

# Women's Freedom in a Just Society

Posted on

***Women's freedom in society includes the right to live free from violence and discrimination; being given equal rights, the freedom to express their voice, the chance to be equally educated; and enjoying the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.***



The word “freedom” is vital for human and animal society; for that purpose, there should be a just society because there can be no freedom in a society unless people understand each other. So, it is defined as: “A just society is one in which each person is socially and economically secure, and where the state is politically, legally, and administratively inclusive and fair.” According to this definition, there must be equality in a particular society for that purpose. Furthermore, it is described as who was the first to give this idea to the world: “The idea of a just society first gained modern attention when philosophers such as John Stuart Mill asked, “What is a just society?” Their writings covered several perspectives, including allowing individuals to live their lives as long as they didn't infringe on the rights of others to the idea that society's resources should be distributed to all, including those most deserving first. It helps us to understand what a just society is. A just society allows people to live with their rights and the similar resources that they like to choose according to their capacity.

So, it makes us understand that if we want freedom, there must be justice and equality in society because freedom remains only in such a society where there is a proper livelihood. If these definitions were fulfilled, one might think there might be freedom. That may be merely a concept, as there is another way to think about freedom. We can understand it by the description of a Tibetan monk, Gelong Thubten, who talked at Google in March 2018, “So, I'd like to start by talking about the concept of freedom. I think the term “freedom,’ the concept of freedom, is essential to us. We're very passionate about our search for freedom. But I'm interested in addressing the fact that even though we may have a certain degree of external freedom in how we live our lives, in terms of how we dress, what we

believe, and what we do with our time. There's a deeper aspect to freedom that I think is more important, deep down in our minds, how free are we?" –Ven. Gelong Thubten.

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According to his explanations, there is a nature in our minds that often reminds us of places, thoughts, emotions, memories, painful memories, and worries, good or bad, places we don't like. So, our mind does not behave as we want it to. It always takes the opposite direction and reacts according to those thoughts, even without our knowledge, because our minds control us above and beyond what we want or mean. As it's not a stable thing. He emphasizes external happiness furthermore as, "So, when our happiness depends on an external trigger, then the problem is when the trigger is absent, the happiness is absent." That means happiness is just a concept, as it is impermanent. When the external resources are impermanent, happiness, which depends on the external world, also changes. The only reason is a lack of knowledge of the unstable external world. Then what does it depend on? The Bhagavad Gita in the Hindu Veda gives the answer to it as: "Mana e'va manushya nam ka'ranam bandha mo'ksha yo'h." The only reason for bondage and emancipation is the state of one's mind, not the external things. That is why the Dharma advises individuals to give up unnecessary thoughts from the mind, and when they arrive, not to control them but to give them up. Therefore, one can understand that to gain freedom, there must be happiness in a society, and for that, there must be a just society. In this case, when we turn to the point of women's freedom, it goes to the period two thousand years ago, when the Bhikkuni Sasana (Buddhist nuns' society) was established.

That happened on a Binara Po'ya day, at the request of the Maha' Praja'pathi' Go'thmi, the stepmother of Prince Siddhartha. As a result, Binara Poya is a significant and historic day for all Buddhists around the world, as it marks the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sasana 2,500 years ago.

The Lord Buddha wanted to give ordination to women in that society to awaken the freedom of the women suppressed in the Brahmin community.

Today, in most societies, women enjoy complete freedom equal to men in education, the health sector, employment, and even in politics. Whatever they wish, they have the freedom to do it. Sometimes there are problems on certain occasions, referring to their lives, families, and even the whole society. That's because they do forget the limits of freedom in society.

In other words, "freedom" must be severely restricted for anyone; otherwise, they would be unable to control it. So, it would be a 'Wal Bu<sup>ru</sup> Nidahasa', as an old Sinhala saying, slightly it translates to English as 'wild donkey freedom', 'which means excessive freedom. So, what would happen if they were involved in dirty politics or insecure jobs? At this juncture, I'd like to remind you of an old but significant Sri Lankan saying, "Gedara Budum Amma<sup>u</sup>" — mother is like "The Buddha in the house," or means 'a great mother.' Though this is an old saying, the concept of 'Gedara Budun' would not be an obstacle to maintaining women's freedom.



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