

Article  
01

**Social Dialogue**  
Towards Building Unity and Coexistence

# MEAT

## CONSUMPTION



Published by:



ഹര്മോണി സെന്റർ  
Harmony Center  
നവ്വിഹാദം രാജ്യം

## FOREWARD

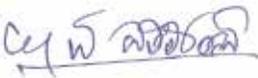
Sri Lanka is a multi ethnic and multi religious country. Differences of opinions prevailing among the communities living here, is unavoidable. Nevertheless, these differences should not become reasons for enmity or hatred among each other. When disputes and differences emerge, it is necessary to solve them through sociable discussions that would lead to mutual understanding.

I perceive this series of books, compiled to provide elucidations on subjects that emerge among communities time to time, as an important effort that we need to turn our attention to. I also see these books as a peaceful opening for meaningful dialogue among the members of our society to solve our issues among ourselves.

I highly appreciate the logical and realistic thoughts presented in these compilations. Obviously, this is a good start to create an attitude in order to protect our traditional relationships and brotherhood as well as to solve our differences as Sri Lankans while not succumbing to spontaneous impulses.

It is not ethical thinking that others too should hold the same opinion we hold. The very Constitution of the country too asserts that every person has the freedom of expression and thinking. Therefore, let us bring about consensus through dialogue. When it is not possible, we should act peacefully accepting the basic principle that others have to hold totally different views from ours. In any case, I believe that I do not have any difficulty whatsoever to agree that this effort indeed has provided a new approach to all of us. This compilation asserts that the best way of solving problems is peaceful dialogue.

***“The person who wins attracts hatred of others; and the defeated becomes miserable; however, the person who becomes contented forgetting win and loss, lives peacefully” - Dhammapadha***



Shashthrapathi Panditha Ven. Galagama Dhammarangsi Thero,  
Viharadhipathi,  
Sri Hathbodhiya Temple,  
Kirula Road - Colombo 05.

## INTRODUCTION

While preparing this series of books under the title ‘Social Dialogue Focused on Peace and Conciliation’ we mainly focused our attention to create cordiality and unity among all the communities living in Sri Lanka, which is adorned by diversity.

Establishing mutual understanding is necessary to move our country, which is enriched by various cultural, religious and ethnic heritages, towards the path of peace and conciliation. In the absence of this understanding, there are possibilities of developing negative feelings like suspicion, untrustworthiness and fear. No faith approves such situations in the society. Therefore, we felt that establishing social cohesion by creating platforms to encourage mutual perception is the need of the times. Hence, we perceived that every one of us should engage in an effort of familiarizing basics and customs of all the religions practiced in our country which we believe this is essential to strengthen conciliation.

It should be acknowledged that various misconceptions and erroneous understandings have come into being about Islam and Muslims. We also accept that we have not done enough to explicate the true situation of these allegations in order to eliminate negative beliefs that have come into being among other communities. However, we also think it is better to be late than never.

Since this is an effort to open the doors of dialogue, we highly appreciate your sincere views about the matters discussed in these booklets. As children of Mother Lanka, we should collectively contribute to prosper our country and join hands to solve our differences by dialogue without polarizing and confining ourselves to individual camps.

### **Compilation:**

Moulavi Murshid Mulaffar	Moulavi Numan Oumar
Moulavi Mahir Ramdeen	Br. Mohamed Dahlan
Moulavi Irshad Hilmy	Br. Ayas Salih

This publication is presented by the Unity Hub Division of the Council for Coordination & Cooperation Committee of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama.

Email: [info@acju.lk](mailto:info@acju.lk)  
Telephone: (+94) 117 490 490

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## Question:

**It is said that Islam is faith of compassion. If so, why does it permit killing animals for food? Is it reasonable to kill animals for one's pleasure?**

## Explanation:

### Animal Slaughter And Meat Consumption

Needless to say that it is Muslims who come into the mind when the subject of animal slaughter and meat consumption comes up. Therefore, we request you to look at this issue with an open and logical mind and a scientific approach and without prejudice, pre-conceived notions or traditional beliefs.

While consumption of meat is not a compulsory aspect in Islam, let us discuss the matters related to animal slaughter in Islam and in general.

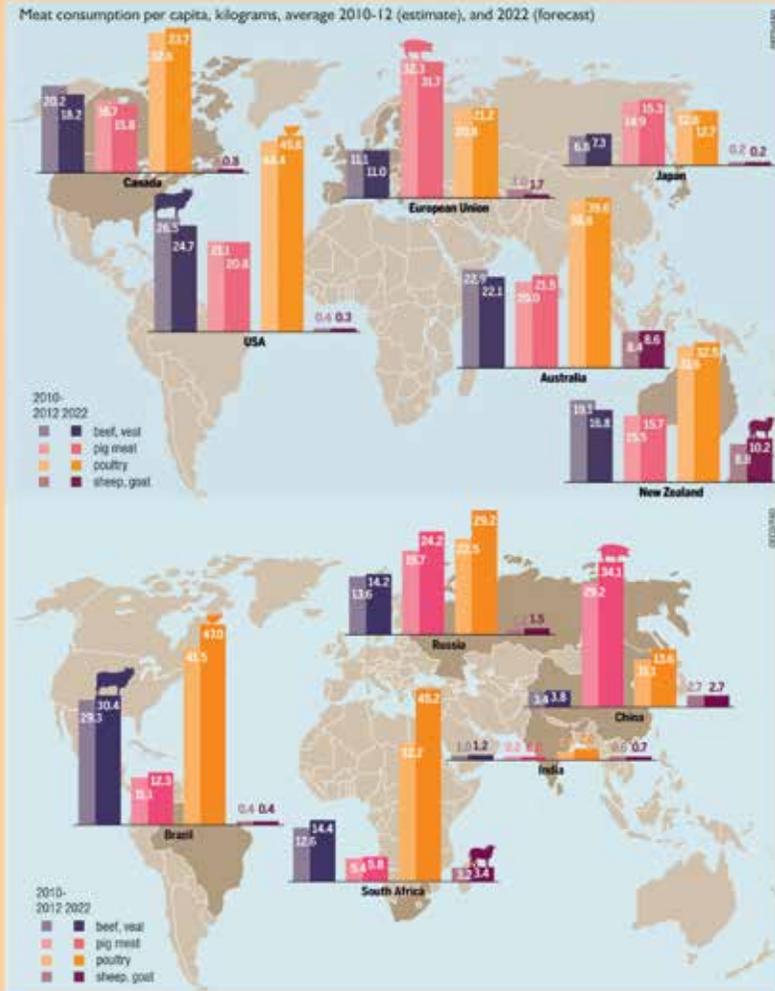
### Universal Effect

We consider commencing the discussion on this topic with a Universal overview as most appropriate. Firstly, let us observe if the 'consumption of vegetarian only' is a global reality.

According to the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO-UN), global per capita meat consumption was 43.1 kg in 2013 while fish consumption was 19.7 Kg.

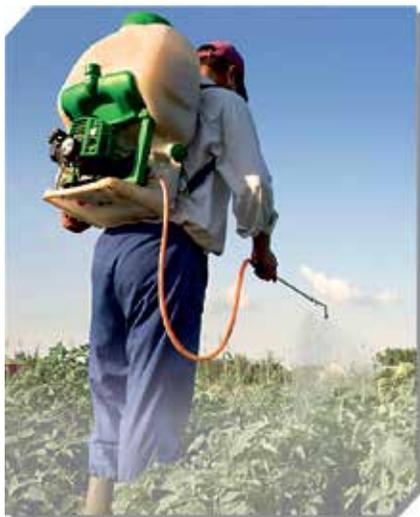
<b>Global Meat Consumption</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>7.181 x 43.1 = Billion 309.50 Kg</b>
<b>Global Fish Consumption</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>7.181 x 19.7 = Billion 141.47 Kg</b>

## 2012 - 2010



What do these figures tell us? We understand that replacing the above colossal meat consumption with agricultural products is quite impossible and that it would trigger a global food catastrophe. It is simply not practical to stop the consumption of meat. Let us understand this situation with hypothetical scenarios.

Let us imagine for a moment, that we have decided to stop animal slaughter altogether and are solely depending on agricultural produce. But is it really



practical to maintain agricultural plantations without causing any harm to other living beings? One may argue that in one's own home garden it is possible to grow some plants without the use of any pesticide or germicide of any sort. We know applying this practically on a large scale is impossible. It is almost quite mandatory, the usage of mega scale agricultural plantations. This necessarily involves the farmer identifying the pests which harm the plantation. Knowing that these pests are living organisms, the farmer decides to destroy them by various methods, in order to protect his plantation.

Now we understand that even a 'Vegetarian Only' concept, which we presume would not cause harm to any living being, in reality, does cause harm to living beings. That it is simply impossible to produce agricultural products without destroying pests through chemical means. How is it possible to deny this reality? This is the reality !

### Local Effect

Let us discuss the reality of animal slaughter within our own country, Sri Lanka.

### Local and social effects

There are about 350 government permitted slaughterhouses in Sri Lanka. The permits are issued for these places by local government authorities and are given to the highest bidder in a Tender procedure.

It is recorded that about 5000 cattle are slaughtered in these places daily except on full moon days and accordingly about 1,750,000 cattle are killed every year for their meat. Apart from this there are illicit cattle slaughters too and due to the covert nature of the activity it is impossible to get exact figures.

$$5000 \times 350 = 1,750,000$$

*'If these slaughters are abruptly stopped, as per the statistics, the total number of cattle would surpass the human population of this country under six years'*

If these slaughters are abruptly stopped, as per the statistics, the total number of cattle would surpass the human population of this country within six years. And the ensuing ecological imbalance would have disastrous effects on the local environment with 20 million humans and that many cattle simultaneously fighting for survival in this small island with neither eating the other. The abnormal

change in two important links (man and cattle) in the food-chain would trigger a catastrophe in this island and naturally, the global effect would be far greater in magnitude.

We hope that the logical arguments presented so far would have brought those holding opposite views to their senses.

Let us now peruse the data pertinent to meat consumption in Sri Lanka. Five thousand cattle slaughtered a day gives approximately 750,000 kilograms of meat daily at 150 kg per animal. **There are only 2 million Muslims in the country and it is impractical to argue that this colossal meat load is consumed by Muslims only.** And consumption of meat continuously or on a daily basis is not practical due to various reasons such as health, economy, preference etc and fish, dry fish, chicken too are eaten alternatively.



Armed forces too need meat in their staple for obvious reasons. Carnivorous and omnivorous animals that are caged in zoos and living in parks and man-made habitats depend on meat provided by humans. Do we have alternatives for these needs?

Another aspect that needs consideration is the dairy industry. Would it be economically viable if this sector is not allowed to sell off its meat? Can a poultry firm survive if the government allows only selling eggs and not chicken meat?

If we need to make our country self sufficient in our dairy needs, we will have to breed or import highly productive cows that would yield 20-25 liters of milk a day. Our paddy fields would provide a good portion of the needed fodder for these animals.

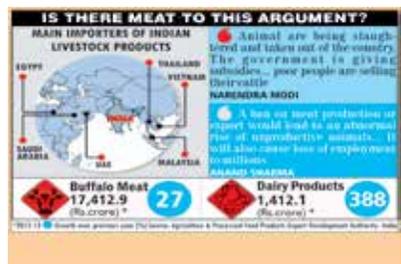


## Local Economic Effects

However, people would engage in such enterprises only if they are profitable. For example, Let us assume that a person wishes to start a dairy farm and buys 100 cows at the rate of Rs. 100,000 to 200,000. When they give birth to calves after about three years the investor would be able to obtain milk for sale. Yield would last for about 7 years. After this period the milk output from those cows would totally stop or the yield levels would come to so low a level that cannot economically justify maintaining them. The entrepreneur would be left with two options. Feeding the 100 cows until their death for several more years or selling them for meat and buy new cows and continue his operation profitably. There would be a demand for his non productive cows only if there is an ongoing meat business in the country.

**What is the logical thing you would do if you are this hypothetical dairy owner? Would you perceive demonstrating to close down the existing slaughterhouses a sensible and practical thing to do?**

India is a country where predominantly Hindus live and we honestly believe they are vegetarians. The dairy industry in India has become profitable thanks to meat eating communities. Overall banning cattle slaughtering would only result in damaging the national dairy industry.



Sri Lanka is a country that robustly tries to promote tourism, which would result in increase in foreign exchange, employment opportunities, and creating interests for foreign investments and various other factors which would



strengthen the economy of the country. Suppose if we advertise internationally that our 5 Star hotels and restaurants do not have meat but only boiled vegetables and grains what would be the effect in the present day competitive tourism industry? It is common knowledge that the main dishes of European, Arab, Far Eastern and American tourists are meat and sea food based. Would the government proceed to import a limited quantity of meat and fish needed for tourist hotels only? What would happen if a

fundamental human rights case is filed in the Supreme Court by a meat starved local citing this unfairness? What about the local dairy farmer? Wouldn't the above act of importing of meats, cause a crisis in the local dairy industry and at the same time help the International Dairy industries.

And what would happen to the animal fat industry? And where would this lead the local leather products industry that churns out footwear, bags, belts etc., and earns00 foreign exchange by exporting them to overseas countries where there is a great demand for our leather goods? Can we import leather from other countries as raw material? That is out of the question as leather is becoming a precious commodity since it is not a synthetic material.



## Individual Effects

### Health Issues

Our country has succumbed to various killer epidemics in the past. Malaria that swept our country in the 19th Century obliterated thousands of lives. Presently, Dengue and Elephantiasis have become formidable health threats. It is with great regret that we have to read the news, which reports the increasing number of deaths due to Dengue. This killer disease enters the human body through mosquitoes. There are many state-sponsored programs being conducted to destroy these dangerous mosquitoes. It is understood that if no measures are taken to destroy these creatures, the irrevocable consequences that would have to be faced. Are there any alternatives for this crisis?

**Did you  
think  
about this**



*Man is naturally an omnivorous being. He has four kinds of teeth called Incisors, Canines, Pre-Molars and Molars. God has given these different kinds of teeth enabling man to bite, tear, chew and grind meats. Even our digestive track is designed to absorb and process meat varieties. This indicates that the God ordained man to consume meat.*



When people get illnesses such as Pneumonia, Tuberculosis etc they are given antibiotics to fight the diseases. What these drugs really do is destroying millions of living organs in our system we generally call 'germs'. So, here again we kill a lesser being to save a supreme being; human. Can this be termed as 'in-human'? The Eskimos who live closer to the frozen North Pole where there is no vegetation depend solely on meat of deer, snow bear etc. What would be the situation of them if God has not given them a system that could digest meat?

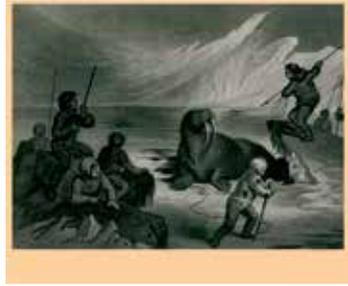
Bio-scientists are engaged in various researches and tests and they have succeeded in inventing and developing various drugs and treatments that save millions of human lives today. Most of the time, scientists need animals for their researches and they more often had to kill those animals in the course of their researches. If the notion 'slaughtering of Animals is a crime' was held, and if these tests were not carried out man would be still lagging in the stone-age in the medical field. They did so and continue to do so for the greater good of saving human lives and nobody opposes this as animal cruelty.

## **General Factors**

In Sri Lanka, those who denounce animal slaughter mainly talk about cattle, especially oxen. May be this is because oxen is entwined with the Lankan traditions due to various aspects. They are used for agricultural cultivation activities,



mode of travel and transportation and especially as a main source for milk and other various purposes. Drums, which is a part of national culture used in Temples, in funeral marches, in Perahera processions etc. are mostly dependent on cattle hide.

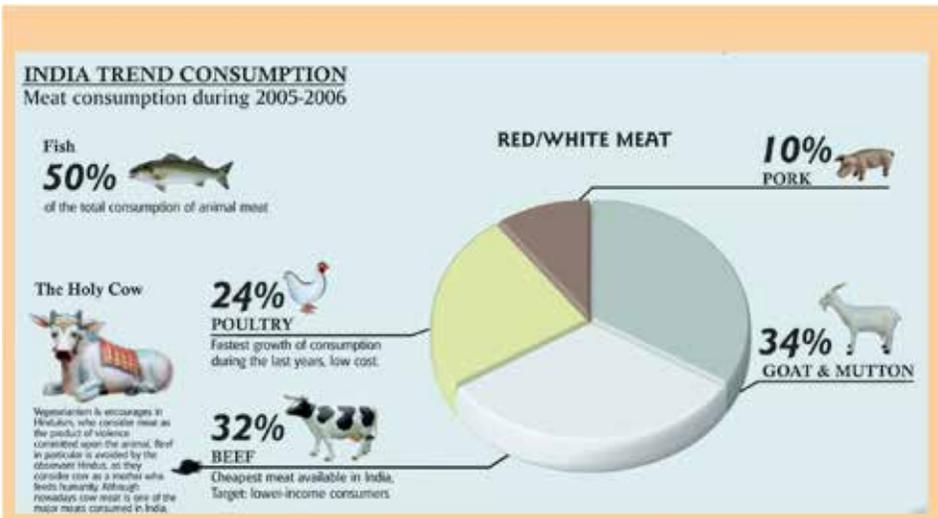


In the meantime, the factions that cry foul over killing of cattle are silent over the slaughter of other beings such as chicken or fish.

How ethical would it be request those people who live in deserts, where water is scarce, and those who live in areas where it snows 365 days a year, to refrain from consuming meat? What is their alternative?

## Religious Views

India is the country that has the largest Hindu population. Cow is considered sacred in Hinduism. However, this has not stopped slaughtering of cattle in many states of the country. Moreover, we would like to point out that no religion in the world except Jainism prohibits consumption of meat.



Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, and multi religious country. Therefore, there are customs and traditions exclusive to each community. For example, Muslims do not eat pork but there are many Christians and some Buddhists who do consume pork. In a multi religious society, do the Muslims have the moral right to oppose others eating pork citing that it is in conflict to the Islamic practices? Definitely not. In a multi ethnic and multi religious society, does anyone have the moral rights to enforce their own religious rites and customs onto other ethnicities?

The following is quoted from the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

### Chapter III – Fundamental Rights

10. Every person is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

14. (1) Every citizen is entitled to -

(e) the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching;

(f) the freedom by himself or in association with others to enjoy and promote his own culture and to use his own language;

(g) the freedom to engage by himself or in association with others in any lawful

### Animal Sacrifice

We all know that animal sacrifice did not commence in the Munneswaram Temple in Chilaw. During the era in which Buddhism initially originated, several other faiths existed in India led by Brahmanism. However, there is no mention any of the ancient books that the members of these beliefs clashed with each other over their dogmas. In fact, they have been mutually respecting each other and learning things from each other. Notably, animal sacrifice was widespread in a time Lord



Buddha was preaching non-violence and yet there had been no disputes among factions though they nurtured beliefs that were laid in two extremes. Lord Buddha while expressing disapproval over killing animals never provoked his disciples to fight against them nor did he urged to hold demonstrations against them. Simply put, Lord Buddha lived up to his preaching of promoting benevolence, non-violence and religious tolerance.

**BBC ‘extremism’ is defined as follows: Verbal and bodily actions against basic values such as democracy, rule of law, personal freedom, various faiths and devotions**

Those who attempt to define meat consumption or animal sacrifice as extremism better consider the above definitions along with the exemplary and detached attitude of Lord Buddha in this regard.

### Islamic Teachings

Although Islam permits meat consumption, it has laid out several strict rules pertaining to this matter. Islam severely warns against tormenting animals unnecessarily. Making animals fight for fun, hunting animals for thrill, confining them to cages or tying them up without properly feeding them, over loading them, beating them cruelly, keeping the calves away from parent cattle and even just sitting on them when not travelling all are shunned in Islam.

**Islam asserts that severing its jugular vein is the least painful method of killing animals and modern science too agrees with this notion. Further asserting the above prescription the Holy Qur’an prohibits consuming animals killed by strangulation, beating, falling or stabbing** (Surah 5:Verse 3).

Muslims are only allowed to consume the meat of selected animals and slaughtered according to the Islamic method.

As per the Verse of the Holy Quran mentioned above, one understands that all other methods of killing, results in animal cruelty. Laws prevailing in our country in this 21st century, and the guidelines ordained by Islam 14 centuries ago, is very similar to each other.

## Hajj Festival & Islamic Practices

Slaughtering a cattle and the meat being given as alms to the needy, the poor, neighbors & relatives during period 10th to the 13th day of the 12th month of the Islamic Calendar is known as 'Ulhiyya'.

*As mentioned previously, comparing the number of cattle slaughtered daily which is about 5000 and the cattle slaughtered for Ulhiyya (during this four day period) is quite negligible.*

As mentioned previously, comparing the number of cattle slaughtered daily which is about 5000 and the cattle slaughtered for Ulhiyya (during this four day period) is quite negligible.

We consider that the problems in the economic, social, and health aspects, in relation to the requesting a ban on killing of animals and consumption of meat, being discussed and solved prior to the discussion of the religious aspect, as the 'Middle way'.

Religious freedom is an essential component in a democracy and especially in a multi religious society. Criticizing a matter without considering the global aspects and universal realities of it would only lead to enmity and it would only harm the affability we have so nurtured for centuries and it is not going to serve any useful purpose at all.



Therefore, we should join hands to rebuild our country as equal children of Mother Lanka with determination in a time when she needs us the most.

It is fervent hope creating a social environment where every Lankan can coexist with brotherhood, peace and unity through this series of compilations called 'Social Dialog' that are based on building mutual understanding. We cordially invite you to join hand with us to attain this noble objective.

## Social Dialogue

### Article No. 01 Meat Consumption

Article No. 02 Muslim Population Phobia

Article No. 03 Extraordinary Increase of Mosques

Article No. 04 Islamization of Asian Buddhist Countries

Article No. 05 Reality of Jihad and Islamic Terrorism

Article No. 06 Islamic Dress Code



### All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU)

No 281, Jayantha Weerasekara Mawatha, Colombo 10.

Telephone: +94 117 490 490, Fax: +94 112 435 859

Email: [info@acju.lk](mailto:info@acju.lk), Website: [www.acju.lk](http://www.acju.lk)

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