

Women's Role according to Buddhist

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Abstract - Issues related to women's rights have been heavily debated in recent times. All cultures, but the West in particular, have rethought women's conventional roles. Because of this, women's involvement in the workforce, government, and society as a whole has increased dramatically. The reevaluation includes a discussion of the place of women in the world's main religions. Among Christian countries, the question of whether or not women should be ordained as clergy has become more controversial and perhaps potentially schismatic. That being the case, this is an appropriate moment to reflect on Buddhism's treatment of women. There are a number of possible readings of the Buddhist perspective on women's role in society. By comparing the position of women in religious and secular life in India before and after the advent of Buddhism, we may gauge the extent to which the Buddha's teachings prompted a radical shift in social norms.

Keywords - Buddhism, women, society, religions.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a lot of discussion over women's rights in recent years. The traditional role of women has been reevaluated in all countries, but especially in the West. This has led to a dramatic shift in women's participation in economic, political, and social spheres. The subject of women's status in the world's major faiths has come up in this reevaluation. The matter of whether or not women should be ordained as clergy has grown divisive and possibly potentially schismatic in Christian nations. Because this is the case, it's a good time to think about how Buddhism treats women.[1]

For this purpose, contemplation of Sanghamittâ Day is a highly recommended activity. While the full moon of the Sinhala month of Unduwap occurs between the months of November-December on the Western calendar, this day has special significance for Sri Lanka's Buddhists. This day commemorates the journey of Bhikkhuni Sanghamittâ, said to be the daughter of the ancient Indian Monarch Asoka, to Sri Lanka. Two priceless items were presented by Sanghamittâ. The first was the founding of the Bhikkhuni Order in Sri Lanka, which complemented the efforts of her brother Mahinda Thera, who is widely regarded as the person responsible for bringing Buddhism to Sri Lanka and who is also credited with introducing the Order of Bhikkhus. Sanghamittâ's second precious gift was a seedling from the Bodhi

tree, under which the Buddha had obtained enlightenment. [2]

It's funny how the Bhikkhuni Order, which has vanished from Sri Lanka, the Bodhi tree continues to thrive there. The fact that many Buddhists choose to care for and venerate inanimate objects rather than other people should serve as a warning sign about the difficulties of maintaining a Buddhist organization that relies on high-quality human effort.[3]

The Buddhist view on women's place in society may be interpreted in several ways. It is possible to assess the degree to which the Buddha's teachings led to a profound shift in society by looking at how the status of women in religious and secular life in India changed before and after the spread of Buddhism. It will be interesting to observe whether, like many other religions, the Buddha's teaching gives women a distinct status than males. One possible line of inquiry is whether or not a person's predetermined gender influences how far down the Buddha's road they get to stay. Women's roles in Buddhism's early history, especially during the Buddha's lifetime, may be illuminating on their current status in the religion. Given the degree of confusion on this subject, it is important to revisit the history of the Bhikkhuni Order and its founding. It is possible to draw attention to the impact Buddhism has had on the status of women in nations where it

has become an active religion. The important events surrounding Sanghamittā's mission in Sri Lanka should be noted in this context. Before now, it has been impossible to compare the treatment of women in Buddhism to that of the other major global religions.[4]

WOMEN'S ROLE IN PRE-BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Buddhism developed within a cultural framework that placed women at a disadvantage. In this aspect, Indian culture was not drastically different from that of other locations, and its treatment of women may have been more liberal in other ways. Brahmanism is the term used to describe the religion practiced in India at the time of the Buddha, in contrast to Hinduism, whose classical form emerged after the death of the Buddha.[5]

Women's roles in Hinduism are well-known to be restricted. The Manu-smirithi, often known as the "Laws of Manu," is one of the most well-known of the classical Hindu Dharmashāstras, from which one could draw some insight into this perspective. The roles of women are outlined as follows in this text. Nothing, not even in her own home, is to be done without the help of a man, and this is true for a girl, a young lady, or an old woman. A woman's place in society is subservient to male figures at all times: to her father as a child, to her husband as a young lady, and to her sons after her lord's death.

Women weren't allowed to participate in religious rituals, and they weren't even supposed to read the Vedas. Historians are trying to figure out to what extent these regulations applied during Buddha's lifetime. While Hindus believe that Manu's rules came directly from God, it's more likely that they were codified decades after Buddha's death, when Hinduism had already hardened into its modern form. While the Brahmanical religion of the Buddha's day was somewhat better, women were still not given full spiritual equality. In the Vedic-Upanishadic philosophy that was prevalent throughout the time of the Buddha, the male-principle (purusha) was considered primal, and thus served as reason for the widespread exclusion of women from social and spiritual life.[6]

The Buddha's teaching was meant to be universal, one that benefitted all people regardless of their background, gender, or sexual orientation, in direct opposition to the prevalent view that spiritual attainment was reserved for men. The Buddha is sometimes referred to as the "teacher of gods and mankind," or "sattādevamanussanam." Instead of the general word manussa, the term "purisa" would have

been used in this classic depiction if the Buddha had been seen as a teacher of men, as opposed to women. The Buddha's message is sometimes described to more generically as one that may bring all beings (sattā) to freedom, regardless of the realm in which they resided or the shape they took. On the other hand, "Purisadammasārathi," which translates to "charioteer of mankind to be tamed," is another of the famous descriptions of the Buddha. This might be seen as sexist by some, but it most likely means what it says, namely that males are more likely to engage in violent acts and hence need more "taming" than women. [7]

BUDDHISM AND THE FEMININE PATH

Buddhism does not have any overtly gendered teachings or practices. While the Buddha was a man in the past, his humanity has no place in the central teachings of Buddhism. The Buddha uncovered a global rule that before even the first Buddhas, and it may be uncovered by anybody, male or female, if they just follow the Buddha's teachings. There is little basis in the Buddha's teachings for the cult of the Buddha's person, worship of relics, conduct of the "Buddha pūjās," and the like that are practices common in both the Theravada and Mahayana schools.[8]

Thereafter, scholars have pondered the possibility that a woman may attain the status of Buddha or Bodhisattva. The Mahayanists have chosen a positive stance (such as the worship of Kwan Yin as a Bodhisattva who hears the cries of the suffering), whereas the Theravadan stance is murkier. It has been argued that all Buddhas must be men, while others have taken a more nuanced stance on the matter. This is another one of those pointless queries (avyākata) that the Buddha did not answer since it had nothing to do with the topic of liberation from samsāra. Notwithstanding what certain Jātakas may indicate, there can be only one Buddha in any given Buddha-period, and the current era happened to have been founded by a man, SiddhattaGotama, whether by necessity or chance.

While the male and female identities are determined at birth, this is only valid for a given birth. According to Buddhist teachings on rebirth, it is possible to undergo a series of transgender transformations. Thus, there is just one karmic stream, regardless of gender, according to samsara. Since that the anattā theory guarantees that there is no enduring personal identity throughout the samsaric stream, this should come as no surprise. This is one another justification

for the Dhamma's general disregard for individuals' sexual orientations.[9]

Regrettably, a competing perspective has acquired some traction in Buddhist nations, mostly because to the impact of the Jataka tales. Men are typically males and women are typically women in these narratives. These tales, which were added to the Buddhist canon later on for the benefit of the masses, don't quite appear to jive with anattā, the central tenet of the religion, as we now understand it. In the Theravada tradition, only the storyless stanzas of the Jatakas are authoritative. Another common misconception in many Buddhist nations is that males who have committed acts of "unskillfulness" will be reincarnated as females, while the converse is true for those who have committed acts of "skillfulness." Neither logic nor established fact appear to support this view. Moreover, for people who have not attained enlightenment, the workings of the rule of kamma are among the unfathomable mysteries. The Buddha never addressed the question of what causes a person to be born male or female. As a result, the Buddha-dhamma does not support the common view on this.[10]

BUDDHISM'S VIEWS ON WOMEN IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The Buddha's teaching was mainly concerned with individual spiritual liberation, which has to be kept in mind while thinking about the place women are given in everyday society. Whilst this liberation would be seen in people's actions in the world, the Buddha had no interest in building and maintaining a specific global order, as any real government put in place would be, in a Buddhist sense, unsatisfying. Buddhism is unique in that it does not attempt to regulate personal or public life via its doctrines.[11]

Hence, unlike other religions, Buddhism does not see marriage as a sacrament. The Buddhist view is that these things must be governed by a social, political, or legal system. Any such agreements need merely avoid direct contradiction with the Dharma. It's possible to have a wide variety of social and familial structures that are consistent with the Dhamma. Divorce, passing on assets, etc. are all governed by societal processes, and people have a lot of leeway in these arrangements. Christian missionaries visiting Buddhist nations were astonished to learn that spouses had wide latitude in subjects such as marriage, divorce, property ownership, personal political or religious opinions, etc.[12]

However the Buddha did express ideas and advocate actions which he felt to be consistent with the

Dhamma in his talks to the lay person. At other occasions, the Buddha's beliefs ran counter to the norms of his day.

Hence, for example, the Buddha had a different perspective than a culture that valued male offspring above female ones. While he shared many of the beliefs of the Brahmanical faith, King Pasenadi of Kosala was unhappy when his wife, Queen Mallika, gave birth to a girl instead of a son. The Buddha consoled him, telling him, "A woman-child, O Lord of mankind, may prove to be a better progeny than a male" The feeling conveyed is real and consistent with the rest of the Buddha's teaching, yet it might be seen as a diplomatic answer to keep the King from becoming hostile toward his Buddhist queen.[13]

The Sigalovada Sutta is one of the few talks delivered to laypeople that focuses on material concerns. Several secular topics' best practices have been extracted from this Sutta. It's the incorrect angle to look at the issue from. The Buddha was not establishing a domestic legal framework in this Sutta, but rather teaching the Brahmin Sigala on the fundamentals. Just the woman's responsibilities for her husband and the husband's toward his wife are pertinent here. The Buddha provides guidance in this area that may be seen as both common sense and profoundly rational. They're following the norms of the current era. The Buddha stresses the need of reciprocity, hence the specifics are unimportant. Hence, just as the woman has some responsibilities towards the husband, the husband also has certain responsibilities towards the wife. What distinguishes Buddha's view of women's roles in the home is his insistence that husbands and wives share the same load of responsibilities and duties. In this Sutta, the Buddha lists characteristics of women that make them a more desirable marriage partner than males. These characteristics include attractiveness, money, family connections, offspring, and virtue. Even though the Buddha advocates monogamy in the Sigalovada Sutta, several of the royal supporters of the Buddha engaged in polygamy by maintaining vast harems. The Buddha avoided giving his opinion on this since it was a question of societal norms.[14]

A contemporary proponent of "women's emancipation" may find fault with various allusions to women's roles in the Pali Canon. Therefore, the Dhaniya Sutta of the Sutta Nipata commends women who obey their husbands. Moreover, the Vinaya and Sutta Pitaka both have lists of different types of spouses, with the latter often implying that the former is preferable because of their submissive nature. Remember, however, that these views are

not binding and may conflict with other claims. It is to be anticipated that a collection as massive as the Pali Canon would have some small inconsistencies.

ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY BUDDHISM

When the Bhikkhuni Order was established, many influential women from many social strata joined, drawn by the strength of the Buddha's message and the independence the Order provided. A large number of these Bhikkhunis reached the pinnacle of happiness, becoming enlightened. The Therigâtha, which is part of the KhuddakaNikaya of the Sutta Pitaka, is a collection of lyrics said by these Theris when they beheld the pure light of the Dhamma and contains anecdotes, sayings, and acts of these illustrious Bhikkhunis.[15]

Famous figures from early Buddhism's Udâna are documented in the Therigâthâ. Uppalavannâ and Khema are often referred to as the "foremost of the Bhikkhunis," while Kisâgotami and Patacâra are prominent figures in the most well-known legends from early Buddhism. Those who joined the organization came from many areas of life. Some, like Ambapâli and Vimala, were former courtesans, while others, like Sumeda and Sela, were from royal bloodlines. Dhammadinnâ was one of these illustrious exponents of the Dhamma; others included the heirs of aristocratic or commercial houses like BhaddaKundalkesa, Sujâta, and Anopama; some still came from more modest backgrounds, such as Punnika the slave girl or Chanda, the daughter of a poor Brahmin. It is unknown how many Theris are participating. There are supposedly 500 people who followed Patacâra personally, and numerous unidentified Thens to whose sayings are ascribed.

Human beings and females have always complemented one another. It is impossible for man to survive apart from woman, and without her, the whole global system would collapse. The Rgveda states that women had full equality in all spheres of society and society's institutions, including social, political, economic, religious, legislative, administrative, judicial, agricultural, and military spheres. Without women, it would be impossible to perform the religious rituals. Ardhanarîsvara Siva, a Hindu deity, and his wife have been shown here in a composite form.[16]

The male and female sexes are necessary cogs in the cosmic wheel, and they are inseparable. Durga, the Sakatî, is shown as slaying the Asuras and warding off their threat to civilization. It illustrates the strength and bravery of women in war. Hence, both sexes have contributed equally to the development of contemporary society. All the fields I've just listed owe

a great deal to her contributions throughout the centuries. This proves, therefore, that their contributions to society and civilization were crucially important at key points in those evolutions' trajectories. Women's inherent qualities of love, caring, and altruism are the driving force behind society's progress. Women's contributions to society as mothers, wives, daughters, workers, and nuns have always been vital. In this sense, women constitute the backbone of our society. Yet, in a culture dominated by men, they were not given the credit they deserved. Women have persisted in their service to society despite persistent bias.

Throughout Indian history, women were never treated as nothing more than property, and they were never completely disregarded. Both in and out of the house, they have held a place of respect and honor. Given that the Jaticas are a focal point of discussion, it follows that the topic at hand is the representation of women in Buddhist literature. We want to talk about how the Jatakas portray women in different roles, such as queen, nun, wife, and daughter. Buddhist culture placed a premium on the role of mothers. She epitomized purity and virginity and was held up as a model for everyone to follow.[17]

Women had an unprecedentedly significant role in Indian society throughout the early stages of Buddhism's development. A Buddhist woman's role as a wife and mother was seen as quite privileged in Buddhist culture. Being a valued member of the family, she had a respected social standing. The working women I knew were really brave and bold. As we have seen, the Buddhist Jatakas depict idealized roles for women throughout a wide range of domains and functions. The Jatakas are sacred texts in Buddhism because they detail the reincarnations of the historical Buddha.

Each component of society is mirrored in these fictional accounts. Women have played a prominent role in numerous Jatakas, both as the protagonist and the antagonist. They also emphasize the roles that women should play and the responsibilities they have in those roles. The current research was commissioned to learn how women fare in various social classes. SanchT, AmravatT, and Bharhut all include Jataka tales carved into their railings since the stories are so beloved by the general public. These bas-reliefs demonstrate that the lore surrounding legendary births was well-known in the second century B.C. and was revered as an important component of religious canon. The Jatakas also provide detailed depictions of the culture's social, economic, political, and religious practices. Special events from the Buddha's life are woven into each story with elements of folklore, social situations, traditions, and values.[18]

CONCLUSION

Women's contributions have been crucial in every area of society. Ardhariarsvara Siva, a composite form of our deity and his spouse, sends a strong message about women's centrality to society. The date of the society's beginning has also been shed abundantly by the archaeological evidences gathered through excavations and investigations. The complete lack of human male representations is indicative of women's preeminence and leadership in that civilization. Women, as Shakti or Durga, warded against the influence of the Demons. Women's status in antiquity was endearing. The mother goddess, the fertility goddess, and the woodland goddess are three stunning and unadorned examples. At the period of the Rigveda, women had complete freedom to take part in all facets of society. Through her roles as a daughter, wife, and mother, women of this time period displayed the core values of love, caring, compassion, sacrifice, and obedience. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the Jataka tales, we were able to pick out key details that shed light on the social and religious climate of the time.

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