

# The Buddhist Ethical Foundations of Animal Rights: Scriptural Teachings and Contemporary Practices

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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

*Ahiṃsa, Animal Right, Buddhist Ethics, Perspective*

*This paper explores the ethical foundations of animal rights from a Buddhist perspective, focusing on the fundamental teaching of non-violence (ahiṃsā), lovingkindness (mettā) and compassion (karuṇā). Grounded in the Buddha's teaching as reflected in the Pāli Canon and its commentaries, Buddhism advocates non-violence, lovingkindness and compassion to all living beings, including animal. The principle of Ahiṃsā calls for abstention from causing harm or killing to animals. Mettā promotes the cultivation of lovingkindness, an active intention and action for the welfare of others, to all living beings. Karuṇā encourages a compassionate action and active response to reduce the suffering of all living beings. Through these ethical principles, Buddhism provides a moral basis for advocating the respectful and compassionate treatment towards animals. Furthermore, it discusses the emergence of modern Buddhist movements who promote compassionate living through practices such as fang sheng (animal release), establishing animal sanctuaries, avoiding meat, rejecting products like leather and silk, and replacing animal labor with machines.*

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## Introduction

In the contemporary world, the ethical treatment of animals has become an urgent global concern. With the rapid industrial growth and consumerism, animals are suffering more than ever before. The mistreatment of animals across various industries such as factory farming, entertainment, fashion, and hunting becoming a widespread issue involving ethical, environmental, and social concerns (Clay & Visseren-Hamakers, 2022). These practices have caused immense suffering for countless animals in this world. In factory farming, animals such as cows, pigs, and chickens are kept in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, often subjected to painful procedures and slaughtered at a young age to maximize production (Anomaly, 2015). In the entertainment industry, animals are trained through fear and punishment, confined in small enclosures, and forced to perform unnatural acts, leading to physical and psychological suffering. In the fashion industry, animals are exploited for their fur, skin, and feathers, with many being confined, live-plucked, or killed in brutal ways to produce clothing and accessories. In hunting, animals are pursued and often killed purely for sport or profit, suffering fear, injury, and death, while some species face population decline and disruption of their natural habitats (Almiron, 2023). According to the data given by *Shelter Animal Count: The National Database* (Shelter Animals Count, 2024), in the United State, millions of animals suffer each year due to human actions. Around 10 million die from

abuse, and 250,000 are victims of hoarding. Nearly 400,000 shelter dogs are euthanized annually. Puppy mills about 10,000 nationwide continue to operate in poor conditions. Meanwhile, over 110 million animals are used and killed in laboratory experiments every year. These practices raise serious ethical questions concerning our treatment of other sentient beings. Increasingly, these concerns are being addressed within the discourse of animal rights, which argues for the moral consideration and protection of animals based on their capacity to suffer and their intrinsic value. Among various philosophical and religious traditions that address ethical conduct, Buddhism offers a unique and profound perspective grounded in the principles of non-violence (*ahimsa*), lovingkindness (*metta*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). Buddhism offers a rich ethical framework that supports animal rights through its emphasis on non-violence, lovingkindness and compassion.

Buddhist ethics, deeply rooted in the principle of nonviolence (*ahimsā*), offers a unique perspective on animal rights, emphasizing compassion and the moral significance of all sentient beings (Lokanang, 2019). Buddhist ethics emphasize nonviolence (*ahimsā*) which extends to animal welfare. Central arguments include the capacity and desire of animals to avoid suffering, the virtue of compassion, and Buddhist views on self, karma, and reincarnation (Finnigan, 2017). The First Precept in Buddhism, abstaining from taking life, extends beyond humans and reflects a deep moral concern for animals (Human, 2013). When it comes to the treatment of animals, Buddhism stands out by promoting a stance of complete nonviolence. Unlike some traditions that may place less value on the lives of animals, Buddhism encourages kindness and care for every sentient being (Stewart, 2014). The idea of *ahimsā* encourages the individuals not to hurt any living being. All living beings, including animals, deserve happiness and freedom from suffering. Every living being fear of death (*sabbe bhāyanti maccuno*) because everyone loves their life (*sabbesaṃ jīvitam piyaṃ*) (Kalupahana, 2008: 130). Therefore, according to Buddhist perspective, harming or causing their suffering is immoral action. Buddhism encourages practitioners to avoid causing harm to any living being, either directly or indirectly. It is not more than just avoiding violence, but also encourages to grow loving-kindness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*). These ethical values make individuals to care about others, feel empathy, and act with kindness, including toward animals.

This paper offers a thorough academic exploration of how Buddhist ethics can enhance contemporary discussions about animal rights. It begins with explanation about Buddhist perspective towards animal, examining the animal position in the Buddhist cosmology. The second section discusses the Buddhist ethical principles on animal right, examining the Buddha's teaching on non-violence (*ahimsa*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). This section describes how the Buddhist ethical principles can be applied in promoting animal right. The last section explores the Buddhist contemporary practices in supporting animal welfare.

## Method

This research adopts qualitative methodology with library approach which aims to explore the ethical foundations of animal rights from a Buddhist perspective, focusing on the fundamental teaching of non-violence (*ahimsā*), lovingkindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). The library research means a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing research materials (Zed, 2014: 3). According to Sugiyono, literature studies are also related to theoretical studies and other references

related to the values, culture, and norms that develop in the social situation being studied (Sugiyono, 2017: 291). With this methodology, this research is conducted into three following steps, namely data collection, analysis and synthesis, and conclusion. The data is collected from primary sources and secondary sources. The *Pāli* Canon and its commentaries are considered as the primary sources. The secondary sources refer to relevant articles, journals, and books written by scholars. The collected data are deeply analyzed to discover the research findings. Grounded in the Buddha's teaching as reflected in the *Pāli* Canon and its commentaries, Buddhism advocates non-violence, lovingkindness and compassion to all living beings including animal. Through these ethical principles, Buddhism provides moral foundation for advocating the respectful and compassionate treatment towards animals.

## Result and Discussion

### Animal in Buddhist Perspective

In Buddhism, animals are regarded as sentient beings (*sattā*), just as humans who are capable of feeling pain, fear, joy, and the desire to live. Buddhist perspective towards animal is very unique, different from other religions. While some religious traditions teach that animals were created primarily for human use or benefit, Buddhism presents a markedly different view. In Buddhism, animals are not considered as human property or resources for human use. Buddhism rejects the notion that animals were created solely for the benefit of human beings. If such reasoning were accepted, it would imply that humans, too, might have been created for the benefit of animals (Dhammananda, 2002: 240). In Buddhist cosmology, beings are reborn into different realms based on their past *kamma*. It is explained that there are 31 realms, which one of them is the animal realm (*tiracchānayoṇi*). Animal existence is considered as part of the *apāya-bhūmi* or realm of misery (Na-Rangsi, 2006: 11). Beings can be reborn as animals, humans, or gods depending on their actions. Buddhism teaches that all beings are the owners of their actions, heirs to their actions, born based on their actions, actions as their relative, and actions as their refuge (Bodhi, 2000: 1533). The term *tiracchāna* literally means “those who move horizontally,” distinguishing animals from humans who walk upright. *Yoni* means “womb” or “birth.” Therefore, *tiracchānayoṇi* is translated as “birth into the animal realm.”

According to Buddhist teachings, being reborn as an animal is considered an unfortunate rebirth (*duggati*), alongside realms such as hell (*niraya*), hungry ghosts (*peta*), and demons (*asura*) (Na-Rangsi, 2006: 7). Animals are considered to dwell in a state of suffering because they live in ignorance, are driven by instinct, have limited ethical capacity, and often endure pain and fear as a result of unwholesome past *kamma*. They are considered as inferior to human beings because they don't have the mental capacity to comprehend the Dhamma and they have only a rudimentary moral sense. In the animal realm is dominated by the principles of ‘eating each other and preying off the weak’ (Dhammika, 2019: 15). Therefore, animals frequently suffer from exploitation, cruelty, and killing by humans or other animals. The Buddha generally classified the living beings according to their mode of birth, such as from eggs (*aṇḍaja*), from the womb (*jalābuja*), from moisture (*saṃsedaja*) and spontaneously (*opapātika*) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 2009: 168). Many living beings born from eggs, such as birds, snakes, and fish, hatch after being laid by the mother. There are some beings born from the womb, like humans, elephants, and dogs, develop inside the mother's body before birth. There are beings born from moisture, such as maggots or worms, arise in decaying organic matter or damp environments. There are beings who appear fully formed without parents, like devas (gods), hell beings, and some ghosts, are born instantly due to

past *kamma*. Animals mostly born from eggs, womb and moisture. In Buddhism, animals are also categorized based on physical characteristics, such as the number of legs, namely many-legged animals (*bahupāda*), four-legged animals (*catuppāda*), two-legged animals (*dvipāda*), and legless animals (*apāda*). According to Buddhism, the variety and number of animals far exceed that of human beings, both in form and population. There are animals who live in the water, land, air and microscopic. It is because more beings are reborn as animals than as human beings (Bodhi, 2000: 1885).

The *Jātaka*, the stories of the past lives of the Buddha before his enlightenment, provides rich insight into the Buddhist perspective on animals. From the *Jātaka* stories, it is understood that the Bodhisatta often reborn as an animal such as a deer, monkey, elephant, etc. in order to fulfill his *Pāramī* to attain enlightenment. In the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka*, the Bodhisatta was born as Nigrodha, a wise and compassionate king of deer (Chalmers, 2003: 39). The *Sammodamāna Jātaka* records the Bodhisatta born as a quail (Chalmers, 2003: 85). *Sakuṇa Jātaka* mentions the Bodhisatta was born as a bird (Chalmers, 2003: 91). *Kapota Jātaka* reports the Bodhisatta was born as pigeon (Chalmers, 2003: 112). In the *Vānarinda Jātaka*, the Bodhisatta was a monkey (Chalmers, 2003: 142). In the *Sigāla Jātaka*, the Bodhisatta was a jackal king (Chalmers, 2003: 304). There are still more examples when the Bodhisatta born in the animal world to fulfill his *Pāramī*. Many *Jātaka* stories depict the Bodhisatta born as various animals, and it shows that animals can embody virtues and even act more nobly than humans. Therefore, from the Buddhist perspective, animals should not be harmed or exploited but should be treated with kindness and compassion.

According to Buddhism, every living being, including animals, desire to live and avoid to die (*jīvitukāma amaritukāma*), desire happiness and avoid suffering (*sukhakāma dukkhappaṭikūla*) (Medhacitto, 2019: 49). The Buddha strongly rejected the practice of killing of animals, including in the context of ritual sacrifice, which was a common practice in Brahmanical traditions of his time. *Kūṭadanta Sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya* presents a significant Buddhist critique to animal sacrifice. This *sutta* reports a story of a Brahmin named Kūṭadanta who wished to perform a great sacrificial ritual involving the killing of many animals. However, when consulting to the Buddha for advice, the Buddha rejected such violent practices (Walshe, 2012: 133). Since the Buddha rejected killing and torture, he reinterpreted the concept of sacrifice as acts of giving or generosity (*dāna*). In Buddhist interpretation, the terms *yañña*, *dāna*, and *dakkiṇa* are understood to have the same meaning (Medhacitto, 2019: 169). In the *Niddesa*, the term *yañña* is interpreted as *deyyadhamma*, or something that is appropriate to give (*yañño vuccati deyyadhammo*) (Medhacitto, 2019: 169). The Buddha explains that the highest form of sacrifice does not involve killing, but rather involves giving to the poor, supporting virtuous people, and living a righteous life. This reflects the Buddhist attitude toward animals as one rooted in compassion and respect. In Buddhism, animals are not seen as mere resources for human use. They deserve moral consideration and should not be exploited or harmed for human benefit.

### **Buddhist Ethical Principles on Animal Rights**

Animal rights are moral principles based on the belief that animals have the right to live according to their own nature. In general sense, the term animal right is often used synonymously with “animal protection” or “animal liberation.” In a more specific sense, “animal right” emphasizes that animals should be recognized as individuals who are entitled to basic rights and respectful treatment (Kumar & Raghavan, 2022). Animal rights promote

animals should not be used for food, hunting, labor, or breeding for human purposes. The natural habitats must be protected to allow them to live freely according to their own nature.

Classical philosophies from the Indian subcontinent generally reflect a perspective that is supportive of animal liberation. *Ahiṃsa* or the teaching of non-violence or non-injury to all living beings is the fundamental teaching of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism (Taylor, 2009: 35). Buddhism offers a unique and profound ethical viewpoint based on the concepts of non-violence (*ahiṃsa*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). By promoting the humane and respectful treatment of all sentient beings, these fundamental principles create a thorough moral framework that inherently promotes the understanding and protection of animal rights.

### 1. The Buddhist Concept of Non-violence (*Ahiṃsa*)

The general concept of non-violence mostly related to the first of Buddhist precepts, namely refraining from killing any living being (Harvey, 2000: 69). The first of the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) observed by Buddhists is the precept to abstain from killing any living being (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*). The term *Ahiṃsā* comes from the Pāli words “a” + “*hiṃsa*.” The prefix “a” means “not” or “without.” The word “*hiṃsa*” is derived from the root verb  $\sqrt{hims}$ , which means “to hurt, injure, strike, or kill”. Therefore, *ahiṃsā*, is literally translated as “non-harming,” “non-injuring,” “non-striking,” or “non-killing” (Medhacitto, 2019: 20). The similar term reflects the same meaning is also found in the Buddhist text, namely *avihiṃsā*. This reflects the Buddhist concept of non-violence. It is a fundamental Buddhist commitment to avoiding harm to all living beings, not only in action but also in speech and thought. *Avihiṃsā* is one of the elements of Right Thought in the practice of Noble Eightfold Path. Right Thought involves three kinds of thought, namely thought of renunciation (*nekkhammasaṅkappo*), the thought of non-ill-will (*abyāpādasāṅkappo*), and the thought of harmlessness (*avihiṃsāsaṅkappo*) (Bodhi, 2000: 1528). *Ahiṃsā* is very important to cultivate lovingkindness and to destroy the hatred or ill-will toward others. It is said that whoever person finds joy in being harmless at all times, and who shows loving-kindness to all living beings, holds no hatred toward anyone (*yassa sabbamahorattaṃ, ahiṃsāya rato mano; mettāṃ so sabbabhūtesu, veraṃ tassa na kenaci”ti*) (Bodhi, 2000: 308). *Ahiṃsā* is considered to be noble practice. The Buddha stated that one who harms living beings is considered ignoble, while one who does no harm to any living being is regarded as truly noble (*na tena ariyo hoti, yena pāṇāni hiṃsati; ahiṃsā sabbapāṇānaṃ, ariyoti pavuccati*) (Kalupahana, 2008: 163).

The Buddhist principle of non-violence is rooted in empathy and understanding that everyone deserves happiness and avoids suffering. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha stated that all beings tremble at punishment; all fears death. Having made the comparison with oneself, let one not kill, nor cause another to kill (*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbe bhāyanti maccuno; Attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye*). Furthermore, the Buddha stated all beings tremble at punishment; life is dear to all. Having made the comparison with oneself, let one not kill, nor cause another to kill (*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbesaṃ jīvitaṃ piyaṃ; Attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye*) (Kalupahana, 2008: 130). This teaching supports the animal right, because animals also want to live happily and free from suffering. The Buddhist principle of non-violence promotes non-killing or non-harming to any living being, including animals. As recorded in the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha stated that whoever, seeking his own happiness, by harming living beings that also seek happiness with violence, will not find happiness after death (*sukhakāmāni bhūtāni yo daṇḍena vihimsati;*

*attano sukham-esāno pecca so na labhate sukham*) (Kalupahana, 2008: 131). This stanza demonstrates the Buddhist idea that all living beings desire happiness (*sukhakāmāni bhūtāni*) and doing violence or force to them (*daṇḍena vihimsati*) is morally wrong. Seeking own happiness while causing suffering to others is not the way to attain true happiness in this life and the next life.

## 2. The Buddhist Concept of Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

The Pāli term *mettā* (Sanskrit: *maitrī*) is etymologically related to *mitta* (*mitra* in Sanskrit), meaning 'friend', and is therefore often translated as friendliness or loving-kindness (Sangharakshita, 2004: 11). *Visuddhimagga* explains the *metta* related to friendliness. It is said that *mettā* is derived from the notion of "fattening" or "nourishing" (*mejjati*), indicating a quality that enriches or nurtures the heart. Its essential meaning is "to soften" or "to be affectionate" (*siniyhati*), suggesting a tender and gentle mental state. Additionally, the term *mettā* is etymologically connected to *mitta* (friend), indicating either an attitude that arises toward a friend or conduct that resembles the treatment of a friend. Thus, *mettā* is understood as friendly and benevolent goodwill directed toward other (Ñānamoli, 2011: 311).

The Pāli term *mettā* encompasses a wide range of meanings, including loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, fellowship, harmony, peaceful coexistence, and nonviolence (Buddharakkhita, 2011: 5). *Mettā* is described as loving-kindness, the good will and amity, the wish to help all beings attain happiness and benefit (Payutto, 2007: 20). According to commentary, *mettā* is defined as strong wish for the welfare and happiness of others (*parahita-parasukha-karaṇa*) (Buddharakkhita, 2011: 5). In the *Visuddhimagga*, it is explained that *mettā* has its characteristic as promoting others' welfare. Its function is to generate a preference for the well-being of others. It becomes manifest through the absence of irritation or hostility. The proximate cause for the arising of *mettā* is the perception of lovable qualities in sentient beings. The cultivation of *mettā* is deemed successful when it leads to the diminishing of ill will, and it is considered unsuccessful when it gives rise to selfish attachment or possessive affection (Ñānamoli, 2011: 311).

In the *Mettā Sutta*, the Buddha explains the essence of love within the Buddhist tradition. He encourages practitioners to develop a heart of boundless lovingkindness for all beings, comparable to the unconditional love and self-sacrifice of a mother who would protect her only child even at the cost of her own life (*Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttamāyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe; evampi sabbabhūtesu mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam*) (Norman, 1992: 17). This boundless lovingkindness should be cultivated impartially to all beings, regardless of their state or form, whether weak (*tasā*) or strong (*thāvarā*), long (*dīghā*), large (*mahantā*), medium (*majjhimā*), short (*rassakā*), subtle (*aṇukā*), or gross (*thūlā*); whether they are visible (*diṭṭhā*) or invisible (*adiṭṭhā*), dwelling far away (*dūre vasanti*) or nearby (*avidūre*), already born (*bhūtā*) or yet to be born (*sambhavesī*). This lovingkindness is to be cultivated towards the entirety of existence (*sabbalokasmiṃ*), embracing all directions, above, below, and across (*uddham adho ca tiriyaṅca*), with a mind free from limitations (*asambādham*), hatred (*averam*), and hostility (*asapattā*) (Medhācitto, 2023: 180).

The Buddhist practice of *mettā*, or loving-kindness, offers a powerful ethical foundation for supporting animal rights. Buddhism teaches that lovingkindness should extend to all forms of life, not just to human beings. Practitioners are encouraged to cultivate loving-kindness (*mettā*) toward every living creature. The Buddha emphasized that it is morally unjustifiable to take the life of any being, as all sentient beings possess an inherent right to live. Just like

humans, animals experience fear and suffering; thus, causing them harm, taking their lives, or instilling fear in them is ethically wrong (Dhammananda, 2002: 240). From this perspective, causing harm to animals, whether through violence or exploitation stands in direct opposition to the spirit of *mettā*. If one truly wishes for the happiness of others, one should not support actions or systems that bring about their suffering.

### 3. The Buddhist Concept of Compassion (*Karuṇā*)

*Karuṇā* is compassion, the desire to help other people escape from sufferings. It is also the determination to free all beings, both human and animal, of their difficulties and miseries (Payutto, 2007: 20). Compassion (*karuṇā*) in Buddhism is more than just feeling sorry for someone. It is an active intention and action to eradicate the suffering of others. According to the commentary, compassion is described as the trembling of the heart when seeing others in suffering (*paradukkhe sati sādḥūnaṃ hadayakampanaṃ karotīti karuṇā*). It is called compassion because it combats, destroys, and expels the suffering of others (*kiṇāti vā paradukkhaṃ hiṃsati vināsetīti karuṇā*). Compassion is marked by its purpose to ease pain, its deep sensitivity to the suffering of others, and its visible expression through acts of kindness (*kiriyaṭi vā dukkḥitesu pharaṇavasena pasāriyaṭi karuṇā*) (Ñānamoli, 2011: 311).

When applied to animal rights, *karuṇā* provides a strong ethical foundation for protecting animals from harm. Buddhists are encouraged to view animals with compassion, recognizing the depth of their suffering (Stewart, 2014). Compassion (*karuṇā*) is a central virtue in Buddhist ethics, regarded as essential for progress along the spiritual path. In the Pāli Canon, the Buddha consistently urges his followers to cultivate an attitude of compassion not only for friends and strangers, but also for animals. This compassion fosters a sense of responsibility toward animals, encouraging protection of their rights to live free from suffering and fear. It is not only avoiding causing harm but actively working to prevent cruelty and alleviate suffering.

### Contemporary Buddhist Practices Supporting Animal Welfare

In recent decades, many Buddhist communities have actively engaged in practices that promote animal welfare, reflecting the foundational values of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *mettā* (lovingkindness) and *karuṇā* (compassion). Rooted in the Buddhist ethical principles, these movements reinterpret ancient values to address the suffering of animals in the modern world. As awareness grows around issues such as industrial farming, animal exploitation, and environmental degradation, many Buddhist practitioners have begun to adopt and promote practices that minimize harm to animals. The contemporary Buddhist practices in supporting animal welfare are as follows:

#### 1. Fang sheng

In modern day, many Buddhist people practice *fang sheng*, the ritual of releasing the animals (like fish or birds) to the nature. Animal release (*fang sheng*) is a term used by Chinese Buddhists to refer to the practice of purchasing animals that are due to be slaughtered and release them to the nature (Dhammika, 2019: 16). This practice was rooted from the Buddha's teaching of kindness and compassion to all beings. As discovered in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the Buddha once praised a monk who released an animal caught in a trap because he had acted out of compassion (*karunnena*). The practice of *fang sheng* reflects the compassionate action towards animal. The act of releasing animals through *fang sheng* symbolizes mercy and compassion, helping living beings to get freedom from suffering and death.

## 2. Building Animal Sanctuaries

In Sri Lanka and Thailand, some Buddhist monks and temples care for injured or abandoned animals such as dogs, cows, and birds. Establishing animal sanctuaries represents a practical expression of Buddhist compassion, offering long-term refuge and care for animals rescued from abuse, slaughter or neglect. These sanctuaries serve as living examples of *mettā* and *karuṇā*, where animals are treated not as commodities but as beings worthy of love, protection, and dignity.

## 3. Avoiding Meat out of Compassion

Avoiding meat is an expression of compassion, reflecting the intention not to harm sentient beings. This practice reflects an ethical awareness of the suffering involved in animal slaughter. Many Buddhists choose a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle because they do not want to contribute to the suffering and killing of animals. Although vegetarianism was not a strict obligation in early Buddhism (Medhacitto et al., 2025), choosing a vegetarian lifestyle supports the principle of compassion (*karuṇā*) and minimizes the exploitation of animals.

## 4. Avoiding Leather and Silk

To reduce animal suffering and exploitation, many Buddhists choose to refrain from using products made of leather, fur, or silk, choosing instead plant-based or synthetic materials. Although traditional Buddhist teachings may not explicitly prohibit the use of such materials, the modern understanding of animal rights and the widespread awareness of the suffering involved in their production have led many contemporary Buddhists to adopt more ethically sensitive lifestyles. Leather and fur industries, for example, often involve significant cruelty, including confinement, mutilation, and slaughter. Silk production traditionally involves boiling silkworms alive to extract the thread, a practice that causes unnecessary harm to sentient beings. In response to these realities, some Buddhist practitioners choose to avoid such products, instead embracing plant-based or synthetic alternatives that do not involve the suffering or killing of animals.

## 5. Replacing Animal Labor with Machine

Some contemporary Buddhist communities advocate for the replacement of animal labor with modern machinery. Instead of using animals like horses to pull carts, people today can use cars or other vehicles, which are more humane and do not cause suffering to animals. Instead of using animals like cows or buffaloes to work in the fields, farmers today can use tractors, which are more efficient and help prevent animal suffering. Choosing machines over animal labor is a way to practice compassion and kindness.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is understood that Buddhism offers a distinctive ethical view toward animals. According to Buddhist perspective, animals are not regarded as human resources or objects for human use. Buddhism rejects the notion that animals were created solely for the benefit of human beings. Just as human beings are born into their circumstances due to past kamma, so too are animals born as animals due to their own *kamma*. Just as human beings deserve happiness and freedom from suffering, animals too have the capacity to experience pain and joy. Buddhist ethics offer a profound foundation for supporting animal rights, rooted in core principles such as *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *mettā* (loving-kindness), and *karuṇā* (compassion). These ethical teachings guide the people to live in ways that minimize harm and foster care for all sentient beings, including animals. The principle of *ahiṃsā* or non-violence emphasizes abstaining from causing harm or killing any

living being, including animal. *Mettā* or lovingkindness, promotes the active cultivation of goodwill and the sincere wish for the happiness and well-being of all living beings. *Karuṇā* or compassion, encourages a compassionate action and active response to reduce the suffering of all living beings. Through these ethical principles, Buddhism provides a moral basis for advocating the respectful and humane treatment of animals. In the modern era, these values have inspired contemporary Buddhist movements to actively promote animal welfare, such as *fang sheng* (animal release), the establishment of animal sanctuaries, avoiding meat, refraining from using products made of leather, fur, or silk, and replacement of animal labor with modern machinery. In summary, Buddhist ethics encourage a compassionate and responsible relationship with animals.

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