CHAPTER III

The Status and Education of Woman in Buddhism
The main objective of this chapter is to understand and analyse the major contributions of Buddhism to woman's status and her education. Before and after Buddha there have been so many philosophies and cultures, which have dealt with improving the status of women, but not significant progress has been made. The status of women has continued to be low for centuries until recently.

As Karl Marx says, any philosophy and Islam should be beneficial for the individual life. In this sense Buddhism has proved its worth for human growth, happiness and peace. In the present chapter an attempt is made to examine how best Buddhism has helped improved the status of women and how can it be useful to the woman's life.

1. Humanism

Buddhism is humanistic, because it believes in the ability of the individual to achieve ethical goods in this world. It may be also described with the teachings of Buddha as having universal significance addressed to the spiritual and moral needs of all mankind. Buddha told his disciples plainly enough: "Go into all lands and preach this teaching. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high, are all one and that all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea."¹

Gautama Buddha was awakened one. He had shattered the power of self, broken the fetters of thinking, and made his consciousness one with universal consciousness. While in that state his wisdom was absolute, and his range of compassion commensurate with
all that lives. He was therefore at the same time the "All compassionate one". As Dr. Sujuki said, "There are two pillars supporting the great edifice of Buddhism, Mahaprajna, great wisdom, and Mahakaruna, great compassion. The wisdoms flows from the compassion and the compassion from the wisdom, for the two are one".

He further said that the righteousness, goodwill and peace would be the religion among mankind. With a tender compassion for all beings, the Buddha set forth to establish the kingdom of righteousness to give light to the people who enshrouded in darkness and to open the gate of immortality to men. He said to his disciples, "Fare Ye forth, brethren, on the mission that is for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many; to take compassion to the world; to work for the profit and good and happiness of Gods and men. All the schools of Buddhism presupposed universal laws, called Dharmas, which govern human existence, and may be known by reason. The word dharma is often used to mean the doctrine of Buddha. In this sense, dharma is not merely a dogma, but rather path, which is regarded as the universal for mankind.

Buddha was a humanist and he achieved moral perfection in this earthly life without the help of any super-natural order. For him, there is no discrimination of caste, colour and creed. Buddha's universal love implying non-hurting any living being is the root cause of his humanism. It is a glorified life well lived according to the dictates of the righteousness living. Buddha denied the division of society into four castes and showed that mobility was not a matter of birth but of good
moral conduct. He wanted to do away with forces like race and colour which Trend to divide humanity based on the quality of the individual. The good society according to him will be built on the basis of peace and non-violence.

Buddha showed up the mythical character of the Brahmanical theory and propounded the equality of birth in the case of all human beings. He exploded the claims of Brahmans that inherited superiority.

2. Social Life

At the time the Buddha was born (6th Century B.C) a woman had scant authority in the home, let alone in fields of social endeavor. No functions whatever were allocated to her in the realm of religion. Her only hope of attaining some small measure of respect and prestige was as a mother of sons who could perform the obsequies at their father's funeral, rites which were beloved to be essential for the future welfare of the dear departed. Daughters, on such occasions, simply did not count. They were generally regarded as an anxiety for whom a husband had to be found at all costs.

It is impossible not to acknowledge the fact that Buddhism became a social force to be reckoned with, and that it strongly influenced the evolution and perspective of Indian society. The most important feature is to establish classless society. The object of his first discourse was to disclaim the Brahmans myth of their superiority and to maintain that all beings were equal before the moral law (good conduct will lead to a good destiny, etc.).
The Buddha's recommendations for republican government that the republic should conform to the customs authorized in ancient tradition. Elders should be honoured and listened to, that women and girls should be protected, that shrines and titles to support them should be respected, and that 'worthy ones' (arhants) should find shelter in the republic to encourage them to live there.⁷

Many modern scholars have maintained that Buddhism developed as a monastic religion or as an ascetic movement, and that it was not a social movement, but criticized this view elsewhere⁸ and pointed out that monasticism or asceticism is only one aspect of Buddhist religious tradition and should not mistake as one part for the whole. The word 'sangha' does not mean merely the order of monks. The community of monks is only a part of the sangha, not the whole of it. Sangha has to be understood to mean the entire community of those human beings who take refuge (sarana) in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The society of the enlightened beings, which is the ideal, nor should one lose sight of the universal society of human beings who are all united through their common dislike for suffering and common quest of happiness.⁹ The monks are never supposed to remain indifferent to social human beings and their sufferings; the dharma-vinaya is not meant only for those who have 'gone forth' from home life. The beginnings of the Buddhist movement lay in the Buddha's keen concern for the freedom and happiness of human beings living in the whole world.
A movement, which moves society, is a social movement. And Buddhism definitely moved society wherever it spread in the course of its long history. For thousands of years it has moved men and women to a higher life, to noble truths and deeper principles; it has inspired races, peoples and nations to develop art and literature, morals and manners, science and philosophy, and to build patterns of civilisation and forces of peace. The history of Buddhist civilization has been the result of Buddhist moral and social ideas and ideals, which are not all ascetic or monastic.¹⁰

As A.K. Warder remarks, "there is a general underlying assumption that beyond the immediate aim of individual peace of mind, or more probably essential connection with it, lies the objective of the happiness of the whole of human society and the still higher objective of the happiness of all living beings".¹¹

It may be pointed out that the lay Buddhists also contributed significantly to the growth of Buddhist ideas and practices. The rise of the powerful schools of the Mahasamghikas and Sarvastivadins resulted in important sociological and secularizing developments. These were matched in the Theravada tradition by the popularity of the Apadanas and Jatakas, which illustrate social ethics. Another area of social life in which this cooperation was meaningfully employed was that of education of the monks as well as the laity. Its centers were monastic schools and colleges in which the monks were the teachers not only of religious doctrines and texts, but also of secular arts and letters.¹²
Buddhist community of casteless and classless monks exerted important influence of Indian society in general.

A fundamental tenet of Buddhist socio-moral ideology is that all beings are bound by their karma. It is the deeds of a person, which determine his or her fortunes in this and the next life. The doctrine recognized the freedom of every person to select a way of life suitable to his or her equipment. In other words, it is one's inner worth and moral excellence, purity of life and nobility of character, control of the mind and the senses and an insight into the real nature of things, in short, progress in the triple training: Sila, Samadhi and Prajna, which determine one's superiority over others. No distinction of birth or caste, colour or sex, race or status was of any value so far as one's higher or holier life and its ways and means was concerned. This was a revolutionary doctrine from the standpoint of the Brahmanical tradition, which zealously guarded the myth of the divine origin of four classes and their duties.

Buddhism made profound impact on Indian social life in several ways. Its leaders and teachers continuously criticized the theory of castes and ridiculed the false claims of superiority based on birth (jati) and colour (varna). On the other hand, Buddhism opened the doors to higher religious life and the highest goal for all those who sought them, including the members of the lower strata of society. Although Buddhism was not directly concerned with the abolition of castes, it strongly opposed the caste-system and repeatedly taught the evils of
casteism. The same is true with regard to the Buddhist contribution towards the uplift of Sudras.\textsuperscript{14}

Another aspect of Buddhist contribution in ancient India lay in the area of social harmony and racial integration on a national scale. It was through Buddhist influence and teachings social harmony and tolerance were pushed. This was a permanent contribution to social integration and national growth, and it could not have been so easily accomplished in a strictly Brahmanical scheme of social gradation without the wholesome effects of the Buddhist disregard for varna-organization and respect for the liberty of the individual.\textsuperscript{15}

The Buddhist message of social equality and communal harmony had left a deep impression on the mind of the Indian people, which continued after the transformation of the classical Buddhist movement. The Buddhist in Tantrika culture continued the task of fighting the evils of casteism and untouchability, during the early medieval centuries. A large number of these siddhas came from lower caste families, but their greatness was assured by their success (siddhi) in esoteric culture (sadhana).\textsuperscript{16}

The saint-poets (santas) were, generally speaking, within the fold of the Brahmanical 'Hindu' religious tradition, yet they revoluted freely against many fundamental dogmas and powerful customs of traditional Brahmanism. Their social and moral teachings were more in keeping with Buddhism than with Brahmanism. All of them disregarded the rules of the varnaasrama-dharma scheme and attacked social
distinctions based on birth and profession. Many of them were born in Sudra families. They became exalted through their pure character, sincere devotion and magnanimity.\textsuperscript{17}

By granting to women an active share in the religion, the Buddha raised the status of women in the secular life as well.\textsuperscript{18} The social reforms initiated by the Buddhists and continued by medieval saint-poets were finally legalized and accomplished (at last in theory) by the government of the Republic of India in 1949.

3. Girl Child

As Buddhism had never subscribed to the Brahminical view that a son was essential for father's translation to heaven, daughters came into their own and marriage was no longer imperative and compulsory. Women in the Buddhist age had the liberty to lead an independent life and go about their own business even though unmarried Anathapindika's daughter is one such example of an early "career woman".\textsuperscript{19}

The birth of a daughter was rarely welcomed in India even from early times. Pali texts invariably do not speak favourably about the birth of a daughter. Vedic literature shows its preference for the birth of a son. The Buddha consoled by saying that girls breed noble men, who protect the world. Thus, the Buddha gave a new outlook to the society. His attitude was rational, which prompted the society to give fair treatment to daughters.\textsuperscript{20}
Moreover, the economic conditions prevailing in India from the 7th to the 4th Centuries B.C. would appear to have been quite flourishing enough to allow for the survival of little girls. And finally, as the Buddha spoke out strongly against blood sacrifice, so he would not have permitted the sacrifice of children, boys or girls.\textsuperscript{21} In pre-Buddhist days a woman had been looked down upon if she did not marry growing old at home, she was called 'one who sits with her father'. But in early Buddhist times an unmarried girl might go unabashed.

A daughter was not as independent as a son. She had to live under the guidance of a member of the family. Vinaya Texts mention ten types of protection received by a daughter.\textsuperscript{22} The Majjhima Nikaya mentions only five types of persons, who can give protection, namely, mother, father, brother, sister, and other relations. Thus, the Buddhist society seems to have been very particular about the upbringing of the daughter.\textsuperscript{23} Yet, in spite of these safeguards, it cannot be denied that the society gave liberal and considerate treatment to a daughter. She was given scope either to devote herself to spiritual pursuits or to choose her life-partner. Many daughters preferred spinster-hood and joined the spiritual world.

As I.B. Horner rightly said: "Under Buddhism a woman no longer felt bound to marry to save her self-respect and that of her family, but found she could honourably remain unmarried without running the gauntlet of public scorn".\textsuperscript{24}
The *Sigalovada Sutta* gives five ways in which parents should show their compassion to their children: The five consequences to the offender against these are given in the *Mahaparinibana Sutta* when the Buddha on his final journey was asked to visit a rest house by followers of his from Pataligama. Briefly, these consequences were: firstly, falling into poverty because of laziness; secondly, getting a bad reputation; thirdly, lack of confidence in company; fourthly, feat at death and fifthly, rebirth in a state of suffering. The four vices in conduct are also given in the *Sigalovada Sutta*, together with the four motives of evil deeds: partiality, enmity, stupidity and fear. The six channels for dissipating wealth together with the six evil consequences of each of these are detailed in the *Sutta* as well. Alcoholism, gambling, adultery, evil companions, drug taking, etc. are some of the evils from which children should be restrained. Parents can also help their children by pointing out the good quantities of friends and the bad qualities of others who are 'lip-service friends' only or even dangerous associates.

The birth of daughter, therefore, was no longer thought to be in conscious as the girl had ceased to be despised and looked upon as earlier. For a girl on the threshold of womanhood, with moments of high seriousness alternating with childish thought. She could enjoy a good ideal of liberty and was not subjected to any humiliation if she did not marry and when she did marry, she was neither hastened off to an early child marriage nor compelled to accept a man of her parent's choice.
In the *Milinda panha*, the sentence, "the little girl, the mere child, whom you chose in marriage and paid a price for, is one, the grown up to full age, who I chose in marriage and paid a price for is another"\(^{27}\), shows that the custom continued into later days, as it had existed during days before the birth of Prince Siddhartha. As the position of women improved much so matrimony could not be their end of life and aim of existence and they were not viewed with disgrace if they did not marry.

Moreover princesses and girls of high families had voice in the matter of selecting their husbands. In practice, maidens did enjoy a fair amount of freedom in their own houses and in society in general. They enjoyed certain privileges and were treated with respect. They could go for excursion and spend the day in the forest. Maidens were also given freedom to move about freely in the society. Many a time maidens are said to have visited the Lord to listen to religious discourses. They also took part in festivals and merrymaking. They received good education. Besides household work, they were sometimes given other responsible work, such as looking after the bhikkhus or shramanas.\(^{27}\)

In Buddhism future happiness does not depend on funeral rites but on the actions of the deceased. The Buddhist funeral ceremony is a very simple affair that could be performed even by the widow or daughter or anyone at the spot and the presence of the son is not compulsory. Therefore in Buddhism there is no ritual or ceremonial need for a son and hence the birth of a daughter need not be the cause for lamentation. There is also no excuse to chase a sonless wife away. It
is also well known that the Buddha comforted King Pasenadi Kosala who came to him grieving that his wife Mallika had given birth to a daughter. 'A female offspring, O King, may prove even nobler than a male one' a revolutionary statement for his time. Thus we get a picture of the honoured position, which was secured by daughters in their family and in society.

4. Child Marriage

"The literature of Buddhists knows nothing of child marriage," says Narasu.29

Pre-puberty marriages were not popular during the Buddhist Epoch. Daughters enjoyed more freedom in matrimonial affairs. Maidens sought husbands of their choice, regardless of caste and creed. Society did not despise such marriages though reluctance is evident. Besides this freedom of choosing the life partner, other customs such as arranged marriages, too, were in vogue. Many a time fathers were depicted as being worried over the marriage of their daughters.30

In the Buddhist era marriageable age was fairly advanced. The existence of the Gandharva form of marriage definitely proves that girls had reached the state of maidenhood, when they could form their own opinion. Probably, girls from the Kshatriya and Vaisya classes had a privilege of marrying at the age of 16 to 20 years. Miss. I.B., Horner thinks, "No age is prescribed as the correct marriageable age; but girls probably married between the ages of sixteen and twenty."31
Instances are many when girls on attaining proper age, which generally ranged between twenty and thirty went of their own accord in search of husbands. But a stranger or an enemy was never selected as husband even in such cases. The Bidala Kukkuta Jataka lays special stress on the requirement of the girls' declaration of chastity by beat of drums in such a 'sayamvara' marriage.23

The literature of the Buddhist knows nothing of child marriage.24 There are very rare references of pre-puberty marriages in the Buddhist texts. On the other hand, many instances of post-puberty marriages are in evidence in the Buddhist texts, which may be considered as common and customary. Dr. Alterkar has pointed out that "During the period of 400 B.C. to 100 A.D. the marriageable age was being gradually lowered. Soon after 100 A.D. conflict ended and society definitely decided in favour of prepuberty marriages."25 Therefore, we may conclude that in the majority of cases the age of marriage was not prepuberty, but post-puberty.

5. Marriage

In Buddhism marriage is not a sacrament. It is purely a secular affair and the bhikkhus do not participate in it. The significant point here is that the Buddha's injunctions are bilateral the marital relationship is a reciprocal one with mutual rights and obligations.

Marriage was of three forms (1) marriage arranged by the guardians of both parties (2) sayamavara marriage and (3) gandharva marriage. The first form of marriage was akin to the prajapatiya form of
marriage current among the Hindus. Equality of birth and not of wealth was a matter of primary consideration before the marriage settlement. The second form of marriage was sayamvara or a girl publicity choosing her husband for herself from a number of suitors assembled for the purpose. The third form of marriage was the gandharva marriage in which the bride and the bridegroom used to make their own choice without the knowledge of their guardians and were married without rites of ceremonies.

Brahma was one of the popular forms in those days. Besides, parents seem to have been very particular about their son-in-law's capacity to earn. Generally, parents considered caste, status, wealth and the capacity of the body to earn. "Besides Varna, jati, gotra, bhoga and Kula. It has mention in the early Pali texts of mana or prestige, as determining a person's family or social status, of which the testing was marriage factor of boys or girls."

On the expulsion of the wife, it may be assumed that the husband was then free to take another wife, even as kings, whether or not they were followers of the Buddha's teaching, might have a number of consorts. Certainly women too could re-marry, as is seen from the strange history of Isidasi who married at least four husbands one after another and for some reason was displeasing to them all- a reason she attributed to an evil deed she did seven births ago. She then entered the order of nuns. The fourth and fifth ways in which parents can minister to their children, thus safeguarding youth and society as well as family

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life, are given as: to see them married at a proper age and 'at the proper
time they hand over their inheritance to them. During the Buddha's
times this was very relevant indeed.

During the period under review the prevalent practice of
marriage was monogamous, as it was in the Vedic times. But there
are no rigid rules in this regard and condemnation of polygamy, which
was a customary right of kings and nobles and of anyone who afford to
support more than one wife. In the Jatakas there was an interesting
story representing polygamy as the natural course to adopt in the
following circumstances. Generally a man possessed one wife only.
The exceptions are to be found, among kings, nobles and merchants.
Pasenadi, Udena and Bimbisara had many wives.

There are evidences to show that divorce was permissible if
either party was found guilty of adultery or unfaithfulness. These were
the only grounds on which a woman was allowed to divorce her
husband who, on the other hand, might put away his wife if she was
barren and apparently if the found her uncongenial as is shown by
Isidasi's case. Three times Isidasi was given in marriage and thrice
deserted. Uppalavanna's husband left her after the birth of a daughter.
But it should be noted that as marriage received no legal or religious
sanction so divorce was settled entirely by the parties concerned.

The question of re-marriage of women who were not widows is
also an important one. Isidasi was married to different persons one
after another. She was probably acting in conformity with the public opinion rather than in opposition to it.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Dhammapada} Commentary, in which introduces to the story of Kana relates that when her husband married another wife, she was taken as a daughter by the king.\textsuperscript{42} A woman from Savatthi "visited her own people's home and they wanted to take her from her husband and marry her to someone else who she did not like".\textsuperscript{43}

Female chastity finds a very important place in the Pali Canon. The Mahaparinibbana Suttanta of the Digha Nikaya points out that violation of chastity was a serious offence. The punishment for a woman who broke her marriage vow was so very severe that the husband could with impunity take away her life. The Andabhuta Jataka\textsuperscript{44} refers to the ordeal of fire to prove chastity. The Mahaummagga Jataka tells us that a bridegroom married the bride after testing her chastity. The Madulakkahanna Jataka furnishes us with an account of ready wit and intelligence of a woman in preserving her chastity.

Divorce was allowed but without any formal decrease.\textsuperscript{45} Remarriage of women was not unknown in the Buddha's time.\textsuperscript{46} Dowry system was unknown to earlier societies and it only came into vogue in medieval times

And also we come across examples where young boys and girls enjoyed freedom of choice. Scope was given to maidens and youths to select their own partners. In this respect the Buddhist seems to have
held rational views. Marriage for love was praised. Thus Buddhist text
gives an impression that the younger men and women in point of
marriage enjoyed much freedom.

6. Wife

In the Buddhist Literature there are various types of wives. The
Anguttara Nikaya mentioned seven types of wives. The Lord said out of
seven type of wives, three types, namely, a destroyer (vadhaka), a thief
(cori) and a mistress (ayya) after death, go to hell; while the remaining
four types by their virtue reach heaven.47

In the Sujata Jataka48 the Buddha himself classifies wives into
seven kinds (1). A wife, who is bad-hearted, relentless to the good, hates
her husband, but loves others and who is a destroyer of everything
obtained at the cost borne by her husband is called a destroyer wife (2).
A wife who steals something, which her husband procures for her by
trade or killed profession or the farmers' spade, is called a thief-wife (3).
A wife who is lazy, passionate, covetous, foul mouthed, full of anger and
extreme hatred, careless of duty and oppressive to her subordinates, is
called a high and might wife (4). A wife who sympathizes with the good,
takes a motherly care of her husband and guards her husbands, is
called a motherly wife (5) A wife who is modest, obedient to her
husband and respects her husband, is called a friendly wife (7) A wife
who is patient, passionate true to her heart, quite when abused, afraid
of violence and submissive to her husband's will, is called a slavish wife.
The Anguttara Nikaya refers to four qualities, which enable a woman to obtain victory in the next life (Paralokavijayaya patipanno hoti). They are as follows: (1) Skill in household duties (2) Capacity to look after members of the family; (3) Capacity of doing everything to the liking of her husband, (4) Thrift: she must save wealth, gold, silver, corn etc. earned by her husband. A woman possessed of these virtues and devoted to the three gems, observer of precepts, charitable and wise, must be happy in the next world. The Samyuttanikaya points out that good housewives are always devoted and dutiful to their husbands. They are always ready to undergo all sorts of misery for their beloved husbands. They are known as the highest comrades (Bhariya parama sakha). Husband is, on the other hand, a woman's emblem and sign (Bhattapannanam itthiyati).

A striking example of husband's devotion to his wife is found in the case of king Munda. When the queen Bhadda, the dear and beloved wife of king Munda died, the king neither bathed nor anointed himself no partook of any food nor concerned himself with any affairs but day and night clung in grief to her body.

When husbands renounced the world, their wives had to follow. In the Mahavagga people saying, with fear, "Why has Gautama come here? To take away our sons and make our daughters widows!" From this it can presume that such women were considered widows and they spent the rest of their life in exclusion. In a way their position was better and in another way worse than that of a widow. Such a woman
could move in the house with the same dignity and authority even in
the absence of her husband.

'Patibbata' ideals were imprinted on the mind of a Buddhist wife.
They were entirely devoted to their husbands, mentally and physically.
"In all probability the majority of wives devoted themselves entirely to
their husband's service." The Buddhist wife had full faith in the ideal
of patibbata, so much so that some women were devoted to their
husband just for this ideal.

The wife was to be the best friend of the husband and in the
Sigalovada Sutta; five ways of ministering to one's wife are given. Thus,
Buddhist proposals regarding women, which safeguard society and in
particular, the family are given, the family was regarded as central to a
well-balanced society. Firstly, a husband should be every courteous to
his wife. This surely means that he must have respect for her and be
polite and good mannered in her presence but also that he must have
friendliness and consideration towards her in thought and deed as well
as in words. The Dhammapada verse says: "Speak the truth: do not be
angry. When you are asked, give, if only a little. From these three
conditions, one may go into the vicinity of the devas. The second
Buddhist proposal given in the Sutta concerning a husband's treatment
of his wife is that the should not despise her in any way. Women were
regarded as their husband's chattels then, so this was very advanced.
Thirdly, a husband should be faithful, which will have meant in
thought, word and deed. Fourthly, he should hand over domestic
management to his wife.
Fifthly, the Sutta says that a wife should be given adornments. According to the Sutta, a wife was to perform all household duties well and this meant. She was to have the usual skills from cooking and cleaning to dressmaking and gardening. She was to keep her home well and her husband and children happy. She was to be hospitable to her husband’s relations, to be strictly faithful, to protect her husband’s earnings and to be skilled and industrious in discharging her duties. The Anguttara Nikaya says,56 she wins power and this world is within her grasp if he possesses qualities such as these.

The way of the Buddha is not a way of annihilation, but a way of freedom from the lower by the development of the higher. Husband and wife can pass together to this state of unity if they will recognize the teaching and work together to its attainment.57 Both can sublimate their lower nature along mental channels.

A woman as a wife was no mere household drudge, but she had considerable authority being herself husband’s friend, philosopher and guide.58 She exercised full control over internal management after her marriage. A wife should not be held in common with another.59 A wife who shares her husband’s lot be it rich or be it poor, gods do praise her fame.60 The wives were graded as those who could behave with their husbands like a mother, sister, comrade (sakhi), slave (dasi), noble lady (ayya), their (cori), and murderer (vadhka).61 A good wife can support her children and keep the households after the death of her husband by spinning the cotton and scraping the woman’s platted hair
(Kappasam kantitum ienim olikhitum). A good wife leading a godly life with her husband for 16 years will never go to another man after the death of her husband. She will keep the virtue in full. She lives at home with a heart free from stinginess. She has faith (sahasampanno), sacrifice (cagasumpanno) and wisdom (pannasampanno). A good husband is like a good wife. A husband is an ornament of his wife, her refuge, her object of pleasure, her protector and her greatest deity.

As a wife she was revered in the family. She had the privilege of the distributing money and she got an opportunity to deal with spiritual matters. The Sigala Sutta narrates that the wife should be worshiped as the western quarter. It is very clearly stated that the husband should treat her with respect (sammananaya) and faithfulness (avimananaya). He should hand over authority to her (issariya vossaggena). He should provide her with ornaments (alamkarnuppadanena). Thus the husband was expected to treat her with courtesy. In return, the wife was expected to fulfill her obligations. She should perform her duties very diligently (susamvihita kammanta ca hoti), be hospitable to kith and kin (susamgahita parijana), (samkhatam anurakkhati), be efficient and not lazy in performing the duties. The very fact that she had responsibility of protecting family wealth shows that he occupied a responsible position as far as money matters were concerned. It was indeed creditable on the part of the Buddhist society to hand over household authority to her. She was not treated as a mere servant of the house. But she enjoyed some rights and had a dominating voice in domestic matters. At the same time, it
was obligatory on both the parties to lead a moral life and to respect each other. This encouragement of her natural aptitudes and inclinations found abundant expression in the Buddhist way of life. The position of a wife in the Buddhist literature was apparently very sound.

7. Widow

The Buddhist texts say very little about widowhood in comparison with other phases of woman's life. Probably, the widow in the Buddhist society suffered the same lot as the Hindu widow. Sati was not yet known then. After the death of her husband, widow led a miserable life. Sometimes the responsibility of the entire family fell upon her. She had to look after the maintenance of her children and herself. Nakula Mata promised her husband,66 who was on his deathbed, that she would work and maintain her children and herself. But generally, widow, used to grieve for her deceased husband. It is said that the Buddha took pity on her, consoled her and showed her the right path.67 If a widow is wealthy and dwells in a prosperous house, has silver and gold, people even her brothers and friends, talk unkindly of her. A widow may have ten brothers to give her shelter; yet she is useless as a river without water.68 Such was the poignant picture of a widow's life portrayed in the Jataka Book.

As a widow she went on her way unabused, free from any suspicion of ill omen, not excluded from the domestic festivities.69 Widow remarriage was prevalent then. In the Ucchanga Jataka, the lady, when given the choice between the life of husband, soon or brother, chose to save the brother. She explained her decision, stating
that if the husband was killed, she could remarry; if the son was killed, she could beget another son; but that she could never get another brother. But, generally, Buddhist widows do not seem to have cherished the ideal of remarriage. Dr. Altekar has rightly pointed out, "Widow-remarriage was, however, coming into disrepute during the period 300 B.C., to 200 A.D." Candā, the widow, preferred to wander for seven years hungry, thirsty and living on alms, to remarrying.

Buddhism showed another way to such women. Many widows joined the Order and led the honourable life of nuns. Candā was one of such ladies. Sona, the widow, mother of many children, when she found herself a burden to the children, joined the Order. Thus many widows must have found shelter in nunnery, rather than lead a humiliating life in the family or in the society.

The doctrine of Kamma, which knows the responsibility for one's own actions, is a rational and moral one conducive to right action. But in its negative side it has been used as a weapon to exploit women. For instance, a window has always been blamed for her husband's death. It is due to her kamma or she has been unchaste in her previous birth. Hence, she is insauspicious and impure. Among high caste Hindus one is expected to perform a satīpuja commit suicide on her husband's pyre to attain heaven. Buddhism does not countenance the view that suicide, for whatever purpose, would lead to salvation. Besides, a wife is not blamed for her husband's death, for death is a natural and inevitable end. As a result woman suffers no moral degradation on account of her widowhood. Her social status is not altered in any way. In Buddhist
culture she does not have to advertise her widowhood, by shaving her head and relinquishing her ornaments. She does not have to fast on specific days and sleep on hard floors, for self-mortification has no place in Buddhism. Nor does she have to absent herself from weddings and auspicious events. Above all she is regarded as a rational human being with no stigma attached to her and there is no religious barrier to her remarriage. Remarriage of married women and widows seems to have been in vogue, though not common.

8. Mother

On the problem of maternity and the duties of the mother the Dhamma throws light and guidance. The idea that it is foolish to produce new life because the new life brings suffering, is a limited one.

Parents who are Buddhists will recognize themselves in their children, they will teach by practice rather than by percept. They are the instruments for the handing on the truth to their offspring, and they will strive to live that truth as examples for the children to follow; and the children in their turn will grow up to recognize the debt they owe their parents. "If thou hast borne thy father and thy mother on thy shoulders for an hundred years, thou hast not repaid them the thousandth part of the debt thou owest them". 73

And in this noble work the woman plays the most important part. Three characteristics describe the position of the woman in her material life, it is hers to endure, to serve, to renounce. The ideal mother is great in enduring, greater in serving, greatest in renouncing.
She bears in her womb the seed of life and brings it forth with suffering and anxiety; she serves that life with loving care; she renounces herself for its benefit and in that great renunciation finds the highest joy. 74

The mother has always been the pivot of the family and she is revered throughout the ages of Indian civilization. In the formation of Indian civilization, woman’s position suffered ups and downs, but the position of the mother remained almost uniformly sound and unchanged. From Vedic times to the present day motherhood has received veneration in the family. Vasista says, "The teacher (acharya) is ten times more venerable than the sub-teacher (upadhyaya), the mother is hundred times more than the father". 75 Such was the ideal before ancient Hindu India, and the very same concept existed in the Buddhist India. As a mother woman secures honour because she brings forth and rears members to continue the family. The Samyutta Nikaya says, "Woman is a commodity supreme." 76 A commentator explains, "Woman is a commodity supreme because she is indispensable utility or because through her Bodhisattas and world rulers take birth."

Parents are honoured throughout Pali texts. It was considered a moral binding on children to respect their parents. 77 Emphatically Buddha’s notion of the boundless debt of gratitude due to parents. Even the gods admire the family where parents are properly revered, properly worshipped, and properly looked after. 78 That is one of the reasons why matricide and patricide are known as exceptions or mental aberrations in the Indian tradition.
Since motherhood is a cherished ideal of every woman, childlessness is considered as the greatest misfortune. A barren woman suffers a miserable life in the family and in the society at large. The primary reason is that it makes the husband to bring another spouse. According to Pali texts that barrenness had caused a 'loss of respect in the society.'

Buddhism took up the cult of the mother in its previous form as is seen in the story of Kisa-Gotami who was called a nobody's daughter when married and therefore was disdainfully treated by the neighbors until she gave birth to a son. After the birth of the son, however, they honoured her. Thus motherhood was granted certain privileges. In the early Buddhist text one can observe that men gave their mother's name when describing their identity.

A mother's love knows no bounds. She looks after the child, at the cost of her life. The Buddha, while explaining as the families where mother and father are worshiped in the house, is worthy of offerings (Sahuneyyakani). The families where mother and father are worshipped in the house are equal with Brahma (Sabrahmakani). The reason is that mother and father do much for children, they bring them up, nourish and show them to the world.

The mother's compassionate heart is often recognized in the Buddhist literature. The Lord, while giving a discourse on love and compassion towards the world, gave the simile of the mother. He said, "Just as a mother, at the cost of her own life, protects her only son,
similarly, immeasurable love should be extended to the entire world. To the mother the most dearest in the world is her child.

He who has much wealth and who does not support his mother or father in old age should also be known as an outcaste. He who strikes or by speech annoys his mother or father or brother or sister or mother in law should also be known as an outcast. In the singalovada suttanta of the dighanikaya the Buddha said; Mother and father belong to the eastern quarters (pubbadisa). Wife and children belong to the western quarters (pacchadisa). Woman has however, as a mother definitely more honored and respected, her position being unassailable.

9. Family

Equally with a man a woman might bring a family to prosperity. All families that have attained great possessions have done so for one or other of the following reasons; they search for what is lost, repair what is dilapidated; eat and drink in moderation and place in authority, issariya, a virtuous woman or man. In spite of her many trials and tribulations, a virtuous women could have power in her home, bear the children she wanted and enjoy the love and respect of her husband and family circle.

The Buddha gave Buddhist proposals regarding youth and society and women and family life in several discourses. Probably the best known of these discourses is the Sigalovada Sutta. The family and its unity are of the highest importance and the Rukkhadhamma Jataka used the simile of trees standing in a forest to show the value of a
family's solidarity: many trees can stand against the force of strong winds whereas a single tree standing alone cannot. In the Anguttara Nikaya it is recorded that families who respected their parents got high status in society; the Sigalovada Sutta gives five ways in which children should minister to their parents.

"This world would be in the grasp of woman, if she is endowed with four qualities," said the Lord to Visakha Migaramata. Which are the four qualities? Her capacity to work, management of servants, pleasant and loving behaviour to husband and capacity to guard wealth. These four qualities would make a perfect housewife. All these four qualities admirably sum up the duties of a wife and suggest that if a wife performs her duties mentioned above, she will be mighty enough to win the family and the world.

Once the Lord said that the prosperity of the family depended on four things. One of the four things was the building up of moral stamina in the family by both the man and the woman. The family is ruined, if it fails to maintain standing record of reputation and suffers in its reputation, owing to the two main pillars of the family being not morally strong. Such consciousness of comradeship must have been an encouraging factor in the society and that may be the reason why lay devotees like Visakha Migaramata, Suppiya, Nakulamata and others led a happy life. The Buddhist concept about the duties of a housewife is very clearly stated in the Anguttara Nikaya to lead the family.
The *Dhammiya Sutta* tells of the life a householder should lead whilst, the *Vyagghapajja Sutta* give the conditions of prosperity or the household life, showing how persistent effort, protecting one's own earnings, good friendship and balanced livelihood will conduce to one's welfare and happiness in this very life itself. The same *Sutta* discusses the four conditions conducive to welfare and happiness in the future life, which are the cultivation of confidence, virtue, charity and wisdom. The *Mahamangala Sutta* gives the thirty-eight blessings of life. The eleventh blessing is "Succouring of mother" and the twelfth is "Succouring of father". The thirteenth is 'Cherishing of wife and children' whilst the seventeenth is 'Rendering aid to relations'. All are Buddhist proposals for family life and the well being of youth and society, which are inseparable.

Besides performing such household duties **the wife cooperated with her husband in every respect. Her advice was sought and her opinion was respected in the house.** It was very common for a housewife to give in charity anything of her choice. Her husband or other relations never interfered her with. The housewife had a right to utilize money in proper way.

The Buddha declared that the prosperity of the family depended on the efficiency of husband and wife and said that they are two pillars of the family. This idea conveys clearly that woman should have a sound and responsible position in the family; and in fact she not only occupied such a position, but in most cases proved herself allowing mistress. As Miss I.B. Horner rightly puts it, "Practically many of the
women appear to have acquired a position of command and to have made themselves queens in their houses.96

The Buddha honoured those women who did not neglect the care of the home.97 Taking into account all these scattered evidences from the Pali Texts may conclude that as a housewife, woman occupied a very important position in the family and in the society.

10. Caste System

When the Buddha was born, caste system was one of the burning questions of the day. Although, generally speaking, it was an established institution among the masses. According to it two young Brahmin students- Bharadvaja and Vaseththa-fell into a discussion as to what makes a Brahmin. On the one hand Bharadvaja contended that one who is of pure birth, on the side of both father and mother, upto the seventh generation is a Brahmin.98 Buddha explained to them that it is the conduct that makes a man noble or mean and birth and other accidents do not count at all. This point to the fact that though caste system was a well established institution.

The Buddhist literature does not give an analytical exposition of the caste system; yet it mentions a variety of castes. The general term "Gahapati" is used for the castes other than Kshatriyas and Brahmins. Vaishya and Sudra, and the sub castes such as Pesakaro, Nalako, Chandala, Jaccalo, Suvannakaro, Migaludhko and others are also mentioned. Buddhaghosa99 narrates the Hindu ideology that Brahmins are born from the mouth of the Brahma, Kshatriyas from the chest
(urato), Vaishyas from the navel and Sudras from the knee (januto). In doing so, he adds one more class, namely, the class of Sramanas. He states that Sramanas are born from the surface of the foot (pitthipadato). This tendency of attributing caste to limbs of the Brahma is found mostly in the Atthakatha literature.

Watertight compartments did not apparently mark the system at the time of the Buddha. A designation or occupation was assigned to a particular group, but one group was not forbidden to work in the profession of other groups, Brahmins were mentioned as custodians of the Vedas, chanters of hymns and charged with work pertaining to religion. Besides preaching, Brahmins were allowed to hold the land and possess a great amount of wealth.108

The struggle between the Brahmin and Kshatriya to gain superiority over each other is evident in the Buddhist texts. In the Majjhima Nikaya, the King of Madhura informed Mahakaccana that the Brahmins were of opinion that they were of the highest caste and others of inferior castes.109 But Buddhist literature, generally, maintains the Kshatriya class as the chief and the best in society. In short, as Brahmins exaggerated the power of the priest.110

There is no evidence of particular profession allotted to particular community, but one may safely allot agriculture to all the communities. Perhaps it may be, as Dr. Rhys David put it, "Nothing in all foregoing evidences has gone to show that in the India of early Buddhist Literature, the pursuit of agriculture was associated with either social prestige or social stigma".112
Matrimonial alliance with communities was not condemned by the Buddhist texts. Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya seemed to have enjoyed fair relation with one another. "What we find in Buddha's time is caste in the making. The great masses of people were distinguished quite roughly into four classes, social strata of which the boundary lines were vague and uncertain".  

The Pali texts give abundant examples of inter-caste marriages, which turned out to be very successful. Queen Mallika, the daughter of a garland-maker, was married to the King of Kosala, and she attained the position of Chief Queen. The King of Banaras is said to have married a daughter of a fruit-seller. King Sivi's mother, Jambavati, was a Candali. The Chaplain Bodhisattva is said to have married a slave girl. Ubbiri was a daughter from noble clan who was given in marriage to the King of Kosala, who consecrated her. All such evidences prove the flexibility of caste, and one can say that caste system had not taken the shape of watertight compartments. However, on the whole, and the society had not then adopted a rigid rule debarring inter-caste marriages, while at the same time the tendency to disapprove of these was distinctly noticeable.

According to the Buddha all four classes are equally 'pure'. Classes were originally occupational, not hereditary, and ought to be so again (they would then cease to be classes in the Brahmanical sense). Any person regardless of his class origin: on this there is another sutra, which insists on the point that persons of any of the four classes could
attain enlightenment and Nirvana, if they are intelligent. Equally people of any class are reborn according to their actions, without discrimination or ground of class.110

The Buddha's views on service are given in another sutra.111 A Brahman once explained to him that the Brahmins declare that there are four kinds of service: of a Brahman, of a warrior, of one of the agricultural-mercantile class (Vaisya) or of a helot (Sudra). If the service will cause the person served to be better (morally), he may be served, if it will make him worse he should not be served. This applies to all regardless of class. Whether a person is a better person or a worse person does not depend on high birth, nor on superior colour, Varna, which also means 'beauty' and 'class', so here the last may well be intended), nor on superior property.

Agganna sutta112 presents the Buddhist view of the origin of social grades and distinctions. According to the Sutta, in the beginning there was a casteless society. But, in course of time, as the society began to grow in complexity, laws were laid down for the maintenance of peace and order among the people. Later on hereditary factor entered into them and a rigid from of class system came into being. At a still later stage this was converted into caste system. The main purpose of Agganna sutta is to show the conventional character of the class system. As such it is only social and not divine in origin.

It is clear from the above account how in course of his discourse and discussions Tathagata exposed the caste system. The Buddha
demolished the very foundation of the system and refuted the claims of the Brahmins to any superiority over the rest of the people.

11. Theris (Nuns)

Buddhist monasticism added the idea of an organized community of nuns. More women were ready to renounce worldly ties than they had ever before.¹¹³

At the time of the Buddha, woman struggled desperately to release herself from the bonds of the world. Her passion for renunciation was so great, her craving for the ultimate truth was so genuine, her desire to liberate herself from the worldly ties was so intense that woman cut off all the delicate meshes of womanhood. It was a crucial point in the history of the Indian woman. Her former ideas were shattered, her dreams violated and her mode of life changed. She neither waited to ponder over nor hesitated to embrace houseless state. "Whether philosophical attainment was within the possibilities of her nature or not the essential medium for it the Indian woman found provided in monastic life."¹¹⁴

The ladies who had renounced the world were because of miseries of life. Mutta the daughter of a Brahmin, was given in marriage to a poor and ugly-looking man, Her verses revealed that she was thoroughly dissatisfied with her married life, and she utters that she escaped from the household drudgery and the tyranny of her hunch back husband.¹¹⁵
Many women joined the monastic life because they were compelled to renounce the world. Some of them were forced to lead a life of celibacy by their family members. Many of them sacrificed their lives for the sake of their families while others showed their reluctance to the celibate life even after putting on saffron robes.¹¹⁴

Some women joined the nunnery because they were closely connected with the Buddhist preachers. They were impressed more by hearing the norm from the mouth of their kith and kin.¹¹⁷ Utter frustration in life due to love was also one of the causes of renunciation. Many women were frustrated in their lives and were unable to revive the spirit. Some were disappointed in love, some in married life and some deceived by destiny.¹¹⁸

Though the magnificent personality of the Buddha contributed in no small measure in making women folk to renounce the world, yet it would not be correct to conclude that it was the chief motive-spring. Suffering was the sole and main cause of woman's renunciation. She suffered mentally or physically or was, disappointed in household life or dissatisfied with mundane affairs. When she heard the call of the Buddha, explaining the cause of suffering (Dukkha) and showing the way of the liberation from suffering, she at once joined his order.

Mahapajapati Gotami was the first lady to fight for women right to monastic life and she was the first lady to receive the ordination.¹¹⁹ Some Buddhist scholars are of opinion that really the first to open the
door to women was Yasodhara, the former wife of the Budha, and not Mahapajapati Gotami.\footnote{120}

Ananda asked him "O Lord, is woman not capable of leading houseless state or realizing the fruit of conversion."\footnote{121} To him the Buddha replied, "No Ananda, they are capable." This clearly shows that the Buddha never doubted the capacity of woman to the attainment of the fruit nor did he consider her inferior to man. He had always paid due respect to woman folk and praised the praiseworthy ones.

Woman accepted Buddha's Order, Why? Because of her craving, yearning for knowledge and desire for emancipation. She wanted to open the avenue of liberty by all means and she got it opened. The mode of life, customs and conventions, behaviour and modus of two groups of monks and nuns were so uniform that one would not be wrong in presupposing their associated life before they entered the Buddhist Order.\footnote{112}

However, once the women were in, the result exceeded all expectations. There arose a very splendid galaxy of Theris (nuns) who practiced the Dhamma so gloriously that in the eyes of the world Buddhism was raised to a very high pedestal. The Therigatas, a collection of seventy-seven verses by individual nuns is one of the prides of Buddhist literature.\footnote{123}

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The nun enjoyed the same privileges as the monk in spiritual exercises. Besides, she was allowed to mix in society, deliver religious sermons to laymen, discuss with them freely on religious topics and guide them whenever necessary. Her position in this respect was equal to that of the monk. On these matters, the monk could never bring any type of pressure to bear upon her. Her relations with the monk were expected to be cordial and healthy. Though she had to pay him respect.\textsuperscript{124}

The Buddhist Literature indicates that relations between the monk and the nun were, in fact, very friendly. Monks helped nuns whenever they needed help.\textsuperscript{125} Since nuns were assaulted by robbers, thieves and wicked men, therefore, the rule was revised and monks were allowed to accompany nuns to dangerous spots. Thus, monks served as escorts to nuns.\textsuperscript{126}

The monks, who misbehaved with nuns, were penalized and were not to be saluted by the Order of nuns. Nuns misbehaving with monks were prohibited from entering the Vihara.\textsuperscript{127} Nuns came more in contact with society than monks, for nuns were forbidden to dwell in the forest. The Vinaya Pitaka gives the impression that society in general was more careful about the nun's behaviour.\textsuperscript{128}

When a woman renounced household life her life was entirely changed. Her aspirations, ambitions and noble desires were diverted into a wider sphere. Her approach to life was more impersonal and her outlook on life broader and elevated. As a nun she acquired greater
scope for performing humanitarian and altruistic work. No doubt her goal was realization of Nibbana; yet she was not isolated from society, she daily came in contact with almsmen and almshwomen, while going for alms. Besides preaching, some of the nuns also did teaching and coaching of lay pupils.\textsuperscript{129}

No restrictions were imposed upon the Theris in the matter of teaching and preaching the doctrine. The Bhikkhuni Sangha produced a wonderful number of remarkable orators, such as Sukha (who commanded pin-drop silence even when she spoke to hundreds of people, Patacara, Khema, Dhammadinna and Pajapati herself. The discourses delivered by these brilliant women often put the Bhikkhus to shame.\textsuperscript{130}

Nuns often tried to help the lay devotees, who suffered from mental agony. Nuns have always proved a healing balm and angles of mercy to such people.\textsuperscript{131} The compassionate attitude of nuns was not restricted to womenfolk only, but extended to men as well. There was a close solidarity between the laity and the members of the Order. According to Buddhist literature, nearly seventy-three women who became Theris or Elder nuns in those days. One cannot say therefore that nuns were neglected in early Buddhist literature. For example, with Visakha, the most eminent and generous benefactor and supporter of the order of monks and nuns.\textsuperscript{132}
The conversion of women by women is part of the weighty contribution that they made to the Buddhist religion. As teachers they exhibit a variety of attracting forces consequent upon their individual character. This tradition of women missionaries contributed many centuries after the demise of the Buddha.

12. Education

Monks, teach Dhamma which is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the ending. Miss. I.B. Horner's translation of the Mahavagga to recall that Buddhism was from the very beginning a missionary spiritual movement, determined to spiritually transform the world of humanity, and to waken it morally, intellectually and spiritually. Buddhist monastic colleges and universities of ancient India threw open their doors to all those who wished to know, irrespective of caste, colour, creed and sex. This universal attitude and catholic spirit of Buddhist culture and its educational centers earned a great international reputation for India and attracted students and scholars from far-off countries. The same cannot be said of Brahmanical system of education and its institutions. It is therefore, quite proper to attribute to the influence of Buddhism the rise of organized public educational institutions in ancient India. The influence of Buddhist monastic and educational institutions on the growth and propagation of Indian culture can scarcely be overestimated. It was through Buddhism that Indian art, literature, thought, and morals were transmitted through the highways and byways of Asia during the first millennium of Christian era.
The Buddha had laid down that every novice must be properly trained in the Vinaya (Discipline) and the Dhamma (Doctrine) and must choose an Upajjhaya (spiritual preceptor). The relations between preceptor and pupil were like that of a father and a son, based on confidence and love.\textsuperscript{137}

All the teaching had to be imparted orally and retained in memory; this is inferable from the non-mention of any written document or textbook among the belongings of a monk listed in the canon. Knowledge of time reckoning, study of the Pratimoksa, the Vinaya and the Dhamma, Buddhist legends and moral fables and basic tenets, these were the subjects of study. The teaching was reinforced in occasional congregational recitations (samgiti).\textsuperscript{138}

The third way given in the Sigalovada Sutta by which parents should minister to their children and thus safeguard youth and society together with family life is to see that their children are properly educated. Girls should obviously be given the same educational opportunities as boys and the trend is now in this direction.

S.B. Dasgupta has given a detailed account of the history, literature and theological beliefs of the worshippers of Dharmathakura in Bengal.\textsuperscript{139} It has been pointed out by scholars that the cult of Dharmathakura had been current among the people of low-class, such as the Domas, Hadis, Bagdis, Fishermen, Carpenters, etc. In the Brahmanical social scheme these castes belong to the Shudra order.
Buddhist contribution to Indian languages and literatures is matched only by the richness and variety of the Buddhist religion and philosophy. The development of Pali and its literature was wholly due to Buddhism. The contribution of Buddhism to the psychological literature of ancient India has perhaps never been equaled in the literature of Brahmanism. The psychological advances made by the Abhidharma schools of Buddhist thought deserve detailed study in the light of contemporary psychology developed in the West.

The great mass of Buddhist art and literature, so rich, varied and deeply meaningful in both form and content, was inspired by the mystery and the norms of the Dharma. There is need hardly mention that the earliest and the best painting of ancient India is the Buddhist painting; the best sculpture of the golden days of ancient Indian culture is the Buddhist sculpture, and the earliest historical sculpture of India is also the Buddhist sculpture.

The eminent position attained by a large number of women in Buddhist history, viz. Khema, Patacara, Dhammadinna, Sujata, Visakha, Samavati, Ambapali, Uppalavarna, Subha, Kisa, and Soma etc., shows that Buddhism had done much for the emancipation of women in Indian society. All these instances show that women were not deprived of education in the Buddhist period.

Woman played an important part in the lives of the Buddhas and Bodhisattas. The Buddhahood is the culmination of the fulfillment of Ten Perfections in many hundreds and thousands of lives. In the study of the lives of the Bodhisattas, find out that woman has helped and
encouraged the development of the supreme personalities of the Bodhisattas. Thus various examples of such can be cited to show how woman, helped Bodhisatta.

Queen Mallika\textsuperscript{142} visited the Lord and asked, "Oh Lord, what is the cause of some women being bad in complexion and ugly to look at and strike with poverty? Why should some woman be ugly and yet possessed of wealth, and on the contrary, some others with lotus-like complexion, charming and beautiful but poor, or again others possessed of both beauty and wealth?" To her the Buddha answered with the same zeal and enthusiasm, which he adopted in answering Anathapindaka. He said, "This difference seen amongst woman is due to the bad nature of the woman who gives no charity." He explained to her that woman's beauty or wealth depended on her good nature and the meritorious acts she performed. It was indeed a sound appeal to woman! As we know, he propagated "charity" amongst his lay devotees. These relations seem to have been very affectionate and, on the part of the Buddha, most paternal. Due to his compassionate heart, lay devotees, irrespective of sex, had great confidence in him.

It will be interesting to evaluate a woman's role in the life of Gautama. Prominent ladies in the life of Gautama Buddha were Mayadevi, Mahapajapati Gotami, Yasodhara, Kisa-Gotami, Sujata, Visakhamigara-mata; prominent nuns from his sisterhood; and Sundari, Cincha, Magandiya the Brahmin's daughter, and many others. All these ladies played their part either to elevate him.
Although father, husband or children supported a greater number of women in Buddhism in Indian society, yet we get often references to self-supporting women who were engaged in various trades and professions. For example, it is found that a certain woman was the keeper of a paddy field and gathered and parched the heads of rice. Another is found as watching the cotton fields, where she used sometimes to spin fine thread from the clean cloth.\textsuperscript{144}

Nuns must have impressed and converted many men and women by their powerful and self-sacrificing personalities. All this conversion of women by women is part of the weighty contribution that they made to the Buddhist religion. As teachers they exhibit a variety of attracting forces consequent upon their individual characters, and histories. This tradition of women-missionaries continued many centuries after the demise of the Buddha. Women played an important part in the early history of Buddhism. The Buddha was never tried of describing the defects and vices of woman and warning the monks to guard against them. In the Anguttara Nikaya similar warnings are given to women as regards the wickedness of men.\textsuperscript{145}

In Buddhist society, since woman could move about freely, she got the facility of making herself economically independent. She was not cooped within the four walls of the house to be a burden to the members of the family; but she could earn her livelihood. She sought various professions. The Buddhist texts give an account of the maidservant's relations with the employer's family members. It showed that such women received both fair and unfair treatment. In most
cases maidservants were treated as members of the family, and not as mere slaves. Buddhist texts do not refrain from giving incidents of bad treatment of maidservants. Such incidents, however, are rare.

During the Buddhist Era ethical teachings played more or less an important part in the lives of the people. People seem to have been attracted to the religious teachings, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist. Barua thinks, 'It was rather a period when civil war was ceased for a while, yielding place to fights for civil rights and higher ethical ideals. Women took an increased interest in religious matters. It is often quoted that women attended sermons delivered by the Buddha and his disciples. Women were not confined to mere household drudgery, but enjoyed a privilege of sharing in new currents of thought flowing in the society. Women belonging to the intelligentsia got more facilities to develop their philosophical sense. Perhaps the credit goes to the broad outlook of the thinkers like the Buddha.

The Jataka Book mentions certain conventions about death. It seems that women used to accompany the funeral procession. On this occasion, their hair was ruffled and untidy, they were red garments, held torches and marched in procession. Under Buddhism a woman was an individual in command of her own life until the dissolution of her body. So it is said "with the growth of Buddhism woman as spinster, wife and widow, with rights and duties not limited to child bearing, became an integral part of society". In the royal family she was regarded as one of the seven treasures of the emperor. A wife combined in her the qualities of chastity and devotion was looked upon as a jewel.
The householder and the housewife exercised co-equal authority in many affairs. Thus in view of the available evidences it may be concluded that the position of women in Buddhist India was more enviable and more honorable than it had been during the pre-Buddhist days. Daughters and widows were no longer regarded with such undisguised despair and disgrace.  

The above analysis denotes that the realistic contribution and efforts of Buddhism which was given a good status and stand for women in Hindu society. The Buddhism principles are praiseworthy in the world. The "word" or "concept" discrimination does not arise in Buddha Dharma. Buddhism had opened the door for all the people to receive knowledge and obtain Nirvana. In this connection women had acquired a significant place in family, society and Sangha.
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