

Buddhist Counseling on Motherhood and Pregnancy: A descriptive study

මාතෘත්වය හා ගර්භනීභාවය පිළිබඳ බෞද්ධ උපදේශනය:
විස්තරාත්මක අධ්‍යයනයක්

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Abstract

මාතෘත්වය වනාහී ස්ත්‍රී අනන්‍යතාවෙහි ඇති උත්කෘෂ්ටතම තත්වයි. මාතෘත්වය හා ගර්භනීභාවය පිළිබඳ පුළුල් විග්‍රහයක් නූතන බටහිර මනෝවිද්‍යාවෙහි සාකච්ඡාවට ලක්වේ. මේ සම්බන්ධව ඉපැරණි පෙරදිග ඥානසම්භාරයේ බොහෝ කාරණා ව්‍යුත්පන්න වුව ද නූතන ව්‍යවහාරික බුදුසමය තුළ මාතෘත්වයේ ගැටලු නිරාකරණය කිරීම විෂයෙහි බෞද්ධ මනෝවිද්‍යාව ඇසුරින් කතිකාවට ගැනීම අත්‍යවශ්‍ය සාධකයක් ව පවතී. බෞද්ධ සාහිත්‍යය වනාහී චරිත සංවර්ධනය විෂයෙහි මනෝඋපදේශනයක නියැලෙමින් පුද්ගල ජීවිතයේ සමෘද්ධිය උදෙසා ක්‍රියාකරනු දක්නට ලැබේ. ඒ අනුව බෞද්ධ සාහිත්‍යය හා බුද්ධ දේශනාවන්ගේ ඇතුළත් අදහස් ඇසුරින් ඒ හා සම්බන්ධ සංස්කෘතික භාවිතයන්ට ගරු කරමින් මාතෘත්වය හා ගර්භනීභාවය ගැන සාකච්ඡාවට යොමු වේ. එය ක්ෂේත්‍ර හතරක් මූලික කරගන්නා අතර අවිවාහක තරුණියකගේ ජීවිතය මාතෘත්වය සඳහා සූදානම් කරන්නේ කෙසේද යන්නත්, විවාහක ස්ත්‍රියක් ගර්භාවක්‍රාන්තියට පෙර වන සූදානමත්, ගර්භනීසමය, දරුප්‍රසූතිය, දාරක පෝෂණය හා ළදරුවියේ ආරක්ෂාව ආදිය මවගෙන් සිදුවන ආකාරය පිළිබඳවත් අවධානය යොමුකරමින් මාතෘත්වයට හානිවන කාරණා හා වදභාවය පිළිබඳ බෞද්ධ අදහස සාකච්ඡාවට බඳුන් කරයි. එකී ක්ෂේත්‍ර පිළිබඳ කරුණු අධ්‍යයනය මෙහි මූලික අරමුණු වන අතර අධ්‍යයනයේ වැදගත්කම වශයෙන් නූතන භාවිතය තුළ මාතෘත්වය විෂයෙහි ඇති ගැටලු අවමකිරීම සඳහා මනෝඋපදේශනය සැපයීමට මෙයින් රුකුලක් සපයයි. පෙරදිග සංස්කෘතිය තුළ දියණියකගේ උපතේ සිටම ඇය මාතෘත්වය වෙත සූදානම් කරනු

ලබන්නේ විවාහය හා ස්වාමීපුරුෂයා විෂයෙහි මූලික අවධානය යොමුකරන්නේ මනෝඋපදේශනයක් වශයෙනි. ඒ අනුව බහුවිධ විශ්වාස පද්ධතිකට උරුමකම් කියන්නන් හැටියට පෙරදිග ජනයා ගර්භයේ පහළවීමට පෙර මවක් ජ්‍යෝතිෂය, නක්ෂත්‍රය, අද්‍යාශාමාන විශ්වාසයන්ට මූලිකත්වය දෙමින් දරුගැබක් ප්‍රාර්ථනා කරන අතර ගැබ්පෙළහැර දීමේ සිට මවක් ප්‍රසූතියට සූදානම් වීම දක්වා සියුම් විග්‍රහයක් ඉදිරිපත් කරයි. ප්‍රසූතියෙන් පසු කිරිපෙවීම හා ළදරුවියේ දරුවාගේ වර්ධනය දක්වාම මවකට විශාල වගකීමක් ඇත. ඊට හේතුව සෑම පුද්ගලයකුගේම පූර්ව ළමාවියේ සිට පෞරුෂ සංවර්ධනයෙහිලා මවගේ භූමිකාව සෘජු බලපෑමක් කරන බැවිනි. එපමණක් නොව ප්‍රභල ගැටලුවක් වන ප්‍රේරිත ගබ්සාව වැළැක්වීම කෙරෙහි එහි ආදීනව පෙන්වන බුදුසමය ස්ත්‍රියගේ වදනාවය උදෙසා දකින්නේ එය ජයගත හැකි අන්දමේ ධනාත්මක දැක්මකි. උක්ත කාරණා නයින් මාතෘත්වය හා ගර්භනීභාවය උදෙසා මනෝඋපදේශාත්මක පසුබිමක් බුදුසමයෙන් ලැබෙන බව පෙන්වාදීම මෙහි මුඛ්‍ය අරමුණ ය.

මුඛ්‍යපද: ගර්භනීභාවය, දාරක පෝෂණය, මාතෘත්වය, වන්ද්‍යාභාවය

Introduction

Motherhood and pregnancy are fundamental aspects of a woman's identity and transcendancy. The influence of a mother's background extends beyond childbirth and directly impacts the development of a child's personality throughout their life. As a result, the mother's mental state impacts the child even before birth and plays a significant role in the child's development. In Western psychological discourse, one can observe a diverse array of literature offering varying interpretations of motherhood and pregnancy. However, what's unique is that only a limited number of scholars have explored the fact of these subjects with both Western psychology and Buddhist teachings. Direct references to motherhood and pregnancy in Buddhist literature are relatively scarce, leading to a noticeable gap in understanding. This research initiative stems from the recognition of this gap

in the works of scholars. Similarly, within Buddhist literature, the conceptualization of motherhood and pregnancy is presented as a universal theme that transcends cultural and societal boundaries. This universality implies that the principles and practices related to motherhood and pregnancy can be applied effectively in any society, often with an apparent alignment with scientific reasoning. The motivation for undertaking this study lies in the curiosity to explore and understand how motherhood and pregnancy are globally interpreted in Buddhist literature. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive psychological counseling to women even before they embark on the journey of pregnancy, highlighting the proactive approach necessary for ensuring maternal and child well-being.

Review of literature

A thorough examination of literary sources reveals the extensive discussion surrounding this subject across various themes within the realm of literature. This discourse extends to Sinhala and English works that draw from Buddhist teachings, showcasing a diverse range of perspectives. Notable examples include “Buddhism for Mothers: A Calm Approach to Caring for Yourself and Your Children” by Sarah Napthali, which, although not primarily focused on counseling, explores how Buddhist principles can aid mothers in managing stress and promoting well-being for themselves and their children (Napthali: 2003). Similarly, “Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas” by Kim Gutschow delves into the experiences of Buddhist nuns, including their views on womanhood and motherhood within the monastic context (Gutschow: 2004). Napthali’s “Buddhism for Mothers of Young Children: Becoming a Mindful Parent” addresses the challenges encountered by mothers of young children, offering

practical advice rooted in Buddhist teachings (Naphthali: 2010). Additionally, “Buddhism, Motherhood, and Mental Health: Reclaiming the Lost Connection” by Hannah Perkins explores the intersection of Buddhism, motherhood, and mental health (Perkins: 2018). Lastly, “The Buddha’s Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon” edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi, while not directly focused on motherhood, touches on familial relationships as addressed by the Buddha (Bodhi: 2016). This comprehensive analysis of these studies provides a nuanced understanding, highlighting the significance of this literature review in facilitating a detailed exploration and overview of the subject matter.

Problem of the study

In contemporary society, there is recognition of effective counseling for women regarding motherhood and pregnancy. Buddhism incorporates scientific and coherent concepts to address this need. Hence, the fundamental question arises- Can Buddhism offer psychological guidance concerning motherhood and pregnancy? The main issue is accompanied by several sub-questions, including:

1. How should unmarried girls prepare for pregnancy?
2. What preparations should marry women make for pregnancy?
3. What are the Buddhist perspectives on pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, and child-rearing?
4. What does Buddhist literature reveal about non-fertile women and problems of motherhood?

Objectives of the study

The research aims align meticulously with the central

inquiry and related sub-inquiries. These objectives delve into a multifaceted exploration:

1. Investigating the optimal preparation methods for unmarried girls preparing for pregnancy.
2. Examining the necessary preparations that married women should undertake in anticipation of pregnancy.
3. Exploring Buddhist perspectives regarding pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, and the upbringing of children.
4. Delving into Buddhist literature to uncover insights on non-fertile women and the challenges associated with motherhood.

Methods

This study adopts a descriptive approach, relying on textual analysis as the primary method. It is categorized under qualitative research, focusing on gathering data from primary and secondary sources and drawing conclusions through inductive reasoning from the analyzed data.

Importance of the study

The importance of this study lies in examining Buddhist literary perspectives on motherhood and pregnancy and exploring counselling strategies for women.

Discussion

Pregnancy is a pivotal period that holds great significance for women, representing not only their femininity but also their journey into motherhood. This phase is marked by a range of physical and mental challenges that women must navigate alongside the expectation of becoming nurturing and

purposeful mothers. Both Eastern and Western cultures offer valuable insights into addressing these challenges through their unique concepts, beliefs, and cultural practices. In modern times, the importance of counseling support during pregnancy has been emphasized, particularly within the realm of Western psychology. Similarly, in the context of Buddhist culture, there is a discussion of Buddhist psychological ideas that can be applied to the experience of pregnancy and motherhood. Delving into how Buddhism can contribute to making this phase of a woman's life meaningful requires a critical examination of the various ideas and perspectives within Buddhism that shed light on this transformative journey. Initially, the focus of discussion should be on the preparation of unmarried girls for pregnancy.

Preparation for pregnancy and motherhood by girls even before marriage: Eastern ideology emphasizes lifelong preparation for marriage and motherhood, focusing on physical and mental aspects starting at a young age. Marriage is regarded as a significant milestone; often referred to as a 'second birth' in Eastern literary traditions. The Dasabrāhmaṇa Jātaka from the Jātakatṭhakathā discusses two marriage customs: Vivāha involves a daughter's marriage after receiving gold and silver jewelry from her parents, while Āvāha refers to a bridegroom's role in choosing a bride.

“Paveccchantīti attano dhītaro hiraññasuvaṇṇaṃ gahetvā paresaṃ denti. Te evaṃ paresaṃ dadamānā vivāhanti nāma, attano puttānaṃ atthāya gaṇhamānā āvāhanti nāma.” (Dasabrāhmaṇa Varṇanā, Buddha Jayanti Tipitakaya app, 23th Oct 2022.)

Buddhist texts cover many aspects of marriage, focusing on a few points here. The Uggaha sutta provides guidance to young women preparing for marriage.

“Then the Buddha said to those women: “So, girls, you should train like this: ‘Our parents will give us to a husband wanting what’s best, out of kindness and compassion. We will get up before him and go to bed after him, and be obliging, behaving nicely and speaking politely.’ That’s how you should train. So, girls, you should train like this: ‘Those our husband respects—mother and father, ascetics and brahmins—we will honor, respect, revere, and venerate, and serve with a seat and a drink when they come as guests.’ That’s how you should train. We will be deft and tireless in doing domestic duties for our husband, such as knitting and sewing. We will have an understanding of how to go about things in order to complete and organize the work. We will know what work our husband’s domestic bondservants, servants, and workers have completed, and what they’ve left incomplete. We will know who is sick, and who is fit or unwell. We will distribute to each a fair portion of fresh and cooked foods. We will ensure that any income our husbands earn is guarded and protected, whether money, grain, silver, or gold. We will not overspend, steal, waste, or lose it.” (AN 5, Uggahasutta, <https://suttacentral.net> , 16th April 2024) Thus, Buddhism provides clear instructions that a young woman should receive guidance before her marriage.

Therefore, according to Buddhist literature, it is crucial for daughters to receive marriage guidance to establish a positive environment for motherhood and pregnancy. Buddhist literature mentions carefully choosing a wife, considering the seven types of wives outlined in the Bhariyā sutta in the Aṅguttaranikāya. The Buddha discussed these seven types of wives with Sujātā, who was Anāpāṇḍika’s daughter-in-law, emphasizing the importance of this selection process.

“Sujātā, a man may have these seven kinds of wives. What seven? One like a slayer, one like a robber, one like a mistress,

one like a mother, one like a sister, one like a companion, and one like a handmaid.” “Satta kho imā sujāte, purisassa bhariyāyo. Katamā satta? Vadhaka samā corī samā ayya samā mātā samā bhagini samā sakhī samā dāsi samā.” (A.N-4, 2006: P.56)

The statement suggests that a husband should ideally have four types of wives: one who acts as a mother, another as a friend, a third as a sister, and the fourth as a maid. Conversely, there are three types of wives who are not suitable for a husband: one who behaves like a thief, another who tries to dominate her husband, and a third who takes on the role of being the head of the household. If a husband ends up with an unsuitable wife from these categories, it can severely disrupt his life. Hence, every parent concurs on choosing a suitable spouse for their son. Nevertheless, in Buddhist literature, the Visākā’s narrative showcases the father’s tenfold counsel, as documented in the *Āṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā*, which can be summarized as follows. (Visākavatthu, Caṭṭasaṅgāyana Tipiṭaka app, 19th Oct 2022)

1. Avoid giving the in-fire to outside.
2. Avoid taking the in-fire from outside.
3. Be generous to those who are generous.
4. Refrain from being generous to those who are not.
5. Be generous to those who are generous or not.
6. Maintain comfort in your surroundings.
7. Seek nourishment joyfully.
8. Rest contentedly.
9. Handle fire cautiously.

10. Show reverence to the divine within.

“Anto aggi bahī na nīharitabbo, bāhirato aggi na anto pavesetabbo, ye dadanti tesam yeva dātabbam, ye na denti tesam na dātabbam, dadantassāpi adadantassāpi dātabbam, sukham nisīditabbam, sukham bhuññitabbam, sukham nipajjitabbam, aggi paricaritabbam, anto devatā namassitabbam.” (Catṭasaṅgāyana Tipiṭaka app, Visākavatthu, 19th Oct 2022.)

Being an exemplary father, Visākā’s father provided invaluable guidance to his daughter on how to navigate her daily interactions with three key family members in her husband’s household: the father-in-law (Sasura), mother-in-law (Sassu), and husband (Sāmika). This advice is regarded as instrumental in ensuring a daughter’s successful marriage, as documented in Buddhist literature. Additionally, the Uggaha sutta in the Aṅguttaranikāya presents five pieces of advice specifically tailored for a daughter to navigate her married life effectively.

“Wherefore, girls, train yourselves in this way: To whatsoever husband our parents shall give us wishing our weal, seeking our happiness, compassionate, because of compassion, for him we will rise early, be the last to retire, be willing workers, order all things sweetly and be gentle-voiced.”

“Tasmātiha, kumāriyo, evaṃ sikkhitabbam, yassa vo mātāpitāro bhattuno ... pubbuṭṭhāyiniyo, pacchānipātiniyo, kiṅkārapaṭissāviniyo, manāpacriniyo, piyavādiniyo’ti.” (A.N-3, 2008: P.29)

Even today, parents have the opportunity to impart such advice to their daughters. Through these instructions and guidance, a daughter can cultivate the foundation for a fulfilling married life from a young age, with the ultimate rewards of motherhood and pregnancy.

Preparing for Pregnancy: Essential Steps for Married Women: An unmarried girl becomes a wife after marriage. The time will come for her to follow the advice given before marriage to ensure a successful married life. There are a lot of physical and mental dedications made by a woman in Eastern countries especially to have a healthy pregnancy. According to Buddhist teachings, parents undergo early preparations in anticipation of welcoming a blessed child into their lives. The *Soṇananda Jātaka* in *Jātakapāli* discusses the mother's efforts in this regard. When a mother desires a child, she meticulously considers the alignment of stars (*nakkhatta*), seasons, and years. Additionally, she engages in worship of deities to fulfill her wish for a successful conception, as depicted in the following passage:

“Desiring offspring, she pays homage to the deities; she inquiries about the stars, the seasons, and the years.” “*Ākaṅkamānā puttaphalaṃ devatāya namassati; nakkhattāni pucchati utusaṃvaccharāni ca.*” (Kh-N, *Jātakapāli*-2, 2006: p. 316)

Subsequently, she experiences a longing for pregnancy. During this time, the manner in which she nurtures love within her heart by envisioning the baby she hopes to see is illustrated as follows:

“She has a natural desire for conception and her heart is filled with happiness at the thought.” “*Tassā utumhi nhātāya hoti gabbhassa vakkamo; tena dohaḷini hoti suhadā tena uccati.*” (Kh-N, *Jātakapāli*-2, 2006: p. 316)

According to the *Mahatanhāsankaya sutta* in *Majjhimanikāya*, the Buddha discussed the natural process by which a human being enters a mother's womb as follows:

“If monks, there is here a coitus of the parents and it is the mother’s season and the gandhabba is present, it is on the conjunction of these three things that there is conception.” “Yato ca kho bhakkhave, mātā pitaroca sannipatitā honti, mātāca utuni hoti, gandhabboca paccupaṭṭhito hoti- evaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sannipātā gabbhassāvakanti hoti.” (M.N-1, 2007: P.322)

Once a woman becomes pregnant, she is described as a longing lady (Dohaḷini) due to her affectionate emotions, and she is referred to as Suhadā. Any tasks or responsibilities the mother needs to fulfill are typically arranged by her husband and other family members, serving as a form of mental support for the mother’s actions in pursuit of a healthy baby, as depicted in Buddhist literature. Various cultural factors, diverse beliefs, astrology, and Eastern philosophies significantly impact a pregnant mother, providing her with both physical and mental support. Nonetheless, once she gives birth to the baby growing in her womb, she attains the most valuable position in the world: motherhood. Buddhism elaborates on her role in several instances, acknowledging the profound significance of her maternal responsibilities.

Buddhist Perspectives on Pregnancy, Childbirth, Nursing, and Child-Rearing

The Buddha illuminated the significance and practicality of motherhood by demonstrating how a woman nurtures a child. Despite attaining Buddhahood, he honored the importance of motherhood by personally attending to his mother's passing, highlighting its supreme nature. (Apadānapāli, mahaprajāpati-theriapadāna)

Following the birth of a baby, the mother nourishes the infant with her blood, which transforms into milk. The Mahātaṇhāsaka sutta in Majjhimanikāya states that a child

is typically born after nine or ten months, with the mother experiencing great anxiety throughout pregnancy and childbirth due to the heavy burden. After birth, the mother feeds the newborn with her life's blood, which is considered "life-blood" according to the teachings for those on the noble path, specifically referring to mother's milk.

"Then monks, at the end of nine- or ten-months' carrier the fetus in her womb with great anxiety for her heavy burden. Then, at the end of nine or ten months, the mother gives birth with great anxiety about her heavy burden. When it is born, she feeds it with her life's blood. For this, monks, are 'life-blood' in the discipline for an Ariyan, that is to say, mother's milk." "Tamenam bhikkhave, mātā nava vā dasa vā māse gabbham kucchinā pariharati mahatā saṃsayena garubhāram. Tamenam bhikkhave mātā navannaṃ vā dasannaṃ vā māsānaṃ accayena vijāyati mahatā saṃsayena garubhāram. Tamenam jātaṃ samānaṃ sakena lohiteṇa poṣeti. Lohitañhetam bhikkhave, ariyassa vinaye yadidaṃ mātuthaññaṃ." (M.N-1, 2007: P.322)

Additionally, the Buddha mentioned in the Indaka sutta in Saṃyuttanikāya that birth occurs after nine months, starting with the formation of Kalala, then Abbuda, Pesī, and finally Ghana where physical features like hair, down, and nails develop. The fetus sustains and grows through the food and drink consumed by the mother.

"At first the Kalala takes birth, and thence the Abbuda. Therefrom the pesī grows, developing as Ghana in its turn. Now in Ghana doth appear the hair, the down, the nails. And whatsoever food and drink the mother of his takes, thereby the man in mother's womb doth live and grow." "Paṭamaṃ kalalaṃ hoti kalalā hoti abbudaṃ; abbudā jāyate pesi pesi nibbattaṭi ghano; ghanā pasākhā jāyanti kesa loma nakhāpi ca. Yañcassa

bhuñjati mātā annaṃ pānañca bhojanaṃ; tena so tattha yāpeti mātukucchagato naro. (S.N-1, 1917: P.263)

In modern medical science, it's understood that the baby remains in the womb for about 36 weeks. aligning with the Buddha's indication, However, post-birth, feeding becomes paramount. The Mūgapakkha Jātaka in Jātakatṭhakathā recounts how Prince Temiya was nursed by a suitable mother among sixty-four candidates. The rejection of other mothers is detailed in the Jātaka commentary for various reasons.

When an infant nurses from the tallest mother's hip, their neck stretches; when they nurse from the shortest mother, their spine may bend; nursing from the thinnest mother may cause leg pain, while nursing from the fattest mother may lead to faulty legs. A very dark-skinned mother is cooler, while a very light-skinned mother is warmer. If a mother has sagging breasts while nursing, it may affect the baby's nose shape. Some mothers' milk can be acidic or sour. Because of these factors, Devi Chandra was chosen as the best mother to nurse the little prince out of sixty-four mothers (Buddha Jayanti Tipitakaya app, Mūgapakkha Jātaka Vaṇṇanā).

All mothers are cautious about how they feed their children, as mentioned in the quote. The mother, known as Jānenti, feeds the baby from her life-blood transformed into milk, sings lullabies, and keeps the baby warm with her breasts. Hence, she is referred to as Tosenti in Pali.

“Thanakhīrena gītena aṅgapāvuraṇena; rodantaṃ puttaṃ toseti toseti tena vuccati.” (Kh-N, Jātakapāli-2, 2006: P.316) Moreover, during heavy rain and storms, a mother protects her baby exceptionally well. In Pali, she is referred to as Posenti, as stated in the following quote: “Tato vātātape ghore mamaṃ katvā udikkhati; dāraṃ appajānantaṃ posenti tena vuccati” (Kh-N,

Jātakapāli-2, 2006: p.316). Queen Mahamāyā, while pregnant with the Bodhisatta, carefully protected her womb according to the Pujāwaliya. In Sinhalese society, mothers continue to follow these practices even today.

When the Bodhisatta was in the womb, Queen Māyā took great care to ensure his well-being. She envisioned the baby's cute and healthy appearance after birth, safeguarding the womb as delicately as one carries a bowl full of oil. She abstained from consuming anything warm, cool, bitter, or spicy throughout the nine months of pregnancy, not even tasting the food. She never ate until full, avoided sleeping on her back or left side, and instead rested on her right side. Fearing the risk of miscarriage, she refrained from strenuous activities and opted for bed rest. (Ñāṇavimala Thera, Kirielle edition, Pujawaliya, 1951: p.132).

These actions of parents, especially the mother's actions, greatly influence the child's development and behavior as they grow.

This illustrates how a mother nurtures her child, highlighting the pivotal role of the mother in shaping the child's personality. The mother plays a direct role in fostering positive thinking and skills in school-age children, particularly during their formative play-age years. Buddhist perspectives on this matter can be delineated as follows.

According to Buddhist teachings, the initial state of the mind, referred to as the first Citta, is inherently bright or luminous. This brightness is likened to the purity of a child's mind. In the Citta sutta found in Aṅguttaranikāya, the Buddha discusses the pristine nature of the mind before it becomes tainted.

“The mind, monks, is luminous. However, it becomes tainted by external defilements.” “Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭha” (A.N-1, 2006: p.8).

Western philosopher John Locke also acknowledges this concept by stating that a child is born with a blank state and their subsequent behavior is influenced by their experiences. (UGC net paper 2, Education, 23th Oct 2022).

During childhood, it's crucial for parents to instill positive qualities in their children. These early influences significantly impact their future behavior and attitudes as adults. The Buddha, in the Mahatāṇhāsakaṃ sūta found in Majjhimanikāya, recommends providing children with suitable toys that aid in the development of their senses.

“When the child has grown and developed their senses, they engage in various play activities suitable for children, such as playing with toy ploughs, carts, spinning tops, and toy bows.” (“So bhikkhave, kumāro vuddhimanvāya indriyānaṃ paripākamanvāya yāni tāni kumārakānaṃ kīlāpanakāni tehi kīlāti, seyyathidaṃ? Vaṅkakaṃ ghaṭikaṃ mokkhacikaṃ ciṅguikaṃ pattāḷhakaṃ rathakaṃ dhanukaṃ.” M.N-1, 2007: p.322).

In summary, Buddhist teachings emphasize the natural brightness of the mind and the importance of early childhood experiences in shaping a person's character and behavior. Parents play a crucial role in their child's development, as highlighted in the Sabrahmakula sūta found in Aṅguttaranikāya, which outlines several responsibilities parents should fulfill.

“Mother and father do much for children, they bring them up, nourish, and introduce them to the world.” “Bahukārā

bhikkhave, mātāpitaro puttānaṃ, āpādakā posakā, imassa lokassa dassetāroti. (A.N-1, 2006: P.115)

Therefore, children hold immense value for parents in this world. This sentiment was expressed by King Suddhodana to the Buddha upon the latter's arrival in Kimbulvatpura, reflecting the universal love that parents feel for their children even today. This deep affection is further elaborated in the Mahāvaggapāli of the Vinayaṭṭaka.

“Lord, when the Lord went forth there came to be not a little sorrow, likewise when Nanda did; it was extreme when Rāhula did. Affection for a son, Lord, cuts into the skin, having cut into the skin it cuts into the hide, having cut into the hide it cuts into the flesh ... the ligaments, ... the bones, having cut into the bones and reaching the marrow, it abides.” (S.N-1, 2006: P. 12)

This sentiment is echoed in the Natthiputtasama sutta of Saṃyuttanikāya, stating that there is no other love comparable to a parent's love for their child ‘natthi putta samaṃ pemaṃ’ (S.N-1, 2006: p. 12). Additionally, parents derive joy from their children, as mentioned in the Nandati sutta in Saṃyuttanikāya ‘nandati puttehi puttimā’ (S.N-1, 2006: p. 12). Nevertheless, parents always strive to provide their children with the best education.

All parents strive to secure the finest education for their children because education holds paramount importance in societal functioning. People regard education as a metaphorical eye that allows one to perceive the world. In contemporary society, individuals without education are often perceived as lacking wisdom. This sentiment is echoed in Sanskrit literature, particularly the Pratya Śataka, which emphasizes the significance of knowledge and learning. The text describes education as a

hidden treasure that brings joy, fame, and fulfillment to those who possess it, enabling them to excel as scholars and teachers, even in foreign lands. A learned person is esteemed more highly than a wealthy individual, as stated in the Pratya Śataka (“Vidyā nām narasya rūpamadhikam vidyā praguptam dhanam, vidyā bhogakarī yasassukhakarī vidyā gurūnām guruḥ, vidyā bandhu jano videśagamane vidyā param dayivatam, vidyā raja supūsitā bhuvi naro vidyā vihinam paśuḥ.”)(Pratya Śataka 11th edition, 2013, Stanza 4, p.2).

The Maṅgala sutta in Khuddakanikāya underscores the auspiciousness of studying and acquiring knowledge in one’s life.

“To have much learning, to be skilful in handicraft, well trained in discipline, and to be of good speech, this is an auspicious fact.” (“Bāhusaccaṃ ca sippañca vinayo ca susikkhito...” Kh.N, Khuddakapāṭhapāli, Maṅgala sutta, Nendimala: Buddhist cultural center, 2006, p.6).

This belief resonates with contemporary parents who prioritize their children’s education. In Buddhism, parents are regarded as the primary teachers, guiding lights, and sources of reverence for their children. The Sabrahmaka sutta in Aṅguttaranikāya portrays parents as Brahmans and Āhuneyyas, emphasizing their role in shaping their children’s lives. (“Brahmāti mātā pitaro, pubbācariyāti vuccare; āhuneyyāca puttānam, pajāya anukampakā” A.N-1, 2006: p.115). The Buddha also symbolized parents as the eastern quarter of an individual’s life, highlighting their foundational importance ‘Mātāpitā disāpubba’ (D.N-3, 1921: p.179). Looking at it from that perspective, it’s evident that a mother’s role extends beyond childbirth; it also involves fostering a positive and fulfilling life for the child within the family dynamic. This notion encapsulates

the essence of real motherhood as emphasized in Buddhist interpretation.

Exploring Buddhist Literature: Insights into Non-Fertile Women and Challenges of Motherhood: Particularly in Buddhist teachings, karma and invisible forces are identified as other fundamental causes for infertility among women. However, delving deeper into the concept of karma is not pertinent to this discussion. Therefore, Buddhist literature often delves into narratives such as the story of Riddi wives, which sheds light on the experiences of infertile women. Additionally, Āyurveda offers physical treatments to enhance fertility in women. Ultimately, when their mindset shifts, even infertile women can experience changes due to special circumstances. Due to the influence of a malevolent spirit known as the Sanni Devil, the Riddi queens faced infertility. However, they later engaged in planting a cotton chena and crafting a shawl from the cotton, which they then offered as a robe to Dipankara Buddha. As a result, they were able to conceive. This practice, known as the Riddi Yāgaya, is a form of ritual called *śānthikarma* that is observed in the Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka. (Kariyawasam, Tissa, 1995.) Initially, this Riddi Yāgaya, known as *śānthikarma*, appears to function akin to a form of psychological therapy for women.

In this context, challenges related to motherhood are limited to matters such as abortion, miscarriages, stillbirths, and other pregnancy-related complications. Abortion as an intentional act is also excluded from Buddhism. According to the Buddha's teachings, ending a person's life from the onset of their first consciousness until their natural passing is viewed as human murder. It is called as *Manussaviggaha*. (Vinaya piṭaka, *pārājikāpāli*) The consequences of abortion can be seen as follows. As illustrated in the *Sattaputthakhādi Petavatthu*, a

woman who intentionally harmed her husband's second wife's children in a past life was reborn as a hungry ghost after death. She gives birth to and consumes seven children throughout the day, yet her hunger remains insatiable. (Petavatthupali, sattaputtakhādi petavatthu) This narrative highlights the belief in Buddhism that abortion is a sinful act. It underscores the understanding that motherhood is a profound responsibility that cannot be taken lightly, reflecting the reverence for motherhood within Buddhism.

Conclusion

Upon examining the topics discussed above, it seems evident that Buddhism has offered women accurate guidance on motherhood and pregnancy. It can be inferred that Buddhism has effectively provided psychological counseling in these areas.

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