

## MARRIAGE INSTITUTION: A BUDDHIST SOCIAL ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Panyazawta**

*Ph. D. Research Scholar, Samrat Ashok Subharti School of Buddhist Studies,  
Swami Vivekanand Subhati University, Subhartipuram, NH-58, Delhi Haridwar Meerut  
Byypass Road, Merut-250005, India ashinpannajota.saviour@gmail.com*



*Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)*

Marriage is a partnership in which two individuals of opposite sexes but equal worth as human being chose to live together. A happy and lasting marriage requires a lot of hard work and commitment where love is fed with shared experiences, joys and sorrows. Marriage is the culmination of love by two individuals committed to one another by a common bond.

Marriage has failed to fulfill its purposes today because people have failed to recognize the importance of equality and respect for women. These privileges are enjoyed by many women in a large number of areas of human activity. Strangely when it comes to marriage, women are still treated badly. The importance of the role of women in society was undoubtedly widened after the advent of Buddhism in India, giving them a wide scope to venture into vocations besides house-keeping. In spite of this, for the vast majority, to get married and rear children remained the normal choice of career. But there was a difference; married life was ennobled by the noble position given to it by the Buddha himself to such an undertaking. He lifted the married woman from a state of servant to a state of responsibility and importance. As an indication of the Buddha's concern for maintenance of happiness through marriage, he laid down specific instructions for the guidance of husband and wife.

The Buddha was full of praise for happy couples. Among his lay disciples were Nakulamata and Nakulapita who were considered most eminent for having lived together harmoniously for a long time. The Buddha praised them and gave instructions to others as to how they too could live happily in marriage. These instructions given over two thousand five hundred years ago hold good even to this day. Much misery, problems has been experienced in today by men and women in married life because they deviated from these instructions.

The instruction of marriage in ancient India was governed by the concept of caste, the position of women, the rights of men and the four stages of the individual's life. The

Buddha's rejection of the concept of the caste system meant that the Buddhist institution of marriage was emancipated from these rigid and inflexible rules, regulations and rituals which had become a great obstacle to the free and unprejudiced behavior of the members of society, both male and female.

The discourse on Fundamentals of Buddhist social Ethics, (*sigalovadasutta*) generally lays down the basic pattern of relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and enumerates the reciprocal duties that bind them together emphasizing the most essential aspects of their common life.

The comprehensive study of the Buddhist institution of marriage outlined in the Buddha's teaching clearly shows that were intended for the enjoyment, promotion and moralization of biological needs, psychological satisfaction and material well-being of both husband and wife without any reference to specific customs, sacraments or any kind of ideology, religious or otherwise.

According to the Buddha, cultural compatibility between husband and wife was considered as one of the factors of a successful married life. Many of today's problems in marriage arise from the inability of the parties concerned to recognize the sacrifices involved. Marriage is not simply lust and romance. Romance is not a bad thing in itself, but it is emotional and has limitations.

There will be fewer disillusion and heartache in marriage if we understand that, from the illusions of romance, a deep and abiding love may emerge. Love is a passionate and abiding desire, on the part of two people, to produce together conditions under which each can express his or her real self and to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish, for superior to what either could achieve alone.

To achieve a successful marriage, couples also need to understand and accept the differences between the two genders. Couples sometimes become frustrated with each other and wish that their partner was more like them. Knowing and being able to tolerate the differences between men and women helps a lot in marriage.

A mate who is willing to weather the hard times and make the adjustments that come with children, job changes, financial difficulties or simply learning more about the person one is married to is the real secret to a successful marriage. Another saying on married life: 'wife becomes a mistress to a young man, a companion to the middle aged and a nurse to an old man.'

Many couples with children are determined to stay together at least until their children are grown up. With just a little effort these years can be among the most fulfilling times in a marriage.

Marriage is a blessing but many people turn their marred lives into misery and a curse. Poverty is not the main cause of an unhappy married life. Both husband and wife must learn to share the pleasure and pain of everything in their daily lives. Mutual understanding is the secret of a happy family life. In a true marriage, man and woman think more of the partnership than they do of themselves individually. Marriage is a bicycle made for two. A feeling security and contentment comes from mutual efforts.

A wife is not her husband's servant. She deserves respect as an equal. Though a man is generally regarded even today as being the bread winner helping out with household chores don demean his masculinity. At the same time, a nagging and grumpy wife is not going to make up for shortage in the home. Neither will her suspicion of her husband help to make a happy marriage. If her husband has shortcomings, only tolerance and kind words will get him to see light. It is important in marriage to keep tolerance alive throughout. Little things can mean a lot. Right understanding and moral conduct are the practical sides of wisdom.

Besides , the key to a harmonious marriage is to work towards achieving one's objective it is a law of nature that if no effort is put into, for instance, a garden, weeds will grow instead of beautiful flowers. The same goes for marriage. Faith, not necessarily in the religious sense, (though it helps tremendously if a couple shares similar religious beliefs) is another vital ingredient in a lasting relationship.

How important is sex in a marriage? Sex is a natural instinct and if enjoyed within its proper boundaries can bring about great happiness. Sex helps to keep a marriage glowing, and is an important and vital area that keeps a marriage together. It creates intimacy, a shared experience between two people which no one else is party to. It makes the relationship precious and private. Sex is much more than the gratification of an appetite. It is the basis of an intimate lifelong companionship and the means of bringing into the world children whom we love and cherish as long as we live. Through the ages we have learned that love and mutual respect must be the basis of cause intimacy between the sexes. Sex, like any other tendency in man, must be regulated by reason. Man, not being governed by instincts like lesser animals, would find his tendencies running wild were he not to regulate them with reason. There is a saying: 'Like fire, sex is a good servant but a bad master.' A society grows

*Copyright © 2020, Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*

through a network of relationships which are mutually intertwined and inter dependent. Every relationship is wholehearted commitment to support and to protect others in a group or community.

Marriage plays a very important part in this strong web of relationship of giving support and protection. A good marriage should grow and develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence.

With regard to the relationship between husband and wife, the Buddha taught that there are five duties of a husband. They are as follows:

1. The husband must be honor and due respect to his wife;
2. The husband should not disparage and look down upon his wife;
3. The husband should be faithful to his wife;
4. The husband should give authority and share household affair to his wife; and
5. The husband should provide his wife with adornments.

In addition, concerning with relationship between husband and wife, the Buddha declared that there are five duties of a wife. They are as follows:

1. The wife should perform household duties to the best of her ability;
2. The wife should be kind to the servants, relatives, and friends of her husband;
3. The wife should be faithful to her husband;
4. The wife should protect the stores her husband earns, and
5. The wife should be skillful and diligent in her duties.

The husband is the acknowledged head of the family, unless he is incapacitated from performing his duties as such. Both in common law and under modern legislation, the husband is legally bound to support his wife and family, notwithstanding the fact that the wife has her own property or income or is capable of earning her own support.

Even today where many wives work, the nurturing of a family should be a shared experience. Husbands have no reason to shirk household duties, to help the wife and train the children, especially when there are no servants to do such work.

Apart from these emotional and sensual aspects, the couple will have to take care of day-to-day living conditions, family budget and social obligations. Thus, mutual consultations between husband and wife on all family problems would help to create an atmosphere of trust and understanding in resolving whatever issues that may arise.

The institution of marriage provides a fine basis for the development of culture, a delightful association of two individuals to be nurtured, and to be free from loneliness, deprivation and fear. In marriage, each partner develops a complementary role, giving strength and moral courage to each other, with each manifesting a supportive and appreciative recognition to the other's skills. There must be no thought of man or woman being superior- each is complementary to the other, a partnership of equality, exuding gentleness, generosity, calm and dedication and most important of all, self-sacrifice.

**Reference:**

*Pathamajivisutta of Anguttaranikaya, (A.II) p.62*

*Sigalovadasutta of Dighanikaya, (D.III) p.942*

*Dhammananda, K Sri. Human life and problems. 1<sup>st</sup>Ed, Buddhist Missionary society, Malaysia, 1997.p.35*