

Review

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Review

# Rediscovering Our Natural Diet: The Cow Path to Humanity

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## Abstract

In an age when food choices affect health, society, and the environment, people still debate whether humans are naturally and biologically meat-eaters or plant-eaters. This review examines the Burmese book translated as *Dog Path versus Cow Path*, written by Monk Ukkaṭṭha (1897–1978). The author explores this dilemma by comparing dogs (carnivores) and cows (herbivores). He argues that humans are naturally plant-eaters. The book also links diet to ethical qualities such as compassion, kindness, and non-violence. Moreover, Monk Ukkaṭṭha claims that a vegetarian diet supports both personal health benefit and societal wellbeing. The book links diet with ethical qualities such as compassion, kindness, and non-violence, and contends that a vegetarian diet supports both personal health and societal well-being. This review summarizes the book for international readers interested in ethical living and the biological foundations of human diet.

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## 1. Introduction

Human diet is a subject of ongoing debate. Food choices affect our body, mind, and society. They influence health, culture, ethics, and the environment. Today, debates about diet are more prominent in science and philosophy. Nutritionists discuss whether meat is necessary for growth. Philosophers and religious leaders consider the ethics of killing animals. Environmentalists highlight the ecological impact of meat consumption. Scholars and ethicists concern if humans are naturally meat-eaters or plant-eaters. This question is not only biological but also ethical and spiritual.

The Burmese book directly translated into "*Dog Path versus Cow Path*" by Monk Ukkaṭṭha (1897–1978) addresses this dilemma. The author compares humans with dogs, representing carnivores, and cows, representing herbivores. He studies differences including teeth, digestion, body structure, and behavior. He observes that humans share more traits with herbivores than with carnivores. He also links diet to moral and social life. He argues that vegetarianism supports virtues such as compassion, kindness, and non-violence. For him, eating meat harms health, increases disease, and contradicts ethical living. Eating plants, in contrast, supports health, and social harmony.

The book has two main parts. The first part presents a biological comparison of dogs, cows, and humans. The second part discusses moral and spiritual aspects of diet. The central question is simple: if humans were designed to eat meat, our bodies would resemble carnivores. If not, our bodies would resemble herbivores.

This review aims to present the inclusive summary of Monk Ukkaṭṭha's arguments to an international audience. The review also evaluates the book's implication in current debates on diet, ethics, and sustainable living.

## 2. Book Summary

In this book, the author compares the anatomy, physiology, and behavior of dogs and cows. Humans, he argues, share more traits with cows than with dogs. First, dogs, representing meat-eating

animals, drink and vocalize in ways similar to cats, tigers, and other carnivores. Moreover, most meat-eating animals do not sweat. By contrast, human beings require sweating and physical exercise to maintain fitness and health. Second, like dogs, many carnivores possess sharp claws used for hunting. Cows and elephants also have hooves, but these are not primarily used as weapons. Humans, however, lack such natural weapons. Third, plant-eating animals require saliva to digest and swallow food effectively. Dogs and other carnivores, by contrast, require little saliva and often bite and swallow food directly. Cows resemble humans in this respect, as both rely on saliva to break down food before swallowing. Another difference lies in dentition. Carnivores such as dogs have sharp canines, whereas humans, like cows, possess flat molars. Furthermore, the author suggests that surgeons examine the colon (large intestine). He notes that meat-eating animals typically have a short colon, unlike humans. He also observes that meats such as beef, fish, frog, and prawn decompose quickly. Moreover, carnivores possess a smooth colon, allowing rapid excretion, whereas humans and cows possess a longer colon suited to plant-based diets. The book also raises the issue of disease. It suggests that the scientific evidence should examine whether meat consumption contributes to disease. According to the author, many common diseases arise from eating meat. He additionally proposes that the bodily odor varies between those who consume meat and those who eat only plants. Strength, both physical and mental, is another key distinction. The author asserts that plant-eating animals are generally stronger than meat-eating ones. The author notes that engines are often measured in “horsepower,” not “tiger power. The comparison extends to early development. Carnivores such as dogs, cats, tigers, and lions are born blind, only opening their eyes a week or more after birth. By contrast, herbivores such as cows are able to see immediately upon birth. Furthermore, carnivores are physically weak at birth, whereas cows open their eyes and move soon after. Finally, the author perceives that carnivores must often eat substances that induce vomiting in order to eliminate toxins derived from meat, even in the absence of illness. In contrast, humans do not require such practices. Correspondingly, meat-eating animals tend to have unhealthy and short lives while plant-eating species including humans can live longer and healthier lives. In Table 1, we summarize these differences for readers.

**Table 1.** The comparative evidence of differences: Dog vs. Cow vs. Human.

Trait	Dog (Carnivore)	Cow (Herbivore)	Human
Drinking	Laps with tongue	Sucks with lips	Sucks with lips
Sweating	No sweating	Mostly sweats	Mostly sweats
Biological weapon	Sharp claws	Hooves	Nails
Saliva	Acidic	Alkaline	Alkaline
Teeth	Sharp canines	Flat molars	Flat molars
Colon	Short	Long	Long
Strength	Weak	Strong	Strong
Eyes	Blind at birth	Open at birth	Open at birth
Vomiting	Required to remove toxins	None	None

Notes: It is clear that humans match herbivore traits far more closely than carnivores.

In addition, Monk Ukkaṭṭha makes five claims in his book: (i) dead meat is not natural food for humans to consume it, (ii) meat is unnecessary for nutrition as plants provide all essential nutrients, (iii) meat contributes to disease and chronic illness while vegetables are safer and easier to digest, (iv) meat consumption harms moral virtues including loving-kindness, compassion and empathetic joy and equanimity (*Brahmavihāra in Pali*), and (v) if humans abandoned meat, the society could attain the collective peace (*loka-nibbāna in Pali*). In summary, the author strains that diet is not merely a biological or nutritional concern but also a profound moral choice. He eventually concludes that the widespread adoption of vegetarianism could promote social harmony and get global peace.

### 3. Critical Analysis

The strength of this book lies in its multidimensional and logical argument. Monk Ukkatṭha does not limit his reasoning to health or morality alone; instead, he synthesizes biological, ethical, and spiritual perspectives into a unified case for vegetarianism. His work is unique because it connects traditional Buddhist ethics with comparative anatomy highlighting issues like veganism, sustainability and compassion. This approach shows foresights by placing human diet within both personal benefit and social responsibility.

The relevance of Ukkatṭha's reasoning go beyond Myanmar. Today, society faces problems in public health, the environment and animal rights. From a health standpoint, plant-based diets reduce the risk of chronic diseases. From an environmental standpoint, eating less meat lowers carbon emissions and saves resources. From an ethical standpoint, avoiding meat supports compassion and non-violence toward all living beings.

What makes the book especially distinctive is its spiritual perspective. Modern debates often focus on science or policy, but Monk Ukkatṭha shows that food choice can transform the mind and society. He argues that what we eat shapes our bodies, our moral habits, our behavior, and our communities. In this way, choosing a vegetarian diet can lead toward *loka-nibbāna*, or collective peace, connecting daily actions with positive values. This idea makes the book useful for both Buddhist readers and materialistic readers who are interested in ethical living. His reasoning also encourages sustainable consumption and shows how human diet can promote social harmony.

In sum, this book provides both intellectual insight and practical guidance. Monk Ukkatṭha shows that human diet is not just a matter of biological nutrition but also a moral and spiritual choice that affects both individual and collective well-being. By combining biology, ethics, and spirituality, he presents a framework that is rational, ethical, and transformative, giving the text lasting scholarly and practical value.

### 4. Conclusion

Monk Ukkatṭha's *Dog Path versus Cow Path* presents a clear and compelling argument that humans are naturally plant-eaters. Through detailed comparisons of anatomy, digestion, and behavior, he shows that human traits resemble herbivores more than carnivores. Beyond biology, he links diet to moral and spiritual life, emphasizing that vegetarianism aligns with virtues such as compassion, kindness, and non-violence.

The book is relevant to a global audience: health-conscious individuals exploring plant-based diets, Buddhists and spiritual practitioners seeking compassionate practice, environmentalists concerned about meat production, educators teaching comparative anatomy or ethical diets, and anyone questioning the normalization of meat consumption.

He also highlights both moral and health consequences of meat-eating, blending scientific observation with Buddhist ethical reasoning. His work demonstrates that understanding human nature begins with what we eat. In sum, *Dog Path versus Cow Path* provides intellectual insight and practical guidance. It frames diet as a rational, ethical, and transformative practice, remaining relevant for scholars and general readers interested in the moral, health, and societal dimensions of human food choices.

**Conflicts of Interest:** No potential conflicts of interest to declare regarding this work.

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