

Buddhist Perspective for the Balance of Family Life

*Phraudomsitthinayok

Introduction

These doctrines, under a virtuous frame, render a sustainable marriage life to husbands and wives in whom they live ordinary life smoothly and happily. Highly successful people measure themselves on seven key elements, Health, Family, Social, Financial, Business, Civic and Spiritual. They try to maintain a balance between these elements to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Ensures good health: Your mental and physical health is pivotal to your growth, and it also reflects on the overall health of your family. Striking a balance helps you lead a happy and contented life, it ensures your growth as an individual and secures your mental peace and well being. The said underlined doctrinal principles will be shown accordingly as follows: 1. Balanced livelihood (*samajīvidham*); 2. Benefits from the Buddhist doctrines; 3. The Buddhist doctrines for the balance of family life.

Balanced Livelihood (*samajīvidhamma*)

An pivotal Buddhist doctrine to help building up perfect balance towards marriage families called Balanced Livelihood (*samajīvidhamma*). It is the most important key factors we are discussing in which lies in “*samajīvisutta*” of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*. The Buddha addressed *NakulaPitā* and *NakulaMātā*.

From the *sutta*, the couples in marriage families who practice according to these principles are reckoned as the best of lay-disciples, male and female, in “intimate conversation”. To be more specific on this, the Longknee, the *Koḷiyan* or the *Dīghajāṇūsutta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya* gives a clearer explanation that; husbands and wives who expect to live their marriage life sustainably.

Balance in faith (*sama-saddhā*)

To be achieved in faith means one must believe in the Buddha and believe in the awakening of the *Tathāgata* (*arahant*), fully awakened (*sammāsambuddho*), adept in knowledge and conduct (*vijjācaranasampañño*), well going (*sugato*), a world-knower (*lokavitū*), incomparable (*anuttaro*), a tamer of tamable men (*purisadhammasārathī*), among *devas* and men the teacher (*sathādevamanussānaṃ*), Buddha, Exalted One (*bhagavāti*), (Look in The Longknee, the *Koḷiyan* (*DīghajāṇuSutta*) - E. M. Hare (tr.), 1978, p. 187) the nine characteristic of the Buddha.

In the commentary to *Aṅguttaranikāya* to *samajīvisutta*, *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, *Buddhaghosacāra* gave an explanation but did not explain in details about the balance in faith “*samasaddhātisaddhāyasamāekasadisā. . .*”. That is to be matched in faith, to be equal in faith. He also stated the significance that practices for householders even worthy to the Stream-Enterer (*sotāpanna*) and the Once-Returner (*sakadākāmi*) laity too.

PhraBrahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) mentioned *samajīvisutta* as in a book named, A Constitution for Living: Buddhist principles for a fruitful and harmonious life. In this book, he used the word *samajīvidhamma* or the compatible couple as the word “well matched” in *Tipiṭaka* and commentary. Moreover, he expounded *sama-saddhā* as the couple who has the same faith. Having compatible faith; they uphold the same religion, revere the same objects of worship, concepts, beliefs or principles, and share the same lines of interest- they are equally firm in all these or can reach agreement on them. They believe in the same thing or having in the same attitude. (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto, 2006, p. 49)

Balance in Virtue (*sama-sīla*)

To be achieved in virtue means the abstinence of the five precepts which are the most basic rules for general lay people. A good Buddhist couple is one who equipped with the observance of *pañca-sīla*. The five precepts or five rules of training (*sikkhāpadāni*) as exhibited in the *Dīghanikaya*:

1. Refraining from taking life,
2. Refraining from taking what is not given,
3. Refraining from sexual misconduct,
4. Refraining from lying speech,
5. Refraining from strong drink and sloth-producing drugs. (Maurice Walshe (tr.), 1987, p. 495)

Above mentioned fives are training rules that protect fearfulness from comes upon a layman life, a layman lives the home-life with confidence, the Exalted One says he [layman who observed those rules] is duly thrown into heaven. (E. M. Hare (tr.), p. 150)

In the commentary, *Buddhaghosacāra* expounded the meaning of the balance in virtue “*samasaddhātisaddhāyasamāekasadisāsīladisu pi es’evanayo. . .*”. That is to be matched in moral conduct, to be equal in moral conduct. This practice is even worthy to the Stream-Enterer (*sotāpanna*) and the Once-Returner (*sakadākāmi*) laity too.

PhraBrahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) mentioned *samasīla* means the couple who has the same level of morality. Having compatible morality; they have conduct, morality, ethics, manners and upbringing which are harmonious or compatible. (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto, p. 49)

However the balance in virtue can be two-way dimensions either good or bad as well. For example, if a husband violates the third *sīla* (*kamesumicchacāra*) or having an affair with the other woman. The trusted in him will be destroyed that can lead to the state of divorce.

In one hand, these basic practices ensure that each member in family will not violate others human rights. On the other hand, they also protect member by means of “marriage life insurance”. The life, asset, spouse, information and health will be, in sequence, safely protected and framed based on the concept of *pañca-sīla* and its functions. As a barrier to those undesirable devil behaviors, they can effectively protect member in a family from all infringements. As stated below, the functions of the five precepts as insurances to a marriage couple:

Balance in Generosity (*sama-cāga*)

To be achieved in generosity means having mind free of the stain of meanness, dwelling at home with heart purged of the stain of avarice mind free of the stain of meanness; freely bounteous, open-handed, gladly giving, yoke-mate to asking, he is a cheerful giver. (Look in The Longknee, the Koliyan (DīghajāṇuSutta) - E. M. Hare (tr.), p. 187)

In *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, the balance in generosity was defined as to be matched in generosity, to be equal in generosity which can be applied to the laity, the Stream-Enterer, and the Once-Returner.

PhraBrahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) stated *sama-cāga* means the couple who is openhandedness and willing to help others. Having compatible generosity; they are in accord, not conflict, with each other in their generosity, hospitality, munificence, sacrifice, and readiness to help others. (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto, p. 49)

If wife and husband understand the concept and significance of donation, they will make a living together for a long time because wealth is important in family life. It is the essential for the household life to make money and manage it properly. Therefore, in Buddhism donation is a practice of stinginess, which is a mental training that is not attached to the materials and objects especially to the money they gained. If wife and husband do not agree, they may always have an argument. That is why the Buddha highlights on giving (*dāna*) and generosity (*cāga*), especially to recluses.

To the researcher’s opinion the balance in generosity can be two dimensions either good or bad. For example, a couple who does not believe in the goodness of the Buddha as mentioned earlier can even live longer a family life together but it will definitely not be a quality one. Finally their lives after death will be those unhappy existences (*apāya-bhūmi*), woeful state, animal kingdom, hungry ghost sphere, host of demon.

In conclusion, balance in generosity means both of wife and husband are having mind free of the stain of meanness that should be matched and equivalent in *cāga*. They are openhandedness, willingness, and readiness to help others.

Balance in Wisdom (*sama-paññā*)

To be achieved in wisdom means being endowed with wisdom as to the way to the utter destruction of ill. (Look in The Longknee, the Koliyan (DīghajāṇuSutta) - E. M. Hare (tr.), p. 187) The wisdom in this context refers to the Buddhist wisdom which is intellectual ability to realize the *Dhamma* throughly understanding the world and life. Apart from that the said ability must also be one’s incompetence to classify things what is good, what is bad, and what is benefits that can lead one out from suffering.

In the commentary, *Buddhaghosacāra* gave an explanation that is to be matched in wisdom or to be equal in wisdom. He also stated that the significance of practices for householders even worthy to the Stream-Enterer and the Once-Returner laity.

Meanwhile, PhraBrahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) added *sama-paññā* means the couple who has compatible intelligence. Having compatible intelligence; they are sensible and can understand each other; they can at least reason with each other. (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto, p. 49)

From all of the above statements, it may be inferred that having equal wisdom does not signify only the worldly knowledge, but necessary refers to wisdom in using rational for understanding others sincerely and harmoniously. Due to the fact that either wife or husband is a human being a part of nature. In order to understanding the nature they should be truly understood as well. They are living together as a good friend (*kalayānamitta*).

In conclusion, being as the main principle for a couple to balance their marriage life, the teaching on the doctrine of balanced livelihood thus plays a crucial role in perpetuating good living of a couple as the meaning of the doctrine named *samajīvidhamma*. Of such, the four following elements are balance in faith, balance in virtue, balance in generosity, and balance in wisdom.

Conclusion

The balance in faith can be two-way dimensions either good or bad. For example, a couple who does not believe in the goodness of the Buddha as mentioned earlier can even live longer a family life but it will definitely not be a quality one. Finally their lives after death will be those unhappy existences, woeful state, animal kingdom, hungry ghost sphere, host of demon. Balance in faith refers to the sameness of believe of wife and husband towards the nine characteristic of the Buddha. They must be matched or equal in faith and attitude in two-way dimensions either good or bad that worthy for the Stream-Enterer and the Once-Returner laity.

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