

Dec 16 Delhi Rape Case and Empowerment of Women in the Mind



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Abstract

Empowerment of women has to start in the mind. If we confine empowerment of women to only debates in parliament, street protests, media discussions and to university seminar halls, it will be difficult to attain our objectives. Beginning has to be made in the mind and then spread outwards. Woman empowerment is thought of as if it were a milestone that can be reached externally. The fact is empowerment of women or lack of it exists in the mind first. If it is in the mind, it is bound to manifest in the external, societal world and if the personal mental attitude of someone is not conducive to it, it is just going to be ephemeral lip service at best. In this paper, emphasis is that without the transformation of mental set up, empowerment of women simply can't move an inch in a truly substantive manner. Amendments to criminal laws, more police personnel on the ground, more CCTVs and creating awareness among the members of public as regards women being equally important in the scheme of nature will help but all such measures would fail to address the root cause of the issue. This paper therefore brings in the efficacy of the practical and scientific essence of teaching of Gautam Buddha that is Vipassana Meditation in ridding mind of its old sankharas i.e. reactions. This makes people automatically fall in love with all living beings and generate compassion and friendship towards one and all.

Misplaced Focus

Our focus is still not at the place where it should be. Former People's President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said, "If India is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel three key societal members can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher."

The beauty of idea is remarkable but the stress is misplaced. If the minds of the father, the mother and the teachers are habitually reactive and thus, not trained enough to distinguish between right and wrong India won't be a developed country at least in mind sector. Sure, we are a country of billion plus people and there must be millions of fathers, mothers and teachers around. Then, why doesn't the change take place? Because when fathers and mothers themselves

are not mentally strong, the question of a nation of 'beautiful minds' doesn't arise.

Of teachers: they siphon off funds meant for food under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) for poor government school students. This corruption too begins in the mind just like any other type.

Although the idea of 'Corruption free India,' and 'India of a beautiful minds' is the noble one and its attainment is paramount, the ideal must be tried not at fathers, mothers and teachers level but through reforming the minds of fathers, mothers and the teachers.

Universal malady requires universal medicine

All humanity suffers from common collective ill. We are all victims and oppressors too. We are all majorities and minorities at

the same time. We are both men and women simultaneously. Just think how variously we think and how many roles we did during a course of 24 hours. We are constantly changing and talking from different vantage points. So, lynching, mob mania, an eye for an eye attitude, antipathy, indifference, attachment, ignorance towards anyone are not the solution. Because that anyone is all of us. That devil of universal ill is in all our minds. This universal ill requires universal solution. Here, Buddha offers the solution.

Way back in the 6th century BC, Buddha placed mind at the centre of human behavior...

Buddh

Manopubba gama dhamm, Manose ha manomaya
Manasa ce padu hena ,Bhasati va karoti va
Tato na dukkhamanveti, Cakka va vahato pada
(Dhammpad 1.1)

Mind precedes all phenomena, Mind matters most, everything is mind made. If with an impure mind, one performs any action of speech or body, then suffering will follow that person as the cartwheel follows the foot of the draught animal.

Reverse equally holds true...

Manopubba gama dhamm, Manose ha manomaya
Manasa ce pasannena, Bhasati va karoti va
Tato na sukhamanveti, Chayava anapaayini
(Dhammpad 1.2)

Mind precedes all phenomena, Mind matters most, everything is mind made. If with a pure mind, one performs any action of speech or body then, happiness will follow that person as the shadow that never departs.

Therefore, mind has to be trained and purified. Devil has to be rooted out from the mind through the help of Buddha's teaching of *Sheel*, *Samadhi* and *Pragya*, chiefly through the practical essence of his teaching that is *Vipassana* meditation. Coupled with this, from cradle to grave kind of ethical education system has to be evolved, where women are not seen as mere objects of desire and sex. This would be *pariyatti*, theory part. Families and schools have to take the lead. There is no other alternative.

An eye for an eye attitude doesn't work

In Delhi rape case, four men have been sentenced to death by hanging for rape and murder. But rapes have not stopped in Delhi or across India rather they have increased.

Lesson 1: Tit for tat justice doesn't serve the purpose.

The total number of rape cases had gone up to 33,707 in 2013 from 24,923 in 2012. Even as number of rape cases in Delhi has doubled during the same period (NCRB stats). Mukesh Singh, man who drove the bus on that fateful night has no remorse that the woman was brutally raped and murdered. He said in BBC documentary that it is women's preference for short dresses, bars and discos which invite it for them. He went on to say that it was to teach her a lesson and that if she had not resisted, her life would have been spared.

Lesson 2: No high a punishment can change a convict's mind. Mukesh Singh still blames the victim for what happened to her. His mind is still violent.

Here, the importance of mind training comes into picture

The amendments to rape laws, unprecedented public protests, voluminous media scrutiny and even his death by hanging haven't changed his mind. Why? The message is we were ignoramus if we thought such deterrence would have positive impact.

Take another example where demand for more policemen on the streets can't be foolproof mechanism against crime against women rather people have to be involved. In the documentary the policeman on the beat, who was first to reach the victim said that there were 30 to 35 persons at the crime scene, he pleaded them to help out with the naked victims but no one did.

Lesson 3: Rapists alone were not brutal in their assault; they simply came from an insensitive lot like you and me.

The vengeance with which the defence lawyer A. P. Singh would set his daughters and sisters on fire if they indulged in premarital sex shows as if rape accused did nothing abnormal.

As if hanging out with a male friend with parents' permission is more shaming, demeaning and brutal than actually raping and murdering a woman.

Lesson 4: Violence begets violence. Defence lawyer is defending the rape and murder accused and further threatening to kill more. He is reacting because he gets paid for it. He is craving (*tanha*) for money and fame (ego satisfaction) in this high profile case.

The most inappropriate quip has come from the other Defence lawyer, M. L. Sharma, "We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no place for a woman."

Lesson 5: First, he chooses to ignore the fact that he was born of a woman himself. Like all other creatures. He is ignorant of our culture. Nature created two sexes as equal. If we had had sati, India gave to world a profound thinker like Buddha too, who at the minutest phenomenon found no distinct sexes. It is neither male nor female, it is *anatta*, i.e., self less, egoless, constantly changing.

That's why addressing the mind is the only solution.

Mind is the engine which drives the bogey of our complete existence comprising our thoughts, bodily actions and other verbal actions. The finding of Buddha is that the mind is the fountainhead of our existence; chiefly its major constituent, thoughts alone are responsible for our other actions namely bodily and verbal. For instance, when a man decides to assault any woman or tries to repress any woman, mentally, physically, sexually, verbally or in any other way, though a person is doing it, in effect, it is the work of his conditioned mind as exemplified by his thoughts and as manifested in turn by his physical actions. So the current situation of lack of empowerment of women can be summarized as below.

World doesn't change because man doesn't change and man (or woman) doesn't change because his or her mind doesn't change. If mind changes, the content of mind that is the thoughts

will change and because thoughts have been changed, the other manifestations of mind, for example, bodily and verbal actions will change for good. True empowerment of both man and woman and society will begin then...

Purity of Mind

This state of purity of mind is of utmost importance. According to Buddha, the law of nature (Dhamm) is that it rewards such noble volition. These days known by scientists as biochemical reactions in mind and body producing feel good hormones during relaxed state of *Dhyaan*, meditation.

Sankharas and Sensations

According to Buddha, our mental reactions (*sankharas*) create miseries for us. He said each and every mental thought is accompanied by a bodily sensation. *Vedana samosarana sabbe Dhamm*. (Anguttara-nikaya and Dasakanipata). Even the most transient thought that arises within the mind is accompanied by a sensation within the body. This was a great discovery of the Buddha. We judge every sensation as good or bad and pleasant or unpleasant and reaction starts for either sustaining or avoiding it. Thus, we generate *tanha* (craving or aversion) in response to them. It is liking towards pleasant and disliking towards unpleasant, which later become craving and aversion both called by the same term *tanha* by Buddha because if it is extreme liking or desire for something, it has to be simultaneously extreme disliking against its absence. They are two wheels of the same cart, both can only move together. Then, *upadaan*, attachment is built.

The most important finding of super scientist Tathagat was that craving or aversion is not to the liquor, some drug, some food, some person, situation, success, failure, sex, luxurious home, car or designer clothes per se, fame or name but to the sensations these sense objects or emotions give rise to. Even before Buddha, it was believed that craving and aversion towards things, situations and persons lead to suffering and that such situations are to be tackled, however, no teacher of that age realized that

craving or aversion is not to these sense objects but to the sensations generated by them.

He gave the example of a black bull and a white bull, one representing the sense doors and the other the sense objects, tied together with a rope. Neither the black bull nor the white bull is the bondage: the rope is the bondage. Buddha said that the rope of *tanha* is the bondage. Every he or she generates it in response to *vedana* that is sensations—*vedana paccaya tanha in paticcasammupada sutta*, (Dependent Origination). This was the great discovery of the Enlightened One. He became an enlightened person because of this. There were teachers even before Buddha who taught that one should not generate *lobh* (craving) and *dosh* (aversion). Buddha explained that *lobh* and *dosh* would last as long as there was *moha*. He advised us to come out of *moha*. *Moha* is ignorance or *avidya*. One doesn't know what is happening inside one's mind and body. One doesn't know the real cause of *lobh* and *dosh*. He taught strike at the root of the problem and come out of misery by working at sensations.

As long as one is not aware of sensations, one keeps fighting with outside objects, thinking, "This is ugly" or "This is not ugly." You are thinking of the black bull or the white bull as the cause of the bondage. In fact, the bondage is the craving or aversion that one generates in response to sensations. An alcoholic thinks that he is addicted to alcohol. In fact, he is addicted to the sensations; he feels when he drinks alcohol.

The whole human suffering is just due to our constant rising craving or aversion. We react to people, situations, feelings, thoughts and things. Never accepting the present moment as it is, always being dissatisfied with the present reality. See the reactions of two defence lawyers; they don't accept that a grave crime has been committed. Therefore, for sexual exploitation to stop or woman empowerment to begin, mind has to be trained, that neither this pleasure lasts nor its absence. This has to be individually experienced.

The uncontrolled craving towards sexual sensations in all six accused of Delhi rape case and simultaneous hatred towards the girl victim led them to brutally and fatally assault her. This way craving and aversion are two sides of the same coin.

How to work at sensations?

When one observes sensations objectively, one starts coming out of ignorance. By understanding the impermanent nature of sensations, one generates *panna* (pragya or wisdom) instead of *tanha*. When one sits in meditation all kinds of sensations come on the body related to all kinds of thoughts and if one observes them in a neutral manner without reacting, one is freed of mental defilements from the roots. Mind is purified. Mind is freed.

The feeling of sensation is the crucial junction from where one can take two paths going in the opposite directions. If one keeps on reacting blindly to pleasant and unpleasant sensations, one multiplies one's misery. If one learns to maintain equanimity in the face of pleasant and unpleasant sensations, one starts changing the habit pattern at the deepest level and starts coming out of misery. The sensations are the root. As long as one neglects the root, the poisonous tree will grow again even if the trunk is cut.

Buddha

Yathapi mule anupaddave da he Chinnopi
rukkho punareva ruhati,

Evampi ta hanusaye anuhate, Nibbattati
dukhamida punappuna (Dhammpad 24.338)

Just as a tree, though cut down, sprouts up again if its roots remain uncut and firm, even so, until the craving that lies dormant is rooted out, suffering springs up again and again.

The analogy implies that though amendments to criminal laws related to offences committed against women would help in curbing crime, it would be akin to trimming wild bushes and wayward thorns without dealing with the roots of jungle. Surely wild bushes and wayward

thorns will grow up again and will retain the potential to harm lives again.

Empowerment of Women and the Mind

This way alone empowerment of women will take place, when desire or antipathy for females will be eradicated from deep roots of the mind. When violence towards women will be dealt with objectively and nonviolently in the mind. Then, crimes against women won't have external, societal reality. All other measures can only be cosmetic and preventive at best.

Buddha reformed the most violent people

Take the cases of Angulimal and Emperor Ashok. It is said Angulimal had killed 999 people, before he came in contact with Buddha and was completely reformed. He was so cruel that he would kill people and chop off their fingers and make a garland of them and put it on. Before he actually killed the innocent people and chopped off their fingers, this physical act was preceded by mental reaction. He was mentally agitated and violent before his body and speech became violent. However, he was violent to himself too and his own peace became the first casualty. *Pubbe hanati attanam, paccha hanati so pare* (Thergatha 139). And Chund Ashok became Dhamm Ashok after doing Vipassana.

One distributes misery to others

Negativities such as anger, hatred, greed, ill will, jealousy, egotism and fear make a person unhappy, miserable and violent. When one is agitated, one doesn't keep this agitation to oneself: one starts distributing it to others, one starts harming others in society. This is what the rape case accused did. One realizes this law of nature within the framework of one's own mind and body when one sits in Vipassana meditation. In due course of time one stops reacting blindly and violently and is purified.

We are constantly reacting due to a powerful subconscious mind

It is impossible for any bodily and verbal action to come before mental reaction. One can argue that when we are in sleep and if a mosquito

bites us, we react, though we didn't think. Correct, we didn't think and react. Then, how does it happen? Apparently we are sleeping. But, truly it is our conscious mind which is sleeping even as our subconscious mind, the most powerful mind remains constantly awake and is always reacting habitually. We have fed into our impressionable mind that a mosquito bite is an unhealthy thing to be avoided and that's why even in sleep, we sweep our hand over the bitten area. We itch. Because the subconscious mind understands a mosquito bite to be a bad incident, aversion. Similarly, the accused's subconscious mind couldn't resist the temptation to sexually assault the young girl, craving.

See the all round reactions on the bus in the Delhi Rape Case

The couple boards the bus. Ram Singh asks the male companion what he was doing with the girl at this hour.

Reaction: Sensations related to sexual activity (craving or desire) felt by Ram Singh. Due to untrained mind, he couldn't experience it objectively.

The male companion slaps the Ram Singh on hearing this.

Reaction: Totally opposite sensations of aversion or antipathy felt by the male friend. This angers the six accused.

Reaction: Now their craving sensations turned into extreme hate feelings for the couple. And nightmare dawns. World just suffers due to craving or aversion driven by ignorance. There is no other villain.

That's why reform must begin in the mind and then, it should spread outwards, which it will on its own. Empowerment of women will happen on its own. In the mind. No prompting needed then.

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