

How to Choose a Partner to Marry According to the Story of *Sīlavīmaṃsana*

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Abstract

A married life is a part of the life of human beings. Of the three ages, a married person usually spends life with his family in the second age and the third age (the age of 20–75). And he can get a pleasant family through a good partner. Reversely, he may possess an unpleasant family for his bad partner. Therefore, choosing a partner to marry can be suggested as an important decision for a married life. An unpleasant married life is a very big problem for a married person. In a married life, one of the causes of getting various difficulties may be regarded as the choice of wrong partner. The story of *Sīlavīmaṃsana* can give the way to provide to be able to choose right partner. This paper will be presented for describing the way to get a right partner extracted from the *Sīlavīmaṃsana Jātaka* in the *Jātaka* stories. Through this paper, a good family can be built with a good partner and finally the rest of the life can be passed peacefully.

Keywords: marriage, *Sīlavīmaṃsana Jātaka*, partner.

Introduction

As a married person, a pleasant married life is what he hopes for life. For a married person, his life partner is an important friend. Just as having a bad companion, living with a bad partner can make one get an unpleasant life. As a reverse of that living with a good partner can make a happy life just like associating with a good friend. So to build a pleasant married life, people try to make well-preparation in various ways. One of them is selecting a suitable life partner.

However, in the Sattajaṭila Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya¹, the Buddha said that it was very difficult to guess who is good or bad.♦ According to this statement, it may be very difficult to get a good person to marry with. In order to solve that problem, people make the criteria to look for a right partner. In the story of *Sīlavīmaṃsana* stated in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, there can be found the valuable criteria to choose a right partner.

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¹ A I, 78.

♦ the things difficult to know: morality, purity, intellectual level and wise.

What is Jātaka?

Jātaka means birth story, the stories of a previous births of the Buddha¹. The books of Jātaka can be found in the Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanta Piṭaka. The doctrines in the Jātaka Text are recorded as the noteworthy teachings of the previous births of the Buddha. So the Jātaka Pāḷi Canon is purely the teachings of the Buddha. These are expressed as the stories in the Jātaka commentary. Buddhist people believe that the Jātaka commentary was written by an Indian Theravadin monk named Ven. Mahābuddhaghosa in the 5th century AD².

The structure of Jātaka commentary is- 1. the story of the present (during the Buddha period), 2. the story of the past (the previous life of the Buddha), 3. the teaching and 4. the connection. In the commentaries, there are 547 stories³. In Buddhist countries, the Jātaka stories are used in the various fields of society such as criterion of morality, proverbs, sayings, literature, entertainment, decoration in religious building, etc.

One of the Jātaka stories called Sīlavīmaṃsana Jātaka is well-known as an expression about the importance of morality. And the story is named after a scene; the investigation on morality. Besides the importance of morality, also the criteria to choose a right partner can be seen in that story.

Sīlavīmaṃsana Jātaka

The story of Sīlavīmaṃsana is recorded as a fifth story of Kāliṅga Vagga, Catuttha Nipāta of the Jatakaṭṭhakathā. This is the 305th story of Jātaka commentary⁴.

Meaning of *Sīlavīmaṃsana*

The word Sīlavīmaṃsana is a combination of two words: "Sīla" and "Vīmaṃsana". In the Pāḷipada Piṭaka Kyan-Nhun, Sīla is defined as- nature, practice, habit, honour, ethic, morality, rule and law⁵. And Vīmaṃsana is defined as- investigation, checking, finding and test⁶. Therefore, Sīlavīmaṃsana can be translated as "Investigation whether a moral person or not".

The Story of *Sīlavīmaṃsana*

¹ PTS, 530.

² Buddhaghosa Biography.

³ wdyd"mef? 8? 202/

⁴ JA III, 16-19.

⁵ ygVdy'? 4/ 233-234/

⁶ ygVdy'? 1/ 452-453/

Once, the Buddha was born as a Brahmin. When he grew up, he went and studied in a professor's house. He is a leader of many other students. The professor has a beautiful daughter. One day he wished his daughter to marry with one of his pupils. So he made a test. He ordered them to bring a valued thing when no one sees. Then the pupils did so. Of the pupils, only the leader brahmin did not take anything. When the professor saw him, the professor asked the reason "Why don't you take anything?" At that time, the brahmin replied, "There is no secret for an evil. So I don't take anything". In Pāḷi Canon, it is recorded as;

*"Natthi loke raho nāma, pāpakammaṃ pakubbato;
Passanti vanabhūtāni, taṃ bālo maññaṃ raho."*¹

(In the world, there is no secret for an evil doer.

It is seen by the gods. A foolish thinks that he made a secret.)

The teacher was very pleased with this answer. He liked his good manner and decided to make his daughter marry with that young brahmin. Then the teacher repaid the pupils to their respective possessions.²

The Criteria which a Life Partner Should Possess

According to the story, it can be found that a right partner should be

- under the decision of parents,
- an educated person,
- a moral person and
- the one who really loves.

1. Getting the advice of parents

In the Sīlavīmaṃsana story, it can be found that the decision of parents is very important in that region and time. Moreover, also in the Siṅgāla Sutta, the authority of parents to arrange marriage can be studied significantly. In the story, it can be found that the teacher managed the whole process of choose till the end. Therefore, of the four factors, this first factor can be assumed as the most important one. And it can also be regarded that according to that story, following the decision of parents makes a suitable choice for life. This factor agrees with the modern criteria; getting on with one's family, and reliability, getting truth of one's family¹.

¹ Zm? 1? 95/

² JA III, 16-19.

¹ 7 characteristics of an ideal partner

2. Being an educated person

In the story, it can also be seen obviously that the teacher selected only his pupils to give them a chance to marry with his daughter. He did not give the chance to other people. Therefore, it can be assumed that after the first factor, choosing an educated person is very important as a second choice in a married life. Then of the factors are chosen in that educated people. Therefore, this factor may be more important than the other two. Moreover, only an educated person can be acceptable intellectual level, sharing values, same ideas and same characteristics, empathy, integrity and having ability to talk about the future together². These are the qualities which an ideal partner should possess, in the present day.

3. Being a Moral Person

This factor can be found evidently in the story. In the story, the teacher made a choosing by four criteria. But he made a test for a factor he could not choose easily. According to this fact, it can be known that the morality of a person cannot be known easily and a moral person does not hesitate to give himself up for morality. In modern days, people want a good relationship built by the ability of maturity, openness, honesty, respect and independence and reliability³. In fact, these abilities are in accordance with morality. Only a moral person is endowed with these abilities.

4. True love

In a married life, everybody wants the person who loves him or her. And nobody wants the one who does not care about him or her. In this story, love is put as a criterion to choose a life partner. The teacher chooses a person who loves his daughter. This choice is not seen obviously but in the test, it is found together with morality. The story tells that the professor ordered his pupils to bring a valuable thing in their family. In this fact, the professor had already known that people could not give their valuable one to a common person. So he might believe that only the one really loves his daughter, will he give a valued thing to get her. Therefore, it can be regarded that this test does not neglect love. Furthermore, when the Bodhisatta did not bring anything, the professor asked why. In his question, it can be guessed that the worry of father professor was, "Perhaps he did not love my daughter". Therefore, it can be assumed that love is an important factor to choose a life partner. Nowadays, the modern qualities to be an ideal partner are a sense of fun, a strong friendship, a sense of humour, romance, share values, being able to forgive and

² 17 Important qualities to look for in your life partner

³ Criteria for being a right partner

forget, an interest in one's life, affection, empathy and mutual respect¹. All these items are comprised in the factors of true love.

Conclusion

To sum up, the four criteria: getting the advice of parents, choosing an educated person, choosing a moral person and true love are very important to build a pleasant married life. These four criteria set in the *Sīlavīmaṃsana* story may provide effectively the modern society.

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တိပိဋက ပါဠိ-မြန်မာ အဘိဓာန်၊ အတွဲ-၈၊ သာသနာရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ၂၀၀၅။
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¹ 17 Important qualities to look for in your life partner