

The background features a watercolor illustration of a city street. In the foreground, a woman with a red headscarf sits on a wooden bench, pushing a red baby stroller. The background shows multi-story buildings with arched windows and a street sign. The overall style is soft and artistic.

A Happy Married Life

A Buddhist Perspective

A good marriage should grow and develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence. A marriage is a partnership of equality, gentleness, generosity, calm and dedication. Each is complementary to the other; giving strength and moral courage to each other; supporting and appreciating the other in caring and providing for the family.

by Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda

Published for free distribution only

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
Dharma Propagation Division
Awaken Publishing & Design
88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117
Tel: (65) 6849 5342
E-mail: publication@kmspks.org
Website: www.kmspks.org

1st Edition | August 2007 | 3000 books
10th Reprint | April 2015 | 5000 books
11th Reprint | July 2016 | 3000 books
12th Reprint | March 2018 | 3000 books

EHAPPY-0112-0318

ISBN: 978-981-05-8992-9

© Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Although reprinting of our books for free distribution is encouraged as long as the publication is reprinted in its entirety with no modifications, including this statement of the conditions, and credit is given to the author and the publisher, we require permission to be obtained in writing, to ensure that the latest edition is used.

Printed by

Sun Rise Printing & Supplies Pte Ltd
Tel : (65) 6383 5290
Fax : (65) 6383 5310

It is very, very rare for one to have a precious human life and still be able to encounter the Buddha-Dharma, therefore please handle this book with utmost respect and care.

Published with environmental mindfulness. Printed in Singapore on eco-friendly paper.



Like Awaken Publishing page
Download iDharmaBook app for iPad & iPhone

A good marriage should grow and develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence. A marriage is a partnership of equality, gentleness, generosity, calm and dedication. Each is complementary to the other; giving strength and moral courage to each other; supporting and appreciating the other in caring and providing for the family.

A *Happy*
Married
Life *A Buddhist Perspective*



Ven Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda,

was born in 1919 in Southern Sri Lanka (Ceylon). He was ordained as a novice monk at the age of 12 and was given the name “Dhammananda” meaning “one who experiences happiness through the Dharma”. He became a fully ordained monk in 1940 and later received higher ordination at the age of 22. After doing his postgraduate studies in India, he spent four years there spreading the Dharma. In 1952, from about 400 monks, he was selected to go to Malaya (Malaysia) to administer the religious needs of the Sinhalese Buddhists in the country. With over 50 years of missionary work, he dedicated his life solely towards promoting peace, understanding and harmony.

one who experiences happiness through the Dharma

The former head of the Theravada Buddhist tradition in Malaysia and Singapore, he was one of Buddhist community's most respected Venerables, and was also the author of over 70 Dharma books, translated into more than 16 languages.

A well-known Dharma speaker who is often invited to speak in America, Australia, United Kingdom, Europe and the rest of Asia, he passed on peacefully at the age of 87 on 31 August 2006.



If a man can find
a suitable and
understanding wife
and a woman can
find a suitable and
understanding
husband,
both are fortunate
indeed.

- The Buddha.

Contents

Foreword	8
Introduction	10
The Nature of Love and Pleasure	13
The Reality of Married Life	18
The Buddhist Concept of Marriage	24
The Religious Dilemma	27
Security, Respect and Responsibilities	30
Polygamy or Monogamy	56
New Technology	58
Morality	59
The East and the West	62
Celibacy	65
Summary	69
Appendix I : The Affectionate Mother	72
Appendix II : Moral Code	74
Appendix III : The Art of Living	76

Foreword

Are you wondering what it takes to maintain a truly happy married life? Or what is Buddhist view on marriage?

In this book, Ven. Dr Dhammananda emphasises the important note that marriage is a partnership of two individuals and that this partnership is enriched and enhanced when it allows the personalities involved to grow.

In the Buddhist perspective, marriage means understanding and respecting each other's beliefs and privacy.



If we investigate thoroughly the root causes of social problems such as pre-marital sex, teenage pregnancies, unhappy marriages and divorces, child-abuse and wife-battering, we invariably discover that all these occur due to selfishness, lack of patience, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Since time immemorial, man has worked and struggled very hard to attain happiness. But very often, due to man's ignorance of the nature of life, he does not know exactly what gives happiness. It is difficult for man to make a distinction between happiness and pleasure. To him, that which gives pleasure gives happiness, and to be happy is to experience pleasure.

The present day is most timely for a book of this nature to be published. Providing Buddhist youths with a lucid understanding of life's imperative matters like love, sex and marriage will not only help them live a happy married life, but also assist them to lead peaceful and contented lives.

May all beings have happy unions and may all progress well on the path of the Dharma!



Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien
Executive Editor

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
Awaken Publishing & Design
Dharma Propagation Division

Introduction

From the Buddhist point of view, marriage is neither holy nor unholy. Buddhism does not regard marriage as a religious duty nor as a sacrament that is ordained in heaven. A cynic has said that while some people believe that marriage is planned in heaven, others say that it is recorded in hell also! Marriage is basically a personal and social obligation, it is not compulsory. Man and woman must have freedom either to get married or to remain single. This does not mean that Buddhism is against marriage. Nobody in this world would say that marriage is bad and there is no religion which is against marriage.

Practically all living things come into being as a result of sex. Among human beings, the institution of marriage has come about so that society guarantees the perpetuation of the human species and also ensures that the young would be cared for. This is based on the argument that children born through the pleasure of sex must be the responsibility of the partners involved, at least until they have grown up. And marriage ensures that this responsibility is upheld and carried out.

A society grows through a network of relationships which are mutually intertwined and interdependent. Every relationship is a wholehearted commitment to support and to protect others in a group or community. Marriage plays a very important part in this strong web of relationships 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.

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 another, each manifesting a supportive and appreciative recognition of the other's skill in caring and providing for the family. There must be no thought of either man or woman being superior — each is complementary to the other; marriage is a partnership of equality, gentleness, generosity, calm and dedication.

In Buddhism, one can find all the necessary advice which can help one to lead a happy married life. One should not neglect the advice given by the Enlightened Teacher if one really wants to lead a happy married life. In His discourses, the Buddha gave various kinds of advice for married couples and for those who are contemplating marriage. The Buddha has said, “If a man can find a suitable and understanding wife and a woman can find a suitable and understanding husband, both are fortunate indeed.”

The Nature of Love and Pleasure

❖ *Love*

There are different kinds of love, and these are variously expressed as motherly love, brotherly love, sensual love, emotional love, sexual love, selfish love, selfless love and universal love.

If people develop only their carnal or selfish love towards one other, that type of love cannot last long. In a true love relationship, one should not ask how much one can get, but how much one can give.

When beauty, complexion and youth start to fade away, a husband who considers only the physical aspects of love may think of acquiring another young one. That type of love is animal love or lust. If a man really develops love as an expression of human concern for another being, he will not lay emphasis only on the external beauty and physical attractiveness of his partner. The beauty and attractiveness of his partner should be in her heart and mind, not in what he sees. Likewise, the wife who follows Buddhist teachings will never neglect her husband even though he has become old, poor or sick.

“I have a fear that the modern girl loves to be Juliet, to have a dozen Romeos. She loves adventure.....The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun, but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary.”

— *Gandhi*

❖ *Sex*

Sex by itself is not “evil,” although the temptation and craving for it invariably disturb the peace of mind, and hence is not conducive to spiritual development.

In the ideal situation, sex is the physical culmination of a deeply satisfying emotional relationship, where both partners give and take equally.

The portrayal of love by commercial groups through the mass media in what we call “Western” culture is not “real” love. When an animal wants to have sex, it shows its “love”, but after experiencing sex, it just forgets about love. For animals, sex is just an instinctive drive necessary for procreation. But a human being has much more to offer in the concept of love. Duties and responsibilities are important ingredients to maintain unity, harmony and understanding in a relationship between human beings.

Sex is not the most important ingredient for happiness in

married life. Those who have become slaves to sex would only ruin love and humanity in marriage. Apart from that, a woman must cease to consider herself as the object of a man's lust. The remedy is more in her hand than in a man's. She must refuse to adorn herself simply to please a man, even if he is her husband. If she wants to be an equal partner with a man, she should dress so that her dignity is enhanced, and she does not become a sex symbol.

“Marriage for the satisfaction of the sexual appetite is no marriage. It is concupiscence.”

— *Gandhi*

Love may indeed be a product of sex, but the reverse is likewise true: sex is an expression of love. In the ideally happy married life, both love and sex are inseparable.

❖ *The Buddha's Explanation*

We can study the Buddha's teachings regarding the feelings that man and woman have for each other. The Buddha said that he had never seen any object in this world which attracts man's attention more than the figure of a woman. At the same time the main attraction for the woman is the figure of a man. It means that by nature, woman and man give each other worldly pleasure. They cannot gain happiness of this kind from any other object. When we observe very carefully,

we notice that among all the things which provide pleasure, there is no other object that can please all the five senses at the same time besides the male and female figures.

The ancient Greeks knew this when they said that originally man and woman were one. They were separated and the two parts that were divided are constantly seeking to be re-united as man and woman.

❖ *Pleasure*

Young people by nature like to indulge in worldly pleasures which can include both good and bad things. Good things, like the enjoyment of music, poetry, dance, good food, dress and similar pursuits do no harm to the body. They only distract us from seeing the fleeting nature and uncertainty of existence and thereby delay our being able to perceive the true nature of the self.

The faculties and senses of young people are very fresh and alert; they are very keen to satisfy all the five senses. Almost everyday, they plan and think of ways and means to experience some form of pleasure. By the very nature of existence, one will never be completely satisfied with whatever pleasure one experiences and the resultant craving in turn only creates more anxieties and worries.

When we think deeply about it, we can understand that life is nothing but a dream. In the end, what do we gain from attachment to this life? Only more worries, disappointments and frustrations.

We may have enjoyed brief moments of pleasure, but in the final analysis, we must try to find out what the real purpose of our lives is.

When one ceases to crave for sensual pleasure and does not seek to find physical comfort in the company of others, the need for marriage does not arise. Suffering and worldly enjoyment are both the outcome of craving, attachment and emotion. If we try to control and suppress our emotions by adopting unrealistic tactics we create disturbances in our mind and in our physical body. Therefore we must know how to handle and control our human passion. Without abusing or misusing this passion, we can tame our desires through proper understanding.

The Reality of Married Life

John J. Robinson in his book *Of Suchness* gives the following advice on love, sex and married life. “Be careful and discreet; it is much easier to get married than unmarried. If you have the right mate, it’s heavenly; but if not, you live in a 24-hour daily hell that clings constantly to you, it can be one of the most bitter things in life.” Life is indeed strange. Somehow, when you find the right one, you know it in your heart. It is not just an infatuation of the moment. But the powerful urges of sex drive a young person headlong into blind acts and one cannot trust his feelings too much. This is especially true if one drinks and gets befuddled; the most lousy slut in a dark bar can look like a Venus then, and her charms become irresistible. Love is much more than sex though; it is the biological foundation between a man and a woman; love and sex get all intertwined and mixed up.”

❖ *Problems*

Almost everyday, we hear people complaining about their marriages. Very seldom do we hear stories about a happy

marriage. Young people who read romantic novels and watch romantic films often conclude that marriage is a bed of roses. Unfortunately, marriage is not as sweet as one thinks. Marriage and problems are interrelated and people must remember that when they are married, they will have to face problems and responsibilities that they have never expected or experienced hitherto.

People often think that it is a duty to get married and that marriage is a very important event in their lives. However, in order to ensure a successful marriage, a couple has to harmonise their lives by minimising whatever differences they may have between them.

Marital problems prompted a cynic to say that there can only be a peaceful married life if the marriage is between a blind wife and a deaf husband, for the blind wife cannot see the faults of the husband and a deaf husband cannot hear the nagging of his wife.

❖ *Sharing and Trust*

One of the major causes of marital problems is suspicion and mistrust. Marriage is a blessing but many people make it a curse due to a lack of understanding.



Both husband and wife should show implicit trust for each another and try not to have secrets between them. Secrets create suspicion, suspicion leads to jealousy, jealousy generates anger, anger causes enmity and enmity may result in separation, suicide or even murder.

If a couple can share pain and pleasure in their day-to-day life, they can console each other and minimise their grievances. Thus, the wife or husband should not expect to experience only pleasure. There will be a lot of painful, miserable experiences that they will have to face. They must have the strong will power to reduce their burdens and misunderstandings.

Discussing mutual problems will give them confidence to live together with better understanding.

Man and woman need the comfort of each other when facing problems and difficulties. The feelings of insecurity and unrest will disappear and life will be more meaningful, happy and interesting if there is someone who is willing to share another's burden.

❖ *Blinded by Emotions*

When two people are in love, they tend to show only the best aspects of their nature and character to each other in order to project a good impression of themselves. Love is said to be blind and hence people in love tend to become completely oblivious to the darker side of each other's natures.

In practice, each will try to highlight his or her sterling qualities to the other, and being so engrossed in love, they tend to accept each other at "face value" only. Each lover will not disclose the darker side of his or her nature for fear of losing the other. Any personal shortcomings are discreetly swept under the carpet, so to speak, so as not to jeopardise their chances of winning each other. People in love also tend

to ignore their partner's faults thinking they will be able to correct them after marriage, or they can live with these faults, that "love will conquer all."

However, after marriage, as the initial romantic mood wears off, the true nature of each other's character will be revealed. Then, much to the disappointment of both parties, the proverbial veil that had so far been concealing the innermost feelings of each partner is removed to expose the true nature of both partners. It is then that disillusion sets in.

❖ *Material Needs*

Love by itself does not subsist on fresh air and sunshine alone. The present world is a materialistic world and in order to meet your material needs, proper financing and budgeting is essential. Without it, no family can live comfortably. Such a situation aptly bears out the saying that "when poverty knocks at the door, love flies through the window." This does not mean that one must be rich to make a marriage work. However, if one has the basic necessities of life provided through a secure job and careful planning, many unnecessary anxieties can be removed from a marriage.

The discomfort of poverty can be averted if there is complete understanding between the couple. Both partners must understand the value of contentment. Both must treat all problems as "our problems" and share all the "ups" and

“downs” in the true spirit of a long-standing life partnership.

❖ *Pre-marriage Advice*

The *Anguttara Nikaya* contains some valuable advice which the Buddha gave to young girls prior to their marriage. Realising that there could be difficulties with the new in-laws, the girls were enjoined to give every respect to their mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law, serving them lovingly as their own parents. They were expected to honour and respect their husband's relatives and friends, thus creating a congenial and happy atmosphere in their new homes.

They were also advised to study and understand their husbands' natures, ascertain their activities, characters and temperaments, and to be useful and co-operative at all times in their new homes. They should be polite, kind and watchful of their husbands' earnings and see to it that all household expenditures were properly administered. The advice given by the Buddha more than 25 centuries ago is still valid even today.

The Buddhist Concept of Marriage

In view of what has been said about “birth and suffering”, some people have criticised Buddhism saying that it is against married life. They are wrong. The Buddha never spoke against married life. However, he pointed out all the problems, difficulties and worries that people would have to face when they take on the responsibility of marriage. Just because he warned one against problems in marriage does not mean that the Buddha condemned marriage.

The act of marriage itself implies that a person is still more attached to the physical world and since our mental faculties are influenced by craving, attachment and human emotions, it is but natural that problems would arise. This happens when we have to consider the needs of others and to give in to what others need.

❖ Role of Religion

A deep analysis of the nature of self is important to help us understand the origin of our problems, worries, miseries and how to overcome them. Here, religious advice is important

for maintaining a tranquil life. However, a man should not become a slave to any religion. Man is not for religion, religion is for man. That means man must know how to make use of religion for his betterment and for his happiness in a respectable way. Simply by following certain religious vows, precepts or commandments with blind faith or by force, thinking that we are duty-bound to observe them will not develop proper understanding.



One important aspect of Buddhism is that the Buddha did not impose any religious laws or commandments. The Buddha was a unique teacher who had set out a number of disciplinary codes for us to uphold according to our way of life. Those who follow the precepts observe them voluntarily but not as obligatory religious laws. It is up to us to follow the advice through our own understanding and experience of what is good for us and for others. Through trial and error, we learn to follow the advice which will give us peace and happiness.

One should try to understand the nature of worldly life. By knowing that you have to face problems, you will be able to strengthen your mind and be more prepared to face the problems that could arise if you get married. Religion is important to help you overcome your problems. Whatever you learned about religious principle when you were young can be adopted to avoid misunderstanding, disappointment and frustration. At the same time, certain good qualities such as patience and understanding which we learned through religion are important assets to help us lead a peaceful married life.

Normally, it is due to a lack of mutual understanding that many married couples lead miserable lives. The result of this is that their innocent children also have to suffer. It is better to know how to handle your problems in order to lead a happy married life. Religion can help you to do this.

The Religious Dilemma

❖ Individual Rights

One of the greatest causes of concern among those who do not belong to the non-semitic religions is the problem of conversion before marriage. While Buddhists and Hindus never demand that a couple must belong to the same religion before a marriage can be solemnised, many others tend to take advantage of this tolerance.

Marriage, contrary to what many romantic novels say, does not mean the total and absolute merging of two people to the extent that each loses his or her own identity. When a religion demands that both partners must have the same religious label, it denies the basic human right of an individual to believe what he or she wants. Societies throughout history have proved that “Unity in Diversity” is not only possible but desirable. Out of diversity comes greater respect and understanding. This should apply to marriage also. There are many living examples all over the world where the husband and wife maintain their own beliefs and yet are able to maintain their happy married life without confronting each other.

Buddhists do not oppose the existence of other religions even

within the same household. Unfortunately, this generous attitude has been exploited by unscrupulous religionists who are out to gain converts by all means.

Intelligent Buddhists must be aware of this stratagem. No self-respecting intelligent human being who really understands what he believes according to his own conviction should give up his beliefs merely to satisfy the man-made demands of another religion. Buddhists do not demand that their partners embrace Buddhism. Neither should they surrender their own beliefs.

❖ *Post-marriage Blues*

When young people are in love, they are prepared to make many sacrifices so long as they can get married. But after a few years, when the real task of building a successful marriage begins, frustrations begin to set in. When a partner who had given up his deep-seated religious beliefs for “love” begins to regret having done so, unnecessary misunderstandings arise. These provide added tensions at a period when there is boredom in a marriage. There will be quarrels. And normally, one of the main causes of these quarrels will be the question of which religion the children should belong to.

Therefore, it is most important for one to know that if there is a process of conversion involved, it must be based on true conviction and not mere convenience or compulsion.

Buddhists maintain the freedom of the individual to choose. This principle should be respected by all.

❖ *The Ceremony*

There is no specific Buddhist ritual or procedure to conduct a marriage. Buddhism recognises the traditions and cultures practised by people in different countries. Hence, Buddhist religious ceremonies differ from one country to another.

In general practice, a religious service for blessing and to give advice to the couple is customarily performed either in the temple or at home to give a greater significance to the marriage. Nowadays, in many countries, besides the blessing service, religious organisations also have been given the authority to solemnise and register marriages together with the issuance of legal marriage certificates.

By and large, the most important point is that the couple should be utterly sincere in their intention to co-operate with and understand each other not only during times of happiness but also whenever they face difficulties.

Security, Respect and Responsibilities

❖ Sense of Insecurity

In the past, there was no such thing as a legal registration of marriages. A man and woman mutually decided to accept each other as husband and wife and thereafter they lived together. Their marriage was carried out in the presence of the community, and separation was rare. The most important thing was that they developed real love and respected their mutual responsibilities.

A legal registration of marriage is important today to ensure security and to safeguard property and children. Due to the sense of insecurity, a couple performs legal marriages to ensure that they are legally bound not to neglect their duties and not to ill-treat each other. Today, some couples even draw up a legal contract on what would happen to their property if they divorce!

❖ Husband and Wife

According to Buddhist teachings, in a marriage, the husband can expect the following qualities from his wife:

- * love
- * attentiveness
- * family obligations
- * faithfulness
- * child-care
- * thrift
- * the provision of meals
- * to calm him down when he is upset
- * sweetness in everything

In return, the wife's expectations from her husband are:

- * tenderness
- * courtesy
- * sociability
- * security
- * fairness
- * loyalty
- * honesty
- * good companionship
- * moral support

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 Buddha's Advice to a Couple*

I. The Wife

In advising women about their role in married life, the Buddha appreciated that the peace and harmony of a home rested largely on a woman. His advice was realistic and practical when he explained a good number of day-to-day characteristics which a woman should or should not cultivate.

On diverse occasions, the Buddha counselled that a wife should:

- a) not harbour evil thoughts against her husband;
- b) not be cruel, harsh or domineering;
- c) not be spendthrift but should be economical and live within her means;
- d) guard and save her husband's hard-earned earnings and property;
- e) always be attentive and chaste in mind and action;
- f) be faithful and harbour no thought of any adulterous acts;
- g) be refined in speech and polite in action;
- h) be kind, industrious and hardworking;
- i) be thoughtful and compassionate towards her husband, and her attitude should equate that of a mother's love and concern for the protection of her only son;
- j) be modest and respectful;
- k) be cool, calm and understanding — serving not only as a wife but also as a friend and adviser when the need arises.



In the days of the Buddha, other religious teachers also spoke on the duties and obligations of a wife towards her husband — stressing particularly on the duty of a wife bearing an offspring for the husband, rendering faithful service and providing conjugal happiness.

Some communities are very particular about having a son in the family. They believe that a son is necessary to perform funeral rites so that their afterlife will be a good one. The failure to get a son from the first wife, gives a man the liberty to have another wife in order to get a son. Buddhism does not support this belief.

According to what the Buddha taught about the law of Karma, one is responsible for one's own action and its consequences. Whether a son or a daughter is born is determined not by a father or mother but the karma of the child. And the well-being of a father or grandfather does not depend upon the action of the son or grandson. Each is responsible for his own actions.

So, it is wrong for men to blame their wives or for a man to feel inadequate when a son is not born. Such Enlightened Teachings help to correct the views of many people and naturally reduce the anxiety of women who are unable to produce sons to perform the “rites of the ancestors”.

Although the duties of a wife towards the husband were laid down in the Confucian code of discipline, it did not stress the duties and obligations of the husband towards the wife. In the *Sigalovada Sutta*, however, the Buddha clearly mentioned the duties of a husband towards the wife and vice versa.

II. The Husband

The Buddha, in reply to a householder as to how a husband should minister to his wife declared that the husband should always honour and respect his wife, by being faithful to her, by giving her the requisite authority to manage domestic affairs and by giving her befitting ornaments. This advice, given over 25 centuries ago, still stands good for today.



Knowing the psychology of the man who tends to consider himself superior, the Buddha made a remarkable change and uplifted the status of a woman by a simple suggestion that a husband should honour and respect his wife. A husband should be faithful to his wife, which means that a husband should fulfil and maintain his marital obligations to his wife thus sustaining the confidence in the marital relationship in every sense of the word. The husband, being a breadwinner, would invariably stay away from home, hence he should entrust the domestic or household

duties to the wife who should be considered as the keeper and the distributor of the property and the home economic-administrator. The provision of befitting ornaments to the wife should be symbolic of the husband's love, care and attention showered on the wife. This symbolic practice has been carried out from time immemorial in Buddhist communities. Unfortunately, it is in danger of dying out because of the influence of modern civilisation.

❖ *The Past*

In the past, since the social structure of most communities was different from that we find today, a husband and wife were interdependent on each other. There was mutual understanding, and the relationship was stable because each knew exactly what his or her role was in the partnership. The "love" that some husbands and wives try to show others by embracing each other in public does not necessarily indicate true love or understanding. In the past, although married couples did not express their love or inner feelings publicly, they had a deep, even unspoken understanding and mutual respect for each other.

The ancient customs which people had in certain countries such as the wife sacrificing her life after her husband's death, or which prevents a widow from remarrying, are foreign to Buddhism. Buddhism does not regard a wife as being inferior to a husband.

❖ *Modern Society*

Some women feel that for them to concentrate on the upbringing of the family is degrading and conservative. It is true that in the past women have been treated very badly, but this was more due to ignorance on the part of men than an inherent weakness in the concept of depending upon women to bring up children.

Women have been struggling for ages to gain equality with men in the field of education, the professions, politics and other avenues. They are now on par with men to a great extent. The male generally tends to be aggressive by nature and the female more emotional. In the domestic scene, particularly in the East, the male is more dominant as head of the family whilst the female tends to remain as passive partner. Please remember, “passive” here does not mean “weak”. Rather, it is a positive quality of “softness” and “gentleness”. If man and woman maintain their masculine and feminine qualities inherited from nature and recognise their respective strengths, then, that attitude can contribute towards a congenial mutual understanding between the sexes.

“I believe in the proper education of woman. But I do believe that woman will not make her contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with man. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man. She has to be the complement of man.”

— *Gandhi*

❖ *Parental Responsibilities*

The basis of all human society is the intricate relationship between parents and child. A mother's duty is to love, care and protect the child, even at extreme cost. This is the self-sacrificing love that the Buddha taught. It is practical, caring and generous, and it is selfless. Buddhists are taught that parents should care for the child as the earth cares for all the plants and creatures.

Parents are responsible for the well-being and upbringing of their children. If the child grows up to be a strong, healthy and useful citizen, it is the result of the parents' efforts. If the child grows up to be a delinquent, parents must bear the responsibility. One must not blame others or society if children go astray. It is the duty of the parents to guide children on the proper path.

A child, at its most impressionable age, needs the tender love, care and attention of the parents. Without parental love and guidance, a child will be handicapped and will find the world a bewildering place to live in. However, showering parental love, care and attention does not mean pandering to all the demands of the child, reasonable or otherwise. Too much pampering would spoil the child. The mother, in bestowing her love and care, should also be strict and firm in handling the tantrums of a child. Being strict and firm does not mean being harsh to the child. Show your love, but temper it with a disciplined hand — the child will understand.

Unfortunately, amongst present day parents, parental love is sadly lacking. The mad rush for material advancement, the liberation movements and the aspiration for equality have resulted in many mothers joining their husbands, spending their working hours in offices and shops, rather than remaining at home tending to their offspring. The children, left to the care of relations or servants, are bewildered at being denied tender motherly love and care. The mother, feeling guilty about her lack of attention, tries to placate the child by giving in to all sorts of demands from the child. Such an action spoils the child. Providing the child with all sorts of modern toys such as tanks, machine guns, pistols, swords and the like as an appeasement is not psychologically good.

Loading the child with such toys is no substitute for a mother's tender love and affections. Devoid of parental affection and guidance, it will not be surprising if the child subsequently grows up to be a delinquent. Who then is to be blamed for bringing up a wayward child? The parents of course! The working mother, especially after a hard day's work in an office, to be followed by household chores, can hardly find time for the child that is yearning for her care and attention.

Parents who have no time for their children should not complain when these same children have no time for them when they are old. Parents who claim that they spend a lot of money on their children but are too busy should not complain when their "busy" children in turn leave them in expensive

Homes for the Aged!

Most women work today so that the family can enjoy more material benefits. They should seriously consider Gandhi's advice for men to seek freedom from greed rather than freedom from need. Of course, given today's economic set-up we cannot deny that some mothers are forced to work. In such a case, the father and mother must make extra sacrifices of their time to compensate for what their children miss when they are away. If both parents spend their non-working hours at home with their children, there will be greater understanding between parents and children.

In his discourses, the Buddha had listed certain primary duties and functions as essential guidelines for parents to observe.

One of the primary guidelines is, by precept, practice and action, to lead the children away from things that are evil and through gentle persuasion, to guide them to do all that is good for the family, for society and for the country.

In this connection, parents would have to exercise great care in dealing with their children. It is not what the parents profess but what they really are and do, that the child absorbs unconsciously and lovingly.

The child's entry to the world is moulded by emulating parental behaviour. It follows that good begets good and evil begets evil. Parents who spend much time with their children will subtly transmit their characteristics to their offspring.



❖ *Duties of Parents*

It is the duty of parents to see to the welfare of their children. In fact, the dutiful and loving parents shoulder the responsibilities with pleasure. To lead children on the right path, parents should first set the example and lead ideal lives. It is almost impossible to expect worthy children from unworthy parents. Apart from the karmic tendencies children inherit from previous births, they invariably inherit the defects and virtues of parents too. Responsible parents should take every precaution not to transmit undesirable tendencies to their progeny.



According to the *Sigalovada Sutta*, there are five duties that should be performed by parents:

1. The first duty is to dissuade children from evil

Home is the first school, and parents are the first teachers. Children usually take elementary lessons in good and evil from their parents. Careless parents directly or indirectly impart an elementary knowledge of lying, cheating, dishonesty, slandering, revenge, shamelessness and fearlessness for evil and immoral activities to their children during childhood days.

Parents should show exemplary conduct and should not transmit such vices into their children's impressionable minds.

2. The second duty is to persuade them to do good

Parents are the teachers at home; teachers are the parents in school. Both parents and teachers are responsible for the future well-being of the children, who become what they are made into. They are, and they will be, what the adults are. They sit at the feet of the adults during their impressionable age. They imbibe what they impart. They follow in their footsteps. They are influenced by their thoughts, words and deeds. As such, it is the duty of the parents to create the most congenial atmosphere both at home and in the school.

Simplicity, obedience, co-operation, unity, courage, self-sacrifice, honesty, straightforwardness, service, self-reliance,

kindness, thrift, contentment, good manners, religious zeal and other kindred virtues should be inculcated in their juvenile minds by degrees. Seeds so planted will eventually grow into fruit-laden trees.

3. The third duty is to give the children a good education

A decent education is the best legacy that parents can bequeath to their children. A more valuable treasure there is not. It is the best blessing that parents could confer on their children.

Education should be imparted to them, preferably from youth, in a religious atmosphere. This has far-reaching effects on their lives.

4. The fourth duty is to see that they are married to suitable individuals

Marriage is a solemn act that pertains to one's whole lifetime; this union should be one that cannot be dissolved easily. Hence, marriage has to be viewed from every angle and in all its aspects to the satisfaction of all parties before the wedding.

According to Buddhist culture, duty supersedes rights. Let both parties not be adamant, but use their wise discretion and come to an amicable settlement. Otherwise, there will be mutual cursing and other repercussions. More often than not, the infection is transmitted to progeny as well.

5. The last duty is to hand over to them, at the proper time, their inheritance

Parents not only love and tend to their children as long as they are still in their custody, but also make preparations for their future comfort and happiness. They hoard up treasures at personal discomfort and ungrudgingly give them as a legacy to their children.

❖ *The Religion of Compassion*

Buddhism is the religion of compassion, and parents should never forget to present it to the children as such. The Buddha taught the Dhamma out of compassion for the world. Parents should practise the *Four Sublime States of Mind* taught by the Buddha in raising their children. They are:

Metta — loving-kindness or goodwill

Karuna — compassion

Mudita — sympathetic joy

Upekkha — equanimity or “even-mindedness”

These four states, well practised, will help parents remain calm throughout the difficult period of child-rearing.

This is the right or ideal way of conduct towards all living beings. These four attitudes of mind provide the framework for all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peacemakers in social conflict, the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle for existence; levellers of social barriers, builders of harmonious

communities, awakers of slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revivers of joy and hope long abandoned, promoters of human brotherhood against the forces of egotism.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that a married couple has to face is the proper upbringing of a child. This is another aspect which distinguishes us from animals. While an animal does care for its offspring with great devotion, a human parent has a greater responsibility, which is the nurturing of the mind.

The Buddha had said that the greatest challenge a man faces is to tame the mind. From the time a child is born, through infancy and adolescence to maturity, a parent is primarily responsible for the development of the child's mind.

Whether a person becomes a useful citizen or not depends mainly on the extent to which his mind has been developed. In Buddhism, a good parent can practise four great virtues to sustain him or her and to overcome the great frustrations which are so closely related with parenthood.

When a child is yet a toddler, unable to express his needs, he is quite prone to indulging in tantrums and crying. A parent who practises the first virtue of loving-kindness can maintain peace within herself or himself to continue to love the child while he is being so difficult. A child who enjoys the effects of this loving-kindness will himself learn to radiate it spontaneously.



A Happy Married Life

As the child becomes more mature as an adolescent, parents should practise *karuna* or compassion towards him. Adolescence is a very difficult time for children. They are coming to terms with adulthood and therefore are rebellious, with a great deal of their anger and frustrations directed at their parents. With the practice of compassion, parents will understand that this rebelliousness is a natural part of growing up, and that children do not mean to hurt their parents wilfully. A child who has enjoyed loving-kindness and compassion will himself become a better person. Having not had hate directed at him, he will only radiate love and compassion towards others.

Just before he becomes an adult, a child will probably meet with some success in examinations and other activities outside the home. This is the time for parents to practise sympathetic joy. Too many parents in modern society use their children to compete with their associates. They want their children to do well for selfish reasons; it is all because they want others to think well of them. By practising sympathetic joy, a parent will rejoice in the success and happiness of his or her child with no ulterior motive. He is happy simply because his child is happy! A child who has been exposed to the effects of sympathetic joy will himself become a person who does not envy others and who is not overly competitive. Such a person will have no room in his heart for selfishness, greed or hatred.

When a child has reached adulthood and has a career and family of his own, his parents should practise the last great virtue of equanimity (*upekkha*). This is one of the most difficult things for Asian parents to practise. It is hard for them to allow their children to become independent in their own right. When parents practise equanimity, they will not interfere with the affairs of their children and not be selfish in demanding more time and attention than the children can give. Young adults in modern society have many problems. An understanding parent of a young couple should not impose extra burdens by making unnecessary demands on them. Most importantly, elderly parents should try not to make their married children feel guilty by making them feel they have neglected their filial obligations. If parents practise equanimity, they will remain serene in their old age and thereby earn the respect of the younger generation.

When parents practise these four virtues towards their children, the children will respond favourably and a pleasant atmosphere will prevail at home. A home where there is loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity will be a happy home. Children who grow up in such an environment will grow up to be understanding, compassionate, willing workers and considerate employers. This is the greatest legacy any parent can give to his child.



❖ *Parents in Modern Society*

One of the saddest things about modern society is the lack of parental love which children in highly industrialised countries suffer from. When a couple gets married, they usually plan to have a number of children. And once the child is born, parents are morally obliged to care for him to the best of their ability. Parents are responsible to see that a child is not only satisfied materially, but spiritually and psychologically as well.

The provision of material comfort is of secondary importance compared to the provision of parental love and attention. We know of many parents from not-so-well-to-do families who have brought up their children well and with plenty of love. On the other hand, many rich families have provided every material comfort for their children but have deprived them of parental love. Such children will just grow up devoid of any psychological and moral development.

A mother should consider carefully whether she should continue to be a working mother or a homemaker giving all the care and affection that she can for the well-being of her child. Strangely, some modern mothers are also being trained to handle guns and other deadly equipment when they should be cuddling their children and training them to be good and law-abiding citizens.

The modern trend and attitude of working mothers towards their children also tend to erode the time-honoured filial piety which children are expected to shower on their parents. The replacement of breast-feeding by bottle-feeding could also be another factor which has contributed to the erosion of the affection between mother and child. When mothers breast-feed and cuddle babies in their arms, the tender affection between mother and child is much greater and the influence the mother has on the child for his well-being, is much more pronounced. Under such circumstances, filial piety, family cohesion and obedience are invariably present. These traditional traits are for the good and well-being of the child. It is up to the parents, especially the mother, to provide them. The mother is responsible for the child being good or wayward. Mothers can reduce delinquency!

❖ *Parental Control*

Many parents try to keep their married children under their

control. They do not give due freedom to them and tend to interfere with a young married couple's life. When parents try to control their married son or married daughter and want them to follow their way of life strictly, they create a lot of misunderstanding between the two generations as well as unhappiness between the couple. Parents may be doing it in good faith due to love and attachment towards the children, but in so doing, they are inviting more problems to themselves and to the children.

Parents must allow their children to shoulder the responsibilities of their own lives and families. For example, if some seeds are dropped under a tree, plants might grow after sometime. But if you want those plants to grow healthy and independent you must transplant them to open ground somewhere else to grow separately, so that they are not hampered by the shade of the parent tree.

Parents should not neglect the ancient wisdom based on advice given by religious teachers, wise people and elders who have developed a knowledge of the world through their own trial and errors.

❖ *Divorce*

Divorce is a controversial issue among the followers of different religions. Some people believe that marriage is already recorded in heaven, thus it is not right to grant a divorce. But,

if a husband and wife really cannot live together, instead of leading a miserable life and harbouring more jealousy, anger and hatred, they should have the liberty to separate and live peacefully.

❖ *Responsibility Towards the Children*

However, the separation of the couple must be done in an atmosphere of understanding by adopting reasonable solutions and not by creating more hatred. If a couple has children, they should try to make the divorce less traumatic for the children and help them to adjust to the new situation. And it is most important to ensure that their future and welfare will be taken care of. It is an inhuman attitude if the couple desert their children and allow them to lead miserable lives.

❖ *The Buddhist View*

In Buddhism, there is no law stating that a husband and wife should not be separated if they cannot live together harmoniously. But, if people follow the advice given by the Buddha to fulfil their duties towards each other, then, such unfortunate occurrences like divorce or separation will never happen in the first place.

In the past, where religious values were highly respected, there were greater efforts on the part of married couples — in the East

as well as in the West — to reach an amicable understanding to develop happy relationships based on respect, love, and regard for each another. Couples developed and made their marriages an important feature which they cherished in their hearts. Divorce cases were very rare, and were considered a disgrace because they indicated the selfishness of one party or the other.

It is a fact that until recently divorce cases were still rather rare in Buddhist countries. This is mainly because couples considered their duties and obligations towards each other, and also basically divorce was not approved by the community as a whole. In many cases, when married couples were in trouble, the community elders usually rallied round and played an important role to improve the situation.

Unfortunately, in the modern society of today, divorce has become such a common practice. In certain countries it has even become fashionable. Instead of regarding divorce as shameful or a failure to order their lives, some young couples seem to be proud of it. The main cause of the failure in marriage in modern society is the abuse of freedom and too much independence and individualism on the part of the partners. There must be a limit to their independent lives, or else both husband and wife will go astray very easily.

Polygamy or Monogamy

As to the question of whether Buddhists can keep more than one wife, a direct answer is not available in the Buddha's teachings, because as mentioned earlier, the Buddha did not lay down any religious laws with regard to married life although he gave valuable advice on how to lead a respectable married life.

Tradition, culture and the way of life as recognised by the majority of a particular country must also be considered when we practise certain things pertaining to our lives. Some religions say that a man can have only one wife whilst others say a man can have more than one wife.

Although the Buddha did not mention anything regarding the number of wives a man could have, he explicitly mentioned in His discourses that should a married man go to another woman out of wedlock, that could become the cause of his own downfall and he would have to face numerous other problems and disturbances.

The Buddha's way of teaching is just to explain the situation and the consequences. People can think for themselves as to why certain things are good and certain things are bad. The Buddha did not lay down rules about how many wives a man should or should not have which people are forced to follow. However, if the laws of a country stipulate that marriages must be monogamous, then such laws must be complied with, because the Buddha was explicit about His followers respecting the laws of a country, if those laws were beneficial to all.



New Technology

❖ *Family Planning*

Some religions are not in favour of family planning. They say it is against the will of God. Buddhism does not interfere in this personal choice. Man is at liberty to follow any method in order to prevent conception. According to Buddhism, certain physical and mental conditions must be present for conception to take place. When any one of these conditions is absent (as when family planning is being practised), no conception takes place, therefore a life does not come into being. But after conception, abortion is NOT acceptable in Buddhism because it means taking away a life that is already present in the form of a foetus.

❖ *Test-tube Babies*

Some people are interested in the moral implication or religious attitude with regard to test-tube babies. If a woman is unable to conceive a baby in the normal way, and if she is anxious to have a baby by adopting modern medical methods, there is no ground in Buddhism to say that it is either immoral or irreligious. Religions must give due credit to man's intelligence and to accommodate new medical discoveries if they are harmless and beneficial to mankind. As was mentioned earlier, so long as the conditions are right, conception can be allowed to take place, naturally or artificially.

Morality

❖ *Premarital Sex*

Premarital sex is a problem which is much discussed in modern society. Many young people would like to know the Buddhist opinion on this sensitive issue. Some religionists say it can be considered as committing adultery, while others say it is immoral and unjustifiable.

In the past, young boys and girls were not allowed by their parents to move around freely until they were married. Their marriages were also arranged and organised by the parents. Of course, this did cause unhappiness in some cases when parents chose partners on the basis of money, social status, family obligations and related issues. But generally, the majority of parents did try very hard to choose partners who would be acceptable to their children.

Today, young people are at liberty to go out and find their own partners. They have a lot of freedom and independence in their lives. This is not a bad thing in itself, but some of these people are just too young and too immature to see the difference between sexual attraction and true compatibility. That is why the problem of pre-marital sex arises.

Too much laxity in matters concerning sex has also given rise

to social problems in modern society. The sad part is that some societies do not express liberal attitudes towards unmarried mothers, illegitimate children and the divorcees while they are quite liberal about free sex. As a result, young people are being punished by the same society which encourages free mixing of the sexes. They become social outcasts and suffer much shame and humiliation. Many young girls have become victims of their own freedom and have ruined their future by violating age-old traditions which were valued in the East as well as in the West.

Pre-marital sex is a modern development which has come about as a result of excessive social freedom prevalent amongst present day young people. Whilst Buddhism holds no strong views either for or against such action, it is thought that all Buddhists, particularly people in love and contemplating marriage, should adhere to the age-old traditional concept that they remain chaste until the nuptial date. The human mind is unstable and forever changing, with the result that any illicit action or indiscretion may cause undue harm to either party if the legal marriage does not take place as expected. It must be remembered that any form of sexual indulgence before a proper marriage is solemnised will be looked down upon by the elders who are guardians of the young people.

❖ *Sexual Misconduct*

Laymen are advised in the Buddha's teachings to avoid sexual

misconduct. That means, if one wants to experience sex, he must do so without creating any violence or by using any kind of force, threat or causing fear. A decent sex life which respects the other partner is not against this religion; it accepts the fact that it is a necessity for those who are not yet ready to renounce the worldly life.

According to Buddhism, those who are involved in extra-marital sex with someone who is already married, who has been betrothed to someone else, or who is under the protection of their parents or guardians are said to be guilty of sexual misconduct, because there is a rupture of social norms, where a third party is being made to suffer as a result of the selfishness of one or the other partner.

❖ *Irresponsible Sexual Behaviour*

The Buddha also mentioned the consequences that an elderly man would have to face if he married without considering the compatibility of age of the other party. According to the Buddha, irresponsible sexual behaviour can become the cause of one's downfall in many aspects of life.

All the nations of the world have clearly defined laws concerning the abuse of sex. Here again, Buddhism advocates that a person must respect and obey the law of the country if the laws are made for the common good.

The East and the West

The following are extracts from a book by the celebrated Japanese author, Dr. Nikkyo Niwano. In his book *The Richer Life*, Dr. Niwano deals with matters relating to love and marriage, both from the Eastern and Western perspectives.

“In the West, marriage on the basis of romantic love has often been considered natural and sometimes ideal. In Asia, in recent years, the number of young people who abandon the traditional arranged marriage and select partners out of romantic consideration has been growing. But in some cases, romantic marriages lead to separation and unhappiness within a short time, whereas the arranged marriage often produces a couple who live and work together in contentment and happiness.

In spite of its emotional appeal, not all romantic marriages can be called unqualified successes. Romantic love is like the bright flame of a wood-fire that leaps up and burns clear, but lasts only a short time. Love between man and wife burns quietly and slowly like the warming fire of burning coal. Of course, bright flaming Love can — and ideally ought

to — eventually become the calm, enduring fire of mature affection. But too often the flame of romantic love is quickly extinguished, leaving nothing but ashes, which are a poor foundation for a successful married life!

Young people in love think of nothing but their emotions. They see themselves only in the light of the feeling of the moment. Everything they think and do is romantic and has little bearing on the practical affairs of the life they must lead after marriage. If the lovers are fortunate enough to have compatible personalities, to have sound and similar ideas about life, to share interests, to enjoy harmonious family relations on both sides and to be financially secure even after the first passion has calmed down, they will still have a basis for a good life together. If they are not so blessed, they may face marital failure.

When the time of dates, emotional pictures, dances, and parties has passed, the young married couples will have to live together, share meals, and reveal to each other their defects as well as their merits. They will have to spend more than half of their life each day together; this kind of living makes demands that are different from the less exacting needs of dating and first love.

Family relations become very important in married life. It is necessary to think about the personalities of the mother and father of the prospective marriage partner. Young people

sometimes think that the strength of their love will enable them to get along well with the most quarrelsome, difficult in-laws; but this is not always true. In short, romance is a matter of a limited time and does not become rooted in actualities and must be regulated to conform to the needs of work and environment in order to bind the couple together in lasting devotion. The two kinds of love are different. To mistake one for the other invites grave trouble.

Giving serious, dispassionate thought to the nature of the person one contemplates marrying, lessens the likelihood of failure. To prevent romance from vanishing after marriage, mutual understanding between the couple is indispensable. But the percentage of successful marriages is higher among young people whose choice of a partner agrees with the opinions of their parents. To live peacefully, it is necessary to realise the difference between romance and married love.”

Celibacy

❖ *What is Celibacy?*

Celibacy is refraining from the pleasure of sexual activity. Some critics of Buddhism say that the teachings go against Nature and they claim that sex is natural and therefore necessary.

Buddhism is not against sex — it is a natural sensual pleasure and very much a part of the worldly life. One may ask, why then did the Buddha advocate celibacy as a precept? Is it not unfair and against Nature? Well, the observance of celibacy for spiritual development was not a new religious precept at the time of the Buddha. All the other existing religions in India at that time had also introduced this practice. Even today, some other religionists, like the Hindus and Catholics observe this as a vow.

Buddhists who have renounced the worldly life voluntarily observe this precept because they are fully aware of the commitments and disturbances which come along if one commits oneself to the life of a family person. The married life can affect or curtail spiritual development when craving for

sex and attachment occupy the mind, and temptation eclipses the peace and purity of the mind.

❖ *Significance of Celibacy*

People tend to ask, “If the Buddha did not preach against married life, why then did He advocate celibacy as one of the important precepts to be observed and why did He advise people to avoid sex and renounce the worldly life?”

One must remember that renunciation is not compulsory in Buddhism. It is not obligatory to renounce the worldly life totally in order to practise Buddhism. You can adjust your way of life according to your understanding by practising certain religious principles and qualities. You can develop your religious principles according to the needs of a lay life. However, when you have progressed and attained greater wisdom and realise that the layman’s way of life is not conducive for the ultimate development of spiritual values and purification of the mind, you may choose to renounce the worldly life and concentrate more on spiritual development.

The Buddha recommended celibacy because sex and marriage are not conducive to ultimate peace and purity of the mind, and renunciation is necessary if one wishes to gain spiritual development and perfection at the highest level. But this renunciation should come naturally, and must never be forced. Renunciation should come through a complete understanding

of the illusory nature of the self, of the unsatisfactory nature of all sensual pleasures.

❖ *Celibacy versus Responsibility*
— *The Buddha's Experience*

The Buddha experienced his worldly life as a prince, husband and a father before his Renunciation and he knew what married life entailed. People may question the Buddha's renunciation by saying that he was selfish and cruel and that it was not fair for him to desert his wife and child. In actual fact, the Buddha did not desert his family without a sense of responsibility.

He never had any misunderstanding with his wife. He too had the same love and attachment towards his wife and child as any normal man would have, perhaps even greater. The difference was that his love was not merely physical and selfish love; he had the courage and understanding to detach that emotional and selfish love for a good cause. His sacrifice is considered all the more noble because he set aside his personal needs and desires in order to serve all of humankind for all time.

The main aim of his renunciation was not only for his own happiness, peace or salvation but for the sake of humankind. Had he remained in the royal palace, his service would have been confined to only his own family or his kingdom. That was why he decided to renounce everything in order to

maintain peace and purity to gain Enlightenment and then to enlighten others who were suffering in ignorance.

One of the Buddha's earliest tasks after gaining his Enlightenment was to return to his palace to enlighten the members of his family. In fact, when his young son, Rahula asked the Buddha for his inheritance, the Buddha said that Rahula was heir to the richest wealth, the treasure of the Dhamma. In this way, the Buddha served his family, and he paved the way for their salvation, peace and happiness. Therefore, no one can say that the Buddha was a cruel or selfish father. He was in fact more compassionate and self-sacrificing than anybody else. With his high degree of spiritual development, the Buddha knew that marriage was a temporary phase while Enlightenment was eternal and for the good of all mankind.

Another important fact was that the Buddha knew that his wife and son would not starve in his absence. During the time of the Buddha, it was considered quite normal and honourable for a young man to retire from the life of a householder. Other members of the family would willingly look after his dependants. When he gained Enlightenment, he was able to give them something no other father could give — the freedom from slavery to attachment.

Summary

Marriage is a partnership of two individuals and this partnership is enriched and enhanced when it allows the personalities involved to grow. Many marriages fail because one partner tries to “swallow” the other or when one demands total freedom. According to Buddhism, marriage means understanding and respecting each other’s beliefs and privacy. A successful marriage is always a two-way path: “humpy, bumpy” — it is difficult but it is always a mutual path.

Young people in this country and elsewhere sometimes think that “old fashioned ideas” are not relevant to modern society. They should be reminded that there are some eternal truths which can never become out-of-date. What was true during the time of Buddha still remains true today.

The so-called modern ideas we receive through highly glamorous television programmes do not represent the way most decent people in the West think or behave. There is a vast “silent majority” of decent couples who are as deeply religious and “conservative” about marriage as any Eastern couple. They do not behave in the manner that the mass media has

portrayed them. Not all the people in the West run off to get a divorce or abortion after their first quarrel or dispute.

Decent people all over the world are the same; they are unselfish and care deeply about those whom they love. They make enormous sacrifices and develop love and understanding to ensure happy and stable marriages.



So, if you want to ape the West, ape the “silent majority”: they are no different from your decent neighbour who lives next door to you.

Young people must also listen to their elders because their own understanding about married life is not mature. They should not make hasty conclusions regarding marriages and divorces. They must have a lot of patience, tolerance and mutual understanding. Otherwise, their life can become very miserable and problematic.

Patience, tolerance and understanding are important disciplines to be observed and practised by all people in marriage.

A feeling of security and contentment comes from mutual understanding which is the **SECRET of a HAPPY MARRIED LIFE.**

Appendix I:
The Affectionate Mother

In the Buddhist Jataka story— Sonadanda, the Bodhisattva sings the virtues of a mother in the following strain:

Kind, Pitiful, our refuge she that fed us at her breast.
A mother is the way to heaven, and thee she loveth best.
She nursed and fostered us with care; graced with good gifts is she,
A mother is the way to heaven, and best she loveth thee.
Craving a child in prayer she kneels each holy shrine before.
The changing season closely scans and studies astral lore.
Pregnant in course of time she feels her tender longings grow,
And soon the unconscious babe begins a loving friend to know.
Her treasure for a year or less she guards with utmost care,
Then brings it forth and from that day a mother's name will bear.
With milky breast and lullaby she soothes the fretting child,
Wrapped in his comforter's warm arms his woes are soon beguiled.
Watching o'er him, poor innocent, lest wind or hear annoy,
His fostering nurse she may be called, to cherish thus her boy.
What gear his sire and mother have she hoards for him "May be,"
She thinks, "Some day, my dearest child, it all may come to thee."

“Do this or that, my darling boy,” the worried mother cries,
 And when he is grown to man’s estate, she still laments and sighs,
 He goes in reckless mood to see a neighbour’s wife at night,
 She fumes and frets, “Why will he not return while it is light?”
 If one thus reared with anxious pains his mother should neglect,
 Playing her false, what doom, I pray, but hell can he expect?
 Those that love wealth o’er much, ‘tis said, their wealth will soon be lost,
 One that neglects a mother soon will rue it to his cost.
 Those that love wealth o’er much, ‘tis said, their wealth will soon be lost.
 One that neglects a father soon will rue it to his cost.
 Gifts, loving speech, kind offices together with the grace
 Of calm indifference of mind shown in time and place —
 These virtues to the world are as linchpin to chariot wheel.
 These lacking, still a mother’s name to children would appeal.
 A mother like the sire should with reverent honour be crowned,
 Sages approve the man in whom those virtues may be found.
 Thus parents worthy of all praise, a high position own,
 By ancient sages Brahma called. So great was their renown.
 Kind parents from their children should receive all reverence due,
 He that is wise will honour them with service good and true.
 He should provide them food and drink, bedding and raiment meet,
 Should bathe them and anoint with oil and duly wash their feet.
 So filial services like these sages his praises sound,
 Here in this world, and after death in heaven his joys abound.

— *Jataka translation Vol. V pp. 173, 174*

Appendix II:
Moral Code

1. Social and Moral Code

The most important element of the Buddhist reform has always been its social and moral code. That moral code taken by itself is one of the most perfect which the world has ever known. On this point all testimonials from hostile and friendly quarters agree; philosophers there may have been, religious preachers, subtle metaphysicists, disputants there may have been, but where shall we find such an incarnation of love, love that knows no distinction of caste and creed or colour, a love that overflowed even the bounds of humanity, that embraced the whole of sentient beings in its sweep, a love that embodied as the gospel of universal “Maitri” and “Ahimsa.”

— Prof. Max Muller, *A German Buddhist Scholar*

2. Morality is based on freedom

Buddhist morality is based on freedom, i.e., on individual development. It is therefore relative. In fact there cannot be

any ethical principle if there is compulsion or determination from an agent outside ourselves.

—*Anagarika B. Govinda, A German Buddhist Scholar*

3. Knowledge and Morality

In Buddhism there can be no real morality without knowledge, no real knowledge without morality; both are bound up together like heat and light in a flame. What constitutes “Bodhi” is not mere intellectual enlightenment, but humanity. The consciousness of moral excellence is of the very essence of “Bodhi.”

—*Bhikkhu Dhammapala, A Netherland Buddhist Scholar*



Appendix III:
The Art of Living

Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda gives some homely advice to those who look down their noses on the commonsense approach to living. This article is directed at the general public, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, on how to live in peace and harmony.

An important rule
for a happy life is
the ability to live
harmoniously with
other people.

To be able to do that, we must recognise that there are many paths that people can take to reach the same goal. Therefore, we must not get unduly upset if other people practise customs or have opinions which are different from ours.

❖ *Manners and Customs*

The standards of good manners differ among societies. In some countries, guests at dinner are expected to eat as noisily as possible. It is also not considered impolite if the guests belch at the end of the meal, since this indicates that they really enjoyed the meal. Such table manners would be considered rude, ill-mannered or uncivilised in other societies.

While in one country, putting one's finger in one's mouth or nose for any reason is considered most insulting, it means nothing in some other countries. Some people think it is degrading to be struck by a shoe, yet among other people, a slipper can be used for spanking a child.

We discover the peculiarities of the manners and customs prevailing in other societies most acutely when travelling. We should not prejudge too quickly what is right or improper. In themselves, manners are neither good nor bad. But when they cause harm or hurt the feelings of others, then we judge an action as being good or bad manners.

We are living in an ever changing world. We should not cling blindly to the traditions, customs, manners and rituals practised by our forefathers or ancestors who adopted these practices according to their beliefs and mental capacity. Some customs or traditions handed down by our ancestors may be good, while others are less useful. We should consider with an open mind whether these practices are congenial and significant to the modern world.

In the *Kalama Sutta*, the Buddha gave this advice about customs, traditions, beliefs and practices: “When you know for yourself that certain things are unwholesome (akusala) and wrong and bad for you and others, then give them up... And when you know for yourself that certain things are wholesome (kusala) and good for you and others, then accept them and follow them.”

Today, some elderly people cannot tolerate the modern ideas and ways of living of the younger generation. They expect their children to follow the same age-old traditions of their forefathers. Instead of adopting such an attitude, they should allow the children to move with the times when the activities

are harmless. Elders should call to mind how their own parents objected to certain popular modes of behaviour prevalent at the time when they were young. These differences in perception between the conservative parents and the younger generation are common sources of conflict within families. It does not mean that parents should hesitate to counsel and guide their children if they have gone astray due to some erroneous values. But when correcting them, it is good to remember that prevention is better than punishment. Parents should also explain to their children why certain practices are wrong, because children are not mature enough to reason why certain things are bad and certain things are good.

❖ *Allowing others the Right to Differ*

If a person lives all by himself, then he will not have any problem with differing opinions. But if he chooses to live in society, he must learn to deal with the views and opinions of others especially when they do not conform with his.

We are also living in a world where, apparently, might is right. The strong take advantage of the weak and the rich exploit the poor. If we cannot agree, we have to learn at least to agree to disagree. We should express our views gently and politely without trying to impose views on others by force. Those who use physical force to overcome their opponents clearly show their inability to convince the opponents that they are right.

We find comfort in those who agree with us, but discomfort in those who disagree. Sometimes, others' opinions on our attitudes or actions may not be something we would like to hear. But if we listen to them carefully, we will realise that there may be some truth in their opinions. This can give us a chance to improve ourselves if we are prepared to change our ways. The world is like a garden with different kinds of flowers. Like a bee gathering honey in the garden, we should be selective in choosing what is good in an opinion and leave behind what is not.

❖ *Patience and Tolerance*

Those who can remain cheerful during difficult times are admirable and a source of inspiration to others. They can avoid conflicts by seeing the lighter side of things. A wise man can avoid a quarrel by answering jokes and remarks directed at him with another joke. When you play a game, you should not show your temper when you lose. By doing so, you not only spoil the fun of the game, you may lose the game completely.



Every person is responsible for making the world a better place by planting the seeds of patience, love and honesty deeply in the human heart.



Eventually, a new era will blossom not only during that person's lifetime but also for generations to come. The person would be a cultured man who left the world better than when he came into it.

Some may say that this is impractical and too idealistic to follow. Some are cynical and wonder if humans who are struggling to eke out a living in a hostile world can cultivate love and kindness. While this is by no means easy to accomplish, perseverance and determination can make this concept into a reality.

❖ *Diplomacy*

You cannot hope to achieve peace by correcting each and every person in this world. In the same way, you cannot remove the world of stones and thorns to ensure the pathway is smooth. To feel comfortable walking on uneven ground, we should learn to guard our senses and to have peace of mind since we cannot succeed in removing disturbing objects from the world.

There are many ways to correct a person if he is wrong. By criticising, blaming and shouting at him publicly, you will not be able to correct him. You only make him more adamant in his views. Correct him without humiliating him. This is by far the most common way to avoid making more enemies. If

you kindly point out his mistakes, he is more likely to listen to you, and some say he will thank you for your guidance and kindness.

Whenever you express your views regarding certain matters, avoid harsh words spoken with anger so as not to hurt the feelings of others. Always express your views gently and politely. On the other hand, you should not lose your temper or show your sulky face when your faults are pointed out. You may think that by raising your temper, showing an ugly face, and shouting at others, you can intimidate others into overlooking your shortcomings. This is a false and wrong attitude to adopt. Rudeness, yelling, anger and swearing are a weak man's imitation of strength.