

BUDDHISM AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL SOLUTION FOR THE MODERN LEGAL SEPARATION OF MARRIAGES

Nun Kundasale Subhagya¹

Introduction

Marriage is the union of two persons which is recognized by some authority be it religious, legal or social. With the passage of time, the very concept and meaning of marriage has changed. With the break-up of joint families and the advent of nuclear families, an increasing number of marriages are ending up in the divorce courts. Marital conflicts have direct or indirect impact on an individuals personality and mostly the impact is psychological in nature and can be most pronounced in children. This paper draws attention to the modern legal separation of marriages. On the other hand, attention was given to the Buddhist teachings which help with psychological solutions for getting rid of issues that arise with the legal separation of marriages.

Methods and Procedure

The data for the study has been collected from the both primary and secondary sources and the relevant monographs and in the field of religion. Ethnographic study has been conducted using observations and interview methods, including young and old married people and a few lawyers who have been included.

Discussion

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions and it is a social convention, an institution created by man for the well-being and happiness of man, to differentiate human society from animal life and to maintain order and harmony in the process of procreation. It is closely connected with the institution of family. In fact, family and marriage are complementary to each other. Marriage can have different implications in

¹ Undergraduate, Bachelor of Arts (Buddhist Studies) , Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy, Pallekele, Sri Lanka, kundasalesubhagya@gmail.com

different cultures. As an Asian country, in Sri Lanka marriage is such a respectable bond that it contributes to having a harmonious society. But presently there are more than 400 divorce cases on trial in courts per day. As the result of that those men, women and mainly children are facing both physical and mental problems as they fail in their lives. The Buddha gave good advice on how to maintain peace and harmony in the home between husband and wife in order to achieve a happy married life. The Buddhist views on marriage are very liberal: in Buddhism, marriage is regarded entirely as a personal and individual concern, not as a religious duty. Buddhism indicated that the lay disciples should organize their life so that there is a successful and complete family without any cause for conflict. There are many suttas such as *Manapakaika sutta*, *Vyaggapajja sutta*, *Ittibandhana sutta*, *Purisa bandhana sutta*, *Sigalovāda Sutta*, *Samajivī Sutta*, *Paṭhmasaṅvāsa sutta* present many examples and points for discussion about "Buddhism as a psychological solution for the modern legal separation of marriages".

Legal separation of the marriage is named as 'Divorce. Divorce is the formal ending of a marriage. It is more permanent than a separation and involves a legal process. If someone gets a divorce, that means the marriage is officially over. There are many disadvantages of the divorce. Divorce ends marriages, divorce hurts, divorce costs money, divorce reduces living standards, divorce changes personal relationships and divorce hurts children. According to the research information, getting divorce of the parents is highly effecting to the psychological development of the children.

However, separation or divorce, although uncommon for Buddhists, is not prohibited. It is accepted, however, that if a couple enters into marriage and adheres to Buddhism's ethical prescriptions for marital and family life, that divorce becomes a non-issue. If, however, a couple refuses to follow the ethical prescriptions, is unable to live in peace, harmony, and mutuality with one another, or in the event of extreme circumstances, such as adultery or violence, it is preferable for the marriage to be broken than

for the marriage to destroy the couple or the family. Men and women must have the liberty to separate if they really cannot agree with each other. Separation is preferable to living a miserable family life for a long period of time for both partners and innocent children. The Buddha further advises in *Parābhava sutta*, old men not to have young wives as the old and young are unlikely to be compatible, which can create undue problems, disharmony and downfall.

A good marriage should grow and develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence. 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 one another, each manifesting a supportive and appreciative recognition of the others skills. There must be no thought of either man or woman being superior; each is complementary to the other, in a partnership of equality, exuding gentleness, self-control, respect, generosity, calm and dedication. Marriage itself should have as its foundation loving kindness or 'metta, the wish for others to be happy, and in so being, acts an environment for the cultivation of the same. Furthermore, marriage helps one to improve ones karma and karmic tendencies, for it acts as a framework within which one can refrain from sexual misconduct, the fourth of the five precepts.

The ideal Buddhist couple would be Nakulapita and Nakulamata who were devoted disciples of the Buddha and who had been happily married for many years. According to their story faithfulness, mutual love and compassion and being each others spiritual mentor and teacher, would be the recipe for an enduring and enriching relationship. According to the Buddhas understanding and teachings, if a husband and wife love each other deeply and have similar *kamma*, they may be able to renew their relationship in the next life too. The Buddha also said that the strong affinity two people feel towards each other might be explained by them

having had a strong love in a previous life. "By living together in the past and by affection in the present, love is born as surely as a lotus is born in water". This idea is elaborated in the Mahavastu: "When love enters the mind and the heart is joyful, the intelligent man can say with certainty that 'This woman has lived with me before'".

The Buddha mentioned that a couple who are following the Dhamma will "speak loving words to each other" (*aññamañña piya vādā*) and that "to cherish ones children and wife is the great est blessing" (*puttadārassa sa gaho eta ma galam uttama*). He said that "a good wife is the best companion" (*bharyā va paramā sakhā*), and the Jātaka comments that a husband and wife should live "with joyful minds, of one heart and in harmony" (*pamodamānā ekacittā samaggavāsa*).

All these Buddhist teachings have a sound psychological basis that helps marriages to survive. Pre- marriage counseling can be of major psychological help that can lead to the success of family life. In Buddhist literature, advice to the Visaka is special information which can be taken as pre-marriage counseling. Also, *Vyaggapajja sutta* in *Anguttara nikaya*, included some valuable advice which Buddha gave to young girls and boys prior to their marriage. This important advice, given by the Great One more than 2600 years ago, is still valid even to present day society.

Conclusion

Marriage is a partnership of two individuals and this partnership is enriched and enhanced when it allows the personalities involved to grow. Divorce is not necessarily the only outcome from a broken or damaged marriage. There are other solutions contained within the teachings of the Buddha. Following Buddhist teachings will lead to a happy and fulfilled marriage. It provides guidance and pathways to reconciliation should disharmony and unpleasantness occurs. It speaks of loving kindness, mental awareness, dedication and an inner calm, which can be seen as having a psychological background and effect.

Keywords: Marriage, Divorce, Buddhism, Psychological Solution

Bibliography

Walse, M. (2012). *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. A Translation of the Digha Nikaya, Boston: Wisdom publications.

Bodhi, B. N. (2012). *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya*, Boston: Wisdom Publication.

Bodhi, B. N. (2000). *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. Boston: Wisdom publications.

Bodhi, B. N. (2005). *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjima Nikaya*. Boston: Wisdom publications.

Rajah, kuruppu. (2003). *Buddhism: its essence & some relevant approaches*, Taranji printers.