

Question: Venerable Sir, some are leading successful marriages while some are not. What is the reason behind this?

Answer: What we have acquired in our previous lives would have a direct impact on our day to day lives as well as marriages. This is something important to remember. Some are not concerned about the outcome of afterlife. If we continue on this cycle of rebirth and death, we would marry and bear children millions of times.

The Supreme Buddha, once, declared, "O' monks, the tears that parents have shed at the loss of children, while wandering along the cycle of birth and death, (*samsara*) are greater than the water in the four great oceans. It is the same in the case of children who lost their parents, wives who lost their husbands and husbands who lost their wives, wandering along the *samsara*."

We are on a very long journey on *samsara*. What we accumulate along the *samsara* will bring appropriate



consequences.

Question: How could we look at extramarital relationships from the Buddhist point of view?

Answer: Some have developed strange relationships. They get in to extramarital relationships; find pleasure in them; in order to sustain their existing marriages. If a marriage is not successful, then we need to ascertain the causes wisely. If the cause is a previous karma, then the person concerned should realize this accordingly. Such a person should begin mastering a good quality, instead of accumulating unwholesome karma further in this life. The ideal approach in this case is to practice *Metta Bhavana* (meditation of loving - kindness). It is of great importance to practice *Metta* meditation when there is a discord in a family. One should get accustomed to practice kindness and patience. This is an inherent skill in our lives. We should be knowledgeable enough to identify this inherent skill and develop it.

There are some who seek the association of paramours in order to take revenge of their spouses. This is a serious crisis as present suffering creates a foundation for suffering in future lives as well.

There are some wives and husbands who face any eventuality with kindness and patience amidst unhappiness experienced in their family lives. They emerge victorious amidst unhappiness. Even though they pay for their previous bad karma, they do not accumulate bad karma for future lives. When they are reborn in the human realm as a result, they are destined to have successful family lives.

Everything that we need for our own salvation is found within ourselves. We should make every attempt to retrieve those things from within. However, we retrieve unnecessary things most of the time. Emergence of these unnecessary things leads to unwholesome

states. This is not conducive to one's wellbeing. Having extra marital relationships and taking revenge are the sources for emergence of unwholesome mental states and demerits in a person. Parental unity is a boon to children. Immoral behavior of parents has a negative impact on children. We need to understand that the present life is only a temporary dwelling on our long journey of cycle of rebirth and death.

Question: Some seemingly believe that not having an extra marital relationship is only an unformed expression of morality. For them, attempt to be free from passion (*raga*) is of great concern and a matter for ridicule.

Answer: This is purely a non-Asian concept. Most non-Asians tend to have families on "Living-together" basis. This is because most of these marriages are short-lived and unsuccessful. These people lack attachment and love. Therefore, they switched to the concept of "living together", rather than resorting to "divorce". They mostly break up relationships due to trivial matters.

Merits leading to a successful marriage

They thought this process to be a fundamental human right as they were not fortunate enough to be influenced by a Supreme Buddha or the Buddhist Doctrine.

Most live in a society where the concept of a Creator God is upheld. Accordingly, everything, including animals, sky, earth, water exists for the benefit of man. So, it is up to him to create his own paradise in this very life. Passion plays a major role in this society. Non-attachment or elimination of attachment is never heard of in this society. So strange concepts flow in to our country rapidly, which was once nurtured by Buddhist concepts. Pressure of this inflow leads to the deterioration of eastern culture, knowledge and philosophy. One may be tempted to think, under this pressure, that one does not need to stick to one spouse only. One may not pay for this type of thinking in this life. Fruition of karma may result in a future birth instead.

Question: What are the Buddhist teachings in this regard?

Answer: There was an actor by the name of Talaputa in the Buddha's time. He, once, visited the Supreme Buddha and said, "Exalted One, I am an actor, an artist. I create things in order to entertain people. Therefore, according to my teacher, I will be reborn in a world where there is a lot of entertainment and fun. Is this right?"

The Supreme Buddha advised "Talaputa, Why don't you discuss another topic with me. As Talaputa continued with the same question, the Supreme Buddha elucidated

"Craving, aversion and delusion are unwholesome mental states of human mind. If you arouse these mental states in the name of entertainment, it is a great unwholesome act. If you intend to be reborn in a heavenly plane, while engaging in such entertainment, it

amounts to a wrongful view. As result, you will be reborn in a lower realm."

Question: Currently, there is tendency to tag high value for artistic productions which degrade our social fabric and morality.

Answer: We can observe how the most obscene movies are nominated for higher awards. Display of nudity has become an avenue for prominence. Such actors and actresses become radical characters and heroes. In this backdrop, there are opportunities for one to realize the truth. If literature and arts promote passion only, it is a pathetic situation.

In one ancient era, a large number of obscene artifacts were produced in India. Especially, when examining ruins belonging to the era, where "Salutation to Sun" (*Surya Namaskar*) was practiced, this fact could be collaborated. So this tendency does not apply only to the present society. When you look at the artifacts made out of granite during the 9th and 10th century in India, you may tend to discount the degree of sensuality found in the present society. It is impossible to satisfy the human beings, who are engrossed in ignorance (*avidya*), without arousing the sensuality. Also, they don't seem to understand other options.

How ever, the intelligent has been looking for something beyond the sensuality. There are great personalities who want to transcend sensuality. They are capable of looking deep in to their lives.

Question: Man needs sensuality in order to seek happiness. How would advise one to seek happiness which is above sensuality.

Answer: The Supreme Buddha's advice is "O Monks, One can gain the highest bliss in this life by attaining the first *jhana*." (Meditative absorption)

We can see how people gain childish happiness by way of consuming alcohol, consuming delicious food and attending parties etc. These will make exhausted in the end and put you to a sleep. You are in position to gain higher happiness by getting in to *jhana*s. It is because of sensuality that human beings are unable to tap this latent capability.

However, we can not prevent the message, that one is free to enjoy sense pleasures, from spreading all over the world. For instance, we did not speculate the degree of obscene communication taking place on the mobile network, when first got the mobile phones. Now, Mobile phones are causing harm and bringing degradation to many including children. Human beings are turning to sensuality rapidly in the present society.

Beings get enchanted by forms, tastes, sounds, odors and tactile sensations. Beings do not know how to transcend nature. This has led beings to think that happiness is to be found through satisfying senses.

Human beings should restrain themselves through self-realization. Any other mode of restraint would cause suffering. Most beings are unable to realize this fact. They blame the disciplined persons that they are a group who suffer and are with a wrongful, empty morality. Most do not understand that the self restraint gained by self realization is a type of knowledge. One who attains self-realization enjoys a different nature of bliss based on one's knowledge. You will find people who seek happiness through senses as well as people who seek a different type of happiness through meditation. All problems will be resolved positively when self-realization becomes one's happiness.

Question: However, some identify this particular way of life as suffering. Their attitude towards life is that life is to be enjoyed, but not to be suffered.

Answer: Same attitude existed during the time of the Buddha as well. The damsels at the king Kosala's harem once went to the Achirawathi River for bathing. Some *bhikkunis* (nuns) were also at the river bank at that time. The damsels, who saw those celibate *bhikkunis* who were on a journey towards liberation, were shocked and puzzled. The damsels considered these pretty celibate *bhikkunis* as a group who was out of their minds.

"You are really an unfortunate group. We are living happily at the harem." *Bhikkunis* observed silence.

Bhikkunis reported this matter to the Supreme Buddha. The Buddha advised, "O *bhikkunis*, hereafter, do not go to that river for bathing." The Supreme Buddha was well aware of the nature of the ordinary human beings. The life of a person who seeks sense pleasures could be likened to a mantis that lives in proximity to the flame of a lamp.

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