

Becoming Pregnant before Marriage: the Value of Sex without Forgiveness

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Abstract—Thai society is filled with different viewpoints, whether they are political, economic, or cultural. Generally speaking, Thais believe in a conservative approach regarding a woman's sexual behavior and virginity, which includes not violating cultural traditions and to preserve one's virginity until the wedding day; Thai society has focused on these beliefs as social norms to which "good" ladies should adhere. Thai society believes that males have superior social status to females, especially regarding the value of sex in society. Thus, males have the privilege of sexual freedom, whereas Thai women have been inculcated to be careful as well as control their sexual behavior, and believe in conserving the virginity as a determiner of a female's value. However, according to the present social trend, more people have become open minded about couples cohabitating before marriage and this trend is evident in all age groups, from students to adults, yet this might also be the cause of many problems in Thai society. Specifically, many problems are in direct contrast to Thai people's values, including the state of being pregnant before getting married. This article aims to explain Embree (1950) and Moerman's theories (1966) about the structure of Thai society, in terms of the values and standards of Thai society in regards to sexual freedom and the double standard in the society as a determiner of a female's value. It can be concluded that Thai society did not use only one standard for judging a human's societal value, especially in females. Only, a double standard was used by administering the value and norm of Thai society as determinants of a person's value in society.

Keywords-being pregnant before marriage, sexual value, structure of Thai society, Norm of Thai society, sexual freedom, double standard, females' value

I. BACKGROUND

The present state of Thai society has changed very much from the former time by the influence of western countries. Changes include the way people dress, expression to the public, behavior or conduct, manners, values, as well as sexual behavior causing distinct changes to Thai society. These rapid changes have affected the way people think as well as rationale in behaving oneself in daily life.

The society changed rapidly especially in regards to technology. There were many kinds of equipment for receiving news, and channels for communication. All of these things allowed everyone to have an opportunity to receive new information and ideas from all over the world,

which were different from what they were familiar with. The danger with advancement, quickness, and modernity, is that it could cause the people to become disillusioned with the technology or want to embrace it; for instance, the way people dress or styles being expressed or imitated from what they had seen or heard from different media sources, including sexual expression stimulated by magazines, cinemas and the internet.

According to a number of different factors, they could lead males and females to express their sexual behavior both in public and in private, including holding hands, touching, hugging, kissing one's cheek, lying on one's lap etc. to become common or normal occurrences in Thai society, which could be seen as an acceptable type of behavior in every place. At present, both males and females give an importance to sexual relationships by comparing them with power as well as mighty (Yingyai, 1990). The talk of sexual relationships was performed openly, including the sexual relationship which could be found from students to working aged people.

However, the attitude of Thai society towards sexual relations was still very confusing. While the adults were criticizing or blaming the search for sexual pleasure, as well as avoiding talking about sexual relations and feelings of sexual needs, which were natural things in human beings, children had their opportunities in perceiving various sexual stories from various sources such as newspapers, magazines, movies and television. In some families, there were expressions showing the sexual relations of their family member. Therefore, it could be viewed that most Thai people grow up with a lack of appropriate readiness in advance.

According to the norm of Thai society in freedom of sex, it recognizes a women's virginity before marriage as an important thing. As a result, the sexual relationship before getting married which could lead to being undesirably pregnant, is a serious problem in Thai society in the present day, whether it occurred with any group of people or in any field, it could always be attentive. So, this article attempts to provide citation in the theory of Embree (1950) and Moreman (1966) for explaining the structure of Thai society in order to compare the sexual value with the double standards used as influencing and determining women's value in society. This was overlooked by many people, in order to suggest guidelines in viewing the problem of sexual relations before being married, which could cause the problem of being pregnant before marriage.

II. STRUCTURE OF THAI SOCIETY

It has been mentioned in general that Thai society had many prominent characteristics; for example, the social class, and others. However, two scholars, Embree (1950), and Moreman (1966) had different explanations of Thai society as follows:

Embree (1950) stated that Thai society was called "the loosely structured social system," which meant that the Thai society was a society considering the importance of individuality, lack of discipline or responsibility; it did not give an importance to the time etc. Moreover, Embree pointed out the issue of females' role and function which were rather clearer than males. A mother had to inculcate their children whereas the father's role for taking care of children was not as prominent as the mother's.

Moreman (1966) had an opposite viewpoint to Embree's (1950), stating that in fact, Thai society was not loosely structured society. On the other hand, it was a strong structured society. Each one had one's own responsibility by viewing that the males had their own responsibility as well as the females who had their responsibility. Each person had one's own duty to be responsible for their actions. In addition, Moreman also emphasized that living with more independence as the other societies than Thai society, was not viewed as the loosely structured society like Thai society.

When both of their theories were referenced, it was viewed that Thai society had controversial characteristics in the context of Thai society itself. According to Embree's approach, a Thai women's sexual culture was more controlled than a man's. The sexual system as a rigid state of creation focusing on teaching Thai women to be more well-behaved than males, whereas Moreman viewed only the strength of Thai society with culture determining Thai people's lifestyle, including sexual role by determining the women's value through their role in inculcating, preaching, and being a role model of proper conduct in good culture.

III. THE APPROACH OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Sigmund Freud (1905) was a major pioneer of Psychoanalytic Theory. He classified the human's livelihood and said that it consisted of two kinds of instincts: life instinct included the need for food and happiness, as well as sexual need, and death instinct, which included the expression of aggression, violence, and quarreling.

Life instinct or reproduction would occur in development of a human's life from childhood to old age. Surely, it starts to develop during adolescence by having relationships with process in entering to maturity and expressing as the need for attachment as well as the interest in the opposite sex.

Sigmund Freud set up the theory "only sex that could control the world." He confirmed that human beings had sexual feelings since they were born, not when they were grown up, or being limited in adults only. He viewed that sexual development was a determinant of the process of being mature. When children were grown up to be adolescents, they would begin to have their physical, emotional, and mental changes as well as love as youngsters with sexual need based on the nature and sexual relation with

the opposite sex differently from their children's age. (Nual-la-or Supapol, 1976: 9)

In psychological perspective, sexual relation was not learnt. On the other hand, it was a kind of human beings' instinct. The human beings had physical, mental, and emotional changes. Consequently, they were interested in the opposite sex. If they were stimulated by the tempted environment, they would tend to react to their sexual emotion easily. If both males and females were mature but they were not ready for having shared responsibility, social problems would occur later. In addition, the problem as an important issue being especially interesting to Thai people would be the undesirable pregnancy or being pregnant before being marriage.

IV. THAI CULTURE AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Thai society was a society influenced by tradition and culture affecting Thai people's lifestyles like the other societies as well as unique characteristic in inculcating the members in society strictly such as to be respected, to obey with, and follow the elders' instruction without focusing on the reasons. Again, they had to focus on seniority as the major thing.

Not only the behavior in daily life, but also sexual relations in which Thai people were limited, due to tradition, focusing on this thing as a concealed topic not to be talked about openly; specifically, the women's sexual behavior, which was restrictive and included serious rules and regulations. For Thai culture regarding women's sexual relationships, it was more limited and narrow-minded in the field than for males, with the belief that women had to live at their house, do housework, not dress themselves too beautifully or travel outside their house alone, especially during the nighttime, and not to express their sexual need overtly.

According to rationale, Thai women were strictly inculcated for contacting with the opposite sex as well as behaving themselves according to the tradition. A family with daughters had to be especially careful in her behavior with special attention paid to being virtuous women, well behaved, not to do before the appropriate time or age, and keeping her virginity, requiring her to be married according to one's own custom and tradition before having sexual relations with one's loved one. If a woman lost her virginity before marriage, she would become worthless, especially having a sexual relationship before being married because if she were to become pregnant, changes in her physical appearance would be obvious, which would lead to a serious reaction from people in society and thus she would be criticized or gossiped about as not being well-behaved, while males were not affected by their sexual behavior and it was not considered to be disgraceful.

For making friends with the opposite sex, or having sexual relationship before being married, for males, in Thai society, still included the value and belief that it was not disgraceful or a serious thing. Thai males' freedom in sexual expression was not as limited as females. On the contrary, many cases viewed that they were normal or recognized which was supported by research study of Rachanee

Wisedsang (1975) in "Moral Judgment of Adolescents in Bangkok between males and females," found that both male and female adolescents had their morals judged and that males sexual expressions were more correct than females in every situation.

V. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF MALES AND FEMALES IN THE PRESENT

Sexual behavior of males and females in Thailand, at the present is more prominent than the past, since the focus of national culture is not as prominent. In the past, there was only the western culture transferred into Thailand; but now, even the foreign cultures of neighboring countries like Japan, or Korea, is another factor that is affecting changes in the viewpoint, attitude, and value of Thai people, whether in the way they dress, their freedom of sex, and outside environmental influence including movies, magazines, and entertainment venues.

Males and females in the present time are encouraged to express their sexual needs and have sex before being married, since the medical technology is more progressed, whether with the various techniques in birth control as well as abortion which is safer than before. In present Thai society, most women who came for an abortion were students with an age between 13-14 years old. (Natwadee Witee-dharma, 2006)

Having sexual relations before being married in Thai society was viewed as an unethical thing. The guilt would be with the females more so than the males. In former time, both male and female adolescents were under control of their caretakers all the time. So, there was very little opportunity to have sexual relations before being married. However, in the present, both males and females have more freedom in their day to day lives. Consequently, they have more opportunities to meet both genders. The control for having sexual need is now less. Furthermore, there are more places for them to express their sexual need overtly such as the hotel, motel, karaoke, café etc. engaging in sexual relations. Both males and females took risks for having deviant behavior as well as causing various problems, for instance, being undesirably pregnant or exposing themselves to a contagious disease. These problems are increasing every year. For Thai society, such issues are disgraceful for both themselves and their family, especially in female students facing such problems which cause the interruption in their studies. Besides, illegitimate children often considered to be inferior and cause social problems in the future. Often it is the case that the pregnant adolescents during studying try to solve the problem by having an abortion, which affects their physical well-being and can be dangerous. (Duangkamol Wechbanyongrat et al., 1984: 63-64)

VI. LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED

In general, male and female adolescents are interested in making friends with the opposite sex, which leads to searching for friendship and love, as well as freedom from their family. Therefore, they tend to look for an attractive member of the opposite sex, with the view to marriage. Both

males and females try to get to know each other before deciding to choose their preferred partner. This always occurs in the form of dating, having physical relationships and finally having sexual relations. Eventually, they get to know each other in every respect whether in their habits or tastes, and they adjust to each other's personalities.

A general characteristic of being an adolescent is that it is the time in a young person's life when he/she is stepping into maturity. It is an age of development in attitude, belief, and adjustment. (Pranee, 1985) It is very difficult for adolescents to distinguish between love and sexual desire. In addition, the recent environmental state is full of temptation; most human beings could not classify the difference between 'love' and 'lust'.

Wantanee Wasikasin (1983: 27) stated that to have sexual relationships before getting married was the behavior being stated very much. The touching between a young man and woman was performed more overtly, which was likely to result in the engaging of sexual relations before getting married. After having sex with women, men felt a sort of dominance and the power to control women, as well as feeling proud of themselves for having sexual intercourse.

There have been various research studies about the value of sexual relationships between males and females. Utid Chaowalit's 1978 study found that the male and female students' opinion on sexual relationships before marriage are seen as a normal thing. Moreover, the study of Kanitta Pochanakool (1979), found that 59.42% of male students viewed that the sexual relationship before getting married was not harmful, and 54.55% of them believed that couples should have sexual relations before being getting married.

Likewise, Pontip Wongpechsa-nga's (1985: 1) study found that the social factors which students allowed to have sexual relations before being marriage included: the parents sex and marital status. Students living dormitories, flats, and houses had more opportunities to have sexual relations before being marriage than the students living with their parents. While Pramote Prasartkool et al. (1987) studied pre-marital sexual behavior of adolescents in urban and rural areas, found that living alone was a factor causing pre-marital sexual relationships.

It might be because today's adolescents have more freedom than their forbearers. Consequently, they have more opportunities to obtain stories regarding sexual relationships, for instance, the expression between the opposite sex, the dating between opposite sex, hence, the sexual relations. On the other hand, the value of Thai society as a Buddhist society focuses on virtue, the traditional culture, and tradition. As a result, the adolescents were confused about the relationship between males and females and thus asked themselves: How should we conduct ourselves?

Nevertheless, the positive factors of living together before being married include: (1) Both people could get to know each other before being married and (2) They could adjust themselves well after getting married. Besides, many couples viewed that living together before getting married was a technique for reducing loneliness and solidarity. They had more confidence as well as feelings that their lives were

more meaningful. The most important factor was the prevention of homosexual behavior.

VII. THE OUTCOME OF LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED

It cannot not be denied that the males and females who have a sexual relationship would be at risk of causing unwanted pregnancies. According to Natwadee Witeedharma, 2006; cited in Bowman & Spanier; 1978: 107, concluded that, in general, a large number of women felt that if they used the birth control devices or medications, it would affect their emotional feeling very much. In sum, sexual behavior should occur naturally from the climate of love. Most women did not want it to be known that they needed sexual relations, although they really had that feeling.

According to many research studies, undesirable pre-marital pregnancies were often caused by no prevention for various reasons. For example, (1) The lack of knowledge about what kinds of the birth control are safe and efficient, (2) The rejection to use the birth control techniques for religious reasons, (3) The need to prove the state of being male or female, (4) The lack of mental, emotional, and educational maturity, (5) The belief that not to use birth control would make them happier and (6) The feeling that "we would not be unlucky."

When the unmarried woman was pregnant, there would be 3 alternatives: to be married and have a child, to have an abortion, and to have a child without being married, hence the term, illegitimate child. (Wantanee Wasikasin, 1983) Whether one chooses any of these alternatives, the woman was affected in every aspect. Being pregnant before being married in Thai society was a serious issue and had a huge impact on the mental feeling of sexual value determining the Thai female's value in being a virgin until getting married.

The major responsibility for Thai females facing problems of dealing with pre-marital pregnancy, started from being forced to be married for concealing their own pregnancy, facing problems in following through with the pregnancy, or living with gossip for being guilty of violating good ethic and tradition of society for the remainder of their life. All of these incidences could very much destroy the potentiality of females as human beings.

During their sexual relations, it would lead to their physical and emotional consents causing both physical and mental risks. Physically, being undesirably pregnant and having an opportunity to be exposed to sexual disease. Socially and mentally, many people who had sexual relationships before marriage felt embarrassed or guilty for their families, their own specified standards, or their friends whom they hoped to see marry in future.

VIII. SEXUAL VALUE AND VALUE IN THE STATE OF BEING MEN-WOMEN

In general, adolescent males and females would make friends with members of their age group of the opposite sex. Everyone would need friendship, love, and freedom from their parents. Therefore, they would seek out like-minded

friends, which would eventually lead to love and end up in marriage.

Sexual behavior in rural and urban areas shows many differences. In rural areas, they would date the opposite sex during ceremonies such as the merit fair or during the Buddhist Lent. The young adults would collaborate in cleaning the temple. So, they would have their chance to make friends as well as be familiar with each other. In rural society, to contact or make friends between young men and women had fewer problems than in the city due to the characteristics of rural society, plus the villagers often had their settlements close to each other. Consequently, young people had opportunities to know each other. Therefore, dating between young adults in the country was not so confusing. Furthermore, the values of people in the rural areas still emphasized tradition and culture. The women would be inculcated to be well behaved by living at home, not making contact with young men. So, pre-marital sexual relationships were both uncommon and taboo.

Males and females living in the urban area were influenced by the mass media. As a result, the young adults in the city had opportunities to obtain the influence of western culture by dating with the opposite sex alone as well as having sex before being married. Some of them were unlucky by facing problems of being undesirably pregnant or exposed to sexual diseases from their partners.

IX. CASE STUDY

One well-known Thai phenomenon in judging the women's value can be seen in the case of a famous movie star actress. On the 2nd September 2005, she announced that she was five months pregnant as good news, which made her very happy since she loved children and wished to have some of her own. She gleefully announced her child's birth, hoping that everyone would be excited as well as pleased with her good news.

After her announcement, a startling development occurred. Various websites were down because Thai people throughout the country were very much interested in this news. People accessed the websites and asked many questions and expressed their opinions a hundred thousand times during the span of only a few minutes. Every television channel and newspaper published the news of her pregnancy in great detail.

The announcement of her pregnancy caused the presentation viewing this topic as a negative one by giving many reasons including: the inappropriate behavior as a public person, the concealment of her pregnancy, and the questioning of the ignorance of her statement in which she said, "I did not know I was pregnant."

According to that phenomenon, it obviously showed the usage of value and norm of Thai society as a determinant of women's values as a doubles standard in judging something.

Starting from whether they were reporters, moderators of many items, or some representatives of parliament, most Thai people all over the country believed that the actress' pre-marital pregnancy was serious because she was the first person who covered up the fact and told people a lie as a public person. There were many cases occurring in which

Thai society should raise questions about as being major issues. For instance, the corrupt politicians, or the politicians who promised to solve the problems of poverty, traffic, etc., all of which, of course, remain major problems to this day. But, it could not be viewed that Thai people all over the country or various publications were opposed to what the actress did in her personal life.

Thai society gave a clear explanation regarding the second standard. (pre-marital pregnancies) Basically, Thai society believes that if adolescents were pregnant before getting married, many problems would follow because they would have to be dependent on their parents since they would not be able to earn a living themselves. It showed that Thai society used "age," "occupation," or "social status," as criterion for judging the state of "readiness" or "non readiness," for being pregnant as well as raising a child whereas this phenomenon occurring with the actress who was older than 30, held an honest occupation, a firm economic status, and a socially accepted position, was seen as unacceptable. Then, why was she seriously blamed by society for "being pregnant before getting married?"

The last standard is commonly overlooked by many people; Thai law provides permission for women who were raped or pregnant with danger for their health, to have an abortion. Some women were pregnant while they were studying and there were only two alternatives: have an abortion, or not have an abortion. Therefore, regardless of the choice a woman made, it would not deprive her of her human rights and values.

X. CONCLUSION

According to the above articles, it could be viewed that the sexual behavior of males and females in the present time was expressed overtly more than in the past, since the information, news, education and culture from different nations were obtained. As a result, the sexual behavior of present human beings is more prominent and accepted. Again, the acceptance is not the acceptance in freedom of sex or equality between males and females; rather it leads to the point of whether Thai society included the loosely structured social system or the rigidly organized system as stated by both scholars, Embree and Moreman.

This article tried to understand the cause of why males and females engage in premarital sexual relationships and the different reasons in order to develop the good comprehension in such behavior as well as the usefulness for related persons to give their suggestion or advice. This advice is geared towards females who were largely impacted by accidental pregnancies so that they would behave themselves in a good and appropriate way. There were many effects of premarital sexual behavior which might cause many women to lose the opportunity to live a more fulfilling life.

Moreover, considering the problem of premarital sexual behavior which could lead to pregnancy before marriage, one might conclude that in the area of Thai culture using age, occupation, working position, responsibility and social status as the indicators, it could be seen that Thai society did not use only one standard for judging the human's value

especially in females. On the other hand, a double standard was used by administering the value and norm of Thai society as determinants.

Therefore, the social phenomenon of "Being pregnant before getting married," Thai society should use only one standard to judge, whether it be the behavior or social expression. The issues of "age," "occupation," or "social status," should not be used as a criterion. Otherwise, from comparison, women's value would be judged with bias.

No man is infallible. So, every social human could make a mistake. When a woman has made a mistake, she should be encouraged or have the opportunity from her family or society "to learn" what she "did not know," and to cope with the problem as well as analyze as her lesson for decision making in her future. If given that chance, then that woman would be able to raise her child in a quality environment. Do not forget that the major cause of women "getting pregnant before marriage," was having sexual intercourse without prevention; this kind of carelessness which resulted in unwanted pregnancies was unintended.

Was it the appropriate time for Thai society to search for the correct and meaningful meaning of "value and freedom of gender," whether one would be male or female? Everyone should behave himself/herself appropriately in sexual behavior as well as combine it to be his/her real personality. Woman should not be born for being only a "wife" of her husband or a "mother" of her child. She might make a mistake just like a man would make. She should use her mistake as her life lesson as well as to prepare to face the problems by being encouraged to not make the same mistake again. She should not be blamed by society. Otherwise, if she were to ask for something, she would ask to not be born as a woman again.

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