The doctrine is regarded by Plutarch as Pythagorean, and it is in Pythagoreanism that we meet many of the most characteristic elements of Greek religious philosophy including the belief in good and evil daemons<sup>4</sup>.

Brenk moves from Plutarch's Pythagorean tone to the reference to the Orphic myth of the original sin:

In the two parts of *De esu carniū carnium*, an early work advocating vegetarianism and strongly Pythagorean in tone, we see Plutarch interested in traditional demonology. At the end of the first essay (996b), Plutarch uses Empedocles' *Purifications* in support of his polemic against the eating of flesh<sup>5</sup>. According to Plutarch, the punishment of reincarnation was meted out to the *daimon* of Empedocles for the crime of eating flesh,

<sup>3</sup> ULLUCCI (2011), pp. 59-60; on DETEINNE and BURKERT, p. 59. He refers to RIVES (2011),  
<sup>4</sup> BRENK (1977) p.79.

<sup>5</sup> See GILHUS (2006), pp. 64-77. GILHUS (65) notes that there are two paradoxical reasons for vegetarianism (p. 77), citing DIERAUER (1977) pp. 286-290: one should abstain from eating animals because animals and humans belong to the same community; or one should abstain because humans are on a higher level than animals and animals are a source of pollution. Thus, one can appeal to a unity of soul between animals and humans, or humans should distance themselves from animals and move closer to the gods.

and this ought to deter us from a similar outrage. The argument is reinforced by reference to the Orphic legend of the dismemberment of the young Dionysus by the Titans, and though the text breaks off at this point, it is clear that a link is made between the “Titanic” nature of man and the original atrocity committed by the Titans<sup>6</sup>.

Plutarch discards the theme of vegetarianism traditionally associated with Orpheus (*Septem sapientium convivium* 159C-D). He cites, rather, Homer for providing a clear picture of the use of food in antiquity (*Septem sapientium convivium* 160B-C)<sup>7</sup>.

Apart from Orphic and Pythagorean motives there were others that determined Plutarch’s defense of the Pythagorean abstinence from meat. Among these, are moral and rational motives<sup>8</sup>. Rationalism plays an important role in Plutarch’s arguments in favor of abstinence. For example, there are instances when, because of Plutarch’s rational tendencies, the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls does not play a great role<sup>9</sup>. There are other mystical and religious motives for absti-

nence from animal flesh among Pythagoras and early Pythagoreans<sup>10</sup>. Transmigration of souls, however, is the most certain motive for abstinence from animal flesh. As Beer notes:

After all, the potential “rights” of animals held little sway in a society founded upon the wide and systematic exploitation and abuse of other humans in the form of slavery. If opposition arose against the consumption of meat or fish, it seems more likely derived from religious or intellectual arguments. Ultimately, a premeditated choice not to eat flesh would probably have been a dietary choice only for those prosperous enough not to have to survive upon a subsistence diet<sup>11</sup>.

The Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls evidently was not a primary reason for the Pythagoreans in Plutarch’s circle to abstain from certain foods such as meat and eggs (*Quaestionum convivialium* 635E, 660D). Nor was it a principal reason for the Seven Sages, who join in the same discussion (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 127A-B). Reasons of health are quite predominant. In Plutarch’s

<sup>6</sup> BRENK (1973), p.3.

<sup>7</sup> On Plutarch’s defense of animals see NEWMYER (1992), (1995), (1999), (2006).

<sup>8</sup> TSEKOURAKIS (1986), p. 134, nn. 31-32.

<sup>9</sup> TSEKOURAIS (1986), p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> TSEKOURAKIS (1987), pp. 370-379; for arguments outside this range: p. 131, nn. 18-20; AUNE (1975).

<sup>11</sup> BEER (2010) 38.

circle, Lucius Philinus, a Pythagorean, brings some young boys along with him to an unanticipated banquet. One of the boys ate nothing but bread, for which Philinus is attacked. The boy is compared to Sosater, an unknown person who lived only on milk, but who is not designated here as a Pythagorean<sup>12</sup>. Philinus replies that he is not against an ample meal, but that it should be a healthy one *Quaestionum convivalium* (660D-662B). Still he is against meat, and particularly fat, as unhealthy. The issue of health, however, may be influenced by the setting, which is in the house of a physician. More surprisingly we are told that the ancient Pythagoreans abstained more from fish than from any other food, such as meat. We then learn that even among Plutarch's contemporaries, the pupils of Alexicrates, a Pythagorean philosopher, abhorred fish, though they ate meat in moderation (*Quaestionum convivalium* 728D)<sup>13</sup>.

Within his project of reinstating non-violence, Plutarch rejects elements of popular culture which involve the exploitation of animal life, chiefly for food and sacrifice. He attributes this to a social decline which is steadily in progress ("lawless conduct", *De esu carniuum* 997B -C). Plutarch laments the transformation from previously "lawful desires", when men depended on vegetable produce (*De esu carniuum*

993F-994B) to "unnatural and anti-social pleasures" (*De esu carniuum* 993 D-E; *De virtute et vitio* 101A-B), which are not in tune with human nature (*De esu carniuum* 995 A-C, 995 D-F, 996A-B), leading to the conclusion that "he who tortures a living creature is no worse than he who slaughters it outright" (996 B-C). Plutarch is concerned with whom exactly was responsible for this drastic social transition. It was the tyrants, who began by killing the "worst of sycophants" like Niceratus, Theramena, and Polemarchus (998B-C). One of the boys and Plutarch's disapproval of bloodshed is in accordance with its description in common Greek practice. As Visser notes:

Plutarch thought it was typical of the Greeks that their historians recorded "the names of those who first slew kinsfolk, or made war on their brothers, or were parricides, or matricides". The Romans, on the other hand, found astonishing, and therefore memorable, the cases of insubordination among women, or of divorce (*Lycurgus and Numa* 3.6-7; *Theseus and Romulus* 6.3-4). He himself records (here displaying the preoccupations of a Greek) Rome's first parricide, and Romulus thinking that "murder was abominable, parricide impossible"—and being right for six hundred years (*Romulus* 22.4-5)<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Sosatros is unknown, and the text might be corrupt.

<sup>13</sup> On Plutarch's Pythagorean friends and their food habits, see HERSHBELL (1984) 73-79.

<sup>14</sup> VISSER (1984), 194, n.1.

Plutarch's concern for animal life demonstrates, in reality, a departure from the accepted social division between humankind and animals<sup>16</sup>.

The program against luxury introduced by Plutarch's description of the legislator exemplifies the need for simplicity. He notes the absence of private property (*Lycurgus* 6, 7, 8, and 13), the introduction of common meals (*Lycurgus* 10, *Solon* 24, *Cimon* 5), the redistribution of land (5, 8), a modest diet (10), the promotion of agriculture (6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 29) and equality of life-style (*Solon* 16-19). The Stoic and Peripatetic acknowledgement of the "frugality" of the first men comes into play, as well as the "superstition of the transmigration of souls." He advocates refraining from harm to animals and plants despite Stoic and Peripatetic opinions about natural ends in regard to human beings (*De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1044D, *De sollertia animalium* 964B) and defends the existence of rationality in animals (*De sollertia animalium* 97D-E). In other places he makes absolutely no claim that one has an obligation to preserve animal life (*De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1044D), nor that they possess reason (*De sollertia animalium* 985B, *De esu carniuum* 999B-C), nor makes any attempt to treat them as worthy recipients of justice (*Adversus Colotem* 1124D; *De*

*esu cranium* 998E-999A, 998F-999B, *Gryllus* 987F-987B)<sup>17</sup>.

Plutarch demonstrated his appreciation for a simple life style when he referred to the Pythagorean ban on injuring animals and plants (*De sollertia animalium* 964E-F) and to Empedocles (*De esu carniuum* 998F-999A). The guilt involved in the practice of shedding blood merges with the guilt of cannibalism, through the concept of transmigration (*De esu carniuum carniuum*, 996B-C, *De Iside et Osiride* 379F-380B, *De E*, 388E) and that of the kinship of all living beings (*De esu carniuum* 993 B-C, 996B-C). In spite of the common Greek practice of consuming meat (*De esu carniuum* 984F, 993B-995F), he argues that it is wrong to consume the flesh of tame animals (*De esu carniuum* 994B-C, *Septem sapientium convivium* 159 B-C). A meat diet is not suitable for human health (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 123 E-F, 125D-E, 126F; *De esu carniuum* 995B, 995E-F). But he allows the exploitation of animal life for food in grave occasions such as dire necessity (*De esu carniuum* 997B-C), hunger, and the scarcity of other food or vegetable produce (*De esu carniuum* 994E-F, 9944-997A), in time of pestilence and war (*De esu carniuum* 998B-C), or disease (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 126D-E, 129F-130B). But he

<sup>16</sup> On Plutarch's motives for vegetarianism, see TSEKOURAKIS (1986), p. 129, nn. 5-12; MOSSMAN (2005, 141-163; NEWMYER (1992) 38-54; (1999) 99-110.

<sup>17</sup> On reason in animals, see GILHUS (2006), pp. 37-62, citing SORABJI (1993) passim; on *De sollertia animalium*, pp. 45-52.

condemns the destruction of animals simply for luxury and the whim of one's appetite (*De esu carniū* 997B-C; C-D), out of cruelty (997E-F), and because of gluttony (997F).

Plutarch's defense of simplicity of conduct is explicit when treating vegetarianism. Grounded on the defense of animal intelligence, *Gryllus* is replete with examples to prove the justification of not slaughtering creatures endowed with countless virtues and even in some ways superior to men. Animals, for example, abhor subjection or slavery (987D-E, 989A-B). They never beg or sue for pity, nor acknowledge defeat (987E-F). They possess valor (as part of their bravery) (988B-C) and temperance (989B-C, 988C-D). They do not violate the order of nature through such abnormal sexual practices as intercourse between males (998E-F), nor in their eating habits, since carnivores are never herbivores (990F-991B). Some of them are undeniably stupid, but others are clever and intelligent (992D-E). The souls of beasts have a greater natural capacity for virtue and attain to greater perfection (987B-C). Their souls are free from passion, luxury, and empty illusions, such as ours (989C-F). Their "native virtue" makes it possible to train them for useful tasks (992B-D). In contrast, human beings are often gluttons (991B-C), ready to eat anything in sight (991C-D), and go so far as to commit sexual acts even with animals (990E-F). Therefore, it is human

beings who should be called beasts, not animals. Their cruelty exceeds that of the most savage animals, serpents, panthers, and lions (99B-C). Some animals, moreover, received worship for their great utility (*De Iside et Osiride* 379D-E). Among these are, for example, the cow, sheep, and ichneumon (381A-B), asp, weasel, and beetle (381A-B), crocodile and sheep (381D-E), and the dolphin (984 B-F).

Phaedimus' conversation with Heracleon in the *Gryllus* offers innumerable instances of the outstanding skills of animals whether they belong to the sea or to land. Among their good characteristics are brevity in speech (977B-C), comprehension, social awareness, and mutual affection (977E-977F), cleverness in attacking prey (978C-F), foreknowledge (979B-C, 982E-F), cleverness and sensitivity (980D-F), and skills in caring for their young (982A-C, 982E-F). In his comparison between land and sea animals, he argues that sea creatures are more knowledgeable and possess a higher degree of virtue than those based on land. Among their virtues are brevity of speech (976D-E, 977B-C) and assistance in danger (977D-E). However, on utilitarian grounds, he notes that few sea creatures can come close to land animals (984 B-D). The beauty of their flesh, tinted like flowers, their harmonious voice, habit of cleanliness, and unusual intelligence—at least in the type of animals usually slaughtered for food—induces Plutarch to study how

they reject human injustice and cruelty (*De esu carniū* 994 E-F). He finds it best for human being to eliminate the habit of indulging in sensory pleasures, which are harmful to bodily functions (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 123C-D, 123D-F, 125C-D, 127A-B).

The process of rejecting sensory pleasures also aids in safeguarding purity (*Septem sapientium convivium* 159C-D). Worse is a type of wrongdoing which produces illicit wealth, leading to licentiousness. Its presence, like that of maggots and grubs, engenders many distempers and emotions in men's souls (*De superstitione* 165B-C) and destroys self-control (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 128B-D). From the point of view of righteousness, purity belongs to self-sufficiency, and this is not just a "quibble" belonging to Orphic teaching (*Septem sapientium convivium* 159B-D). One can best improve one's health through vegetarianism, since it offers the promise of guarding oneself from the pleasures of gluttony (124E-125D) and the lust to kill (*De esu carniū carniū* 997A-D). Plutarch traces the elimination of excessive pleasure to the introduction of agriculture (126C-D, 131F-132B) and the rise of the educated and the truly cultured man (132F-133A, 122E-F). Consumption of meat is totally deranging, disturbing, and foreign to

nature (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 125C-F, 131F-132B). Plutarch laments the transformation from previously "lawful desires", when men depended on vegetable produce (*De esu carniū* 993F-994B) to "unnatural and anti-social pleasures" (*De esu carniū* 993D-E, *De virtute et vitio* 101A-B). These are not in tune with human nature (*De esu carniū* 995A-996B). The thought leads him to conclude that "he who tortures a living creature is no worse than he who slaughters it outright" (996B-C). Plutarch dismisses the legends of cannibalism found in myth (996B-C, 997E-F) and appreciates the efforts made by philosophers to eliminate the practice of eating flesh (998F-999A). Dismissing cannibalism, he concludes that the tyrants by slaughtering citizens (998B-C) gradually cleared the ground first to kill wild and harmful animals, then domestic animals, "the reason for which was the entertainment of guests, and celebrations of marriage, with friends and consorts in war (998C-D)<sup>18</sup>.

Plutarch's main authorities on animals are the philosophers, Aristotle (979E-F, 980F-982B) and Theophrastus (979E-F), and the poets, Pindar and Theognis (978E-F). The prescription for a less expensive diet is attributed to Socrates (124E-F) and Plato (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 126F-127B)<sup>19</sup>. Fi-

<sup>18</sup> On these topics, see NEWMYER (1995), (2009), (2011), pp. 15-18, 32, 37, 42, 52, 57-58, 62-63, 77-79, 88, 105-107, 115-116.

<sup>19</sup> MARTIN (1979) 103. Since Plutarch seems to be excessively interested in fishing, DODDS (1933) 105, suggested that he was, or had formerly been, a practicing fisherman [!].



nally, Plutarch attributes the origin of war to bloody sacrifice, which was common to most nations in antiquity. War came about partly through human ignorance, but also through a cultural change. The violent killing inherent in bloody sacrifice led to a type of wickedness which first encouraged injustice toward animals and ended in the horrible evils inflicted upon human beings in war (*Septem sapientium convivium* 158E-F, *De esu carniū carniū* 997C-D).

### 1. Maghata

The concern for animal life in Sinhalese culture is similar to that in Plutarch. The Buddhist definition of non-violence provides an insight into the perplexing issue of human fragmentation in the body. Non-violence is one of the cardinal virtues of most Hindu sects of the Indian sub-continent but particularly of the Buddhists and Jains. The Pali meanings of non-violence, *ahinsa* (= *ahinsaka*) include “not injuring, not hurting, harmlessness, humaneness, kindness”. The Sanskrit equivalent is *ahinsa*, *ahinsaka*, *ahinsat*, *ahinsana*, *orahinsya*, *ahinsyamana*, *ahinsra*. The meanings can be filled out as “security, safeness, devotion to harmlessness or gentleness” and its personification as the wife of Dharma. Moving in proximity to *ahinsa* is *maghata*. The Pali meanings

of *ghata* (= *ghataka*, *ghatika*, *ghatita* [= *ghatimhi*, *ghatake*]), *ghatimant ghateti* (= *ghatayati*), *ghatapeti* [= *ghacca*, *ghatita*, *aghateti*) include “murder, destruction, and killing” and is extended further as “bull-slaughter, robbery, brigandage and highway robbery”. Its Sanskrit equivalent (*ghata* [= *ghatana ghatin*, *ghatakara*, *ghatuka*, *ghatya*]) bears similar meanings such as “blow, wound, fowling or the use of a bird-net”. Sanskrit *ghataka* is “killer”. The Pali *abhighata* is “striking, slaying, killing”, while the meanings of *anupghata* and *himsa* range from “injury, harm to life”, to hurt, mischief, wrong”. *Maghata*, *ma+ghata*, is “not kill” or more precisely “not to kill”. *Upavasa maghata* is abstention from killing on special observance days. The Sanskrit meaning is “keeping a prescribed day, fasting, self-denial, abstaining from enjoyments”<sup>20</sup>. The Sanskrit *uposata* (= Vedic *upavasta*) is the eve of the Soma sacrifice or day of preparation.<sup>21</sup> According to the Pali-English Dictionary:

At the time of the rise of Buddhism the word had come to mean the day preceding the four stages of the moon's waxing and waning (first, eighth, fifteenth, twenty-third) nights of the lunar month, that is to say, a weekly sacred day, a sabbath. These days were utilized by the pre-Buddhis-

<sup>20</sup> *Sanskrit-English. Dictionary* (2005), pp. 150-151.

<sup>21</sup> *Uposata* is a special observance day when Buddhists are expected to engage in good activities. In Sri Lanka the commonly used word for such a day is Poya Day, since it falls on the full moon of each month. It is a public holiday.

tic reforming commentaries for the expounding of their views<sup>22</sup>.

## 2. Non-violence (ahinsa)

The Buddhist theory of non-violence is a cardinal feature within the confines of the ascetic life, in the form of abstinence from killing. The theory is mentioned in the *Suttas* or Buddhist scriptures, which comprise the teachings of the Buddha. *Suttas* are grouped into a number of *Nikayas* (discourses). The present study refers to the *Digha Nikaya* (Long Discourses), *Majjhima Nikaya* (Middle-Length Discourses), *Anguttara Nikaya* (Further Factored Discourses) and *Sanyutta Nikaya* (Grouped Discourses). Also involved are sections in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the disciplinary rules intended for Buddhist monastic life. *Vinaya* is a set of rules of conduct imposed on the Buddhist priests. These are not mentioned in the early texts but appear in late ones. Non-violence is mentioned in a variety of *Suttas* and *Nikayas* such as the *Saleyyaka Sutta* 41.8 (= *Majjhima Nikaya* I.286), *Sandaraka Sutta* 51.9 (= I.344), *Pataliya Sutta* 54.4 (= I.360) and 54.6 (= I.363), *Jivaka Sutta* 55.12 (= I.371), *Sevitabba Sutta* 114.5 (= III.47), and *Culakammavibhanga Sutta* 135.5 (= III.203). Non-violence is expressed predominantly as *sila* (from the stem *sil*, *sa-*

*madhi*, *upadharana*, *silanga*, *silacara*, *silakatha*, *silakandha*, *silacarana*, *silatittha*, *silabbata*, *silamattaka*, *silamaya*, *silasanvuta*, *silasampatti*, *silasampada*, *silasampanna*)<sup>23</sup>.

*Sila* is categorized as *pancha* (five), *asta* (eight), *dasa* (ten) *sila*. The first two types are recommended for the lay community. In all three types, injury to life is prohibited. Violation of life is a *parajika* (*para+aj;para+ji* (= *paraji*, *parajayat*, *jigye*, *jaishtu*, *jayishye*, *jayet*, *jayyat*, *jayet*, *jayyat*, *jiyyathu*, *jaishit*, *jetum* (*Vinaya Pitaka*, 1, *Suttavibhanga*, 111.85-88 [= III.5.32-3]). The slaughter of living beings (Pali *ghata* [= *Sutta ghata*, *ghatana*] is the first in the order of *sila* (*panathipatha*, *veramani*, *sikkhapadam*, *samadiyami*), while as a *parajika* it falls into the third category. Non-violence in the forms of *sila* and *parajika* occupies a profound position in the life of the ascetic (“self-mortifier”) as he will not “harm a living thing, does not cause a living being to be harmed, and does not approve of such harming” (*Udumbarikasihanada Sutta* 25.16 [= *Digha Nikaya* III.49). Anyone tempted of whatever ought never slaughter another (111.68 [=111.1, 1], 111.70-71 [= 111.1, 4-2] not even for the sake of the Buddha (*Jivaka Sutta*, 55.12 [= *Majjhima Nikaya* I.371]). The *sila* of the ascetic is such that no ascetic harms another. They:

<sup>22</sup> *Pali-English Dictionary* (1997), p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive illustration of *sila*, see *English-Pali Dictionary* (1925), pp. 712-713.

...by abandoning the slaying of creatures, are abstainers from the slaying of creatures, have laid aside the rod; they are modest, show kindness, they abide friendly and compassionate to all creatures, to all beings” (*Anguttara Nikaya* 1.211 [= *Book of the Threes* 111.7.70] : “. . . having gone forth, and possessing the *bhikku*’s training and way of life, abandoning the killing of living beings, with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings” [= *Book of the Threes* 111.7.70].

Non-violence, together with the four other precepts, moves within the structure of righteous conduct, the result of which is a happy afterlife (*Salleyyaka Sutta* 41.15-17 [= *Majjima* I.289-290; 18.42-433 [= *Majjima* I.290, *Culakammavibhanga Sutta* 135.5. [= *Majjima* II.203], 135.6-8 [= *Majjima* 204), while the reverse is the cause for an unpleasant after-life (*Apannaka Sutta* 60.13-14 [= *Majjima* I.405-6]). Non-violence prevents an unpleasant rebirth in the realm of the goblins (*Samyuttha Nikaya* 1.6.827 [= *Yakkhasamyuttha* 10). Non-violence assumes a wider coverage in the *Sathara Brahmaviharana*, four noble ways to Brahma in the forms of *mettha* (= *metti*, *metteyyatta* [“to love, be fat, to desire bringing welfare and good to one’s fellow men, to have a heart full of love”] or as *mettayati* [“to feel friendly, to show love and to be benevolent, to have *karuna* (pity, compassion”)]. The last is one of the

four qualities belonging to the character of a human being who has attained enfranchisement of heart in the four sentients (referring to having life and being able to sense), *muditha* (“soft-heartedness, kindness, sympathy”), often as the triad *metta* (“active love, preventive love, and disinterested love”) and *upekkha* (“hedonic neutrality, indifference, the zero point between joy and sorrow, disinterestedness, neutral feeling, equanimity”). *Karuna*, “loving compassion” (*Vatthupama Sutta* 7.14 [= *Majjima* I.39], *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* 26.21 [= I.169-170], *Cula Assapura Sutta* 40.10 [= I.284], *Maratajjaniya Sutta* 50.14 [= I.335-336], *Jivaka Sutta* 55.8 [= I.370-371], *Maharahulovada Sutta* 62.19 [= I.424-425, *AS* 118.4-III.79]. *Tevijja Sutta* 13.76 [= *Digha* I.252]) associates *ahimsa* (*Culahattipadopama Sutta* 27.13 [= *Majjima* I.179-180], *Ghatikara Sutta* 81.18 [= I.51-52] and *pancha sila* (*Sallekha Sutta* 8.12 [= I.42.43, *Dvedhavitakka Sutta* 19.10 [= I.116-117, *Sevitabbasevutabba Sutta* 114-118 [= III.50-57, *Culskammavibhanga Sutta* 135.8 [= III.204] as a constituent of *sathara brahma viharana* or the path to the Brahma world (*Makhadeva Sutta* 83.5 [= II.76], *Dhananjani Sutta* 97.33 [= II.95, *Canki Sutta* 95.25 [= II.175]. *Karuna* exceeds *maghatha* in its application for the wider concerns of *Gauthama Thathagatha* (*Vattupama Sutta* 7.14 [= I.39], *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* 26.21 [= I.169-170], *Cula Assapura Sutta* 40.10 [= I.284], *Maratajjaniya Sutta* 50.14 [= I.335-336, *Jivaka Sutta* 55.8 [=

I.370-371], *Maharahulovada Sutta* 62.19 [= I.424-425], *Anapanasati Sutta* 118. 4 [= III.79]). The final result of this mode of life is the emergence of the celibate who is restrained and full of love for all living beings, with the absence of barriers between human and non-human life, the animal and the celestial (*Dhammpada*, *Dandavagga* 9.142 (= 129-141) and whose condition grants nobility to men (*Buddhavagga* 19.270)<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. Destruction of animals

One who causes the destruction of life is not an ascetic (*Mahapadana Sutta* 14.3.28 *Digha Nikaya* II.51). In this group are: a butcher of sheep and of pigs, fowler, trapper of wild beasts, hunter, fisherman, thief, executioner, prison warden, or a person in any other bloody occupation (*Kandaraka Sutta* 51.9 [= *Majjimai* 344]). Deliberate destruction of life is banned. The range even covers causing injury to different forms of life during the construction of lodging<sup>25</sup>. Nothing ought to be begged from animals, i.e., snakes (111.146-147 [= 6.1.3-4] and birds (111.148 [= 6.1.5-6]). The monk is forbidden from seeing sights such as an army fighting (*Vinaya*, *Suttavibhanga*, 4.104 [= *Expiation* 48.1-3.1, 4.105 (= 49), sham fights and the sight of horses, elephants, chariots, and infantry (4.107-

108 [= 1.2.2]). The original Buddhist theory of non-violence, however, does not include a ban on the consumption of meat. Eating meat does not go against purity and is not an obstacle to the cultivation of individual perfection, which involves putting an end to the continuous cycle of human misery, through rebirth. It enshrines a sense of universal solidarity, which bonds the entire structure of living beings into a single frame. The Buddhist definition of non-violence includes a wider range of non-violence, incorporating compassion and concern for the salvation of posterity. The distortion of the original content of the ascetical component of non-violence gave birth to the popular mode of its dissemination, the practice of vegetarianism, the origins of which go back to the time of Buddha. The Devadatta insists that the Samaneans abstain from fish and meat, to which the Buddha's reaction is that one ought to follow them according to one's individual choice:

Whoever wishes, let him be a forest-dweller; whoever wishes, let him dwell in the neighborhood of a village; whoever wishes, let him be a beggar for alms; whoever wishes, let him accept an invitation; whoever wishes,

<sup>24</sup> *Pali-English Dictionary: metta* (pp. 540-541), *karuna* (p. 197), *muditha* (p. 537), *upekkha* (p. 150). HARRIS, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/harris/b141.html>.

<sup>25</sup> (*Vinaya*, 111.148 [= *Formal Meeting*, 6.1.5-6], 111.149-150 [= 6.2.2], 111.150-151 [= 6.2.3-4], 111.151-152 [= 6.3.2-3], 111.152-153 [= 6.3.6-9], 111.153-154 [= 6.3], 111.155 [= 6.3.16], 111.150-151 [= 6.2.3-4]).

let him wear rags taken from the dust-heap; whoever wishes, let him accept a householder's robes. For eight months, Devadatta, lodging at the foot of a tree is permitted by me. Fish and flesh are pure in respect to three points: if they are not seen, heard or suspected (to have been killed for him) (*Vinaya*, 3.171-172 [= *Cullavagga* 5.3., 13.4-3, 15-16].

#### 4. *Destruction of plants*

The concern for and protection of vegetation lays a claim to an extreme form of non-violence. Whether during the wandering life, or as monasticism developed into a complicated system within the confinement of residential surroundings, consistency with the principle of frugality was maintained. The two moved in close proximity to non-violence, not just to forms of life like that of insects and animals but also to plants. This was most evident during *vassa* (stem *vassathi*) the rainy season, which was usually from June to October. During this time, the *bhikku* (the Buddhist monk) remained in a *vassavasa* ("rains-residence") (= *vasati*, *vassa*, *vasan*, *vasati*, *vassan upethi*, *vassanupagacchati*, *vuttha vasa*, *vassan vasapeti*, *anto vassa*, *anantara vassan*). This at one time raised an issue among those who detested this season, on which occasion the following was uttered:

How can these recluses, sons of the Sakyans, walk on tour during the cold weather and the hot weather and the rains, trampling down the crops and grasses, injuring life that has only one faculty and bringing many small creatures to destruction? Shall it be that those members of other sects whose rules are badly kept cling to and prepare a rains-residence? Shall it be that the birds having made their nests in the tree tops cling to and prepare a rains-residence, while these recluses, sons of the Sakyans, walk on tour during cold weather and the rains, trampling down the crops and grasses, injuring life that has only one faculty, and bringing many small creatures to destruction? (*Mahavagga*, 3.4.1-2 [= *Suttavibhanga* 7.1-2, *Dhammadayada Sutta* 3.3 [= *Majjima* I.13]<sup>26</sup>).

The underlying reason for *vassa* was the protection of crops—the economic mainspring of life—and the protection of small creatures. The *Vinaya* prohibits waste water to be spilled in a place where there are no crops or no living creatures (*Mahavagga*, 10.4, 5-6), where there are forms of life, and where there is little or no green grass (4.1.4-8, 6.26.5-8, 10.4.5-6)<sup>27</sup>. Construction of hedges is encouraged to protect plants from being trampled by goats and cattle

<sup>26</sup> *Book of the Discipline*, vol.4, p.183.

<sup>27</sup> FINDLY (2002), 252-263; SCHMITHAUSEN (1997) 1-55.

(*Vinaya* 4.1-2 [= *Cullavagga* 6], which is extended to a ban on cutting down trees, since they are the abodes of birds and animals (111.156 [= VII.1-2]; 111.156-157 [= VII.3.2-6].

The regular transmission of Buddhism into the island of Sri Lanka from India operated as a significant cultural factor in defining the philosophical explanation of the Buddhist way of life. This changed somewhat in a second movement during the Mauryan period (322-185 B.C.E.) when King Asoka (269-232 B.C.E.) committed himself to a propaganda campaign of popularizing Buddhism, in which protection of animal life was a central feature. Concern for animal life merged with Indian religious culture due to the commitment of Asoka. His contribution is notable in the form of a ban on the slaughter of animals (*Asokan Rock Edict* 1, 3, 4) and measures taken, among others, for the preservation of animal life (*Asokan Rock Edict* 2)<sup>28</sup>. The edicts are, however silent, about a ban on beef. The later wave, which introduced a ban on the slaughter of animals and the consumption of their flesh, was the result of the penetration of South Indian influence into the Sinhalese religious scene, by approximately the fifth or sixth centuries C.E. Abstention from beef was a prominent element in this context.

<sup>28</sup> *Epigraphica Indica* 2 (1970), pp. 466-467.

<sup>29</sup> *Bodhisatta* is the Pali spelling, while *bodhisatva* is Sanskrit.

<sup>30</sup> ANNALAYO (2010), p.15. Buddha Gautama is the last of the Buddhas in the Buddhist tradition.

Vegetarianism in the form of *upavasa maghata* (ceremonial abstention from meat on special observance days) spread into Sinhalese culture beginning approximately in the third century C.E.

According to the chronicler, it was at this time that the *bodhisattva* ideal became attributed to Sinhalese kings, and through them as a medium, *maghata* was imposed upon society at large<sup>29</sup>. According to Annalayo:

In the discourses collected in the *Pāli Nikāyas* of the Theravāda tradition, the term *bodhisattva* is used predominantly by the Buddha Gautama to refer to his pre-awakening experiences, the time when he was “the bodhisattva” *par excellence*. Such usage occurs as part of a standard formulaic phrase, according to which a particular event or reflection occurred “before (my) awakening, when still being an unawakened bodhisattva” (*pubbe va (me) sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisat tass’ eva sato* [henceforth referred to as the “before awakening” phrase])<sup>30</sup>.

##### 5. Maghata in the chronicles

The imposition of the order of *maghatha* is attributed to Sinhalese kings in the chronicles. Among these

are the *Mahavamsa*, or the *Great Chronicle*, and the *Culavamsa*, or the *Lesser Chronicle*. These chronicles document the religious ordinances of the kings in Sri Lanka. King Amandagamini (22-31 C.E.) declared that one should not kill animals (*Mahavamsa* 25.6-7, *Dipavamsa* 21.37), and distributed gifts of strainers to prevent injury to small aquatic creatures (*Mahavamsa* 35.74). He also showed compassion for apes, wild boars, gazelles, and dogs (*Cula* 54.32). Imposition of the rule of *maghatha* is not a proof, however, that he promoted a vegetarian ethic. King Aggabodhi VIII (816-827 C.E.) imposed a ban on meat, fish, and intoxicating liquors during *uposatha* days (49.49). Sena the First (846-866 C.E.) introduced a ban on meat, fish, and intoxicating liquor on Uposatha days or special religious observance days (*Culavamsa* 49.49). This king's regulations move from *bhikkus* (monks) to kinsfolk, involving fish, four-footed beasts and birds (50.3), and ensuring safety for animals on and in water (52.15). The kings who imposed *maghata*, however, were reacting solely to their role as *bodhisattva* and for the safety of their sovereignty.

#### 6. Bodhisattva in the chronicles

An extension of the *bodhisattva* ideal in the description of Sinhalese kings in the form of non-violence, is traceable in both the chronicles and inscriptions. Voharika Tissa (215-237 C.E.) imposed a ban on injuring animals

and prescribed a penalty (36.28). King Sirimeghavanna (304-332 C.E.) provided water for animals (37.99). King Upatissa II (525-526 C.E.) tried to prevent his subjects from causing trouble to living beings (37.188) and made arrangements for their security (37.193), while King Silakala (526-539 C.E.) issued a decree for the preservation of life for all creatures (*Mahavamsa*, 4.30-1). King Aggabodhi IV (673-689 C.E.) commanded his subjects not to slay animals (46.40) as did Aggabodhi V (726-732 C.E.) (48.34). Kassapa IV (912-929 C.E.) showed concern for the protection of creatures whether living on land or in water (*Culavamsa* 52.15).

#### 7. Ahimsa in the chronicles

The concept of *ahimsa* in Sinhalese culture covers concern for animal life by way of ensuring the safety of game, fish, and the like on the four Uposatha days (*Cula* 73.21). Charity for animals in the form of medical treatment is recorded as one of the good deeds of King Buddhadasa (341-370 C.E.) (*Cula*. 37.112-123). Protection of animals is continuously treated as a good deed (193) and it extends to all creatures on land and in water (52.15): four-footed beasts and birds (60.3); fish, game, and birds (48.97)—including their preservation (41.3) and a ban on slaughter (48.24)—and providing food for crows, dogs, and other animals (60.74). This took the form of feeding places for birds (37.204) and their nourishment (48.18),

with fresh corn containing “milky juice” for cattle (48.147, 49.36), rice and cakes for apes, wild boar, gazelle and dogs (54.32), and rice for crows and other birds (49.36).

#### 8. *Karuna* in the chronicles

Compassion (*karuna*) is profoundly associated with the image of *bodhisatva*<sup>31</sup>. Concern for animal life among Sinhalese kings is a marked feature of the diffusion of the concept of *karuna*. It takes several forms, such as the institution of great alms-giving for all living beings (*Cula*. 37.71-3), medicine for animals, as in the particular case of King Buddhadasa (48.112-123, 124-131, 132-139, 140-147), appointment of physicians for elephants, horses, soldiers, preventing injuring to fish (48.97), careful walking so as not to harm insects (48.199-200), and food for cattle (48.147-148). An exceptional case is king Buddhadasa who cures a snake (37.112-123) and appoints physicians for elephants and horses (37.147). The Tamil king, Elara (205-161 B.C.E.) is also represented in the light of extending care to animals, a cow (*Mahavamsa* 21.18) and a snake (*Mahavamsa*, 21.20).

<sup>31</sup> SCHMITHAUSEN (2003) 21-46.

<sup>32</sup> RANAWELLA (2005), p. 42,

<sup>33</sup> *Kumara-Alla Slab Inscription*, in RANAWELLA (2005),. p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> *Veheragama Slab Inscription*, in RANAWELLA (2005), p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Niranguna Vehera Pillar Inscription* in RANAWELLA (2005), p. 30.

#### 9. Inscriptions

The inscriptions are rich in material for the diffusion of the concept of non-violence toward animals. Village oxen, domesticated (tusk-less) elephants and cart buffaloes were not to be impressed<sup>32</sup>. Killers of buffaloes, oxen, and goats were to be punished with death<sup>33</sup>. Manifold punishments are imposed on those who steal these animals and they are made to stand on heated iron sandals and be branded:

... for the offence of causing injuries to goats, she-buffaloes by cutting them.....the Head of the Granary shall levy two *kalandas* of gold (as fine).<sup>34</sup>

... those who have come after having committed murder (elsewhere) shall not be arrested within the boundaries of the village but they shall be arrested once they have removed them from the village<sup>35</sup>.

The prohibition against violence, though in this case theft is involved, is not limited to animate nature but extends to the inanimate as well:

He who takes grass, wood, flowers or fruits from the land



given to the Buddha will become a departed one”.

As it has been said that he who takes fraudulently or by force, grass, wood, flowers, or fruits belonging to the Buddha will become a departed one, so no one should take anything belonging to the Buddha”<sup>36</sup>.

#### 10. Hindu influence

The consumption of meat, as we have seen, was not always subject to restrictions in ancient Sri Lanka. As Gunawardhana notes:

The sanctions against the eating of beef which existed in Sinhalese society would suggest that the idea of *ahimsa* was not the sole contribution of Buddhism; it reflects the influence of Hinduism, particularly of the Saiva variety. This clearly illustrates the collaboration of Buddhist and Hindu influences in the propagation of common ideas within Sinhalese society<sup>37</sup>.

A connection between low caste and a meat-eating tradition is traceable in early Sinhalese culture. Consumption of meat was ascribed to those who belonged to low social castes and thus a connection was made between caste and the meat-eating tradition. Purity of caste is assumed to be subject to defilement

from food (and in some cases from improper sexual relations). In Sri Lanka and South India castes are endogamous groups based on a hierarchy of purity. According to Yalman:

The kindred are the most important kin group. It has an identity and very considerable solidarity. Kandyans would consider themselves to be “one people” and “one blood”. Hence kindred is directly associated with caste ideology. “Blood” is never a neutral category; it always carries ritual-qualities. In this case, those of “one blood” would assert that *ipso facto* they are of special ritual status. This idea is at the root of a preference for making kindred a closed circle and to preserve land, women, and ritual quality within it. Hence the auspicious and the inauspicious, fecundity and death, fertility and barrenness, purity and pollution appear associated with blood<sup>38</sup>.

The acceptance of food moves from the superior (caste) to the inferior :

In other words seed and food go from superior to inferior. When offered by an inferior, the superior rejects the offer. Thus a rejection of an offer of food is a statement of superiority, and a refusal to give women in marriage also carried the same implication. In all these respects

<sup>36</sup> *Salva Rock Inscription*, in UDUWARA (1992), p.139.

<sup>37</sup> GUNAWARDHANA, (1979), p. 166. Saiva is the religion of the god Siva.

<sup>38</sup> YALMAN (1963), 27.

the connotation of food is similar to that in India. So, commensality is the central rite in marriage rituals when the bride and groom feed each other publicly with little bits of food, and family disputes are brought to a head by a refusal to take part in such a marriage feast, which carries a serious insult as well as a rejection<sup>39</sup>.

Meat, especially beef, is connected with the caste of drum-beaters, *bherava kula*<sup>40</sup>. An extensive form of meat consumption such as eating human flesh and improper sexual relations between a high caste female and low caste male was supposedly responsible for the origin of the low *rodiya* caste<sup>41</sup>. As in the later Indian tradition, upper caste persons are vegetarian and offer vegetarian food to the *devas* (gods) while those of the lower castes eat and offer meat for *yakkhas* (demons):

In the Indian context, the upper castes who are vegetarian, offer only pure vegetarian food to their deities, whereas the low castes, who are carnivorous, offer goats and chickens to their deities. The offering is either appropriate to the gastronomic traditions of the caste or of the supernatural beings involved in the

act. Otherwise one would be at a loss to explain the reported offering of fecal matter to demons in Ceylon. But that is evidently their gastronomic tradition<sup>42</sup>.

Demons are treated as being below the status of ordinary humans, probably like members of a very low caste<sup>43</sup>. A clear distinction between vegetarian and non-vegetarian is made in the food offered to the Buddha, *deva*, and *yakkha*, as Yalman observes:

But just as a categorical distinction is made in the case of the food (*dana*) offered to the Buddha and his monks and the food offering made to gods (*adukku. multeng*), the food offering for demons is known as *dola*. Moreover, while the food for the first two categories is vegetarian, *dola* always includes flesh of some kind. Indeed, the vegetarian/carnivorous distinction is made with some emphasis for the Yakkha since the *dola* is sometimes explicitly intended to contain some polluting matter. In the great variety of food which may be offered to the Yakkha, one sometimes finds the feathers and combs, besides the flesh, of new-

<sup>39</sup> YALMAN (1973), 298.

<sup>40</sup> GUNAWARDHANA (1979), 166.

<sup>41</sup> YALMAN (1965), 454.

<sup>42</sup> YALMAN (1973), 302. *Yakkha* is the Pali and Sinhalese word for demon.

<sup>43</sup> YALMAN (1973), 297.

ly-killed fowls. Or to drive the point home, the *dola* is cooked in a skull thereby polluting the food, rice or meat, with the most potent thing of all, the pollution caused by death<sup>44</sup>.

Appeasement of supernatural beings is the foundation for success which is often sought in different kinds of personal offerings, whether a bloody or bloodless sacrifice. The word *bali* (oblations, religious offerings particularly to subordinate divinities) and *bali yaga* (*yaga*=chantings) are used as a generic term for ceremonies in a class featuring appeals and offerings mainly to planetary gods. Blood sacrifice is the norm of the *bali dana*, an offering dedicated to the *yakkha*. Killing animals for sacrificial purpose, then, is confined to the worship of demons whose offering

is both of meat and meatless substance (*bali dola*). The “polluted food offering” consists of flesh meat or fish<sup>45</sup>.

A cock is sacrificed for recovery from illness, while dying persons touch and dedicate wild flowers, rice and flesh as *pideni* (food offering). *Bali dola* consists of fried food, since fried foods are associated with impurity<sup>46</sup>. Among food offered to the *yakkha* are five kinds of fried foods (*kilimas* or fried flesh). These are *die mas* or water flesh, that is fish, and *goda mas* or land flesh, that is, meat, and three kinds of grain<sup>47</sup>. Abstinence from meat is observed by the exorcist for the fulfillment of his objectives<sup>48</sup>. In some cases the worshippers of certain gods (*devas*) are strict vegetarians whose way of living is founded on purity, the range of which includes not just abstinence from meat but also avoidance of sexual intercourse, death, and alcohol<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> YALMAN (1973), 295. Leftovers of the offerings of the *deva* are eaten but not those of the *yakkha* (294-295; 295, note 8).

<sup>45</sup> YALMAN (1964), 300; TENNENT (1850), 233.

<sup>46</sup> YALMAN (1964), 124. The skull of a wild cat was used to cook this food (122-123). On the topic of sacrifice to demons, see YALMAN (1973), 287-302. Only men cook food for demons, since they do not menstruate and are, therefore, not impure (1964), 128, 131. No impurity or *vas* is permitted in the Buddhist temple (130). There is no ban, however, against a menstruating woman entering a Buddhist temple (131, n. 13). *Vas* means inauspicious. A menstruating woman is considered as inauspicious in the context of Hindu religion. This does not apply to Buddhism.

<sup>47</sup> YALMAN (1963), 124, n. 9. Commonly consumed meats were pig (land), peacock (air), and fish (sea) (131). Fowl, blood, and meat were also in demand (126). Together with these, betel leaves, plantains, and coconuts were offered (123) (*Kili* is “impure”, *mas* is “meat”, *die* is “water”, *goda* is “land”).

<sup>48</sup> GOMBRICH & OBESEKERA (1988), p. 188.

<sup>49</sup> GOMBRICH & OBESEKERA (1988), p. 81.

Vegetarianism in contemporary Sri Lanka is something very personal<sup>50</sup>. Roasted flesh is the usual sacrifice for demons, while bloodless sacrifice is used for the *devas*, in the form of milk. For example, boiling milk is a ritual offering to the *devas*.<sup>51</sup> In recent times the Buddhist concept of *ahimsa* has taken on the form of a mock sacrifice of a pumpkin. In Gombrich's description:

Violence against animals, even if necessary in peasant life, is always considered morally bad and regrettable. This has had the effect that in early Buddhist healing rituals in which the demon of the disease requires a blood sacrifice to persuade him to leave, often a pumpkin is stabbed, or merely a token amount of blood is offered (a few drops from the comb of a cockerel who is brought in as if to be sacrificed). In recent years in Sri Lanka Sinhala Buddhists have been offering real blood sacrifices, typically goats, to the goddess Kali at the Saiva temple in the district of Munnessarama and maybe elsewhere. This violation of Buddhist ethical norms can be reasonably called syncretistic<sup>52</sup>.

### Conclusion

A simple and frugal lifestyle in ancient Greece involved the idea of *au-*

*tarkeia* (self-sufficiency), which was fundamental to Greek culture and was elaborated in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. The development of asceticism in Greece in the Early Empire, such as elaborated by Plutarch, stressed avoidance of violence toward animals and abstinence from meat. These were also central principles of Orphic and Pythagorean teachings. These strains of Greek thought associated with vegetarianism the horror of shedding blood and the risk of committing cannibalism. The revival of an ancient mode of life, or at least one closer to nature, is a special concern of Plutarch in many essays, who defends the ideas of simplicity and frugality. However, a major concern is compassion for animals. In contrast to Sinhalese literature, personal health both of the body and the soul is a major concern. In ancient Sri Lanka such a form of life was associated more with mainline Buddhism, propagated by Buddhist monks and Sinhalese kings, rather than with philosophers or marginal religions as in Greece. In Greece, however, the movement was more from philosophers to an intellectual elite, in Sri Lanka, the prohibition against killing animals and consuming meat, was often imposed from the top down through political

<sup>50</sup> GOMBRICH & OBESEKERA (1988), p. 480.

<sup>51</sup> YALMAN (1963), 30. The types of milk in Sinhalese culture are: coconut, breast, cow, and the sap of milk exuding trees: YALMAN (1963), 30. The offering of the *devas* is considered the purest, according to YALMAN (1964), 130-131.

<sup>52</sup> GOMBRICH (1997) 165-6.

authority. It was designed to prevent exploitation of domestic and wild animals, and of vegetation, in modern terms, to preserve the ecosystem. Still it did not omit the element of compassion for animals. On a religious and social level, vegetarianism was associated with purity and the divine, with the upper castes and with the gods, whereas meat eating was associated with the lower classes and with demons. Even in contemporary Sinhalese society it is a popular notion that mistreating or killing animals and eating meat is wrong, since it indicates lack of compassion. This attitude also has a religious or even thaumaturgic aspect (in the sense of mixing religion and magic), since meat is often associated with demons while abstinence from meat is associated with the gods.

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