CHAPTER - 4

WOMEN IN BUDDHISM AT PRESENT
Symbolic and ideological definitions of women are not sufficient to explain women's status, but they should be included in any discussion of Southeast Asian women. This paper look at how women are defined by Theravada Buddhism, one of the great religious traditions of Southeast Asia. Although this paper emphasize Thai Buddhist women, the implications may be broadly applied to Buddhist Southeast Asia.

There is a substantial literature linking Buddhist doctrine and social behavior in Theravada Buddhism communities, much of it done by anthropologists (cf. Tambiah 1970; Spiro; Terweil 1975; Bunnak 1973). Buddhism defines women as being "inherently lower in religious status than men, and women are barred by sex from aspiring to the roles to which the greatest virtue attaches, namely the roles associated with the Buddhist Sangha." (Keyes 1977:161). Ideologically, then, women are inferior to men. On the other hand, Keyes also points out that: The fact that in all Theravada Buddhist societies, non-ascriptive criteria are at least as important as ascriptive criteria in the allocation of social roles can be explained, I believe, with reference to the Buddhist ideas that karma not only determines one's place along the hierarchy of relative suffering but also that human being create their own Karma (1977:164).

This hint of potential spiritual equality suggests that factors other than sex are important in determining and individual's spiritual worth. Buddhist doctrine appears to be sufficiently paradoxical to allow for alternative representation, a point emphasized in the following paper.

Buddhist ideology supplies us with certain images of women. By including research on this ideology, we are not equating these images and myths with real Buddhist Women - past or present. Nevertheless, we recognize the importance of Buddhist ideology as a reference system which men and women may use to interpret their own behavior. How can women manipulate this ideology to fit their changing values and lifestyles? or, how are women constrained by Buddhist ideology?
Thomas Kirsch proposes an integration of ideological and economic variables for Thai society, which might also have implications for Buddhist Southeast Asia. He argues that Buddhism builds in certain orientations toward economic behavior which can also be linked to sex role patternning. He outlines the relevant Buddhist values and documents the economic orientation of Thai women, but cautions us not to view this simply as an instance of high status and equality without relating these economic facts to religious goals and values.

John van Esterik elaborates on a new religious role for women in Theravada Buddhist countries, the meditation teachers of Bangkok. He shows how these scholars have appealed to modern elite Buddhists through their interpretation of the Buddhist canon. He, too, finds that these women do not view themselves simply as women, but as persons on their way to transcending distinctions such as male and female. He relates this complex of lay women meditation teachers to the system of political power in modern Thailand, nothing in particular competing ideologies to traditional Buddhist thought, and suggests that women meditation teachers may be viewed as non-threatening to masculine political order.

Women, the most conspicuous merit makers in Buddhist Southeast Asia, are clearly lay devotees with no access to the most valued religious roles since the ordination tradition of women ended before Buddhism became established in Southeast Asia. But there is still substantial variation possible within the identity of lay devotee to Buddhism.

Participation of Thai women in Buddhist religious life has been marginal and peripheral, despite the fact that 95 percent of the population in Thailand profess to be Buddhists. Buddhists in Thailand can be divided into four groups; namely, the monks, the nuns, (mae chee) layman and laywomen. The Thai monastic community does not recognize mae chee due to misinterpretations of the Buddha’s doctrine. This results in mae chee have a lower status than
monks in the Thai society. They do not have the privileges of Buddhist monks, such as free use of public transportation, tax exemption and access to Buddhist universities. Moreover, while they are not given the same status as monks in religious practices and social welfare they are classified as persons in religious orders and do not have the right to political vote. There are about 10,000 mae chee in Thailand, but they are not ordained.

It is important for woman to be recognized as equal to man in religion, because religion has a great influence on people's values, mentality, attitudes and actions. Like gender, it is a social organizing principle since it groups people together in an organized manner and presents a set of social values and principles that guide attitudes and behavior. Exclusion of women in religion has come to be accepted as a religious matter, even though it is not found in any religious teachings of Buddha, Christ or Mohammed. As a consequence of excluding women from the inner and higher positions of religious hierarchy and delegating their role to mere rituals and practices women are denied a religious education which would give both men and women a deeper understanding of their religion. ¹

In many Asian countries, except Japan, religion is an indispensable part of life. In addition to Hindu and Islamic countries there are a number of Buddhist countries: Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia, countries in which there is still strong belief in Theravada Buddhism. (Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism is the first of two strands of Buddhism, and emphasize personal salvation through one's own efforts. The later strand - Mahayana - emphasizes salvation by Faith only.) In these Buddhist countries, women are much less oppressed and the tradition of matriarchy has not been totally destroyed. Women are more independent and free, and lead active lives.


(242)
Buddhism originated in the sixth century BC as a sort of criticism against the caste system of Hinduism. Buddhism is the first religion in the world to establish a community of ordained men on the basis that women can achieve equal salvation with men. According to the Hindu Manu Scripture, women are possessions to be handed down under the protection of men. Women were not allowed to perform rituals on their own. Within this social context, Buddhism opened up new horizons and Buddhist women stepped out of their expected roles to fulfils their ideal roles, not only as wives and mothers, but now as propagators of this new religion in the same capacity as their male counterparts.

One basic idea in Buddhism is Karma. This means that the sum of actions in one's previous lives determines an individual's present status. To be born a women in this life means there was an inadequate store of merit in her previous lives. Thus women are put into socially and economically disadvantaged positions.

There are two main views of women in Thai society. Firstly there is that propounded by Buddhism which is the religion of 95 percent of the population of Thailand. Under the precepts of Buddhism women in Thailand are viewed as second class citizens. Being born a women in this life means that the women has an inadequate store of merit in her previous lives. This situation can, it is believed, be remedied by engaging in merit-maxing activities. Women are, however, denied the most efficient way of altering their balance of merit and demerit to improve their moral and religious position because they are denied admission to the Buddhist order. A mother may, however, redeem her demerit should her son don the saffron robe to enter monk hood. Women suffer daily reminders of their religious inferiority: a women's clothes should not be washed together with those of a man, neither should they be hung in areas where a man might pass below. Women are generally not permitted to touch sacred Buddha images, nor are they to possess any object charged with protective power lest they spoil its magical value (Thitsa, 1980:17).
Religion not only assigns women a lower moral status, it has traditionally left them with less education and thus fewer opportunities to develop the skills to improve their socio-economic status. Women had no access to education when it was the exclusive preserve of monasteries. Since 1921, however, primary education has been compulsory for both boys and girls. In rural areas, where there is a lack of formal schools and teachers, monasteries continue to play a significant role in education. The result is, for poor rural girls, less access to education and the opportunities it can provide.

The second view of women in Thai society is that which relates to the position of women in the family. Whereas boys are “the rice with the husk” they will fall anywhere and grow without attention, girls are “the rice without the husk” requiring constant vigilance and careful upbringing. Marriage often means a woman is transferred from the custody of her father to that of her husband. Buddhism determines implicitly, if not explicitly, the religious and moral inferiority of women, there by leaving them disadvantaged both socially and economically. While Buddha himself neither condemned nor recommended polygamy he did forbid sexual relationships with the wines of other men. This teaching is interpreted to mean that as long as the women is not the wife of somebody it is not a demerit to have a sexual relationship with her.²

Buddhism, in many respects, has long borne great influence over Thai ways of life. The pattern of social relations practiced among Thais is much influenced by one of the Buddhist teachings on the principle of hierarchical order, characterized by a formalized super ordinate subordinate relationship among individuals. Based on this religious concept, the status inequalities within a family are defined in terms of relative ages of each family member

---

(younger : older; children : parents : younger sibling : order sibling) rather than by the sex of a person (male : female). With this classification, the elderly are usually awarded the highest status and prestige and each family member has duties and obligations according to his or her own status within the family (Smith, 1979; Pongphit, 1988 cited in Limanonda, 1996). This religious concept and practice is conducive to reducing sex-biased attitudes and gives a certain status of female family members. There are other religious practices and beliefs which provide an opportunity to women to maintain their importance as much as men in the family. In Buddhism, for instance, only a men could enter into monk hood, which is considered to be the most laudable act of children to gain great merit for the parents. It is also viewed as a gesture to repay the parents a dept of gratitude because they give life to the child. This practice, how ever, does not explicitly suggest a superior status of a men over a women. A daughter who is not allowed to enter the monk hood can also reply a dept of gratitude to parents in any other ways. For examples she could help parents by doing the household chores, working on the farm, earning income, supporting parents financially, looking after old parents, and obtaining a pride price

which is valued as a repayment for mother’s milk (Rabibhadana, 1984 cited in Limanonda; 1996).

In fact, these obligations and practices place more burden on a daughter than a son. In this context, therefore, a daughter in the family could be a valuable asset in the eyes of the parents and also maintain a high status for daughters compared with sons.³

Buddhism, women play an important role in taking case of the children and in shaping their social and moral concepts. However, women cannot completely perform this role since they have no chance to learn and understand

The essence of religion enough to utilize religious concepts in the development of their families. "In the last five years, the rapid growth of information and communication technologies brought many changes in the way people work and communicate. This brings about both threats and opportunities for women. Information and communication technologies may challenge gender division of labor, may redefine women's participation in the work force, creating new career paths and areas of expertise, and has the potential to alleviate the impoverished conditions of women. However, advancements in technology have also caused the displacement of and occupational hazards to women works, have resulted in the degradation of the environment and have the potential to threaten diversity of women's experience and cultures.

The last decade of this century marked the shift to a global information economy characterized by the dominance of giant media and transnational corporations that are able to indicate the production of information worldwide. Information and communication technologies have played a crucial role in this global trend. This same ownership pattern and control has resulted in highly unequal access for majority of the world's population. This inequality contributes to increasing the gap between those who have access to abundant information resources and those who are deprived of this access.

In order to participate in the new world order and the emerging information society. Women must understand and be part of the development of new information and communication technologies. Historically women have not been raised and trained to engage in science and technology. Because of this, women have a lot of catching up to do. It is therefore imperative that women use new information and communication technologies critically to ensure that it results in women's advancement and empowerment.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Asia Pacific women 2000 Gender Equality Development and Peace for the Twenty first century This Publication is Funded by United Nations Development fund for women (UNISEN) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) P.74.
What do Thai women have to say about the relation of religion to socio-economic awareness? In both its progressive and reactionary forms, religion has entered into the life of every person in Thailand and has shaped almost all major conflicts and happening in Thailand today. As on the reactionary side, there is narrowness and chauvinism in every religious tradition, which easily allows itself to grow with narrow and chauvinistic national and economic interests; the progressive aspect contributes to growth in a positive sense in however small a measure it may be. Religion is both a problem where its structures of dominance have oppressed women, as well as a solution where its vision of liberation or equality has generated powerful movements for social change. The same religious tradition may be both a problem and a solution for a social question. In the midst of predominantly patriarchal theology, women’s theology of liberation may derive strength from the powerful image of the religious faith; spell liberation from bondage, setting forth toward freedom. Not surprisingly, women committed to social change have a deeply ambiguous, or perhaps paradoxical, relation to their religious traditions and women’s movements for change have been both within traditions and over and against traditions.⁵

Religion is a bond of Kinship which binds people together or binds them to God. It is not an establishment or structure, as much a tradition or family in which we stand. In the Eastern world, for instance, “dharma” may be interpreted as “religion” but it is also natural law, social law, social structure, right order, ethics and ritual obligation. It may include those deeply held traditions and values which shape ways of life, ways of thinking and hope for change.

The understanding of religion is significant, both for women and for the process of social change. In order to understand, analyze and begin to change the situation of women, insight to religious issues is foundational, even for

⁵ Dawar Darweewan - Brahmanism in Southeast Asia, Sterling Pub. New Delhi 1982
women who do not think of themselves as religious. What ever the divine, transcendent or revelatory nature of a religion, its language is human language. Many of the burning issues facing society are often rooted in deeply held values and attitudes. A study of religion is not only important for an analysis of the position of Thai women, it is important for understanding the on-coming social changes in the country as well. Change takes place in the context of, or in rebellion against, a world which is shaped by a world view, with its nation of human and divine order. It is a clear and greatly significant fact that religious institutions in Thailand provide the largest and most extensive network of grassroots organizations.

For women, religion is a mixed blessing. In general, women need religion as much as men do to make sense out of life and find inspiration to carry on. But most of the known world religions at the present time are patriarchal. Therefore, the male principle is given primacy, men are defined as reflections of the image of god, conceptualized as more worthy and therefore, considered as more entitled to be in control. Women are made to feel as the "other", less worthy, and the one with the inferior body, mind and soul, and therefore deserving to be controlled and dominated. Religious rituals and symbolism confirm and legitimize this state of affairs as just, proper and in keeping with the natural order of things. Most religions include in their religious tenets at least some women friendly strands. More often than not these aspects are obscured and ignore because, by and large, men have been in charge of interpreting religion and presenting it to the public. Consequently, just as in other institutional contexts in modern societies, men have established themselves as the dominant group and have been dominant group and have been directing the course of events.

To bring about gender equality women have to actively participate in all institutional arenas, including religion. For women to become active participants they have to be empowered. Empowerment means that women develop an inner strength and confidence in themselves and come to believe they are worthy people. It also means that they become aware of the significant of their contributions to society and believe in their right to make choices in life and influence the direction of social change. In this context women friendly strands of religion need to be highlighted and made popular to promote the ideology of gender equality. Old ideologies are not projected and new ones accepted simply because they are more rational, just or good. They are accepted only when there is a popular acceptance of the new and rejection of the old. The efforts of intellectual and moral leadership are crucial at this juncture. They have to highlight the women friendly aspects religion to gain religious legitimacy for gender equality. When the ideology becomes popular, conditions are conductive for the empowerment of women.7

In order to understand the position and problems of Thai women in Buddhism, it is necessary to examine the social and cultural roles of women generally in Thailand. Historically, the training and social conditioning of Thai women has been aimed at producing “good women” who are well-equipped in the traditional “home sciences” cooking, craving fruit into beautiful offerings for their husbands, and maintaining the home. It has been accepted for many years that Thai women do not have critical or intellectual capacities., and that women are the “weaker sex,” flowers of the world to save and please men.8

It is, of course, absurd to say that women are the “weaker sex”. In traditional village life, women have always worked side by side in the fields with men. Than, while the men relax after returning from a day of working in the fields, women cook the meals, take care of children, clean and weave.9

9. Ibid., P.127
During the last thirty years, agricultural failure resulting from backward or inadequate technology has forced many village women to seek employment in urban industrial areas, primarily in the capital, Bangkok. Many textile factories prefer to hire women because they produce better work, are less trouble to control or manipulate, and are paid less than men.\(^{10}\)

Thai women continue to be suppressed in economics, politics, and culture. It is rare to find mention of the endurance and self-sacrifice of Thai women in the pages of my country's history. Women are doubly exploited, both in the class structure of Thai society and in the gender bias within that structure.\(^{11}\)

THE WOMEN: WOMEN AND ECONOMY CONCEPT AND PROBLEMS :-

According to the definition of the Thai dictionary (1978), a "women" is a female human that can give birth. The word "economy" is defined as activities relating to production, sale, distribution, and consumption of the people. Combined together, the words "women and economy" refer to a human that can give birth from the points of view of production, sale, distribution, and consumption.

WOMEN AND ECONOMY: THE CONCEPT :-

The above definitions of women and economy indicate that women are a part of the economic process in two aspects. The first aspect is women as producers, which in economic teams refers to women as labor force. Labor force here is defined as a factor of production which, together with other factors, contributions to the production of goods and services both in the agricultural and industrial sectors

---

\(^{10}\) Ibid., P. 143.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., PP:128-29.
The second aspect is women as consumers, that is persons consuming products for one's own survival. However, both aspects of production and consumption do not cover two important, perhaps the most important, roles of women. Regarding production, one generally does not take into account the value of the women workforce in household or domestic chores which include a number of miscellaneous tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundering child upbringing, etc. Women do not receive any payment for their household work. If men had to pay for such labor or hire an assistant to take care of laundry or meals, their income would be affected. Consequently, this could lead them to require an increase in their wages of salaries. The important point here is that women's roles in the production is one of the many important elements that help sustain a capitalist economy and insure its development. However, the market mechanism and social values have hidden this very fact. Apart from the productivity of women at home, there is another important aspect where women are indispensable: the reproduction of human beings. In this context, some scholars consider the womb as a production factor as well. Such production process includes pregnancy and birth giving (which men can never do) up to child upbringing.

With regards to consumption, the modern economic system is a major force that results in women having a greater participation in the production process both in formal and informal economics. Traditional values have also influenced the involvement of women in the economic process. The reason women have to work personal needs. They also have to support their own family members, whether it be their own close family or their relatives. Women might play this role knowingly or unknowingly. At any rate, the important point to note here is that women with regards to consumption are different from men in many ways and that their economic behavior is different. Therefore, one should correct the view that women are just other individuals without any differences from men. Women should be considered as born as such rather than just defined by societies.  


(251)
Thailand was originally an agriculture based country before becoming increasingly industrialized as it is today. Thai society has been a society continuously developing over the countries. The existing economic situation, including the problem of women and economy and the historical evolution are thus inseparable. Before being forced to open up the country to the Western world under the 1855 Bowring Treaty, Thailand's production was based on agriculture, mainly for domestic consumption. The major agricultural product was rice which, for national security reasons, was not then allowed to be exported. Rice production was therefore limited and depended on the size of the population at the time. Manual labor was the only main factor of production, other aspects being relatively significant. There was an abundance of land as compared to the size of the population. The role of capital in production was small and technology was strictly indigenous. The traditional Thai society was a society with a distinctive class structure. Social norms were prescribed by different roles, functions and relationship of each social stratum. Thai society was characterized by the patron and client relationship. The patrons were the nobles who constituted a minority group of people at the upper stratum while the clients were the majority of the population at the lower social class level which consisted of commoners and staves. Slaves were the property of the masters who could do anything with their subjects. The commoners were ordinary citizens who were bound under a patronage system.

Social rules under the patronage system did not allow commoners to utilize all their time and energy for their own benefit. They were obliged to serve the nobles “in alternate months” without pay; they were granted protection under the patronage system as well as certain rights in accordance with the law. Such free labor was thus a major source of the nobles’ income. Such benefits decreased as time went on. The patronage system was limited to male labor only.
As men had to serve the nobles under the patronage system on alternate months, their family continued working on the farm. There was thus a need for the re-allocation of labor responsibilities in the family to compensate for the loss of the male labor. Thai women, who normally were responsible for household work, then had to participate in the production process in place of the men. The women work force became even more important for production during the war when men were drafted and sent to the battlefields. Such circumstances increased the roles and participation of Thai women in production besides domestic work which society had already allotted to them.

After the year 1855, the Thai economy drastically changed due to enforcement of the Bowring Treaty. The production structure in the agricultural sector also changed considerably. The abolition of the rice export ban resulted in the increase in rice production. Rice which had been previously produced for domestic consumption became the important export commodity of the country. The area of rice cultivation was expanded, resulted in an increased demand for labor in the agricultural sectors. As a consequence male as well as female labor was increasingly utilized.

Despite the fact that the patronage system was abolished during the reign of King Rama V, female labor remained an important unpaid family labor force. In addition, the impact of the Bowring Treaty resulted in the expansion of the market system where by a large number of Thai farmers disposed of their land ownership and became wage earners in the agricultural sector and jointed the female labor force. The administrative reform during the reign of King Rama V represents another major upturning in the Thai society. One of these changes was the introduction of “Formal Education” which however did not benefit women. Men had more chances to attend school than women. Moreover, such formal education was not extended to the provinces. Therefore, Thai women, particularly in the rural areas, lacked the opportunity for education which subsequently meant less participation of women in some occupations.
and some important positions. However, the lack of opportunity for education was a problem facing both men and women in the rural areas, but the proportion of women lacking such opportunity was higher than that of men.

Later, Thailand abolished the system of absolute monarchy and implemented a democratic system of government with the King as Head of state. The civilian government tried to develop the country in various aspects, but the impact was not widely spread and did not affect the lives of the people, whether it be educational services, public health and public utilities. The majority of the people still remained farmers living on agriculture. The labor force still included female labor in the agricultural production.

In 1961, Thailand announced its first Economic Development plan aiming mainly at promoting economic growth. Industrial development was chosen as a means to accomplish such policy in the belief that the emphasis on such development would accelerate the economic development as a whole. Moreover, the introduction of technology in agriculture was seen as a way to increase the efficiency of production. There was a surplus of labor in the agriculture sector and unemployment in various forms. Therefore, industrial development was meant to mobilize the surplus of labor in agriculture to increase production efficiency in industry without much additional expenditures.

The policy on industrial development led to the establishment of many new industries beginning with import substitute industries, stressing export-oriented industries later. Major industries included textile and garments, frozen and canned food, integrated circuits, electrical appliances, jewelry and leather goods, all of which mainly employed female labor and contributed to a significant increase in national income.

Most industries set up during this economic and social development plan were located mainly in Bangkok and its vicinity. This was because of the availability of the facilities and infrastructure in the area. Such concentration of industries development brought about an economic disparity between the urban and rural areas. A number of workers migrated to Bangkok for better
job opportunities. As a result, more than 1,000 slum areas appeared in Bangkok. The migration was caused by both “push factors” and “pull factors” and most of the migrants were women who were seasonally unemployed or underemployed. Family labor which formerly was without play became paid labor in the economic sector both in formal and informal labor markets, which however presented many differences in terms of wages, working conditions as well as welfare for worker. The rapid expansion of tourism as an industry led to the growth in services which employed mostly female labor. This also led to the establishment of many sex service businesses where many rural women came to work for and became social problems.

Among other developments, there were irrigation schemes, though not on a wide scale, effecting about 20 percent of the total arable land. There were also many agricultural product promotion projects and the expansion of arable land for commercial crops, such as, rice, tapioca, which required more labor force. Part of the increased labor included women who had been responsible for the heavy burden of domestic work without pay or were hired. Workers in the agricultural sector. From the above, it is clear that Thai female labor has long played a significant role in the economy at the domestic and national levels either in the agricultural, industrial or service sectors. The participation of the Thai female labor force has been considered relatively high when compared to other countries. Women workers have participated in economic activities shoulder to shoulder with men or even more so than men in many cases. Women have had many roles to play in Thai society, and have had to face many problems. Some of the problems have been aggravated in this industrial age and have become problems for the society as a whole.  

Women are valuable assets and are important for social, economic and political development. Participation of women means that opportunities are open for them and that they are accepted and supported to enable then to develop to their full potential for the benefit of the women themselves and for

13. Women and the Economy Sukum Attavavutichai The National commission on women’s Affairs office of the Prime Minister Unicef 1992, P. 53-55
the men and the society as a whole. Women have lower social, economic and political status than men in many aspects. The promotion and development of women, including opening up the opportunities for women to participate in decision-making, are principal strategies for development. The Thai society as a whole has accepted and recognized the roles of women in family and household affairs. It is also recognized that women have equal rights with men in making decisions within the family. However, when the society has become more urbanized and modern, the family income is more in the form of salaries and wages. Once the financial and banking system has become more complex and modern technology has been applied, the power and participation in decision making, financial management and control have gone back mainly to the hands of the husband who would provide an allocated sum to the wife to manage the household finance.  

Amidst economic competitiveness including that in the service industry, the quality of the people is of utmost important. In Thailand, women account for 40 percent of the labor force. As women works have a low education and are not able to advance in their careers, they have a low income. It is necessary to ensure that they receive higher education and have the chance to increase their skills and experience which is an education of life. The improvements of all types of information technologies have made available a variety of the forms and methods to secure information. Self-learning is also introduced. There have forced women to be selective in processing the information reaching them for their own benefit. While Thailand's economic development has been very rapid, social problems also occur and directly affect women, particularly the problems arising from violence in the family and the community. Examples include physical abuse; rapes, trafficking of women and children which all violate human rights. This latter case does not only cause physical injury but also psychological damage to the victims for the rest of their lives. Recently there has been an increasing trend in violence against women and children.

Children are being lured into prostitution and although this is a crime, it has grown into a global network. Women need to be protected from these problems by all concerned agencies and children. Women need to be protected from these problems by all concerned agencies both in the public and private sectors, business enterprises and institutions dealing with social matters.15

BUDDHIST ECONOMICS :-

After Schumacher (1973, p.50) originated that “there must be such a thing as Buddhist economic”, many thinkers tried to incorporate a Buddhist perspective into economic analysis in order to develop a new economics. Buddhist economic is expected to improve the equality of human life, not achieving only higher standard of life (or abundant goods and high consumption). The following works detail the development of Buddhist economics.

Priyanut (1999, p 33-183) constructed a holistic framework based on Buddhist teaching in the Pali canon (Tipitaka) and applied the Four Noble Truths to be the methodology. It perceived poverty as a cause of suffering in economic consideration. Provision of material well-being is the cessation of (economic) suffering. The path leading to the cessation of (economic) suffering is right livelihood. However, material well-being is not the objective of life. As commonly understood in Buddhism, material well-being is a necessary condition for the practice of mental development towards the true objective of life, the cessation of suffering. It suggested two sets of principles for doing economic activities: the cost-effectiveness criterion and the Buddhist principles of action. It also classified Buddhist economic activities into three groups; acquisition of wealth, protection of wealth, and utilization of wealth. Each activity has its principles helping shape all activities on the same path with the mental development.

15. Ibid., P. 18.
Wickramasinghe (2000) stated that economic causes the problem of human degradation because it excludes ethics, morals, and spiritual values. Its suggestion is to find a system of economic that can provide goods for all the needs of the people living in the world also to make people “small” in order to comply with the concept of Smith’s “perfect competition”, while remaining altruistic and compassionate. It said that the Buddha does not discard material acquisition. However, it must be reconciled with spiritual development. So the theory of people friendly development is designed in order to achieve both material and spiritual goals. The strategy is right livelihood, that is, earning and consuming in a righteous way.

Apichai (2001, p.395 - 499) joined the same aspect that economics has an incomplete perception of humanness. As a result, economic systems become alienated and harmful to humanity. It stated that the standing point of Buddhist economics is the principle of non-violence in pursuit of happiness. It revised the three main economic theories - production theory, consumption theory, and distribution theory into a wider aspect from a Buddhist perspective. For production theory, it suggested to put Panna as another important production factor.

In fact, Panna is the most important factor that helps reduce environmental degradation in the production process. For consumption, it asserted that consumption theory is the weakest point in economics. Consumption under maximization of utility is only the happiness arising from sensual pleasures. In Buddhism, this kind of happiness can easily lead to many sufferings. While Panna helps a consumer not to attach himself to this kind of happiness and also to choose to consume for his physiological needs or biological needs. Moreover, physiological and biological needs help envision to consumption efficiency, which consumption theory, has never studies. Therefore, utility theory is unable to provide this understanding. Instead, utilization is the concept that gives a clear understanding of necessity. As a results clear understanding of utilization of goods and services leads to determine their prices in a more
reasonable way. For distribution theory, the principle of non-violence also prevails in order to get rid of famine for all. Furthermore, it also proposed the other three new theories that may help develop economics to serve humanity in a wide consideration. They are time use theory, theory of economy, and theory of work satisfaction. These three theories are useful in various aspects ranking from the economic aspect to the spiritual aspect. They enable humanity to have prosperity in harmony with spiritual development.


**WOMEN AND ECONOMY : THE PROBLEMS :-**

Women have played a greater role in the economy during the recent economic and social developments. A number of studies have confirmed this phenomenon. However, an inadequate analysis and a lack of good understanding of women have brought about eighteen major problems as follow:

1. Difference and inequality of income and wages between men and women, mostly as a result of the economic system.

2. Inequality of job opportunity for men and women, mostly as a result of social values.

3. Women remain key producers of domestic products even though they have to work outside as well. Such situation gives them a heavier burden and affects the family life, particularly regarding the upbringing of the children. The problem is attributed to the economic system and social values.
4. Too much work. Besides their heavy involvement in the industrial production, women still have to be responsible for domestic chores which society assigns only to them. Therefore as development activities increase, women have to carry the greatest part on this increasing burden affecting society.

5. Women enter the labor market earlier than men and miss the opportunity to continue their education. Therefore, their education tends to be comparatively lower than that of men. As a consequence, they have less opportunity to find good jobs or to get some training for higher education and skills, all of which affect their income and work progress.

6. In general, the unemployment rate for women is higher than for men and this unemployment rate is rather high among the younger people or among those who have just entered the labor market.

7. Most Thai women have an education background lower, and are deprived of the opportunity to develop themselves.

8. In general, wages for women workers are lower than those of men workers, both within and outside the agricultural sector.

9. Women workers are forced to retire after working for just a few years in some industries, such as in the electrical appliances industry. When these women re-enter the labor market, they have to start again with lower wages because their previous work experience does not justify an increase of wages.

10. The participation of women in high or important sectors.

11. There is exploitation of young girls in the informal labor market.

12. There is discrimination against women worker in both the public and private sectors.

13. There is the lack of participation in the decision-making process on family resource management when the family financial status is improved.
14. Job opportunities in the agricultural sector are limited; this has caused a large migration of women workers toward the cities, especially in Bangkok, to work in both the formal labor market.

15. A number of women workers are working without pay, therefore, the importance of the women workers toward the economy of the family and the country is minimized or obscured.

16. A number of women workers are engaged in the sex services both voluntarily and involuntarily. Meanwhile, quite a number of young girls are lured or forced to work in such businesses which often create many social problems.

17. The participation of women in labor organization is much lower than that of men. This is because women workers cannot spare time to join in the activities of the organizations, due to their responsibilities in the family.

18. Women workers do not receive sincere and serious attention in policy formulation and development activities. As a result, they do not gain as much benefit from national development as they should.

It is clear that proposals on the solutions to the problems of women workers are related to a number of factors such as, attitudes or social values toward women, the readiness and efficiency of the governmental mechanism and institutions as well as consciousness of the women themselves. This will take time to achieve. However, joint efforts must begin to foster awareness and understanding about the roles of women in the economy as well as to promote equality so that, ultimately, women and men are regarded as equal partners without any prejudice.

SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC ROLES :-

Women’s social and domestic roles are not isolated from the religious institutions in Southeast Asia. Religious attitudes and law may affect women’s rights within marriage, their reproductive freedom, and even the domestic duties they perform.
In her analysis, Barbara Ward argues that: It is always sociologically unsound to argue as if social factors were derived from religious beliefs and rituals and did not exist in their own right we do not argue the other way (namely, that religious beliefs and rituals are simply a product of social structure) either. The relationship is one of subtle mutual influence, differing with different religious and social system, and at different historical periods (1963:66)

Southeast Asian women have improved their domestic situation by influencing marriage law reforms. A women was at all time under Somme’s protection. If single, no matter how old, she was under the care and protection of her parent s; when married, she was under her husband’s protection. Parental power was converted into conjugal power and transferred to her husband. (Wichiencharoen and Netisastra, cited in Engel 1978:168)

Under more recent laws, married women could not dispose of women marital property without their husband’s permission.

A 1935 Thai law forbade men to have more than one wife (Aneckvanich 1978:34). These conditions have been partially corrected by the passage of a new family law permitting Thai women to sue for damages from the women who has had sexual relation with her husband (Ounayakowit 1979:14).

Hopefully, women will have the power and leverage at the local level to enforce these laws protecting their marriage rights. The papers by Laderman and Hull focus on the extent and meaning of women’s domestic activities - running households, giving birth, raising children, producing and processing food. Although they refer to different communities, they illustrate how the action of women save to integrate families and households within wider community networks.  

---

16. The National commission on women’s Affairs office of the Primo Minister Unicef 1-2 march 1992 Imperial Hotel, Bangkok P.34-35.
Thai traditional values which uphold simple and natural life styles have been transformed into these in which materialism, consumerism and complex and fast-pace life style are increasingly dominant. Moral values, on the other hand, are losing their hold on the life of Thai people. Moral values which used to clearly differentiate right from wrong have been replaced by attitude of "flexibility" which result in ethically precarious norms. Some critics even go so far as saying that it has come to the point that someone who has committed a crime and managed to get away with it, is considered a hero admired for his cleverness.

Moral training based on religious ideals seems to have tittles impact. There was a revival movement to bring back moral and character training some time ago but this movement seems to have been fading away.

Sexual values seem also to be quite lax. Thai men have the freedom to engage into extra marital affairs, or to engage into sexual promiscuity. They can get away with having several wives even though this is illegal. This sexually-biased set of values is also reflected in many laws. For example, men and women are required to supply different types of evidence to the court when filing for evidence: men can supply accuse their wives of committing adultery as ground for divorce, when women have to apply concrete evidence that their husbands actually treat their mistresses openly as their wives before they can file for the evidence. Modern women have to consider the question of values seriously, as there is still certain confusion as to was are desirable values. On general ethical issues, it has been said that women usually take up the role of maintaining ethical standards of acting as the conscience of the society. Be this as it may, one of the most important role for the children's socialization process is that of parent. This role is certainly every important for young people who will become parents in the future.\(^{17}\)

---

17. Women of Southeast Asia Panyvan Esterik, editor occasional paper No.9, 1982 P. 5-7.
Although improving women's status is usually considered part of the general socio-economic development progress, it is worth stressing that traditionally in Thailand women have experienced relative social and economic freedom. Two aspects in which Thailand stands out are strikingly high female labor force participation compared to most developing countries and the important economic roles that women play in Thai society (cf. Sharp, 1970-1971). In addition to producing a sizeable proportion of the family income through their marketing activities, Thai peasant women generally control family finances as is often the case with their urban counterparts (de Young 1966 P. 24). In urban areas, it is not uncommon for women to work for wages or as independent vendors both before and after marriage (Prachuabmoh and others, 1972, pp. 24-28, see also Thailand National Commission on women's Affairs, 1980).

Unlike a number of other society in which women are far more isolated, Thailand women actively participate in many aspect of social and economic life. As a result they linked, along with Thai men, to the modern communication networks that seem to be developing so rapidly as a result of the dramatic expansion of the mass media and the transportation system. Thus, in various and increasing ways, even rural women are exposed to the ideas and life style that characterize urban centers and the world beyond.

In any society at any given time, the perception of women will depend on the social circumstances at that time. For example, when a nation is at peace and enjoy economic prosperity, women are usually considered just members of the beautiful gender, gentle, sensitive and always reluctant to make any decision. As the saying goes, "She wavers, She hesitates, in a word, She is a women". But in a socialist regime such as in China, Chairman Mac Tes Tong once said that women also carry half on the world. In Thailand, in times of war the old saying "Rocking the cradles, carrying the swords", means that women have roles to play both for national security and for raising children. It is a well known fact that the status of women in the past presented a wide
variety of pictures, depending on their social and economic positions. For instance, women in the agricultural sector always worked as hard as men, including being engaged in small trade business such as in the fresh product market. Wealthy women emphasized their role as housewives, taking care of all household management, including financial matters. In addition, women in the past also took part in the national defense when necessity arose, so much so that there is a Thai expression that praises Thai women saying “with one hand, they rock the cradle, with the other, they wield a sword.” Compared to situations in many countries, Thai women enjoy a relative freedom, and quit able to develop their own potential. Equal opportunities are accessible to women in certain areas, such as the rights to vote, which have been accorded to women right from the very beginning. Women also have equal access to educational opportunities, at least in compulsory education. However, there are still many laws and regulations which are not conductive to the development of women. Certain excuses were made to justify the existence or continuation of such laws, such as the needs for women protection, based on deep-rooted prejudices that still exist, such the attitude looking at women as sex objects, etc. These factors need to be gradually improved, in order that women may fully utilize their potential for the development of the society.

Thai women played greater roles than men in household economies. Social expectations of daughters and sons were different: daughters were expected to be the pillar of the family economy while sons were expected to bring honor and power to the family. Female characters in a classic story in the literature. "Khun Chang and Khun Paen" (A classic story about a love triangle involving Khun Paen, the dashing lover and great warrior, Khun Chang, the comic but faithful husband and Wan Tong who waivered between the two men. Note of the translator.) were all involved in trading and production while male characters were noble men who were highly recognized or involved in rivalry for women as a way of protecting their names and would not become involved in commercial business. Khun Chang was the only male character

(265)
in the story who was involved in this kind of economic business, but then he was despised, and was refused due respect. It is possible that the disrespect was due to Khun Chang’s inappropriate role. Although the economic role of women was quite distinct, their religious and political roles were not equal to those of men. Women were not allowed to be ordained. By gender, they had less potential than men since they could not enjoy higher status than that given to them by birth, due to the patriarchal concept of the Indian spreading in to Thailand through religious leaders (Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism). According to religions of Indian origin, women are considered an inferior gender in all aspects. In the North, women were not to sit in the front rows in the temples (as they were regarded as an enemy purity and being near the priests was highly inappropriate). In ancient days, Thai women were not equal in status to the men. They were, however, not seriously oppressed or discriminated against. The roles of the two sexes had long been distinctively defined and traditionalized. The men were the bread winner, the head of the family, the ruler or the protector of the family. The women look after the house, the children, and the menfolk and managed the family budget. This division of responsibilities was common in most countries of the world at a time when population was small and natural resource still plentiful. For centuries, Thai women accepted their roles, although a number of women managed now and then to stand out on an equal footing with the men, especially in the economic field, but rarely in the government circle. Admittedly, traditional discrimination between the two sexes existed, but they were not seriously oppressive. Thus, while women did not receive any schooling, the men in the lower income group were also mostly illustrate. Furthermore, while men were responsible for local and national affairs, most women were the decision-makers in the family and likely influenced their men in the conduct of local affairs. Men could practice polygamy openly while women were expected to maintain their fidelity; but widows or women separated from their husbands could remarry.
Economically, Thai women has always been given equal responsibility especially in the lower income group. They worked side by side with their men in the fields and had to take of households duties as well. As a rule, women hold the purse strings in the family, and when, more often than not, the purse was empty, they had to supplement the family income.

As society changed and technology progressed, Thai women also changed their role to take a more active part in the development of their society. This change has, however, been gradual and effected without much pressure or struggle. At the height of western colonialism in Asia the king of Thailand of the present Chakri Dynasty wisely adopted and adopted some western customs in order that the country maintain its independence. Education along modern lives, which was considered essential to the development of the country, was promoted. Primary education was declared compulsory for both boys and girls in 1921. Secondary and vocational schools were opened in Bangkok, first for boy only but soon after for girls as well. Thus, in the recent past, discrimination in education was in fact more pronounced between the urban and the rural populations than between the sexes. However, it could not be denied that if a family could afford to send only a limited number of children to school, the son would be given priority.

After the second world war, the changes in the roles of Thai women have been more rapid and wider spread. A growing number of women received formal education and university degrees. A few completed on equal terms with men and obtained scholarships to study abroad. They became civil servants and take part in the administration of the country. Education up to the highest level was equally open to both sexes.

During 1975, however, the government supported the activities for the International women’s Year quite fully. The National Executive committee for the Celebration of the IWY organized a variety of activities to make women aware that they could contribute more towards the development of their country and to the equality of life. A parade of female farmers from rural areas was
hold in front of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand to show their solidarity for the cause of women. Lectures and seminars and publications were undertaken to point out existing discrimination between the sexes in Thai society and, at the same time, to point out female potential which had not been fully exploited for the benefit of the whole country.\textsuperscript{18}

**WOMEN AND FAMILY IN CHANGING SOCIETY: THAILAND:**

The national development policies and plans that have been implemented in Thailand created a lot of changes in Thai society in almost all aspects such as population, economics, social, education and culture. These changes affect people's way of life and family relations to a great extent. The Thai style way of life and quality of life known in the past have changed and adapted. Thai family have the tendency to imitate industrial or urban societies. They increasingly become nuclear families which decrease in family bonding. More members of the family are employed outside the house and are used to a lifestyle of comfort and convenience. Family cannot provide basic services to its own members anymore and has to depend on other organization or institution instead. A present, with the worst economic sluggish ever happened in the Thai history, Thai people are under extreme pressure to be economical and live a simplex way of life. Many families suffered from unemployment resulting from the slow-down in the country's economy. The crisis of Thai family institution, which is considered a vital problem of the country has greater demand for social workers to work in the following area of problem: poverty, juvenile delinquency, drug, persons with HIV/AIDS, aging, other dangerous diseases, pollution and environmental problems, etc. These are the important missions that social works have to carry on by protecting, solving, rehabilitating and developing their client system. A family is fundamental institution to teach,

train, and socialize a person. It is a very important institution to protect and solve social problems. Good relations among family members is a great and wonderful force to reduce family problems. A secure society builds from secure families.

However, family as an institution has changed in accordance with the world. Thailand has gone through a lot of changes during the past decades. There are changes in the economic, society, education and culture. One of the most important changes concerns the population structure e.g. population growth, characteristic of Thai family and crisis of the Thai family. These changes have affected people's way of life including the family relationship system. This is due to the "rush" situation of modern life, the progress and development in ideas, transportation, working system, and hardship in earning a living. The Thai-style way of life and equality of life known in the past have rapidly been changing. New social problems occur in varieties of forms and patterns. These development and changes have forced social welfare practitioner and social workers to change their old roles and seek more appropriate ones to cope with these drastic changes.

THE DEFINITION OF "FAMILY" :-

The most common meaning of "family" is a group of people bound together by blood and by law. They are related in mind and emotion and live together, socially and economically; some families could be exceptionally different.

Anthropologies define family as an important social institution comprised of one or more female living with one or more male, having children together, with sexual relations accepted by social standard by marriage or by any other system, including any right and duty derived from the marriage. (Charles W isrick, 1972 cited in Sasipet Yodpet, editor, 1997: 143).

The changes in all important aspects of change in the Thai society which create an impact on the Thai family institution as follows:
1. Focus on the change in population structure
2. Focus on the characteristic of Thai family
3. Focus on crisis of the Thai family
4. Conclusion
5. A case study on aging families.

1. THE CHANGE IN POPULATION STRUCTURE:

To identify the characteristic of Thai family nowadays, it is important to look at the major factor contributing to the changing of family pattern. That is the population structure. The result of family planning projects carried on in the past showed a successful accomplishment. The trend of population growth has been decreasing, with 1.30% in 1994, 1.1% in 1996 and expecting to be 1.0% in 2001. In accordance with this growth rate, Thailand with her 60 million population in 1997, will have 63 million in the year 2001, 65 million in 2005, and 70 million in 2012. The proportion of population structure at present is as follows.

Children population 26.9% or 16,288 million, working age between 15-59 years old 64.6% or 36.073 million, elderly age from 60 years up 8.4% or 5.079 million. The progress in medical science and technology has contributed to better health care among the people resulting in higher rate of life expectancy at birth from 63.0 for male and 67.0 or female into 66.6 or male and 71.7 for female in 1997. The life expectancy at sixty (additional years) is also increasing, in 1997, it is 18.8 male and 22.0 female. That is expected to increase more in the future. According to 1987 statistics, Thailand had an average 74.3% of extended families and 25.7% of nuclear families. In comparison between urban and rural areas, it was found that there was no difference in rural families with 79.6% of extended families and 22.4% of nuclear families. However, the national population and household census conducted in 1990 revealed a drastic change in family pattern in Thailand. It was almost a complete reversal from what it was in 1987, the result showed that Thailand has 74.1% of nuclear families while the number of extended families declined to 25.9%.

2. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THAI FAMILY :-

The change in the country's economic structure from agricultural economy to industrial economy has driven the traditional Thai rural society to become urban society. It has affected people's equality of life customs, economy, society, politics and family relationships. It has also created a new pattern of Thai family.

Some of these changes are discussed below:

2.1 SOCIAL AND CULTURE\(^{21}\) :-

The change of population structure which mentioned earlier has brought the change within the family pattern. These families are characterized as nuclear family and led up to the vast changes of social and culture, especially of taking care of children. Parents are forced to leave their babies and small children at day-care centers, and take them back home in the evening. Some parents leave children with housemaid during daytimes because both father and mother have to go to work. Therefore, time to spend with their children is limited. The relationship between parents and children can be described as having wider gap. Time for family getting together is very scarce, relationships among family member become superficial with no sense of helping each other and no time to do family activities together. Parents can neither give their children's warmth and loving care nor become their children's best friends. Moreover, There is no elderly living together in the family anymore/ In other words the elderly members have lost their importance in a nuclear family. Activities among relatives are declining. Relatives hardly know each other and the closeness is shifting apart. It become a society with indifferent attitude, nobody

cares for anybody. Families that are still able to socialize their children, are those who have elderly members living together. They are in close relationships and can devote enough time to teach and train the children. Most of them are in trading business, which can be operated within the family, thus, they can find more time for the children. For those who have under primary education and earn barely enough money to cover expenses, such as people who live in up country, give importance and emphasis on transferring knowledge and professional skills to their children to earn their living in the future. They teach the children to see the virtue of working and being economized.

As for social; emotional and intellectual development, for example, self reliance, self adaptation, knowing how to give and take, knowing social etiquette, knowing how to admit wrong-doing, having self confidence, knowing self discipline and punctuality, training from the elder lies, it was found that city children or urban- community children have better self adaptation to got along with others. Even though their families have no time to spare for them, these children learn how to adjust themselves from day care centers, schools universities. They are able to express their opinion with confidence and behave properly, which coincide with the new educational plan to encourage students self confidence, punctuality and discipline. Most children are trained in tight discipline when they are in schools. Therefore, there is no difference compared with the past, except that in the past this role was played by the children’s families.

2.2 PUBLIC HEALTH :-

The extension of basic public health services throughout the country has improved the quality of life of Thai population greatly. The infant mortality rate has decreased from 8.8% in 1996 to 2.5% at present 1997. The distribution of public health services into rural areas has been better than what it was half a century ago. The development of health insurance system if effectively attracted more and more people (The Thai economy promotion Board, 1996:6)
The top five causes of death among Thai people per 100,000 surveyed in 1995 were heart disease 66.0%, transportation accident 28.3%, liver disease 12.2%, blood poisoning 11.1%, and lung infection 11.0%. The projection of the top five killers in the future, heart disease still ranks as the number killer, second is accident and toxic pollution, cancer of all types comes third, high blood pressure and brain hemorrhage are the fourth killer and suicide and homicide ranks fifth. As for health service venues, it was found that in cause of illness or pregnancy, people in the community prefer to go to the hospital, community health centers, clinic or midwife. Hospital services become more popular. However, there are some group of people who do not get their medical services from the hospital. It could be because they don’t have enough money to pay, or hospital is always located in the city. These people, therefore, go to community medical center. Only critical patients are transferred to the hospital. Poor people with low education would rather go to the nearby health center than go to the hospital. While those who use hospital services are better in terms of education and earnings. They view that services from community health center is less efficiency than that from the hospital. Nowadays, society has so much changes there’re more convenient way of transportation, and communication, more hospitals; people have better education, including social security system taken in the industrial sector, make people go to hospitals more than in the past, and the trend his growing. For small or minor illness, members of the family will take care of each other.

Problems derived from medical services are mostly concerned with the lack of personnel and health centers. The total numbers of Thai’s public health personnel is still behind acceptable standard. The ratio of medical doctor and the people is 1: 4,165; dentist 1: 19,677; Pharmacist 1: 10,532; professional nurse 1: 1,150; and technical nurse 1: 1,965. Source: Department of Public Health: Survey of Public Health Practitioners. 1994.\(^{22}\)

\(^{22}\) Source: Department of Public Health: survey of Public Health Practitioners. 1994.
2.3 EDUCATION :-

Thailand is one among many countries that enjoys successful compulsory education development. It is farly accurate to say that, Thai people now have greater educational opportunities. The national survey on labor force conducted in August 1992 indicated that only 7% of Thai population have no education.

The rest possess different level of education with the biggest number (64.7%) are those who finished the first half of primary education. Study conducted in Thailand by Phananiramai and Mason 1993, found that the chance to continue secondary education of Thai children was related to the size of their families. Children from small family have more chance to continue their study than those from bigger family. According to Children and Youth survey 1994, the most important reason that children age between 12-19 years did not go to school was because their families were poor and had no money (Rasarin Suthiphongs, 1996;71) In the future, if the government can manage in accordance with the plan to extend compulsory education from 6 years to 9 year by building more secondary schools in sub-district level, and provide intuution fee, books and uniform fee of charge, than more Thai children will certainly get better education.23

2.4 OCCUPATION AND ECONOMY :-

Based on the structure of Thai population of 1996, it is estimated that there are 34.4 million people in labor force or 57.34% of the total population. Out of this number, 32.59 million are employed or 92.28% of labor force. About 16.96% millions (52.04% of employment) are working in agricultural sector. While 15.63 million (47.96%) are in non-agricultural sector. There are about 910,000 people (2.72% of labor force) unemployed. The trend of employment in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors is anticipated in a diminishing growth.

---

Occupation wise, Thai population are employed in agricultural sector more than non-agricultural sector. The growth of non-agricultural sector's employment in the future also shows a diminishing rate, from 3.24% between 1995-2000/ to 2.21% between 2000-2010 and 1.32% in 2010-2020.

Thai economy has a rapid growth in the past. Exports value was 33.3% in 1989. However, Thailand has recently been facing with high competition from new emerging developing countries. Thus, the exports has slowed down growth from 14.4% in 1990 to 13.2% 1992 and 13.0% in 1993, with the exception of rather high growth of 23.5% in 1991. The National Statistical Office conducted a nationwide survey on social and economic status of Thai households in 1994, it revealed that the average annual income of a Thai family was 99,144 baht or 8,262 baht per month. The average spending was 90,804 bath per year or 7,567 baht monthly.

At present, Thailand is fighting with its worst economic crisis. Due to the government's mismanagement in financial policy, the country has plunges into great dept, both domestically and internationally. The foreign reserves dropped rapidly to critical level, Thai baht has been devaluated and eventually Thailand has to ask for help from the International monetary fund. This economic crisis has badly affected all Thai people. Consumer product prices are shootings up, the costs of public utilities are rising, and the value added tax (VAT) has been raised from 7% to 10%. The investment has come to almost a complete halt. So many firms, big and small, have gone out of business or even bankruptcy. Unemployment rate gone up as the consequence.

2.5 EMPLOYMENT :-

The number of labor force in Thailand has increased from 28.04 millions in 1986 to 31.7 million in 1990. Thai is about 900,000 people pre year, or 2.65 % (Thai Bank of Thailand, cited in Sumalee Nitayanont, 1992). During 1987-1991, the average percentage of labor increased about 2.4% and decreased to 2% between 1992-1996. Therefore, the new labor force entering the market
has grown in a decreasing rate, from 720,000 in 1992 to 559,000 and 479,000 in 1993 and 1996 respectively. The decrease in labor growth has contributed to the reduction of the unemployment rate from 0.51% of labor force in 1992 to 0.50% and 0.46% in 1993 and 1996 respectively (Thammarak Karnpisit, 1993). It is expected that the average growth of Thai labor force would be in a diminishing rate, i.e. about 1.1% per year between 1990-2000 (United Nation, 1988; Bauer, 1990). The worst economic crisis ever happened in Thailand in the middle of this year, 1997, have affected the country so badly. Business sector facing liquidity problems with no orders for exports manufactures, resulting in over-supplied goods. Businesses are operated in the loss. Many cannon pull though and are forced to close down. For those who still fight on have to restructure their companies or downsizing their operations. Many people are force to leave their jobs. Top of the list is the textile industry where workers are lay off most of all, about 36.10% of the total number of workers. Next is the canned-food, wood product, and garment industries respectively. As for the cause of unemployment in the near future, the major one is the loss in financial operation with makes up to 63.66% of the total companies expecting to lay-off their employees. The second cause about 17.4%, is the lack of good’s orders’ reduction of manufacturing. The third cause resulting from liquidity crisis in most of finance companies. The government ordered 58 finance companies closed in June and July 1997 has cause a large number of people working in those companies being unemployed suddenly.

2.6 THE NEW CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN THAI FAMILY :-

The change in population structure coincided with social and economic changes have created a great impact on Thai family’s way of life. The new characteristics of a modern Thai family as follows:

1. It is a modern family which separates itself from a traditional extended family into a nuclear family, a normal trend in accordance with the development of social system.
2. The closeness among family members is declining, due to the impact of economic development that has driven more members of the family to work outside of the house. Father, mother and the children are drifting apart.

3. Members of the family have more freedom. Women and are equal and exercise the same rights. Family economy resembles that of a cooperative. Every member is a resource and is helping each other to built family and asset and share the benefit together.

4. Luxury becomes people's way of life and social value. Everybody is busy finding things that will enhance convenience and comfort. Most people become different and lack the sense of helping each other. This difference has made modern a Thai families stay away from their own neighbors.

5. Since the industrial society has set its values on economic achievement and individual integrity, including freedom of choice to make one's own loving. More member of the family are employed outside the home in industrial and business factors.

6. Other organizations and institutions such as religious institutions or associations have taken over the role of the family in terms of education, day-care centers, etc. This is because the family could not provide these services to its members like in the past due to the economic and social pressures of today.

7. Modern families do not stress much on religion, culture, customs which marked the traditional society. They view the latter as old-fashioned because they can help themselves more and can see better what is going on in the society. Therefore, they have lost faith in religion culture, mores, and lead their lives towards secularization more and more.

8. Economic pressure has forced each family to cut down their luxurious spending, try to economize, spend money carefully, reduce unnecessary entertainment and live a simple life.
3. CRISIS OF THE THAI FAMILY INSTITUTION :-

The evaluation of social problems from academic and others institutions involved into social welfare, e.g. the National Economic and social Development Board (the office of the Prime minister), the office of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister), and the special Task Commission of the third National Social Development and Social work 1997-2001 (Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare), come to the same conclusion:

Thai are facing the problem of broken families and weakened communities. This crisis has many causal and pressure factors that create problems affecting ways of life of the family members. Some of these problems are summarized as follows:

3.1 POVERTY :- The majority of Thai people are in the rural areas weak in education, health, income and chances of development. Rural resources are drained for the cities, leaving many problems for the private sectors. People are forced to go to the capital or bigger cities. With one main reason, to find more money to support the family. Unfortunately, very little money is sent back home because the earners themselves have so many problems of their own. In the village, the elder lies and small children are left struggling for a living alone. Family has completely lost the virtue what a family should be.

3.2 INCREASE OF DIVORCE RATE :- Relationship between husbands and wives have become more fragile due money problems. Divorce rate has been increasing. Women have to be responsible for themselves and other members of family, bearing the cost of children rearing themselves. With regard to almost, it is found that four out of five divorces never get any alimony from their husbands.

3.3 THE WEAKENING OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP :- The lack of good and close relationship among family members, particularly, the father and the mother, has great impact on the children’s behaviors. According to Child and
Youth Welfare Division (Department of Public Welfare), these misbehaviors are listed as truancy, carrying fighting, stealing, playing around at night time. The young drug addicts have been arrested every year. Mrs. Duangmal Silapaarcha, has said that these juveniles who have committed criminal offences do not come only from poor families. Many are from rich or middle class families, whose parents have no time for their children. The children are left alone, so they turn to bad friends and end up as drug addicts of some kind.

3.4 CHILDREN ABANDONMENT AN CHILD ABUSE: This problem is caused by the weakening of the family, not ready to have a family and not ready to have a child, leading to child abandonment, many newborn infants are abandoned in the hospitals or some other places. Small children are life to fight for their lives alone, some have to take care of the family with elderly or disabled members, or younger sisters and brothers. Some are forced into child labor. Some families sell their own children into sex market. In some families girls are sexually abused by their own fathers, brothers, uncles, or close relatives.

3.5 FAMILY VIOLENCE: Most family violence originates from the husband’s irresponsibility. Men tend to use authoritative relationship with their wives, drink heavily or addicted to drugs, commit adultery, keep mistresses, remarry other women. All these factors lead to serious quarreling and fighting in the family. Some women file for a divorce, some kill the husbands and end up in jail. Children growing in this type of family environment absorb the violent behavior of their parents and will act in the same fashion when they have to solve their own problems. Many research studies on juvenile delinquency agree that family violence is the major factor in this social problem. No doubt, the weakening of the family institution has a direct impact on national human resource. If nothing is done, the Thai society will deteriorate.

3.6 FAMILY WITH DISABLE MEMBERS: There are about 4,825,680 disabled people in Thailand or 8.1% of the total population (The National Public Health,
1991-1992). The number of intellectually disabled population (using the estimation set by World Health Organization of one percent of the whole population) is approximately 600,000 while the mental or behavioral disabled population is 973,966 or 1.7% of the total population. According to the figures mentioned above, many Thai families have the problem of taking care of disable members. This is a special group of people that need more a attention and care. Most important of all, they want to be a treated as normal human beings.

3.7 THE GROWING NUMBER OF THE ELDER LIES :- As mentioned earlier in the structure of Thai population, at present Thai has 4.2 million of over 60 years old or 7.3% of the total population. Within the next 10 years, this group will increase to 6.7 million. This rapid growth of elderly population will certainly cause problem for the families, here is 95.6% of the elderly population living with their families. Only 4.4% live alone are taken care of by other institutions. Therefore, Thai families have to be responsible for almost the whole elderly population. They have to take good care of these in all aspects including physical, mental, social and economic ones. In terms of economic aspect the responsibility of the family also extends to the elder lies who are not living with the family as well. Taking care of the elder lies is not an essay job. It's a heavy burden that many modern Thai families have to bear.

3.8 AIDS AND OTHER SERIOUS DISEASE :- Thailand has a serious problem with AIDS, and the trend is critically increasing. From data released by the Epidemiology Division (Ministry of Public Health), it is estimated that by the year 2000; Thailand will have 52,000 of AIDS victims of the last stage. (Aids Project: Thai Red Cross Councial 1995:1). In 1996, there were 5,439 victims. The major cause is by sexual intercourse. As a consequence, 2,908 new born infants (5.49%) contracted AIDS virus from their mother.(the Epidemiology Division 1996:1). From the situation, one can draw the picture of Thai families in the future. Even though AIDS problem has been tackled and solved to some extent, there are still many people who carry AIDS virus without
showing any symptom yet. However, their wealth will become weaker and weaker. Families will be affected, orphans of AIDS victims will increase in number. People need to be careful in choosing their parents. And those infected with Aids will be outcast and barred from friends and even members of the family. There are still many other factors affecting modern Thai families. To name a few, the rapid growth in construction, particularly in high rise buildings, house, roads etc; health hazard caused by carelessness in operating modern equipment; business selfishness such as pollution from factories, gas explosion, building collapsing, water pollution, traffic jams etc. These problems have all contributed to stress and mental health of family members. Its trend is getting worse in the future. Moreover, with the economic pressure these days, problem of unemployment, earning not enough to cover expenses, including other heavy burdens, the problem of mental health among Thai people will become more serious.

4. CONCLUSION :-

In regard to all kinds of problems facing Thai families at present, it is a very important task of the country to play more active role to protect, rehabilitate and develop family institution. Thai government has set up the policy to develop the policy institution. The objective is to help and encourage each family to function on their role both at micro and macro levels. The practitioners and social workers should help cater to the needs of the families in term of providing the social knowledge to all people regardless of their social class or age. The knowledge should concern family life, child development, creating sense of family responsibility, family with special problems, migrated family, AIDS infected family etc. In addition, social workers should provide services in counseling, rehabilitating and advocacy campaigning. The most important mission for social workers nowadays is to support and push hard for changes in social policy both at macro level, which will benefit all service recipients, leading to sustainable family development in the future.
5. INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGING FAMILY: A CASE STUDY :-

The economic and social change s have affected Thai population of all ages. Everybody has to adjust his/ her role to cope up with modern way to life, including the elder lies. Findings from many studies indicated that Thai elderly have three major roles in the families.24

5.1 ELDERLY AS FAMILY SUPPORTS :- Occupation of the elder lies depended mostly on their former occupations before retirement. In Thailand, retirement age is at 60 in government sector and 55 in business sector. Retired people live with their spouses and children on pension money. About 69.0% of retired population do not work, while 25.0% are proprietors, 18.2% are in grocery retail business. The rest are general workers or company consultants (Ratchanee Fonthong mongkul, 1995: 70-71). The elder lies living in provincial urban areas are still working at the age of retirement. Their occupations include trading, construction, farming , and other small jobs (Juthathip Aphirom, 1994: 42).

In Bangkok metropolitan area, 78.9% of the elder lies do not work. Only 21.1% are still continue working. Out of this number, 8.1% are in treading, 5.2% work in agriculture, animal farming and forestry, 3.1% are mechanics or workers in manufacturing factories, the same percentage are members in service business. Only 1.4% who work in professional fields and 0.2% involve in administration and management (Siriwan Siriboon and Malinee Wongsthi, 1992: 1). Concerning the urban poor, it is commonly found that most of these old people still have to continue working. They could be street vendors, garbage, collector, recycling vendors, or even street beggars (N.Piriya, 1990: 36). The elder lies living near the capital city are also working with or without payment. Most elderly people don’t like to be inactive and do nothing, they

always try to do something. The elder lies who need to earn their living but are not able to work in the fields because of the weakening bodies, will find other lighter job such as making sweets and desserts for selting (Saowapha Siripong et al, 1991: 10). Veerasith and Yothin study found the same result that economic pressure and the increase of population have make life harder. Everybody have to work to support his family, working harder and longer including the elder lies (Wathinee Boonchalaksi and Yupin Vorasiamorn, 1996: 53). Generally speaking, the elder lies are perceived as those whom society has to be responsible for, who create problems and become a burden to the society. But in reality, many studies come to the same conclusion that a large number of the elder lies are active and will remain so in the future.

5.2 ELDERLY AS FAMILY BREAD-WINNERS: Working status of the elder lies is an important variable to determine their economic role.

A research result reported by Siriwan and Malinee indicate that 60% of the elder lies who are still working claim that they are the family bread-winners. The elderly members of the families whose incomes come from working or pensions or saving also said that they are the main supporters of the families (the highest proportion). On the contrary, the elder lies who have no income and depend on their children said that their sons, daughters, sons-in-law or daughter-in-law, are the family bread-winners.

Prapaisri indicate that when the elder lies re tired from their jobs, they still help their family doing some household work such as looking after the house, cleaning and cooking. A major task of most elder lies in the Central Region involves cooking and taking care of the house. Elderly women perform this role more than elderly men. About 35.6% are responsible for all household chores. It is worth noting that 10.4% of the elder lies, almost all men, have no family responsibility at all (Sasipat Yodpet 1996:36).

The research conducted by Siriwan and Malinee indicate that 90% of the elder lies can help doing household chores. Types of household chores the elder lies help doing are mixed in nature, such as
looking after the house, selling, buying food, cooing, washing clothes, cleaning the house, taking care of the children, growing plants or gardening (Siriwan Siriboon and Malinee Wongsith, 1992: 51, 53, 53).

Another study done by Varaporn come the same result 57.5% of the elder lies are responsible for more than one household jobs. Out of this number 40% help looking after the house, do household routines including taking care of the kids (Varaporn Saengvajapra, 1994: 52).

From studies mentioned above, it is evidence that elderly people are still playing an important role in economic and labor aspects. They are willing to bear the burden with great sense of love and responsibility.

5.3. ELDERLY AS FAMILY DEPENDENTS: - The economic and social changes e.g. the industrial system, the expansion of the city, change in young people life's style, etc, have created a great impact on the role and way of life of the elder lies. This is because the majority of Thai elder lies are living with their children or other people. Only 2.9% are living alone by themselves, and the same number are living with their spouses. The rest are living with other people in the family such as sons or daughters, relatives and others. (Yuwadee Krisawattankorn, 1994: 122). Most of Thai elder lies (73.3%) in the Northeast, which represent the population in the study, most of them, 73.3%, live with their children. About 18.1% live with grandchildren or brothers and sisters, 5.2% live alone, and 3.4% live with their spouses (Sermphan Nitnara, 1991: 27).

In the Central Region, a large number of elder lies are depended on their children. Besides their spouses, children are the important social network for the elder lies. Most elder lies 69.2% have at least one of their sons or daughter living with them. However, there is almost one-fourth (22%) of the elder lies who are not living with children. More than half of 60%, have at least other people living with them. These people might be their nieces, nephews, sons-in-law and or daughters-in-law. Relatives who are living with elderly people are more women than men. (Sasipat Yodpet et al, 1996: 27-29).
Regarding the role of the family in taking care of the elderly lies, most family members, both within and outside municipality are able to take of elderly members in physical and mental aspects more than in the social aspect, while the economic aspect comes at the bottom of the list. (Arporn Sukswas, 1996:1). However, the majority of Thai people believe in gratitude and consider taking care of the elderly lies as one of their most important duties.

The Thai culture requires that children be grateful to their parents and those who are good to them. This belief is deep-rooted in Thai society. The more remote the area is, the more grateful to the elderly lies the people are. People believe in the consequence of doing good things (and bad things,) which affect the way they treat the elderly lies. They believe that negligence of parents is a sin, a shameful behavior. Ungrateful persons will lose their credibility and will be condemned by the society. Therefore, Thai people are obligated to take good care of their parents.

However, this obligation cannot be identified exactly whether it happens out of willingness or being forced by social norms (Sasipat Yodpet et al, 1996:55). Although case study presented above, focuses on only one particularly group of elderly lies, it can project the role of the elderly lies in the families affected by economic and social changes. Old people have to adapt to changing family roles and take more responsibilities. Towards their own well-being moreover, the elderly must continue to maintain their strengths in giving love warmth, mental support as well as transferring art and culture. Social workers should bear in mind, the strong potentials or the elderly population and try to find the best way to utilize them for the elderly lies' own benefits and their families. Lastly, it is important that the elderly lies have a sense of self-worth and full needed by other members of the family so that they will live happily for the rest of their lives.
BUDDHISTS AND SOCIAL ACTION: WOMEN AND MEN WORKING TOGETHER:

The telecommunication progress, especially in communication technology, is a major driving force in making the world "borderless". The speed of communication has led to a fast pace of changes in terms of knowledge, attitudes, including ways of living, resulting in the following: With higher competition in trade, the competitive cage of the country depends on the quality of the people who form an important labor force. The change in the economic structure which has shifted to industrialization has resulted in labor migration from the agriculture to the industry sectors. The majority of the labor force are women who lack knowledge, skills and experience. The media, which reach the population very fast, has led to changing values where consumerism is valued highly in the society. Access to mass media create certain stereotypes of women. They do have a strong influence on the development of sexual behaviors. The limited portrayal of roles and status of women in the media has imposed constraints on the generation of ideas and on the awareness to utilize the potential and capability of women including the access to factual information. International movements related to democracy, human rights, gender equality and natural resources and environment conservation have forced women to seek further knowledge and understanding and to actively participate in community activities as well as to learn to effectively use natural resources. Increasingly coordination and interrelatedness among countries in the world. Particularly the prevalence of humanistic trends and human rights movements, have led to a call for the rights and participation for the advancement of women. In addition, the promotion of tourism among countries has expanded the network and the illegal business of the sex trade has been include in tour packages. Transboundary commercial sex trafficking has taken place.25

The difference in social status between men and women has not been significant. However, the role of each sex has been traditionally assigned in different ways. In general, the men was regarded as the head of the family and the earner while the women took care of domestic work. In war, both men and women shared responsibility for defending the country. Throughout history, many times victory came through hands of women. Women is the most pious creation of God- Many roles for her to play. She shapes the future of her children. She develops the careers of her sons and daughters. These children are the foundations of society. Roles of mothers is child development very important. Due to poverty, illiteracy and backwardness, many mothers are unable to groom their children. Train mothers- Educate them- Nations have been built because of the effective and right training by the mothers to their children. Some solutions suggested - Allocate more resources to the rural areas. Train women in vocations and latest techniques - Remove illiteracy and provide facilities. Women is the most pious creation of God. She assumes the roles of a daughter, a mother, a wife and a nation - builder. She has saved mankind from many a disaster. Because of her contributions and scarifies, mankind is proudly surging ahead. A great philosopher has said, “the hands that rock the cradle, rule the world.” How true he was. Women in the role of a mother has assumed the dignity and decorum equivalent to that of the Almighty Elders state that her status is even more than that of the Almighty. Mother moulds the character and destiny of her child. She is responsible for his all-round development. Her training helps him achieve the unknown heights during his lifetime. Take the example of Shivaji. His mother, Jijabai; trained him in studies, arts, military skills and above all, the politics. She trained him so that he could be groomed to become a great warrior and administration. The small but well-trained forces of Shivaji took a heavy toll of life and property of the army of emperor Aurangzeb. Shivaji proved to be an able administrator as well. All his training and perfection were due to his education at his mother feet. Napolean Bonaparte once said, “Give me good mothers and I will give
you a good nation”. History was no guided or made by men of courage but by the mothers of those men who taught them how to walk through difficult times. An educated mother would be able to teach and train in a match better manner than an illiterate mother could. This is a very important conclusion to be considered seriously by policy makers. If women are educated, trained and polished for a tough life, they would develop their own children for perfection. Therefore, an educated and trained mother would always develop her children so that they would be able to get whatever they desired.  

Human society in most parts of the world is patriarchal. Historically in almost all societies the father and not the mother has headed the family, and continues to do so, taken decisions and governed the members and the property of the family. At all stages of life a women is under the control of a man- father, husband or son. In many cultures only sons have the right to inherit the family property and daughters have to depend on the good will of the men folk. Patriarchy acts as a severe constraint to the establishment of a gender equal social order. That is why many feminists force the roots of female oppression to patriarchy.

Patriarchy values are reflected in all the major society of Asia, which in turn maintain and perpetuate stereotypes relating to women’s subordinate position. With half of humanity dehumanized this way, we become deeply impoverished. We have lost out on the contribution of these women their affective, beautiful, harmonizing, peaceful and creative capabilities. Women in general are looked at differently indifferent societies. Some consider women as objects endowed with life. Others proclaim that men and women are equal in the sight of God but at the same time hold that this equality does not pervade all situations. Yet another view categorically states that men and women are equal in all aspects except in their anatomy. This is the modern

outlook. We are living in a society which is characterized by progress and growth. The word progress seems to be without much meaning and significance a large number of women in different societies do live a life of degradation and desperation.

Hinduism also abounds with contradictions regarding women’s position. In her article “Religion works against women” Rama Devi writes that inequality is inherent in patriarchal society (Rama Devi. 1996). In Hindu religion on the one hand there is high idealism and women are worshipped and on the other, they are treated as interior and subjugated to male dominance. The so called traditional culture of the established patriarchal social system condemns women to untold miseries. It has so widely permeated society that it is virtually impossible to eradicate its influence. It is something unimaginable and most shameful that a country like India, which has long traditions of worshipping female figures as Goddesses with names such as Laxmi, Kali, Saraswathi, Sita, etc. inflicts such inhuman treatment on human. Religion indeed promotes dual standards.27

Women are walking up all over the world, in all the activities and in civil society. They assert their rights and demand their recognition. They commit themselves to the issues of social justice, peace and eco-harmony. With an innate feeling of compassion they got involved in the cause of the poor and the marginalized. Women have involved today as a power in society.28

Gender is a set of characteristics that basically defines people as being either masculine of feminine. Gender relations on the other hand are socially constructed as a result of the behavior of women themselves. It is important to realize that gender relations are historical, changeable and subject to change through daily events and periodic moments of crisis and transformation.

28. Ibid. P.46.
Infect, men and women reflect biological similarity to a greater degree than biological differences. Society and culture have suppressed the natural similarities between the sexes and exacerbated the differences. They are governed by rules and practices through which society ensures that male and female are channeled into being men and women. Biological arguments about women's suitability for certain types of work operate under such premises. Therefore, one's gender determines the life experiences one will be exposed to i.e. access to education, work, resources, health, freedom of movement, relationship, sexuality, ability to make decisions and act autonomously. In different cultures, gender and gender relations constitute power relations with wider implications for access and control over resources (economic or political) including decision making. In such a situation women receive the smallest share. It is important to remember that the interests and needs of women and men in any family structure may be quite different because they are basically based on their social roles, power and differences of status vested in those roles. Men and women have performed different and differing roles in life from the immemorial. In most societies, women are identified as being mothers, housekeepers and or home-makers, whereas, men were identified as bread winners. On the whole, it is possible to list out the roles ascribed to men and women by the four institutions which shape human life namely the household, community, market and state. The roles identified in each of these sectors are basically common or similar in most societies. In actuality, the rules/resources/people activities and power relations in these four institutions determine the roles that ought to be played by women and men.29

Gender is a cultural construct which is seen as a full range of personality traits, attitudes, feeling, values, behavior that society ascribes to men and women on a differential basis. Though men and women possess similar

29. Ibid P. 142-143.
qualities they are considered different as a result of their biological and physiological make up. However, society has over the years, tended to uphold these differences and segregate women on all kinds of grounds. The impact of this kind of gender segregation is being felt by women in different ways all over the world. Gender related prejudices have put women in a disadvantaged position in almost all walks of life, such as, for example, in the allocation of social, economic and productive roles. Women are deprived of opportunities for access to education, training, skill, development and decision making both at personal and social values. When women are deprived of opportunities for meaningful participation in public life, development looses its direction. It is this reality which all government policies, including population policies must take note of.\(^{30}\)

Comparatively speaking, Thai women fare better than many of their counterparts in other developing countries in terms of their roles, right and cognition.\(^{31}\)

After the Second World War, a growing number of women received formal education and university degrees. Quite a few completed on equal terms with men and obtained scholarships. They serve their country in civil service and a variety of occupations and professions. A developing economic, professional, administrative, clerical, transportation and communication and blue collar occupations may be defined as the modern sector, women work side by side with their men in the fields and take of household duties as well.

Nevertheless, as compared to men, the role of women in the development process is still limited and their status is still under-privileged. Economic as well as social structures do not give rise to women to become equal. The most basic problem may be the deeply ingrained attitude of both men and women concerning the separate roles and functions of the sexes in the society.

\(^{30}\) Ibid P. 178.

By and large, disparities in work opportunity, income, educational opportunities, political representation, health care, legal treatment, training opportunities and so on, exist. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Human rights are basically something that all human beings are born with. Everyone has an equal claim to the rights. They cannot be transferred to others. They are the rights that demand equal respect of the others. They are the rights that all rulers or those in power have to respect, promote and support. Otherwise it may lead to dire consequences as stated in the preamble of the Declarations. Human rights being to every human being, regardless of sex, race, language or religion. Therefore, human rights also belong to women. They do not, however, simply belong to women. They are the rights that demand equal aspect of the others. They belong to women as equally as they belong to men. Men should therefore be aware of this fact, and should not act in oppression of women, if they do not wish to have women revolt against them, or to be branded tyrants.32

Human being cannot live along in the society. Everybody have associated with another people. So, association with each other must be take care of related environment such as human, society, and environment. Individual and social behavior must be controlled by social norms, beliefs, values, morality and ethics. Ethics is the normative science of character, habits of activity or the behavior of human beings. J.S. Mackenzie says that "Ethics discusses man's habits and customs, their characters and principles on which they habitually act, and consider what it is that constitutes the righteousness and wrongness of those principles of the good or bad of those habits."33

Ethics is not concerned with human conduct as it is, but it ought to be. It seeks to determine Norms, Ideals or standards of good or bad. Swami Vivekananda called women Shakti and emphasized that if this Shakti is neglected then the country is sure to be doomed. For the development of this Shakti the following conditions will have to be taken into consideration:

- Women is not only an animal of nature but also of culture. (Sudha Chandran)

- She must have commitment to and participation in the social order (Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya) She must be wakeful, watchful and witnessing. (Rajkumari Amrit Kaur). She must have conception and not only perception. (Ilī Bhatt)

Ideation process is essential. (Gargi)

Reflection and not reaction is the need. (Jijabai)

Heart and brain must operate simultaneously. (Mahadevi Verma)

Her satisfaction level must be raised.

Power is never given but always earned.

Accountability goes hand in hand with power (Kiran Bedi)

Inspiration must be generated before aspiration.

It is essential to deserve before desire. (Rani Luxmibai).

Status cannot be bad without stature. (Amrapali)

Achieved status dominates over ascribed status. (Kunti over Gandhari).

Role models have to be changed. (Harira Kaur)

Dual character of shakti and prakriti has to be attained. (Draupadi).

Politeness and not submission to wrongs is needed (Nalini Singh).

Women has to relate herself with inner most self and the outer world. (Sarojini Naidu)\textsuperscript{34}

The Human Development Report 1994 also aspects that women continue to be victims of discrimination all over the world- in home, place of profession and in society. In the developing countries this discrimination is more broadly based ranging from employment to education, nutrition to health care. A way to combat it is a deep study of women's nature, potentialities, capabilities, and deciding what a women is and what and she be.

\textsuperscript{34} Indian women Education and Development Edited by Usha Agrawal: Indian Publications 1995. P 22-23.
Alexander Walker studies, “beautiful of the mental thinking system is less proper to women than to men is, less feminine than beauty of the vital or nutritive system, and that it is not the mental but the vital or nutritive system out to be most developed in women.” He further asserts, “all the actions of women are more and less instinctive: and this- this alone accounts for her rapid tact, her instantaneous feeling of the proprieties, her promptitude to decide the little matters that naturally fall under her cognizance.” Though his study he is trying to reduce women to instinctual level and thus inferior to men. This a worldwide phenomena. Even today, after so much of advancement women have not been able to change their “inside” role and are not taken as PIVOTAL. In spite of the fact that sexuality is only aspect of women’s personality she has been branded as body only.\(^{35}\)

Even Philosophers like Tagore, Radhakrishna and others are not lagging behind in adding glory to this sacrificing character of women. Free women might have got intellectual acceptance today but emotionally she is still "the tittles women" of the home and hearth. In the words of Tagore, "Women's function is the passive function of the soil". According Radhakrishnan, “To be a mother and wife is undoubtedly the most important, highly skilled and difficult task that a woman can perform.” He writes, “Man is the creator and women the lover. It is an admitted fact that women are physically weak by nature in comparison to men but their other mental and behavioral capacities are not in any case less than the men. Therefore, their participation in the field of economic, education, art appreciation, social and cultural development and decisions with regard to important matters of the family or the society need not be neglected. As generally accepted, it can be said that women always played an important role in the smooth flow of the society but enjoyed no independent status. No doubt, a vast change has come with regard to the women’s freedom of speech and expression and consequently. As Gandhiji wrote in Swaraj “Women is the companion of men gifted with equal mental

\(^{35}\) Ibid 27-28.
capacities and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he.” Jawaharlal Nehru was equally emphatic. “The association of men and women should be perfect freedom and perfect comradeship with no dependence of one on the other.”

Throughout history and in all societies, it has been the reproductive function and capacity of women which on the one hand defines their capacity as women. The reproductive capacity on the one hand, defines their distinctive and unique roles, and on the other, limits their abilities to fully engage in social and economic options which are open to them. The position of women vis-a-vis the marriage and inheritance laws, therefore, are vital in determining their position in a society.

The extent to which men and women contributed to the necessities of life was determined by the availability of various resources, and women’s status appeared to vary accordingly. In general, the fact that men provided for the safety of the tribe and furnished most of the meat, always regarded as the prestige food, gave them the advantage. Nonetheless, the common payment of the bride price suggests that women were also valued for their contributions. In some what more advanced horticultural societies, plants were cultivated in small plots located near the home. Men continued to conduct warfare and also prepared the ground by slashing and burning; women prepared the food and cared for infants. But virtually all other activities were shared. Accordingly, men and women tended to be considerably more equal during this stage than in the agricultural societies that would follow. In pastoral societies, on the other hand, men tended to monopolize the herding of large animals, an activity that often took them far from home. Herding provided the bulk of what was needed for subsistence. Women’s contribution were largely confined to tending the primitive equivalent of hearth and home, and females never reached more than a subservient status.

36. Ibid. P. 168.
One important dimension that has recently been considered important in facilitating the process of women's development is male participation and their role in sharing responsibilities in the family. The 1984 Mexico City Declaration on Population and development emphasized the importance of men's role in women's development and stated that: "To achieve this goal to assist women in attaining full equality with men, it is necessary for men and women to share responsibilities jointly in areas such as family life, child-caring and family planning." In the 1994 ICPD Program of Action, it was recognized that to empower women without taking men into account would mean that the objectives would not be reached successfully. Men should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their parenthood, sexual behavior, and social and family roles, so that men and women are equal partners in public and private life (United Nations, ICPD, 1994: 20). As most of the planning in the past has focused on women as a target group, it is time that men's participation and involvement are also taken into account in solving women's problems and in accelerating the process of national development.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the pattern of women's lives began to change in reality the concept of the "perfect wife" was being redefined. First, there were modifications in the appropriate activities for a female at different states of their life. Second, the appropriate arena for female action was expanded. And third, there was a new and growing approval of individualism. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a number of women who were educated, articulate, mobile and increasingly involved in public activities.

Take any facet of human activity. The world is changing rapidly - be it education, technology, science and society itself. In this change, women has not lagged behind. She has marched shoulder to shoulder with the male of the species and shared his endeavor in every field of life. She has also reached out into outer space and make a place for herself there too.

This advancement of women and the complete role reversal from ancient days when she was confined to the obscurity and anonymity of the home is studied and explained in detail in this chapter. Besides placing facts in a logical order, it attempts to analyses the factors that have made the change possible and also the prevailing trends vis-a-vis women and the new approach that society has adopted towards her. Half of the Divine Being was incarnated as women, and this half was dedicated to creativeness, to building of forms and to the nourishing and guarding of these forms. This is the Mother-side of life, whose essential nature was love, compassion and feeling as intellect or reason was that of the other half, the man. This vision of the women determined her functions in social cosmos. Over the centuries, women got to be relegated into the background. Her role become strictly defined to early children and running the household while man become the breadwinner, the earner of the family. This was a throwback on the early ages when man was the hunter, procuring food for the family, while the woman prepared it and looked after the other minimum chores required to keep the family together.

However, with education, which in itself was an empowerment of women, a change in attitudes and perspectives began taking place. Industrialization and urbanization brought about the sea change and women began coming out, though not in large numbers, to supplement the family income. In course of time, specified vocations like teaching, nursing and the like came to be identified solely as women-oriented. Here too, one can see a limitation and delineation of roles. However, with the march of civilization, with the compulsory education of girls and female enfranchisement, women began to assert themselves more aggressively and by the middle of the twentieth century, earned a place, not behind man, but alongside man. They began taking up jobs and vocations that were considered “only for men” and today there is hardly any sphere or dimension of human activity that does not see the participation of women, even to the extent of exploring apace. There is hardly any human endeavor where the female of the species has not made her presence felt.
This has not been an easy task. It took determination, girl and a fanatic obsession to make a mark in the world of men. There was humiliation, there was ostracism, and there was resentment, even to the extent of blatant discouragement. But woman forged ahead, regardless of the obstacles, and overcame every challenge to her progress head-on. The result is there for all to see in the world of the twenty-first century. Woman has made and her role in the society of today that is fast-changing and a far cry from the days when she was confined to the four walls of her home. It analyses the trends and approaches that society has incorporated in modern-day living with regard to the female of the species and her fully integrated and coordinated role in the scenario of today. The gap between male and female life expectancies is partly a reflection of genetic differences between the sexes and partly a reflection of social, cultural, and economic factors. Women's hormones protect them from atherosclerotic diseases; their lower metabolic rate and higher proportional body fat content may also make them less vulnerable to a range of other chronic and critical conditions. Increasingly, the most prevalent lethal diseases in developed countries are attributable to smoking and to the dietary habits associated with affluent lifestyles; women are less prone to these diseases than men, partly for genetic reasons and partly due to more moderate female consumption patterns.

By sticking to the concrete details of daily life, women are helping us find new directions as we work our way through the greatest crisis since the Conquest. The breakdown of the technocratic, bureaucratic, patriarchal models typically associated with men is allowing women but not just women to rethink society overall. (Pacific News Service 1991).

Women are unused to decision-making and to participating in development activities. Therefore, they are more comfortable in women-only groups. They begin to value the skills they have, and to resent the limitations their society has placed on them and on their female children. The women
have a strong sense of responsibility for the environment and for their cultural heritage. Ethnic pride is fostered and learn the importance of their role as "primary gatekeepers and transmitters of folk beliefs, customs and practices;" and that "women are fundamental to the recollection and reintegration of traditional knowledge". Potential family disruption and the role of men in and international women's movement are rarely addressed in the literature. Relations between men and women are determined by economic, cultural and social forces, and, as rapid change has been occurring, many cultures have not adopted family and child-raising patterns that enable the family to remain a strong unit.

Whatever the cause, men and women often have different reactions to poverty and difficult circumstances. Men have not in general been drawn into empowerment projects. Women may become geographically, emotionally, and culturally distanced from their families, their mothers. Of course, this can happen for many other reasons as well, and it is possible that community activities can bring different generations together. However, change is often most threatening to those who have lived the longest with the conditions that are to be changed.

Women may be even busier than before, facing a triple day, that now includes group activities as well as productive and reproductive ones.

**INDIAN BUDDHIST AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

The dawn of 2002 reverberated with the echoes of mass conversion of Dalits to Buddhism. The stage had been set for this when on November 4, 2001, in New Delhi, an Indian Revenue Service officer, Ram Raj (re-christened Udit Raj), led members of the All India Confederation of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes organization to embrace Buddhism. The incident highlighted how India's pluralistic society continues to be challenged by age-old issues in this era of globalization as the county strives to reconcile tradition and

(299)
modernity. This juxtaposition drags religion into the public sphere, sparking debate and politicization. Government then becomes a balancing act, as the nation remains pledged to the principles of democracy and secularism. The fallout of Ram Raj’s massive rally in the distant South, when more such conversions were held, is a pointer to the reality that the issue is not just caste discrimination or the right to choose one’s religion but also of votes and money. The conversion issue continues to crop up every now and then in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and the northeast region. Taking a serious views of it, the National Commission of Minorities (NCM) sought the intervention of religious institutions to ensure that such instances do not recur.

In Jhajjar district in Haryana, over 100 Dalit families converted to Buddhism on October 27, in protest against the lynching of five Dalits on the mistaken accusation of cow slaughter.40

The Mahabodhi Society of India (MSI) released White paper alleging that the relics of Sariputta and Mahamaagallana, disciples of Lord Buddha, were removed from the Sanchi stupa in Madhya Pradesh. For over a year, a tussle has been reported between the monks of Indian and Sri Lankan for controlling the Buddhist shrines and society in India. The MSI claims that the caskets containing either the ashes or bones of the two disciples were “sighted” in Colombo by MIS members in July 2001. It alleges that some Sri Lankan monks “surreptitiously” took them away from Sanchi. Sri Lankan monks have denied the allegations. An official of the Mahabodhi society, however, declined to comment, saying that the matter was beyond their jurisdiction. However, they did not rule out the possibility of the relics having been shared between the countries. They also questioned why the MSI remained silent on such a crucial issue for well over a year.41

41. Ibid P. 279-280.
LAY WOMEN: NEW PATTERN FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

When he established the Sangha of Monks (bhiksu) and nuns (bhiksun), the Buddha also established the Sangha of laywomen (upasika) and laymen (upasaka) who followed his teachings. Those lay folk who were most devoted to the teaching and most eager to follow the holy path while remaining in the midst of worldly life could undertake to observe five or even eight or ten of the basic rules for self-restraint found in the Buddhist scriptures.42

They could observe these rules permanently, or for a limited period of time - a day, a week, a month. Lay people still do this, throughout the Buddhist world.

Lay people could demonstrate their dedication to the Buddha’s teaching by observing the precepts, but in ancient time they have no thought of striving for nirvana in this life. Buddhists believe that all sentient beings are caught in the cycle of rebirth. They reborn again and again until they are able to attain the powerful, liberating insight into the true nature of existence that is nirvana.43

It was the monks and nuns who cherished that aspiration, and for its sake went forth from worldly life into the forest to meditate and discipline themselves, and open their minds to a higher understanding. Upasika and Upasaka remained at home, and sought to acquire merit for themselves that in a future existence they too could hope for nirvana. Merit is achieved through various actions, especially by giving gifts of food, clothing, and other requisites to monks and nuns. The lay faithful have always been indispensable to the monastic, for they are the source of their livelihood. Women have probably always made up the majority of the Buddhist laity in most countries, as they have.44

Women have founded several of the new religions of Japan or have been the co-founders who have taken their partner's message into the world and built the new movement into a major religion with a huge following.

In the twentieth century, laywomen in Theravada lands have assumed new roles in their religion, also. In Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma, increasing numbers of Buddhist laywomen practice meditation regular at meditation centers. Most of these centers in Thailand and Sri Lanka are in the cities, for it was educated members of the urban elite who were first attracted to the practice of meditation. Now, in Sri Lanka at least, village women of more traditional backgrounds are also joining the exodus to meditation training centers in their own areas. At these centers, both urban and rural, laywomen and laymen learn the techniques of meditation during intensive courses lasting a week or more, which may require up to twenty hours of meditation per day. Many return periodically to join meditation retreats and to reach higher levels of proficiency. The highly respected teachers at some of the better known centers are laywomen.\(^45\)

As Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere have pointed out, the widespread practice of meditation by the laity is the greatest single change that has occurred in Theravada Buddhist countries since the end of World War II.\(^46\)

The many, many lay Buddhists who are now practicing meditation regularly and seriously are demonstrating their belief that every Buddhist should her or his own salvation in this life. They are acting on their conviction that it is possible for a lay person to attain nirvana here and now. Nirvana is not just that business of the monastic. One does not need to renounce the world in order to reach the ultimate goal. Many lay meditators today in Theravada lands regard meditation as their basic religious practice, rather than the rituals

\(^45\) Bond 1988, 177-86, 208-12; J. Van Esterik 1982, 47.
\(^46\) Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, 237; see also Bond 1988, 177.
that were the mainstay of lay religious life in the past. This is a truly radical change in the character of Theravada Buddhism, and in the balance of duty and authority between clerics and laity. Even more radical is the presumption of laywomen to time on the role of meditation teacher. Some- Achan Naeb in Thailand, for example-teach monks as well as lay people, a remarkable innovation.47

It was women scholars who first made the subject of women in Buddhism respectable. And now, in the published work and in their classroom teaching, they are interpreting Buddhism for others from women points of views. Along with women spiritual leaders, they are shaping the perception of Buddhism while helping build the reality of a new Buddhism, which will be different from the old because of the prominence of women within it.

SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND RELIGIOUS TEACHERS :-

In the past, men dominated Buddhism and today they still do. But one of the most heartening things about modern Buddhism is that women are stepping to the forefront at all levels of Buddhist activity. They are working and they are leading, and happily, they doing it with the cooperation of many Buddhist men. In our country at last, understanding women in Asia and in the West are working with men to shape the practice and development of Buddhism. Some are spiritual leaders and religious teachers who have attracted crowds of followers. Others are moves and shakers- they organize, they administer, and they consciously work for change. Still others are the keepers of the records: they are scholars and teachers who tell the world about women's Buddhism and interpret Buddhist doctrine and history from a women's point of view. All these women are breathing a fresh life into the old religion; they helping to change. There are a number of other noteworthy women religious teachers in Asia today. Sister Sudharma, one of the most important leaders

47. J. Van Esterik 1982, 47-52.
of the dasasilmattawa in Sri Lanka, taught Buddhism in a girls' school and
then in a college for over twenty years before retiring to the forest to meditate
and lead a life of renunciation. She has so far established fourteen monastic
residences for dasasilmattawa to which she accepts students from all over
the world, and she also administers a retirement home for aged
dasasilmattawa.48

The lay teacher Achan Neab heads a large network of meditation centers
in Bangkok and central Thailand, were she teaches both lay people and monks.49

Daw Panna, a thila shin in Burma, follows the model of her grandmother
and heads an important monastic residence and social for women
renunciations.50

Venerable Bhiksuni Tae-heng Se Nim, a Korea nun of the Chogye, is the
founder and spiritual head of seven Han Ma Um Zen centers in Korea and
America. She has some twenty thousand lay followers in Korea and growing
number in the United States.51

Venerable Bhiksuni Hin Wan is a scholar, painter, and Chan (Zen) master
in Taiwan.52

Rengestu was another artist-nun of nineteenth-century Japan, who
influenced many through her spiritual semple and her generosity to others,
as well as through her text.53 And there was Satomi Myodo, a Soto Zen nun,
who died in 1978. She is important not as a teacher but as an example to
others of extraordinary fortitude in the pursuit of her spiritual goal.54

Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh a Buddhist Scholar and Professor at
Thammasat University in Bangkok.55

55. See NIBWA, 4, 1985, 15-17, NIBWA, 11, 1987, 13-18. Dr. Kabilsingh has published several articles and books,
including a Comparative Study of Bhikkhuni Patimokkha.
She is founder and contributing editor of NIBWA, the Newsletter on International Buddhist Women’s Activities. It is an important forum for Buddhist women and others to change ideas, and an invaluable focal point around which women can rally and identify themselves to each other as Buddhist women. Dr. Kabilsingh is action in many other Buddhist projects, and has traveled widely in Asia attending conferences and bringing Buddhist women’s groups into contact with one another. She was one of the organizers of the international conference of Buddhist nuns held at Bodh Gaya, India (the place of the Buddha’s enlightenment), in 1987.

Dr. Kabilsingh studied at Visva Bharati University at Santiniketan, India, and at McMaster University in Canada. Her mother, Venerable Bhikkhuni Voramai Kabilsingh, who was once a teacher herself, become one of the first Theravada women to receive full ordination as a Bhikkhuni, from the Chinese Samgha in Taiwan in 1972. She is now head of Thailand’s only nunnery for Bhikkhuni, Wat Songdharma Kalyani in Nakhon Pathom.

Chatsumarn wants to see more nunneries established so that women committed to the ordained life can devote themselves to the study of Buddhism, and so that lay women can come for the nuns for instruction in the religion and help with family and social problems. Thoughtful and educated Buddhist women in Thailand and elsewhere want to involve themselves in solving social problems and proving prospects for the world’s survival, but the opportunities for doing this, in a Buddhist way, are limited for women at present. Establishment of the Bhikkhuni Samgha everywhere would open one important avenue to women.

Dr. Kabilsingh believes, and would have significant repercussions on the lives of other Buddhist women as well.

Dr. Kabilsingh recognizes that there is more support for her ideas abroad than at home at the movement, but hopes that today’s universal Buddhist movement will inspire changes in the more conservative society.
Thai monks, particularly the younger ones, are gradually changing their views about the Bhikkhuni Samgha, she says, but women who earnestly desire ordination should not wait for their permission. Instead, women should be seek ordination abroad, then establish Bhiksuni communities at home, and become living proof that they are beneficiate to society. The movement would certainly spread, and the monks would be own over and offer ordination to the Bhiksu in the Theravada tradition.

As Dr. Kabilisingh see it, it must be educated women from the more privileged and influential classes who take the lead in seeking ordination. They must also be the ones who supports and champion the movement. They and sympathetic men from their own social circles understand the issue, and they have influence to bring about change.⁵⁶

Through NIBWA and her many other publications, her teaching, and her international activities, Dr. Kabilisingh is working very energetically to bring about fundamental changes in Buddhist women’s live in Thailand and in the whole world.

Modern Buddhism is in process of change. The most significant change is the leading role that women, both nuns and lay, and laymen have assumed. They active involvement arises from the realization that the fundamental Buddhist directive- that each person must seek her or his own liberation, her and now is indeed a mandate for Buddhists, not just for monks. The old distinction between the status of lay and cleric is being rejected by many, giving scope to new possibilities for practice and leadership. Now, lay Buddhists are often the ones who are serious meditators rather than the monks, and lay women and laymen even often meditation instruction to the Bhiksu. New identities are being forged in modern Buddhism, too, such as that of the dasasilmattawa of Sri Lanka who are neither nuns nor laywomen but

somewhere between, who have earned general respect for their commitment to practice and for the purity of their lives. An entirely new Buddhist sects have sprung up, with new balances of power between lay and cleric, and women and men. Modern Buddhist women and take their religion seriously, and they take fully responsibility for their spiritual destiny upon themselves. Women are important participants in the newest developments in Buddhism, and in the critical analysis of Buddhist and Western values, which hopes to blend the best of both for the sake of a better world.

BUDDHIST WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY:--

The Sanskrit terms bhikṣuni and bhikṣu, and the Pali terms bhikkhuni and bhikkhu, mean female and male medicant, one who begs alms and renounces conventional worldly livelihoods. The translation of these terms as “nun” and “monk” is done for convenience, but should be kept in mind that Buddhist “monks” and “nuns” did not the like their Christian counterparts.⁵⁷

One of the most important issues modern Buddhist women have raised is the matter of the restoration of the nun’ order (bhikṣuni samgha, order of female medicants) in countries where it to longer exists, and its introduction. Where it never did find a home in the past. According to Buddhist scriptures, the bhikṣuni samgha was founded, along with the bhikṣu samgha (order of male mendicants or monks); by Gautama the Buddha early in his career as a religious teacher.⁵⁸

Nuns and monks lived as wandering renunciants seeking enlightenment and liberation (nirvana) from pain-bringing attachment to worldly life.

---

⁵⁸. The most widely accepted dates for the Buddhist life are about 560-480 B.C.E. According to tradition, the nuns’ order was founded about five years after the Buddha’ enlightenment and the founding of the monk’s order— that is, around 520 B.C.E. Recent research by Kabilisingh (1984, 70-72) however, suggests that the two orders equally old.
Meditation and moral discipline was their path to liberation. Monks and sometimes nuns, preached the Buddha’s doctrines (dharma) to lay devotees, and were in turn supported by their donations of food, clothing, and other necessities. Buddhist monastic life was meant to be totally devoted to the spiritual goal of liberation. As so it was, in the Buddha’s day. The nun’s order flourished in India for some centuries and then declined in numbers and activity. Meanwhile, the order had been established in Sri Lanka by Indian nun around 250 B.C.E. and traveling Sinhalese nuns carried it on to China in 433 or 434 C.E., and later to Burma. 59

From China the transmission of the order continued to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. 60

Eventually the order disappeared completely, not only from India but from Sri Lanka and Bruma as well.

It has, however, continued to the thrive in China, and also in Korea, Japan and Vietnam to the present day. In China proper, the communist government of the people’s republic of China holds Buddhism and make remain active there, and then has been a number of ordinations of new clerics during the past decade. 61

In Taiwan the nun’s order flourished. Thus it is in China, and in the Chinese influenced countries of the Far East, that the order of full ordained nuns has remained infect, from the time of its establishment then it the fifth century to the present.


60. Tsai 1981, 8. The Vietnamese ordination ritual, though derived from the Chinese tradition, may be based on texts different from those conventionally used in China itself: Dalai Lama 1987, 7.

61. Jan 1984, 41-42. The total number of monks and nuns in the people’s Republic of China in 1982 has been established at 25,000 to 25,000, the majority being monks: Jan 1984, 44.

(308)
In May, 1956 the British Broadcasting corporation, London, broadcast a talk by Dr. Ambedkar on “Why did he like the Buddhism and how has it useful to the world” Ambedkar said that he like Buddhism because it taught understanding against superstition, love (karuna) and equality (samanata). He claimed that Buddhism was the answer to Marx and his communism. Ambedkar said that once it was realized that Buddhism was the social gospel its revival would be an every lasting event. In this talks given to the voice of America he deal with the prospects of democracy of India. Ambedkar came down to Bombay in May 1956. As per his earlier declaration he was embrace Buddhism in the month of October the same year on the day of Buddha Jayanti celebration. During one of his speeches, which was probably his last, Ambedkar said that Buddhism differed Hinduism; “Hinduism believes in God. Buddhism has no God. Hinduism believes in soul. In Buddhism there is no soul. Hinduism believes in caste system. Buddhism has no place for the caste system and Chaturvarnya”.

The day Ambedkar had chosen to embrace Buddhism was fast approaching. The place he chose for holding the conversion ceremony was Nagpur. He said that those who wanted to join him were most welcome. Those who did not like conversion were free to go their own way. Ambedkar then issued a press note saying that his conversion to Buddhism would take place in Nagpur. On October 14, 1956, in the forenoon. He invited Rev. Bhikkhu Chandramuni, the oldest men in India, to Nagpur, to initiate him into Buddhism. On the appointed day, Ambedkar, accompanied by his wife and his honorary private secretary, reached Nagpur to go through the conversion ceremony. For over week people from depressed classes, especially the Mahrs, had been gathering in Nagpur to witness the ceremony which would initiate their leader into Buddhism. The vast multitude of men, women and children which came to Nagpur by transport of tracked hundred of miles shouting slogans like “Bhagwan Buddha Ki Jai, Babaashib Ki Jai” was guided properly by a huge volunteer crepes. Nagpur had transformed in to holy place. A sprawling
open round was turned into an enclosure. A huge decorated dais was set up to conduct ceremony. Ambedkar said that he has chosen the least harmful way for the country by embracing Buddhism; for Buddhism is a part of Indian culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of culture.\textsuperscript{62}

Buddhism accounts for 6.6 million or around 0.71% of the Indian’s population. India has the difference in many aspects of life, religions, races, languages and castes. But it has become a land of unity. However, the Indian problem was based on the principles of the caste system. According to caste system, the social status of the people was regarded by their caste family where they were born in society. There are four castes in Indian society, known as Chatuvarnas: The Brahmans or the priests, the highest caste of all castes. The Kshatriyas or the warriors placed in the second range of caste hierarchy. The Vaishayyas or the merchants and traders and lest, the Sudras or the Untouchables were considered as the lowest caste in the society. The untouchability are generally honest and gentle people with hardy, strong and great physical stamina, endurance and powers of resistance against the cold and difficult condition of life and are habituated to bear hardships. Peaceful and hardworking, both men and women have a lusty sense of humour. The untouchability are cheerful, pleasure loving and are hard working and almost, without exception, everyone is extremely religious minded because their tradition has included in them a deep and enduring religious culture. The Indian Buddhist women have a share in the decision making process. There is no gender-bias among this community. There is no nation of individual ownership of money or property. Everything belong to and is decided by family as a unit. After 14 October 1956, there was almost no Neo-Buddhists in this country especially in Maharashtra state. Women are treated in a different way in all matters including their up bring and. Education. Discrimination

\textsuperscript{62.} Great Indian Revolutionary Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Retold by Firoz Alam Sahin Publications 92. P. 127-130.
among women could not be ruled out. In Aurangabad, a large number of Neo-Buddhist belong to the scheduled classes or to be the lower class and the status and life of women varied according to differences in the status of their other religious in the society. The life of a Indian Buddhist women is very important for the economic upliftment. She has the duties for cooking, housekeeping and rearing children. She is equally active in spinning, weaving cloth and carpets, threshing and transporting the corns and hay. Children are very well looked after. There is no discrimination between a girl and a boy child. Children who are deep outs usually end up as helpers or some go to defense services to serve the country. There is no report of either bonded labour and child labourers. Ceremony, rite or ritual is one of the religious factor. Ceremonialism is a collective practice usually associated with religion. Thus Praying, feasting, dancing, singing, kneeling are examples of ceremonialism or ritualism. The function of religious rituals in to affirm the moral superiority of the society over its individual members and thus to maintain the solidarity of the society. The ceremonies of birth, death and marriage etc, are also observed in the Indian Buddhist society.

Neo-Buddhists are described as kind, gentle, honest and cheerful people. They are intelligent, humorous, self-reliant and hard-working people. Neo-Buddhists are mostly the followers of Buddhism. Their devotion to their spirituality and religion is admirable. Their religious fervor has not shown any sign of domination since coming over to the settlement. Their faith and reverence to the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the secular as well as religious head of the great Indian revolutionary.

With the development of Buddhist lay movements, leadership opportunities for women have increased, women have becomes spiritual leaders, teachers, scholars, organizers, and shapers of a new Buddhism for the modern world in countries formerly dominated by monks. The lay movement has also brought more women into the practice the meditation in
Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma; many of the teachers have been women. According to the religious activities of Neo-Buddhist, there is a great amount of Indian Buddhist women. Women chant sutras or go on pilgrimage together, and some attend sessions where the leader goes into trance, communicates with the religious leader and practice healing.

This section will discuss the position of lay women in Buddhism in India as daughters, wives, mothers and widows. It will be noted that while during the period of Buddhism women in Buddhist communities enjoyed a wider latitude of freedoms than those in Hindu communities, due to the Buddha’s emphasis upon gender equality in spiritual matters and his opposition to Brahmanical sacrifices, rituals and rejection of caste differentiation, yet Brahmanical values and attitudes regarding gender and position of women persisted in Buddhist communities.

It must be remembered that while Buddhism established itself as a popular religion in large parts of the India, particularly during Asoka’s rule at about 500 B.C., Hindu Brahmanism did not disappear entirely, co-existed and interacted with it and continued to influence the daily life and customs of converts to the new movement. Thus while in doctrinal matters the break between Brahmanism and Buddhism was profound, and while under the influence of the Buddha a whole set of new social rules and customs to given the secular life of his followers was developed, many Brahmanical values could not be uprooted entirely from their lives. These Brahmanical values and rules were written down by the great lawgiver Manu, known as the code of Manu, or Manuva-Dharmasastra, and they reflect the customary law and social relation of Hindu society as it existed at about 500 B.C.  

In the pre-Buddhist period of Indian history women had been perceived and treated as natural inferiors to men and received recognition and honour only as mothers. However, during the early Buddhist period women in India, though still confined to certain restricted roles within domestic, social and religious life, were accorded more equality and respect. Men recognized women as intelligent and rational and the Buddha himself gave the Dhamma to both men and women. They were not owned by or subservient to men and longer, and could pursue their own life and aspirations. This recognition according to women by Buddhism was fostered and accelerated by the innate intelligence of women them selves.64

WIVES, MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS :-

According to Brahmanical tradition it is the responsibility for the children to take care of their parents in their old age. In numerous passages in early literature in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, which refer very frequently to Buddhist lay men and lay women, women as mothers are mentioned before men as fathers. In a word meaning parents in Sanskrit and Pali languages, the word of mother is placed before that of father, i.e., in Pali “Matapitaro”.65

Moreover, the grown children, especially sons, were admonished to pay respect to their parents after absence of time and on special occasion, paying homage to their mother first. Young people were often reminded that they could never repay their parents, especially their mothers. The observance of filial piety in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions is as important as in Confucian tradition. Position of women as daughters are also different during the Vedic and the Buddhist period. During the Brahmanical times birth of daughter was a sad event. Daughters were perceived as a liability and a responsibility. They would marry, leave home and would not be around to take care of

64. Horner, op. cit., P.2
65. Ibid., P.5
parents in the old age. In addition, financial resources were essential to give a dowry and marry her off well. A daughter could not perform any rites, rituals or ceremonies or continue the language. The birth of a first daughter was acceptable, but any subsequent birth of a female was interpreted as worth of the Gods and punishment of the family.

Because of these beliefs a bride was given a new name during the wedding ceremony, to signify her rebirth and new identity according to her husband's family. At the time of the rise of Buddhism and during its early days, the status of girls was higher than it has ever been before or since. This demonstrated in several sources which use the word “putta” or child, without identifying gender.66

Buddhism did not accept the Brahmanic belief that it was absolutely necessary to have a son so that the funeral rites for parents could performed, which had two position effects for women. Although under Buddhism a man could set aside his wife if she failed to have any children at all, he could not do so if he had daughters. Secondly, if there was no son born there was no compulsion to adopt one in order to perpetuate the lineage through the family name and to perform the funeral rites. In fact, the attitude of fathers to their daughters in early Buddhism was one of great affection, because there was no more any pressure to perform funeral rites.67

QUALITY OF WIVES :-

The Vinaya lists ten different kinds of wives; those bough for money; those living with their husbands voluntarily; those who are to be enjoyed or made use of occasionally; those who have given cloth (pata); those who have the quality of providing the house with water; those who used head cushions to carry vessels on their heads; those who were slaves and wives;

66. Ibid., P. 19.
67. Ibid., P.13.
those who were artisans and wives; those who were acquired as prisoners of war; and those who were temporary or monetary wives. A list given in the Anguttara suggests a wife's worth from husband's point of view. Certain attributes, both positive and negative were assigned to evaluate a wife. It emphasizes various classes or person that the wife may resemble. If she resembles a murderer, a thief, or a master she is bad and will go to hell; if she is good and will attain bliss. There were cases such as that of Isidasi who had all four positive attributes of a wife, she was very devoted and did everything to please him, and yet her husband would not like her.  

Isidasi expresses her sentiments, and vents her sorrow, in the following passage:

“
My salutation morn and eve I brought
To both the parents of my husband, low
Bowing my head and kneeling at their feet,
According to the training given me.
My husband’s sisters and his brothers too,
And all his kin, scarce were they entered when
I rose in timid zeal and gave them place.
And as to food, or boiled or dried, and drink,
That which was to be stored I set aside,
And served it out and gave to whom ‘twas due.
Rising betimes, I went about the house,
Then with my hands and feet well cleansed I went
To bring respectful greeting to my lord,
And taking comb and mirror, unguents, soap;
I dressed and groomed him as a handmaid might.
To boiled the rice, I washed the pots and pans;
And as a mother to her only child.

68. Horner, op. cit., p.44.
So did I minister to my good man.

For me, who with toil infinite thus worked,
And rendered service with a humble mind,
Rose early, ever diligent and good,
For me he nothing felt some sore dislike". 69

Within the home a woman could be quite dominant even over her husband if she possessed five powers, the power of beauty, wealth, kin, sons and virtue. The ability to keep a secret was considered a very admirable quality. Widows.

The Buddhist literature does not address the state of widowhood during the first century A.D. However, some observations would be made about the nature of the society before the advent of Buddhism, at the end of the Brahmanical period, from the sources which describe the prevailing social conditions during early Buddhism, because many customs were carried into the Buddhist era. During this era, widowhood changed a woman's life but not her social status. She did not to have shave her head or give up jewellery or coloured clothes. She was not expected to follow any specific diet, retrain from attending rituals and other occasions such as weddings, sleep on mats on the floor. Compared with the Brahmin widows, she did not face any degradation. She was not thought to be "impure or untouchable, nor was she feared as a source of bad women". Buddhist thought did not support any of these notions. 70

In Buddhism also a widow was incomplete. Even when she was protected by her parents, by the siblings, by the clan or by the Dhamma, words such as anatha, meaning unprotected, destitute, were used to emphasize the plight of widows. A women whose husband had been taken a prisoner went crying to the king's palace and begged for something to cover herself. She rejected the clothes given to her saying, and she that lacks a husband goes bare and naked indeed." 71

69. Ibid., P.45.
70. Ibid., P.73.
71. Homer, op.cit., P.74.
Also, a widow in the Buddhist tradition had the option to continue to live her life in the material world or join the order. If she stayed at home, she could inherit and manage her husband’s property.

BUDDHIST WOMEN IN THAI SOCIETY :-

Religion is not just a means of perpetuating faith, it defines a way of life. Every religion defines and enforces the gender determined roles and conduct for its followers. Buddhism is no exception. Although to be ordained as a monk represents the highest form of making merit in Tharavada Buddhism in Thailand, the doctrine does not allow ordination of women. Because women are central to the stability and the well-being of a Thailand family and are perceived as being more attached to worldly possessions, particularly their children, they are not considered as meeting the necessary conditions for ordination as monks.

Some of these negative perceptions about women in Thailand have been attributing, to some extent, to the influences of the Chinese and India cultural and Buddhist religious values. According to the traditional Chinese thought women are easily manipulated, always unsatisfied, jealous, insulting and of lesser intelligence. Indian cultural values echoed, to some extent, some what similar values and attitudes. Women are always to be protected and guided by the men during their different states of life, i. e., first father, then older brother after father’s death, then husband when she marries and finally, her own son, if she become a widow.  

In many society in Asia- including China, India, Islamic societies as will as Thailand-through generations. Women have generally accepted these restrictions subjugation under the persistent to conform, and internalized many norms as valid for two main reasons, amongst many others. First, it was the women who themselves, as mothers and mothers in-law, had been

---

implementing these oppressive measures against persons of their own gender. And secondly, it has always been stressed that these measures “are good for you and family”.

In Thailand Theravada Buddhism perceives and associates women with “attachment and becoming”, while males are associated with “detachment and release”. According, and because of these propensities, The Thai women are considered more suitable to pursue certain activities in which they excel, like business, but are expressly excluded from being ordained as monks and from joining the Sangha.\footnote{Van Esterik, op. cit., P.78}

Thus according to the prevailing doctrinal practice and belief, if any woman has such aspirations, she must accumulate “enough” good karma until she is reborn as a man.\footnote{Karsch, op. cit., P.27.}

Women relationship to Buddhism, its values and norms is altogether a different matter. Their merit accumulation is linked with their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, and in these capacities they are far more involved than men in performing the acts of routine merit making, such attending the Wat services, feeding the monks, releasing the captured birds from straw cages at sites of Wats, donating Buddha’s images to the Wats on special occasions like birth of a son or recovery from a serious illness to express gratitude for favors granted, and many other acts of charity, mercy and devotion.\footnote{Loc cit.}

Also in the villages more women than men attend temple services on regular basis, listen to the sermons, and are actively involved in giving alms and observing certain precepts. The monastic order in Thailand is surviving because of the devotion of the laywomen, who provide food and sons to ensure the community of the monastic order.\footnote{Van Esterik, op. cit., P. 58}

The explanation given for this type of devotion of women to Buddhism is that because of their gender they need to be involved in merit making for more than men.\footnote{Kirsch, op., P.27 .}
This explanation insists that the salvation of a woman is in doing her duty at every station of her life, and that she accumulates most merit by serving the most important man in her life in each particular period, i.e., her father or husband, or by giving a son for ordination into the Sangha. This also puts a pressure and absolute responsibility on the women to bear not just one, but several sons, to prove her worth in this life and to safeguard her future life. Hence she should be in a position to give one of her sons to the Sangha, while other sons would help on the family activities and take of the family and their parents in old age. This is considered the most important merit making activity of a woman in Thailand. Most societies, specially in Asia, and for different reasons, value their women by the number of sons they bear. Even taking of successive wives is sanctioned if the first has failed to produce a son. For example in India, where this practice is well documented, it is used to ensure the continuity of the lineage, take care of parents in their old age, perpetuate the family have and ensure the performance of funeral rites for the parents. When father dies then his eldest son assumes the responsibility to look after his widows mother and any unmarried siblings. In many Asian society the source of woman’s worth and the extent of her power and authority is deeply rooted in the institution of motherhood. The mother in-law syndrome effectively implements it. It is not enough that a woman be a mother, she must fulfill the requirement of bearing at least one son. It is remarkable to observe how her status and position within her own family of birth, but also all in her family of procreation, particularly vis-a-vis her mother-in-law and other women in both families, is transformed to a superior status upon the birth of a son. She become immediately entrenched and empowered as a women through her son. These different rules for Thai women and women bring up to another thesis. Thomas Kirsch in his essay quotes Simon La Loubere, who has visited Thailand, then called Siam, in the seventeenth century. While he was impressed by the easy life led by men who spent their time playing, smoking and sleeping, he observed at the same that it were the
women who worked land and conducted business in cities. This observation was further expended upon by W. Graham, who said that while Thai men who no aptitude for business, women are always busy working the land and carrying on small scale private business.78

In Thailand men and women play their roles as defined and regulated by Buddhism and its values. This leads to many generalizations and stereotypes. It is generally believed that women are most patient than men. It must be point out that the meaning of patience in Thai society is very different from its meaning in the west. In Thailand, patience translates into enduring suffering, restraint and control under trying circumstances, to be courageous in challenging circumstances, overcoming any impediments in achieving a desired goal, i.e. merit making. Thus patience, as a very highly valued virtue in Buddhism, is central to the qualities prescribed for conduct of not only women but monks as well. Although the Thai women have been relatively more free than their counterparts in other regions of South and East Asia, this does not mean that they enjoy complete equality with men. The fact that the Thai women are more active in business could be explained by the fact that Buddhism does not place any value on accumulating material wealth in general, but more so by men who are encouraged to join the Sangha, hence men are expected to stay away from entrepreneurial pursuits while women carry on all kinds of business and economic activities.79

These small to moderate size business managed by women generate resources which enable men to do their merit making to accumulate good karma. In order words women work to earn their own merit by providing resources for their husbands so that the latter may save their souls. Since certain expectations determine behaviour of Thai men and women incorporate

79. Kirsch, op. tic., P. 28
Buddhist values more into their daily lives than women. Attributes like kindness, generosity and compassion are not compatible with carries on successful trade or business. Also doing business or being involved in trade implies the pursuit of worldly wealth which negates Buddhist values. A man must not be seen as miserly or stingy because he has the potential for following the example of prince Vessantra, a character from one of the many Jataka tales, who give away all his worldly goods, including his wife and children, out of compassion for others.  

The Thai women, on the other hand, can pursue worldly interests even if such activities distract them from attaining Buddhist goals. There is also a prevailing perception that women are more shrewd than men and therefore it is easier for them to function in the business world. Skinner notes that because of these characteristics Chinese businessmen preferred to deal with women instead of men.

While during the period of pre-modern economy the Thai women traders could not participate in external trade of the kingdom, because this was placed by the king into the hands of non-Thais, the Thai women played the dominant role in domestic private sector.

Thai Buddhist women, when compared to their counterparts in most countries of Asia, enjoy a greater degree of power and recognition. Indeed, Thai women have played a significant roles in household management, and in educating and socializing the young, apart from engaging in income-generating activities such as cash crop growing, and raising domestic animals both for home consumption and marketing. In addition, a great number of women enjoy prestigious professions such as university professors, school teachers,
medical doctors, judges, high ranking civil servants, and private enterprise executives. There are also a considerable number of Thai women politicians running for political office such as of parliament and as members of local governments. If one traces the relatively more liberal atmosphere toward women in Thai society, one can pin down a number of factors including the traditional system and the absence of a strong Confucian culture. Women, the most conspicuous merit makers in Buddhist Southeast Asia, are clearly lay devotees with no access to the most valued religious roles since the ordination tradition for women ended before Buddhism became established in Southeast Asia. But there is still substantial variation possible within the identity of lay devotees to Buddhism.

For Buddhist women, they spend more time than men in practicing Buddhism but they do not have the chance to formally take up Dhamma teachings like men. As religious practitioners, many of them have been very successful and can be leaders in religious practices although they have not gone through the formal system. Female government officials are not allowed to take leave for religious study and practice Buddhism while their male counterparts are able to take leave for three months to enter the monkhood.

+++