

Example of research paper on women menstruation in buddhism

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



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Centuries ago, the Indian ideology stipulates that women should be under the supervision of men. In ancient India, women are always under the supervision of man. As a young girl, they are under the control and supervision of their father. After marriage, the lady becomes under the control and supervision of her husband. When old, the woman is automatically placed under the control and supervision of her son. However, in Buddhism, women were given equal rights, respect, and freedom as men were. This has not changed up till this moment. Buddhism granted women more respect and acknowledgement and insisted on equal social right and recognition for both men and women.

Buddhism can be described as religion of the practice and development of spirituality which leads to insight into the true nature of reality. The practice of meditation by Buddhist is aimed towards changing oneself in order to develop qualities of wisdom, awareness, and kindness. The religion of Buddhism originated in India and spread to several places in Asia. Today, Buddhism has risen to become the most popular religion in Asia even though the basic beliefs of Buddhism, at inception, contradicted the Indian empire's ideology.

In most of the world's religion, only male monks exist, this is also same in Buddhism. However, unlike most of the other religions, the belief in Buddhism is that women are as good as men. Initially though, Buddha did not allow women to become monks, he prompted equal respects for them.

Position of Women at the Time of the Buddha

During the time of the Buddha, in India, women are generally considered a burden on the household because all their responsibilities are to be taken care of by the male folks. Women are also seen as not capable to perform religious rites, for instance, the rite performed on the soul of the dead parents. As a result, women are seen as being of little use to the religious community. The birth of a female is therefore perceived as a sign of misfortune in the household. Parents therefore prefers having sons to having daughter, and would always wish and pray for the birth of sons that would continue the family tradition, perform religious rites, and also carry the family name after their departure from the earth surface.

A good instance of how miserable a parent feels when a girl-child is born can be seen in the event that occurred as regards King Pasenadi of Kosala whose wife gave birth to a daughter. When news came to the King informing him that his queen gave birth to a girl-child, the king immediately went to the Buddha and lamented. It was the Buddha that pacified him by letting him know that good daughters are as good as good sons. This advice given by Buddha to the King Pasenadi of Kosala, a close devotee of his, ascertains that Buddhism does not consider the birth of a daughter as a cause for worry and despair.

As stated in the book “ The First Buddhist Women”, Buddha initially was against women becoming nuns due to his believe that if women are allowed into the sangha, his teachings would only last for 500 years instead of 1000 years. As time went by, Buda gave approval for females to become monks if they so desire.

Buddhism accepts the physical and biological differences between the man and the woman but does not consider women as being inferior to men.

Buddhism consider men and women to be equally useful to the society. The Buddha laid emphases on the fruitful role the women can play and should play as a wife, a good mother in making the family life a success. Equal responsibility are expected from both the husband and the wives with each [person carrying out their task with equal level of dedication as far as the family is concerned. Buddhism admonishes the husband to see the wife as a partner, a companion, and a friend. On the issue of family affairs, whenever the husband is indisposed the wife is expected to take over. In fact, it is expected of the wife to get herself acquainted with the business, trade, business, or the company where the husband works, so as to be a good substitute for the husband when required. The above points show that in the Buddhist society the wife occupied an equal position with the husband.

Position of Women in Buddhism Today

In our world today, especially in Asia where majority of the populace are Buddhists, the women are treated with more respect than before, in the household and community at large. As we can see now, there are many female Buddhist who are contributing immensely to the society due to the

fact that they believe they are equal to the men.

Those women joining Buddhism do so in order to find freedom and independence in the society. Women who are Buddhists are treated equal as men in their household. Both men and women can achieve enlightenment or Nirvana as far as Buddhism is concerned. As more women joined the spiritual life of Buddhism, they get to face a prohibition from having sex. They are also not allowed to eat meat and imbibe alcohol just as their male counterpart.

In the early texts of Buddhism, any form of sexual activity is forbidden for nuns and monks. However, in some Buddhist community today, heterosexuality and homosexuality activities involving monks have been accepted without any great condemnation. In Korea and Japan, Buddhist priests are allowed to get married but the nuns is not allowed to do same. Also, the original rules of discipline for monks and nuns as recorded in the Vinaya-pitaka section of the Tripitaka, known also as Pali Canon, shows that nuns are given additional rule as opposed to those given to the monks. These additional rules include their subordination to monks. It ironically states that the most senior nuns are to be considered junior even to a monk that just got ordained a second ago.

In Buddhism, menstruation is seen as “ a natural physical excretion that women have to undergo every month, nothing more or less” (Buddha Dharma Education Association, 2004). However, some categories of the Buddhist culture have been infiltrated by some Hindu beliefs. In Taiwan for instance, menstruating women are characterized by Buddhists as polluted,

and are thus restricted, based on taboos, from performing certain activities. Women are made to believe that their menstrual periods are a dangerous vulnerability (Furth & Shu-Yueh, 1992). They refer to the menstrual blood, itself, as either “poison” or “dirt” (Furth & Shu-Yueh, 1992). Japanese Buddhism, in particular, are known to have a untiring anti-feministic approach (Jnanavira, 2006).

According to the Buddhist scriptures, the human body is generally said to be flawed and to be leaking filthy substances. There is no authentic Buddhist sutra that says that the female body is polluted. It is therefore wrong for any Buddhist to discriminate against women as a result of their menstruation. Some of the common taboos placed on the women as a result of menstruation include the non-entry into the temple for menstruating women and the ban of menstruating women from participating in folk rituals, and that they must avoid temples. Menstruating women are discouraged from meditation and are also not allowed to have contact with the priests. Also, they are prevented from partaking in ceremonies such as wedding. (Furth & Shu-Yueh, 1992).

Menstruating women are thought to lose Qi (i. e. spiritual energy). Since Buddhist belief that ghosts eat blood; then automatically, it is believed that a menstruating woman will therefore attract ghosts, thus, this makes her a threat to others and herself too. (Lhamo, 2003). It is supposed that women would stop menstruating when they enter the first level of arhatship (“stream-enterer”). This means that the person has attained nirvana through her effort and has proved her ability to remove the greatest barrier to enlightenment and control herself better. (Lhamo, 2003). In an interview

conducted on Taiwanese Buddhists, several general questions were asked as regards the nature of menstruation. Comment made by the Respondents varied but most added that it is unclean, dirty or shameful. (Furth & Shu-Yueh 1992)

In conclusion, the tenets of Buddhism does not, in any way, restrict the religious freedom of women neither does it take the women as inferior to the man nor does allow that the women be denied societal responsibilities/opportunities simply because they are women. The Buddha believes that the women has the ability to realize the truth, just as the men are. This explains why he permitted women be admitted into the order.

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