



## ***A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON BIRTH CONTROL IN DEMOGRAPHIC AND BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES***

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This study focuses on identifying the concept of birth control from a demographic and Buddhist perspectives, based on a qualitative analysis of secondary data from the *Thripitaka* and demographic literature. In the modern world, fertility plays a major role in increasing the world population. Reproduction is a phenomenon that fulfils the procreation and sexual needs of humans. In demography, sexual union of a male and a female and conception are two main factors needed for a birth. According to Buddhism, sexual intercourse, mothers' fertile period and the arrival of consciousness are the three factors essential for a birth. The concept of birth control has a long history. Birth control is mainly used for stopping unwanted pregnancies and a method of reducing family size. According to Buddhism, induced abortions are a sin. Therefore, birth control is considered as an action that avoids killing a foetus. Buddhism suggests four types of natural birth control methods. Natural birth control methods prevail even today; rhythm and withdrawal are the main types that can be identified. Buddhagosha thero, who wrote commentaries to *Thripitaka*, notes five birth control methods - *Watta*, *Chamma*, *Panna*, *Thipusasadani* and *Wakapatta*. *Chamma* and *Watta* in Buddhist perspective are similar to the modern methods of male and female condoms. *Thipusisaadani*, meaning an instrument made of Lead, is similar to the modern method Intrauterine device (IUD). Since technology has developed far beyond that was observed in Buddha's time, methods similar to modern birth control such as birth control pills, sterilization and emergency contraceptives are not found in the Buddhist perspective. Use of birth controls is high today. Though this should reduce induced abortion, it prevails due to high proportions of unwanted births. Especially in countries where abortions are illegal, foetuses are killed under unsafe conditions, also risking the mother's life. It is better to avoid conception rather than engaging in unsafe abortions. If the Buddhist perceptions of using birth control to avoid abortions and thus the killing of a life are inculcated among the populations, this would result in a reduction of risky abortions, and thus positively impact the reproductive health of populations.

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