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BUDDHIST'S VIEW ON WOMEN

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Abstract:-Nowadays many religionists like to claim that all religions give equal rights to women as equal to men. We only have to look at the world around us today to see the position of women in many societies. It seems that they have no property rights and Socialization, Christian religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, women, social stratification, spiritual phenomena, S?la and God are discriminated against in various fields and generally suffer abuse in many subtle forms. Even in western countries, women like the Suffragettes had to fight very hard for their rights. According to Buddhism, it is not justifiable to regard women as inferior. Buddhism is a realistic religion. Both men and women are required for life. One cannot live without the other. In an era when women were mere chattels and slaves, the Buddha, with his infinite compassion, gave them their rightful place. Women freedom helps them to move and associate with men. There was never any segregation of his devotees based on gender.

Keywords:Buddhist's View , societies , women , social stratification.

INTRODUCTION

The Buddha promoted the position of women by comparing and analyzing with the position of men who always dominant in various ways such as social, moral and even the religious aspect in the memorial of time. These evidences are clearly seen in the aforesaid of our survey and it is also to understand more that the women and men are equal in their position.

In all theistic religions, woman seems to have been considered as a secondary creation. In Christian religion it is believed that the man was first created and then the woman was created by taking one rib of the man. Hence the position of women in Christian religion is more inferior to that of the men. In Hinduism it is accepted that women were created by Pajapati and it is also believed that women are inferior to men. Buddhism negates this theoretical possibility of man's superiority. It is pointed out that the Buddhist world-view plays a unique role in a proper understanding of the position of women. There is no theoretical foundation whatsoever in Buddhism which makes woman a second grade citizen. Instead of the theory of creation, Buddhism, hence, upholds the gradual evolution of society.

SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW

Firstly, it is to be already known the position of women in early uncivilized societies. In communities they have not yet emerged from Barbarism and there hardly exist that men were more

superior to women. Ill usage, underfeeding and overworking are pushed to the greatest limit, compatible with the preservation of the race. Women are divorced, abandoned, sold or killed at the mere whim of men. They have to carry about children and also serve as beasts of burden, when the tribe moves from one place to another. The treatment thus meted out to them need not cause any surprise; in primitive life the muscle was an indispensable element in success and the men were stronger in it than the women. The man fought with the animals and enemies to protect women and children; he chased the big game to feed the family. Physical prowess, bodily vigor and muscular strength thus naturally established men's permanent superiority over women who besides lacking these qualities was periodically in a most helpless condition a few weeks before and after her frequent confinements.

Man had not yet developed sufficient culture and sensibility to make him feel and realize that women undergo these trials and tribulations for the sake of the race and therefore deserve to be treated with utmost sympathy and consideration. It was taken for granted everywhere that women as such can have no rights and privileges. They were inherently inferior to men and therefore must be always subordinate on them. For instance, in ancient Greece a writer has trenchantly put it; "There was no woman question at Athens because all women were as mere vegetables and there was no woman question at Sparta because both men and women there were little better than animals."

In ancient times in all patriarchal societies the birth of a girl was generally an unwelcome event. Almost everywhere the son was valued more than the daughter. He was a permanent economic asset of the family. He lived with his aged parents and did not migrate like the daughter to another family after the marriage. He perpetuated the name of his father's family. As he grew into adolescence and youth, he could offer valuable co-operation to his family, when it had either to defend itself or to attack an enemy. The daughter on the other hand no fighting value whatever. He therefore hardly ever welcomed the birth of a daughter. Sometimes he abandoned her after her birth; sometimes he even killed her. Further, the status of women is given below:

"Women, even if high-born and blessed with beauty and efficient guardians, love to transgress the codes of society, and rebel against all restraints. None is more inclined to sin than women. Women are the root of all troubles. Even when married to noble, handsome, wealthy men, women are inclined to be faithless when opportunities arise.

BUDDHISTS ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

One of the important things that should be criticized to highlight the clear picture of our survey is the social stratification of women in Buddhism. And it also looked at how the social strata dominant does to the women and what are the advantages of it. Moreover, by utilizing it what understood is that what Buddhism launches as well as promotes the position of women unlike before. In fact, human beings themselves cause the social stratification. Such social divisions into strata regarded as not only but also . The strata, of course,

WOMEN AND THE SOCIETY IN BUDDHISM

The study of the position of women in and the later time of the Buddhist thinkers who has focused such field by taking various considerations that were stated the condition of the women who were acting their activities in her family and society as well.

The family is the basic unit or group in society and as an institution family is highly valued in the Buddhist system of thought. The nuclear family as well as the extended family is often referred to in Buddhist literature. In a family, relationships between the members are intimate, expressive and

specific. A family, whether extended or nuclear is closely connected with the kin-group. Duties in a family comprise the support extended and respect paid to the parents, the provisions made for the sustenance of wife and children and the treatment extended belong directly to the family and the kinsmen's support is vital for the family to continue its functions successfully in society.

Among such functions of the family, the following, according to *Nandasena Ratnapala*, who is sociologists and the author of the book named Buddhist Sociology, are important in a Buddhist sense:

- 1.Economic activities: earning what is necessary to maintain the family and to sustain it,
- 2.Socialization of children by inculcating positive values in children,
- 3.Satisfaction of sexual needs and
- 4.Providing emotional support and security to the members at all times.

SEXUAL NEEDS

Sexual need is another important thing for both satisfaction of sexual need from his wife. Her love upon him is a deep and should be an abiding love and it is the most emotional and spontaneous expression of desire and self-fulfillment a husband expects of his wife. It is indeed the basis of an intimate life-long mutual relationship and the means of bringing into the world children whom they will love and cherish as long as they live. Here love is not limited to mere attachment, *pema* but it is an all pervading quality of wishing for the genuine well-being of her husband.

Sex is an important factor in family life, whereas the role of husband and wife are concerned. In marriage, among other factors, sexual compatibility was regarded as of great significance. This is why a marriage where there is a great disparity in age between the bride and the groom is openly discouraged. The husband as well as the wife should see that they are sexually satisfied in their relations with each other. A woman's sex role is emphasized in her relation to the husband. The obligation as to the sex functions lies equally on husband as well as on the wife. This is the reason why celibacy is appreciated both in men and women before marriage and after marriage faithfulness to each other is considered as a cardinal virtue that should not be violated. This faithfulness is not one-sided with its burden laid only on women. The man should satisfy himself sexually by associating his wife only and not other women. The wife should see that this highest sexual satisfaction is given to the husband as part of her responsibility. A husband who being not satisfied with his wife becomes unfaithful to his own wife and seeks other women will ruin himself and also the family.

The Buddha once advised a group of girls about to marry. The young wives are advised to get up early, work willingly, order their affairs smoothly, and to cultivate gentle voices. Honor and respect should be paid to them to all persons honored and respected by the husband. The young wives should be skilful in various handicrafts. They should care for the sick and the servants, allot the food suitably. They should study the approval of the husband, keep safe whatever money, corn, silver or gold the husband brings home. In this manner the wife would win powers and this world is within her grasp.

A woman reaches her full potential in marriage and in becoming a mother. In the Indian society of the day, an unmarried woman was regarded as inferior. "But the spirit of Buddhism was against such an attitude. Unmarried women under Buddhist influence could go unabused, contended, adequately occupied at home, caring for their parents and younger brothers and sisters," said I.B. Horner.

WOMEN AND S?LA IN BUDDHISM

It is important that in the study of the position of women the virtue, s?la, she sustained the significant for the Buddhist society base on it. Likewise, the future society depends on the women as well. As a chief of the house the women' qualities especially virtue are, no doubt, the primary requirement of the progress of her home and the society that is the environment of her house. The more she has this virtue the more her house and society ascent to the peace, stable and progression. In

the Order, the woman, as a nun could be virtue for the benefit of her and the community as well.

The Buddha stated in his first sermon called *Dhammacakkhpavattana Sutta* the path that can give the final emancipation for the being. The early path, paṭipadā which was the eightfold Path, aṣṭāṅgikamagga embodied the threefold precept of virtue, sīla, concentration, samādhi and insight knowledge, paññā and come to be identified as the threefold training tiśo sikkhā. Of these three cardinal precepts virtue, sīla formed the basis on which rested the other two. It is mentioned in the *Digha Nikāya* that the well practiced virtue brought about concentration leading to wisdom, whereby the cankers are destroyed, sīlāparibhāvito samādhi paribhāvito paññā sammādeva savēhi vimuccati.

In the family, due to her virtue, already mentioned above, mother is treated with equal respect and adoration as father. She is like Gods. In common parlance the mother is comparable to the Buddha living in one's own house. In this saying, we observe how in the institution of the family the mother is treated equal, but more superior in her role to that of the father. Buddhist thought under scores important position in the institution of the family. What is significant is to note that among forms of address used Buddha, one refers to him as "the immortal mother" or the mother who gave the world the nectar of Nibbāna."

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion we may consider some changes in the position of women in Buddhist countries since the era of the Buddha. This must include a consideration of the attempt to revive the Bhikkhuni order in Theravada countries. However strong was the role of women in the Buddha's day once the charismatic presence of the Buddha ended with his decease, the Bhikkhuni sangha too appeared to have entered into decline. While the Bhikkhu Sangha has continued in unbroken succession in many parts of the world (though not in the land of its birth) the fate of the Bhikkhuni Sangha is less well recorded.

The Buddha is credited with the prophecy that the lifespan of the dispensation be founded would be curtailed because of the creation of the Bhikkhuni order. Whatever value be added to such prophecies, it is a fact that after the period foreseen by the Buddha (500 years) Buddhism saw the great bifurcation between the Mahayana and the Theravada streams. Even the Theravada which is the closest of these two streams to the original views of the Buddha, developed numerous tendencies which were not seen in the Buddha's day. The rise of the Mahayana has had some implications for the role of women in Buddhism. It has been claimed that the Mahayana entertained a positive attitude to the role of women than the Theravada. However the early Mahayana masters were all male. Indeed it is the claim of some Mahayana sects that the Buddha established a line of patriarchs with Maha Kassapa as the first. This line of patriarchs naturally all consisted of males. When Chinese orders of Bhikshunis were finally established this was done with the aid of Theravada bhikkhunis from Sri Lanka.

Anyhow, we would like to appreciate Buddha's view on women. At present, women have property rights. Even then they are physically, mentally facing lot of problems in this universe. Even in this universe we have so many goddesses but we are not respecting women full heartedly. Really, they are gate way of human life. They are the source for everything without which anybody in this world. Not only that, there are so many rivers in the name of women but we are unable to understand the women in respectful manner. We also call the earth as mother but we ignore our mother, wife and daughter. Indeed, we do injustice to the women. Both men and women are mentally, physically equal. To respect women, we have to follow Buddha's path.

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