



ARE YOU WILLING TO BE INDEPENDENT?

If we are capable of being mindful of our deeds, while refraining from impure deeds, then sorrow, frustration can not interfere with our lives. Purity brings pride to our lives. Children should be reinforced with the idea of this pride from their childhood. This is where the importance of *dharma* comes into play. Parents should be knowledgeable enough for this task. Parents should be conversant with the *Dharma* in the first place.

It is evident that the children living in the present society are attempting to be independent at younger ages. There could be several reasons for this trend. Children, who are living in the western countries, tend to make independent decisions with regard to their life styles.

Young children in our present society are now getting involved with the members of the opposite sex as lovers. I will relate a strange story which happened recently. The girl involved in this strange story was three years old. She was a grade seven student. She wrote a love letter on the Valentines Day. She managed to find a ring as well. Her fiancé's age was fourteen years. This girl wrapped the ring colorfully and handed it to her fiancé, along with the love letter. Both of them were financially unsound. They were mere teenagers. This was just a relationship which got carried away by childish feelings. Time passed by and when the girl turned fifteen years she realized that this relationship to be meaningless. She explained the futility of this relationship to her fiancé, "We are still students. We need to complete our education". However, the boy was of the opinion that the life was not worth living without his fiancée. So he decided to commit suicide. He was fourteen years old then.

He was planning to consume a bottle of poison. By this time, his education had completely collapsed. The cause for all this trouble was his love affair. He bungled his whole life. Luckily, one of his relatives prevented his suicidal attempt. Finally, we managed to rehabilitate this child.

Currently, there is a widespread belief among teenagers that they should have a lover by the time they reach an age of twelve or thirteen years. This is a scary concept. The concept, that a teenager is not perfect or like an invalid without a lover, has been popularized among the teenagers.

This is the stage where a teenager's character should be molded to become a righteous citizen. Now, let's look at the factors which are essential for a righteous living. Education, self-restraint, virtue, composedness, farsightedness are those factors which could make a child's life virtuous, provided, a child has access to these important factors at a younger age. Lives would be failures if time is wasted on love affairs. Instead, lives should be spent on cultivating these important factors.

Every parent should strive to get their children involved in *dhamma* practice. Present society is not concerned with this important task. Parents are more concerned about children's education, language skills, employment and timely marriages. Parents tend to neglect the important aspect of children's spiritual progress. Are we not witnessing adverse consequences as a result of this trend?

I want to share something that I am fully aware of. Take a look at the situation in western countries. There is no *dhamma* practice in those countries. There is no religious background for children to take refuge in.

Similarly, we must strive to establish a society in which lovers offer booklets such as *dhammapada*, instead of roses on this day. Even though the Europeans do not possess any solid doctrine, we have a doctrine based on a pure foundation. We need to understand this fact clearly.

Isn't it impossible for lovers to exchange meaningful messages with a flavor of *dhamma*? One might misunderstand the phrase – message with a flavor of *dhamma* – at this juncture.

This should not be considered as something applicable to elderly laymen. We always attach specific importance to a quote or a statement made by westerners. Thus a westerner's assertion would always be a "scholarly advice".

Don't we consider the excerpts from foreigners' manuals as scholarly advice? Do scholars are brought forth only in the West? If so, this means that scholars do not come into being in the East. Should the scholarly advice be written only in the English language?

In this circumstance, when we present an important *dhamma* message, it is considered as work meant for elderly people. However, these *dhamma* messages are the advice proclaimed with wisdom by the Awakened One. This task could only be done by none other than a *Buddha*. Only such *dhamma* messages could heal lives.

I would like to bring such *dhamma* message to the notice of the children who wish to celebrate the Valentines Day. It is evident that there are relationships among people which result from attachments from previous lives. These people meet with each other in this life as well. They get involved in love affairs.

Arahant Maha Kasyapa therō's life as a layman was such a story. That was a very rare relationship. Both had a lot of merits. Both had accumulated merits equally. Sometimes, such people become partners as a result of marriage proposals by their parents.

Arahant Maha Kasyapa was a person who possessed pleasant features. His parents were planning to arrange a marriage for him when he was a young layman. But his goal was to find liberation. So he devised a plan to stay away from the marriage. He got a sculpture made of a woman with gracious features and said that he would marry only if he finds a girl resembling that sculpture. He thought that a similar woman could not be found by his parents. But a girl with similar features was found and therefore he had to honour his promise and marry her. His name as a layman was *Pippali*

Prince *Pippali* told his bride, *Bhaddakachchana*, "I am not keen on this marriage. My only expectation is getting liberated. I am a person who is practicing celibacy" In reply to this, *Bhaddakachchana* said, "Brother, I am not keen on a marriage either. I am a practitioner of celibacy too."

After this dialog, both of them came to a decision. - Both should get married. However, they were to continue as practitioners of celibacy. After their marriage, they used to lay a garland of flowers between them while sleeping. They made a vow that the flowers would fade in the event of their mind being hindered by sensual desires. On their journey to liberation, these flowers did not fade. Take a note of those noble characters who lived in the society at that time. Some people accumulate those noble qualities through their cycle of rebirth and they may become partners in the present life.

Nakula matha and pitha, who lived in the Buddha's time, once told the Buddha that they wanted to be husband and wife again in future lives. Then the Buddha explained, "If you can maintain equal degrees of Virtue, Charity, Devotion, Wisdom, and then you will be able to be reborn as per your wish."

It is a possibility that people with same qualities still live in the society. This similarity in attributes may make them attract to each other. This is really a fortunate attachment. People with similar attachment are in a position to lead successful worldly lives while accumulating a lot of merits.

But, some love affairs result in suffering. From the day they start their relationships, they are confronted with problems due to differences in characters and qualities. However, despite these problems, they live as one family unit. Their relationships do not fall apart. This suffering results from bad karma from previous lives.

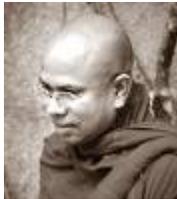
How a person had lived in previous lives; what this person had accumulated on his journey of *samsara* (recycle of birth); would have a direct impact on his or her present life.

Out of fear for negative outcomes, horoscopes are read before a marriage. But, horoscopes are not capable of making a life successful! Only tenants of *dhamma* can

make it. By maintaining equal degree of *Sila* (virtue), *Samadhi* (concentration) and *Panna* (wisdom), only partners can make this happen.

There are lots of married people who live under mental stress due to problems caused by children and other social obligations. The only antidote for this is the *dhamma* proclaimed by the Buddha. According to the tenants of the *dhamma* , If one were to lead a happy family life, the only way would be to refrain from committing sinful deeds, being virtuous with wisdom, until one reaches old age.

In the absence of virtue (*Sila*), suspicion creeps in to a family life. This will hinder cordial relationship between two partners. Therefore, we need to be very cautious about these matters.



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