COW DHAMMA
Venerable Ledi Sayādaw
Aggamahāpañḍita, D.Litt.
Although man owes limitless gratitude to cows, not the
Though they derive great service and milk from them,
of folly is unfathomable, if ingratitude reigns supreme.
towards cows becomes incomprehensible. The depth
how the Buddha honoured the Tree of Enlightenment
meat overwhelms all gratitude. When one remembers
least acknowledgement appears. Man's lust for eating
and dignity of animals is reduced to the lowest order. Although man owes limitless gratitude to cows, not the
least acknowledgement appears. Man's lust for eating
meat overwhelms all gratitude. When one remembers
be lost. Everyone should consider the service rendered
outcome of gratitude. It cannot discard the outlook and
The immense debt of gratitude must be seen in the
labour and service of cows. Their help resembles that of
our parents. Since one readily acknowledges the immeasurable debt of gratitude due to one's father and mother,
one should be able to declare the same thing regarding
cows. The debt one owes to them is obvious. So the Pāḷi
text states, “Cañāle are like a man's father and mother.”

The Manuals of Dhamma (Vipassanā Dīpanī,
Paṭṭhānuddesa Dīpanī, Sāmmadīṭṭhi Dīpanī, Niyāma
Dīpanī, Catusacca Dīpanī, Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī,
Magganga Dīpanī, Alin-Kyan), Religious Affairs
Dept., Kaba-Aye, Yangon. ✤ Insight Books

The Manual of the Constituents of the Noble Path
(Magganga Dīpanī), S.S. Davidson. ✤ Insight Books

The Requisites of Enlightenment (Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī).
✦ BPS Wheel No.171/174 and ✡ Insight Books

A Manual of Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpāna Dīpanī).
✦ BPS Wheel No.431/432 and ✡ Insight Books

A Manual of the Excellent Man (Uttamapurisa Dīpanī).
✦ Buddhist Publication Society


An Four Stanza Poem on Samvega, BPS (Fortcoming Bodhi Leaf). ✤ Association for Insight Meditation

A Talk on Intoxicants and Gambling (Extract from Gorasāra Dīpanī). ✤ Association for Insight Meditation


Buddhist Publication Society: PO. Box 61, 54
Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka Tel/Fax:
01981 580 436 www/lanka.com/dhamma
Insight Books: The Sun, Garway Hill, Herefordshire HR2 8EZ info@insightbooks.co.uk
✦ Association for Insight Meditation

22

Cow Dhamma

and dignity of animals is reduced to the lowest order. Although man owes limitless gratitude to cows, not the
least acknowledgement appears. Man's lust for eating
meat overwhelms all gratitude. When one remembers
how the Buddha honoured the Tree of Enlightenment
for seven days by showing his gratitude, such behaviour
towards cows becomes incomprehensible. The depth of folly is unfathomable, if ingratitude reigns supreme.

The End Justifies the Means

Those who hold Khattavijja Diṭṭhi think that the end
justifies the means. They have a selfish outlook, and only
pragmatic considerations of usefulness or benefit prevail.
Meat-eaters also belong to this group. The Buddha's
training is based on love and compassion, which are the
outcome of gratitude. It cannot discard the outlook and
behaviour of indebtedness. The right attitude must not
be lost. Everyone should consider the service rendered
by cows. The next consideration must be based on the
following thought: "If cows were high-status persons or
honourable, how one's gratitude would multiply!
Though they derive great service and milk from them,
persons do not rate them highly, let alone speaking in
praise of cows. If only cows had rank and position!"

If cows were high ranking persons, everyone would
show the gratitude due to them. People would show
love and kindness to the fullest extent. Torture and

Editor's Foreword

This unique work by the late Venerable Ledi Sayādaw puts a strong case for vegetarianism, though the
Sayādaw points out that the Buddha did not prohibit the eating of meat by monks. Had the Buddha
done this, as Devadatta demanded, it would have caused an obstruction to the propagation of Buddhism
wherever meat-eating was common. The overriding
consideration for a monk is gratitude and contentment
— so if people offer meat or fish he should accept it graciously. He need not eat it, if he does not wish to.
If he eats it, reflecting wisely, he will be free from blame.
The Sayādaw stresses that ingratitude is the really
harmful factor in eating meat. Beef-eating is especially
blameworthy because cattle provide both labour and
milk for mankind. Cattle are not used as draught
animals in the West, but the practice is still common
in Asia. Nevertheless, we do use a lot of dairy products,
so the factor of gratitude is important here too.

During the time of the Buddha, the large scale trade
in meat would not have been feasible without modern
transport and refrigeration. Modern technology has
given man unprecedented power over nature, and the
consequent growth of ingratitude towards animals,
trees, the environment, and material things is obvious.
The recent BSE crisis was a stark reminder of the evil
nature of the modern beef-trade. There is no trace of

Cow Dhamma in Detail

Comparison of Cows to Parents or Relatives

Soon after a child is born, soft pressed rice is given
with cow's milk. So cows give life twice a day. Since
then a human being's life is dependent on cows and
buffalos. As draught animals, they help to produce
rice and other food so that a man becomes wealthy. A
wealthy man can donate schools and monasteries, or
build pagodas. These charitable deeds are possible
with the aid of draught animals. Cows give both life
and wealth to human beings.

The immense debt of gratitude must be seen in the
labour and service of cows. Their help resembles that of
our parents. Since one readily acknowledges the immeasurable debt of gratitude due to one's father and mother,
one should be able to declare the same thing regarding
cows. The debt one owes to them is obvious. So the Pāḷi
text states, “Cattle are like a man's father and mother.”
The Buddha also declares that “... cattle resemble
brothers, sons, daughters, and relatives.” No good
man will kill or torture his own relatives. Nor will he
allow others to kill or torture them. He cannot bear to
see them killed, because he loves his relatives.

Likewise a good person, knowing the power or debt
of gratitude one owes to others, will not torture his
draught animals. If news of torture and killing is known,
he will feel sad. He may become angry. One would not
humanity in a system that can feed animal remains to cattle just to increase their body weight for slaughter.

If the Buddhadhamma is rightly understood and practised, people will surely become much more sensitive to the effect that they have on other living beings, and on their environment. The Buddha praised restraint and moderation in all things. He taught his disciples to take proper care of their bowl and robes, to eat almsfood respectfully, to clean and repair their dwellings, and not to damage trees or plants.

A Buddhist monastery or a Buddhist’s home should be a shrine to simplicity, cleanliness, beauty, serenity, harmony, thrift, and self-discipline. Though meat or fish may be taken in moderation, alcohol has no place in the home of a Buddhist. The Āmagandha Sutta, from the Suttanipāta, makes it clear that unwholesome kamma is stench, and not the eating of meat. However, monks have not reflected properly on their almsfood if they look down on vegetarian meals as inferior.

Our debt to cows is immeasurable, even in this modern age. Perhaps we should outlaw the killing of cows as well as the hunting of foxes. It would make for a more caring society.

Bhikkhu Pesala
December 2010

8 Cow Dhamma

eat the flesh of one’s relatives if they are killed by others — one will not relish eating their meat at all. One will feel sorry for the dead animals. The habit of gratitude and compassion suppresses any pleasure of eating beef. Compassion will also arise. One’s indebtedness is acknowledged by thoughts, words, and deeds.

Providers of Life, Beauty, Bliss, and Strength

No explanation is necessary as the meaning is obvious.

Deities Protect Good People

As explained earlier, the qualities of a good person include gratitude. Gratitude is revered by deities such as Sakka, the king of gods. They always appreciate thankfulness reappear now. This is the way of a good person’s heart and conduct.

On the other hand, if owners use the labour of draught animals, and then eat their flesh, the honour
Whether meat is essential is not the point. Those who eat meat without restraint suffer from diseases. Such cases are mentioned in Sutta Pitaka, Dhammapada Commentary, Jātaka Commentary, etc. So one should not make excuses, nor should one follow the way of gourmets. One’s diet should be based on vegetables, ghee, and milk, with a little flesh for protein. Health is improved by moderate eating.

Although one may not avoid eating meat, one should try to practise the virtues of contentment and simple living. All bodhisattas hold these virtues in highest regard since they lead to supreme enlightenment. The moral for everyone is to curb the passion for tasty food to gain concentration and wisdom. Overindulgence increases mental distraction. The bodhisatta, even when the king of crows, though by nature he had to eat other animals, tried to limit his eating habits. He expressed vows and good determination to reach a higher state of mind.

**Dumb Animals Cannot Defend Themselves**

Since animals are dumb they cannot defend themselves, and have to suffer in silence. Wealth is obtained through the labour of cows yet many fail to show any indebtedness. People should remember that paddy, groundnuts, sesame, vegetables, etc., are obtained by tilling the land with cows. Farmers need the cow’s help. Lacking a sense of gratitude benefit received. A thousand pounds worth of benefit is reduced to only twenty-five. Sometimes they totally ignore the help received from others. If their benefactors lack position, power, wealth, etc., they show even less gratitude. They dismiss the debt of gratitude that is due, concealing the benefit received. They do not help their benefactors when they are in need. They now shun them. They are glad when their benefactor dies because they do not want to repay their debt.

So the gratitude owed to animals is often denied. One seldom reflects on or acknowledges one’s debts to animals, not even to the smallest extent. As cows have no status, being dumb animals, people neglect to show any gratitude. The virtue of gratitude therefore diminishes, promoting vanity and folly among mankind, and callousness spreads. People become partial towards the upper class and biased against those of lower class. Dignified persons receive undeserved praise and exaggerated gratitude, while low-class benefactors are belittled, or totally ignored. Because it impairs righteousness, the importance of gratitude even towards trees was taught by the Buddha. The Pāḷi text “Yassa rukkhassa sāyāra” teaches us to preserve gratitude even for non-sentient things like trees. People should not destroy trees, because they enjoy shelter under them. People should not say unkind words. This is the teachings of the bodhisattas and the Buddhas. They habitually practise this virtue.

**Deities Fail to Protect Ungrateful People**

Every country needs a government. A country that lacks a government suffers from anarchic chaos. Robbers, murderers, and rebels gain supremacy and wreak havoc in various parts of the country. When a stable, strong government is duly established, disruptive elements have no chance to make mischief. They therefore remain at peace. Whenever authority is absent, miscreants rob and kill as they like. A strong government means peace and security. Likewise, when a country is looked after by good deities, demons and ghosts cannot do evil to the population. Bad deities have no chance to wreak havoc among the people. In times when people show no gratitude, even good deities are displeased, and they neglect to look after the world. Then demons, ghosts, and bad deities take their chance for evil-doing. They spread disease, epidemics, calamities, etc., and when the victims die they suck their blood and eat their flesh.

**Deities Fail to Protect Ungrateful People**

The fourth point indicates the neglect of good deities, such as personal deities, home deities, village deities, city deities, etc., who neglect their duty to protect the welfare of human beings. Then demons spread old and new diseases among men and animals. This is the detailed explanation for third point too. Man’s ingratitude makes the world a bleak place.
4. When gratitude, love, and compassion are weak or absent, men use animals for their needs without compunction. They strike or whip them hard, torturing them in various ways. Finally, they kill and eat them.

Due to that ingratitude and unrestrained greed, deities hate human beings because they lack love and compassion. Individual guardian deities hate individuals. Village deities hate villagers. Town deities hate镇 dwellers. National deities hate nations. As a result they do not look after the welfare of human beings, and fail to protect them. The opportunity is ripe for the work of demons. New diseases, epidemics, and dangers appear among mankind. All sorts of calamities bring disaster to many people. This is the teaching of the Buddha.

The above explanation is based on the Sutta Nipāta with direct and inferred meanings.

5. The Buddha taught in the Nārada Jātaka that, while cows and buffalos may be used for service when they are strong, when they are old and feeble they must be cared for properly. During their working lives they must be well-fed, and treated with love and compassion. They must not be killed when they are no longer useful.

6. The Sarabhāṅga Jātaka. Everybody is expected to observe the five moral precepts (not to kill sentient beings, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to take intoxicants and drugs). Every bhikkhu must properly feed in old age. Animals must cultivate the three good factors habitually.

We have shown the teaching of the Nārada Jātaka in the sense indicated above. Without this good procedure, those who use all the money for themselves incur debts due to animals. It means that the owners and users must suffer in their countless future lives, to repay their burden of debt. These debts can multiply in countless ways through the long journey in samsāra. Fools who do not believe in future existences, brazenly torture and eat draught animals. They mercilessly

Meat-eaters can incure the same guilt as butchers and meat-traders if they approve of killing. If one praises the prosperity of livestock farmers and meat-traders, one’s kamma is just like a butcher’s with the attendant evil results. Sometimes approvers and supporters can incur more blame than the perpetrators. It depends on the state of mind. The serious fault here is that one destroys justice and righteousness. One’s view is also wrong, which is the greatest error in the world. These facts are explained in the Vibhaṅga and its commentary.

Buyers depend on sellers, who in turn depend on buyers. Buyers help sellers by enjoying their produce. Especially in the matter of food, sellers have to depend on buyers. Money is used for further killing. So some animal species are endangered due to increased killing.

**Man is Driven by Lust for Meat**

Man enjoys meat eating as he likes without regard for the Dhamma. His greed compels him even to eat cows’ flesh, blind to the serious evil of ingratitude. In earning his livelihood he overlooks wrong-doing. For his immoral livelihood he gets serious effects in the lower worlds in future for the sake of benefit in the present life.

Some people maintain that meat improves the human body and brain. Meat is essential for our health, they say. However, the Pāḷi text says that health is dependent on balanced living, free from excesses.
Dhamma of gratitude is fundamental for the practice of love, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity.

Those who harm cows or eat their flesh suffer poverty and downfall. Due to their ingratitude, they face various dangers in the present. The future dangers to be incurred, are determined by their present deeds.

The four Brahmavihāras are the traditional protectors of the world. They imply loving regard for others, whether men or animals. The world’s situation is getting worse with famine, terrorism, wars, natural disasters, drug use, etc. Even in Buddhist countries, harsh treatment of cows, killings of cows, eating of beef, etc., can be seen. Non-Buddhist countries encourage the meat-trade, forsaking the precept of non-killing.

People should avoid occupations such as trading in arms, livestock, meat, poisons, and intoxicants. These moral principles, though well-known throughout the world, are seldom observed. People lack compassion, so they become evil. Their greed for wealth and power ever increases. So they resemble, even now, hungry ghosts (petas). Seeking only their selfish ends, they behave like animals. They are too proud. Although their livelihood depends on the services of animals, they kill, torture, and eat them. They even make sport of them. Cows are man’s best friends. Butchers and meat-traders go to hell, their ingratitude being so great.

The above explanations have been briefly made in the first point also. Right understanding is necessary regarding the gratitude owed to cows and buffalos. Morality alone is not enough — mental purity must be the goal.

Thirty-Eight Blessings
To acknowledge indebtedness or gratitude is to follow the Mangala Dhamma (the thirty-eight blessings). When these Mangala Dhammas are known and understood, craving for meat, such as beef, etc., will diminish in due course. Everyone should try to avoid eating the flesh of animals, especially that of cows and buffalos. One should study the Sutta Nipāta, Temiya Jātaka, and Nārada Jātaka in which the importance of gratitude is taught by the Buddha, even towards trees and animals, so that this moral precept is not violated by wrong view. Magnanimity must prevail in the world. Indebtedness must be seen everywhere.

Importance of Gratitude
Even animals have gratitude for their mothers and feeders. They show love and gratitude when food is given to them. Even wild animals become tame if people feed them with kindness. They love their benefactors and show loyalty and devotion. It is strange that meat-eaters do not love cows — showing them no civility. It is remarkable that meat-eaters do observe 227 Vinaya rules scrupulously. All Buddhists, by this observance of morality, become pure in body and speech, which is the main function of morality. One becomes a moral person by leading a moral life.

The characteristic of wisdom is the ability to teach others in accordance with the Dhamma as taught by the Buddha. The aim of teaching Dhamma is to develop civility, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. He who obtains this qualification is called a wise man (paṇḍita). A wise man, who is learned in the texts and able to teach others, obtains wisdom — a necessary factor of a good man.

The characteristics of a good man (sappurisa) include the open acknowledgment of gratitude owed to others, and revering the good qualities of others. This qualification makes one a good person. Besides these two fundamental qualifications, a third one is the need for a soft and gentle mind, or a good heart. These are the basic qualities of a good man.

In the teaching of the Buddha, the Vinaya concerns morality, the Abhidhamma pertains to wisdom, and the Suttanta concerns the qualities of a good person (sappurisa). Thus we can classify three basic aspects of life. However, they may not be coexistent as one would wish them to be. Some individuals may possess morality, but they may lack wisdom and goodness. So they may not be wise persons or good persons. Some abuse the labour of cows and buffalos so that the animals suffer as if in hell. Far-sighted persons should take this warning with all due seriousness.

The Teaching in the Nārada Jātaka
A tree, under which we shelter, becomes our benefactor, though it is an insentient thing. Having enjoyed protection from a tree, one must not destroy its branches or leaves. Wanton destruction means ingratitude just like using our best friend. Moreover, one commits the fault of breaking the virtue of a good person. This teaching of the Buddha is as well-known as the sun and the moon. All persons should, therefore, treat draught animals with kindness, remembering their virtues and services. One should abstain from eating their meat, to fulfil the duty of gratitude. This factor of a good person must be maintained at all costs. Wherever human beings kill and eat their benefactors, they originate wars, conflicts, and atrocities. The calamity of war is due to this serious evil called ingratitude.

The term “Sathantara Kappa” means the calamity of war. A single slaughter-house kills at least one thousand cows each day; and over thirty thousand cows are butchered every month. In a year, more than three hundred thousand cows are slaughtered — over three million in ten years. In the whole country, the appalling slaughter of cows, each day, month, and year
persons are wise, but because they lack morality, they are not good. Others are good, but they may lack morality and wisdom. Some possess both morality and wisdom, but they are not good-natured. Some persons are blessed with morality and goodness, but they lack wisdom. Others possess wisdom and goodness, but they do not have morality.

Some people possess all three basic qualifications: morality, wisdom, and goodness. A few individuals lack all three good qualities. Those who possess all three good qualities are very rare.

7. The Temiya Jātaka mentions that those who take shelter and sleep under a tree must not break its branches with bad intention. For the tree becomes his best friend, a helper deserving gratitude. If one destroys the branches of the tree, one violates the duty of friendship, harming one’s benefactor. One lacks the basic requirement of a good man. This is the teaching of the Buddha in the Temiya Jātaka.

Breaking branches and felling trees, even with an evil, ungrateful mind, is not the evil deed of killing, because trees are not sentient beings. However, the evil mental state of ingratitude prevails. Hence the transgressor commits an evil deed. To maintain the virtues of a good person, gratitude must be shown even to lifeless things. One must show reverence and

should be considered. For the animals, the greatest calamity befalls them without respite, day and night.

The butcher’s money becomes capital for the meat-traders and slaughter-houses. The consumer’s money also goes to them. With this huge income, meat-traders again buy animals for slaughter. They establish more and more slaughter-houses. In a single country there may be more than one thousand slaughter-houses. With the financial-support of meat-traders and consumers, the slaughter of animals is supported by meat-eaters everywhere. So the calamity of a single cow’s death is caused by man. Man seldom considers the fact of indebtedness.

On the other hand, cows and buffalos give rice, wheat, barley, etc., to mankind. Farmers rely on them. With their labour, they sustain the life of man every day. Yet callous human beings exploit them by creating slaughter-houses, and devise all ways of killing them for their meat. So these animals suffer the calamity of death due to the ingratitude of man. In the entire world, millions of cows are butchered for food every day.

Morality, Wisdom, and Goodness

In the Vinaya Piṭaka there is no prohibition to refrain from eating meat. For the monks, if they have not seen, heard, or suspected that the meat was killed for them, they can eat it. They are free from any offence.

Impracticability of Vegetarianism

Everywhere, vegetarians constitute a small minority. If the Buddha prohibited meat for the monks, the majority of monks would unavoidably violate this Vinaya rule. Then transgressions would increase in the course of earning a livelihood. Those monks who insist on vegetarian food would be opposed by the populace, and their livelihood would become restricted. People will find difficulty to meet their requirements. Its impracticability prevented the Buddha from promulgating vegetarianism in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

In the Vinaya Piṭaka, meat-eating is allowed if the right kind of meat is given. The observance of the Vinaya rules¹ is limited for it purifies only bodily and vocal misconduct. It does yet reach the sphere of purification of mental evils which encompass a wide range. In the Sutta Piṭaka, ethical precepts and practices reach the mental realm. It covers all mental evils. Only when mental evils are purified, goodness arises. A person now becomes good, not merely moral or ethical. This attainment is possible because the factors of gratitude, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity prevail in the heart. The heart must be cleansed of evil things to become good.

¹ The original has “Abstaining from the ten evil kammas (dasa akusala).” This is an error as it does include kammas of the mental sphere: covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view (ed.)
The Blessing of Gratitude

In the Sutta Nipāta the Buddha teaches: “yathā mātā pitā bhūtā, aṁīne vāpi ca nātakā.” The meaning is that cows and buffalos, being providers of rice and other food, are givers of life. They are comparable to one’s mother and father. If people can eat their parents' flesh, they will also eat meat. If they will not eat their parents flesh, they should refrain from eating meat. If one heard that a man had eaten his parents, he would be regarded as an inhuman monster, maniac, or cannibal. Similarly, on hearing that people eat the flesh of cows and buffalos, one can judge that they are monsters, maniacs, or barbarians. Why is this? Because one’s parents are one’s life-givers and benefactors. So too are cows and buffalos. The flesh of one’s benefactors must not be eaten. People would rightly blame those who ate their parents, brothers, or sisters as barbaric cannibals. The same criticism should be levelled at meat-eaters because cows give us life. We owe them a great debt of gratitude, comparable to that due to our parents. We should love these animals, considering their services to mankind. They are worthy of our noble love and pity, considering their enormous service for mankind.¹

¹ The Gosûrû Dipâni here deals with the evils of intoxicants and gambling, q.v. see the booklet “A Talk on Intoxicants and Gambling.”

Gratitude

Appreciation of benefit obtained from others is called gratitude (kataññutā). It means acknowledgment of benefits received, or sincere appreciation. Benefits may be obtained from persons or things. There are two classes of benefactors: well-known or high class persons; unknown or low class persons, or beings of low dignity, power, and status. Most people exaggerate the benefit received from well-known or high class persons. They will acknow-

Morality, Wisdom, and Goodness

However, mere freedom from offence does not make a good monk. The essential factors of a good monk must be observed. The Vinaya rules do not forbid meat or beef as long as the above three factors are absent. However, the Vinaya rules only govern impurities of the bodily and vocal spheres. They concern only one of the four types of purification. A bhikkhu also has to follow the remaining three Parisuddhi Sila. As these three — controlling the senses, purity of livelihood, and reflection on the use of requisites — belong to the Sutta Dhamma, a monk should conform to it so that all four kinds of purity are attained.

Here, it is important to relate morality to goodness. A bhikkhu, when he observes all four purities, attains only the qualification of a moral person. He also needs to enrich his mind with a liberal spirit such as appreciation and acknowledgement of gratitude. This enrichment of the mind or mental sphere ensures that a good heart emerges along with good conduct. Many individuals lack this mental factor although they possess morality. The qualities of a good person must be cultivated.

A further explanation of this point may be helpful. If a monk is well-versed in Vinaya and observes the discipline, he is classified as a moral monk. Yet he may be of rough mind, full of pride, stubborn, rebellious against his teachers, giving no support to the needy and no help to his elderly parents. He is always
edge a benefit of one hundred pounds for one pound, one thousand for one hundred, because the status of their benefactor is high. However, a low class person’s gift or service usually remain undeclared. If the beneficiaries do acknowledge any indebtedness, they seldom tell the whole truth. One thousand pounds benefit is mentioned as only one pound. This is the attitude of wicked or cunning people. They are not good Buddhists.

All sincere persons of good-will acknowledge their gratitude in the following way: the benefit received from well-known persons is a hundredfold whereas that of ordinary persons is a thousandfold. Since they emphasise gratitude, they speak in glowing terms for services received from ordinary people. This is the nature of bodhisattas and other good persons.

scolding and complaining. Jealousy and envy prevail in his heart. He exhibits egoism and conceit, wallowing in fame and wealth.

From his practice of the Pāṭimokkha Sīla, he is a moral person in this respect. However, he is very far from the basic characteristics of goodness as mentioned in the Metta Sutta (the fifteen points of becoming a good person). So, though moral, he is not good. Those types of monks, learned in the scriptures but proud and conceited, can only be called learned bhikkhus. However, they are not good in the sense indicated above.

This standard can also be applied to the laity. Those laymen who observe five precepts can only be classified as moral persons. For example, they observe the ‘non-killing’ precept by refraining from killing sentient beings, not having any intention to kill. Although by his acts some insects, pests, and other animals may suffer death, he escapes from the transgression of this precept as his intention is not based on killing. There is in this case, no evil deed even though death occurs to pests and animals. With other intentions he perpetrates a deed that involves death to others, such as clearing fields, burning rubbish and groves. By so doing, small pests are killed, but his aim is to clear the jungle or overgrowth, so he escapes evil in this act. He burns the fields, causing death to some sentient beings, but having a different intention, he escapes the evil of killing. Although thousands of insects may die, he has no responsibility for their death as his aim is to clear the fields or rubbish. It is right. He does not violate the first precept. He is still a moral person, because he has no intention to kill. However, if he knows that burning his fields or groves entails death to small animals, if he does this, he lacks love and compassion. So he is not a good person.

Some people carefully observe all five precepts, but they neglect to support their parents. They fail to pay respect to them. They scold learned men. They decide cases in a partial way. They oppress their inferiors. As they keep five precepts they are called “moral.” However, since they lack gratitude, humility, dutiful conduct, etc., they are not good persons at all. They lack the important factors of love and compassion.

If one knows that meat is served for one’s enjoyment, without seeing the act of killing, without suspicion or without direct involvement, ethical conduct is not sullied. So meat-eaters, although they know that cows are killed for food and that butchers prosper with the increasing demand, do not break the five precepts. It is just like the persons who, wishing to clear the jungle, burn bushes, trees, and groves, killing insects and animals in the process. Since they have no intention to kill, they are innocent.

Meat-eaters do not possess the factors of gratitude and compassion, and they are far from becoming good