

Buddhist Philosophical perspective of human food ethics

Shyamali Piyasiri

Postgraduate student, Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya

piyasiri2013@gmail.com

Food is one of the major needs of humans as well as of other beings. In the Buddhist doctrine, it is described as “sabbhesatthaāharathhitha”, all the beings depend on food, and “gigajjhāparamārogā”, hunger is the biggest illness. The Buddha held the view that the consumption of food is essential to eliminate the pain caused by hunger. Buddhism has a plethora of teachings related to food ethics. The *Vinayapitaka* consists of most of such teachings, elucidating the rules followed by the Buddha and other Buddhist monks vis-à-vis consumption of food. *Āhārasutta* of *saṃyuttanikaya* explains that human beings nourish themselves both physically and mentally through references to Kābalikahara, (physicality) phassa, (sense impression) manosancetana (volition) and manoviññāna (consciousness). Though people often tend to emphasize the importance of food for physical nourishment, according to Buddhist teachings, a healthy life requires food for nourishment of which a quarter is physical, and the remaining three-quarters is mental. Buddhism stands out among other religions with its elaboration on food ethics. This paper discusses the spiritual basis for Buddhist food ethics focusing on how these Buddhist food ethics contribute to spirituality and improvement of the layman’s life which encounters social problems of various natures.

Key Words: Buddhist food ethics, social problems, spiritual development