Buddhism has evolved in various forms of liberation during its long chequered history, the teachings of the Lord Buddha regarding codes of conduct, guidelines for communal life, rituals, meditative practices, modes of teaching, images, fables and philosophies have varied greatly over time and place. According to the fundamental Buddhist principle of skill-in-means\(^1\), whatever variations are there in the teachings of Lord Buddha are natural and proper. All are necessary responses to the great variety of circumstances in which Buddhism has been propagated. Pure Land Buddhism is the result of such developments.

Pure Land Buddhism is a mainstream of Mahāyāna Buddhism, also one of the most popular schools in the Far East. It is centered on the Buddha Amitābha\(^2\) (Infinite-Light), also known as the Buddha Amitāyus (Infinite-Life), whose double name is shortened to "Amituo" in Chinese, "Amida" in Japanese and "Adida" in Korean and Vietnamese. The set of beliefs and practices surrounding Amitābha and Sukhāvatī has come to be referred to as ‘Pure Land Buddhism’ and in its Chinese sectarian development as the ‘Pure Land School’ (Ching-t’u-tsung) or ‘Pure Land Teaching’ (Ching-t’u-chiao). The ‘Pure Land’ reflects a concept associated with the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva practice of ‘purifying the Buddha Land’ (Budhaksetra-parisuddhi; buddhaksetra-parisodhana; ksetram parisodhayati etc.). ‘Purification’ in this context refers to the spiritual process of leading all beings dwelling within the Bodhisattva’s realm to enlightenment. Pure Land Buddhism is sometimes designated by the term "Amidism".

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\(^1\) Skill-in-means requires that the presentation of the Buddhist Teaching, (Sometimes simply called “the Dhamma”) be adapted to the mentality and circumstances of the people being taught.

\(^2\) Buddha as such is a concept that transcends any particular embodiment, such as Śākyamuni Buddha (the historical Buddha born in India), or Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha), or Vairocana Buddha (the cosmic Buddha) or Amitābha Buddha (the Buddha of the western paradise). Buddha exists in many forms, but all share the same "body of reality," the same Dharmakāya, which is formless, omnipresent, all-pervading, indescribable, infinite--the everywhere-equal essence of all things, the one reality within-and-beyond all appearances.
In Pure Land Buddhist teachings it is believed that Śākyamuni saw people in our time having more afflictions, worries, and wandering thoughts. Our deep-seated bad habits, having become even more entrenched over thousands of lifetimes, make liberating ourselves solely by our own efforts almost impossible. He knew that to end one’s problems and attain lasting happiness many people would need the help of another Buddha: Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light also known as Amitāyus, the Buddha of Infinite Life, who presides over a Buddha-realm known as Sukhāvatī, a realm of rebirth in which all impediments to the attainment of final Enlightenment are nonexistent. This realm or Pure Land (also known as the Realm of Bliss) is the result of the accumulated merit of the Bodhisattva Dharmakāra.

As told in the Sukāvatīvūhasutra, or Sutra of the Land of Bliss (commonly known as the Pure Land Sutra), countless eons ago, a king named Dharmakāra met a Buddha named Lokeśvararāja and renounced the throne to pursue the bodhisattva path, who after witnessing the suffering of sentient beings, spent thousands of millions of years studying all the Buddha lands. Dharmakāra then made forty-eight vows (pranidhana). He declared that he would not attain Buddhahood unless his vows for a perfect Pure Land known as Sukhāvatī, where all beings would advance along the Buddhist path and never again fall back into the cycle of rebirth, were accomplished. Once his vows were accomplished, Dharmakāra Bodhisattva became Amitābha Buddha. He is now teaching the Dharma in his Pure Land and helping all who are truly sincere in their personal vows to be reborn there.

With help from Amitābha, we do not have to rely solely on ourselves to attain enlightenment as we would with other methods. In Pure Land Buddhism, we rely on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to help us. Thus, reliance on self and on another are combined as we request by way of our mindful chanting that Amitābha Buddha, through the strength of his vows, help us to be reborn in the Pure Land as we breath our last breath in our present bodies. Thus the object of Pure Land Buddhism is rebirth into the Realm of Bliss. Pure Land Buddhism rests on the following tripod:

- **Faith.**
• **Aspiration** or the **Vow for Rebirth**.

• **Practice**, single-minded effort aimed at Buddha Remembrance Samādhi, "Buddhanusmrti" in Sanskrit, "Nien-Fo" in Chinese. Buddhanusmrti means "To stay mindful of the Buddha," and has been a central practice of Pure Land Buddhism since its beginnings. Nien-Fo also refers to the recitation of the Buddha's name, among other practices.

Pure Land Buddhism is based on the Pure Land sutras. It is believed that they have first been brought to China as early as 148 CE, when the Parthian monk Ān Shigāo began translating sutras into Chinese in the imperial capital of Luoyang during the Hán dynasty at the White Horse Temple [Báimă Sī]. The Kushan monk Lokakṣema, who arrived in Luoyang two decades after Ān Shigāo, is often attributed with the earliest translations of the core sutras of Pure Land Buddhism. There are primarily three sutras that are regarded as the basic texts of classical Pure Land Buddhism:

- **The Smaller Sukhāvatī Sūtra**, in which Śākyamuni Buddha speaks to his disciple Śāriputra about the Realm of Bliss, giving a concise description of Amitābha's Buddha-realm. This is probably the most recited of the three main Pure Land sutras.

- **The Larger Sukhāvatī Sūtra**, in which Śākyamuni Buddha gives his disciple Ananda a detailed description of the Realm of Bliss. He also recounts the history of the Bodhisattva Dharmakāra and describes the 48 vows in detail.

- **The Visualization Sutra** or *Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching*, which was composed in China. This Sūtra, also regarded as a meditation manual, gives a detailed description of the features of the Pure Land. This includes descriptions of the characteristics of Amitābha Buddha and the attendant Bodhisattvas: Avalokiteśvara, representing engaged compassion, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, representing wisdom. Avalokiteśvara means "Regarder of the Cries of the World," while Mahāsthāmaprāpta means "The One Who Has Attained Great Strength."
With the passage of time many commentaries were composed on these sutras. Besides collections of believers' biographies, Pure Land literature includes other types of works designed to promote faith in the Pure Land teachings.

Contemporary Pure Land traditions see the Buddha Amitābha preaching the Dharma in his Buddha-field (S. Buddhakṣetra), called the "Pure Land" (Ch. Pinyin jìngtū, Jp. jōdo, V. Tịnh độ) or "Western Pureland" (Ch. pinyin xītiān), a region offering respite from karmic transmigration. The Vietnamese also use the term Tây Phương Cực Lạc for "Western Land of Bliss", or more accurately, "Western Paradise". In such traditions, entering the Pure Land is popularly perceived as equivalent to the attainment of enlightenment. After practitioners attain enlightenment in the Pure Land, rather than becoming a Buddha and entering nirvana, they will return to the six realms as bodhisattvas and help deluded beings in samsara. Here it may be added that in esoteric Vajrayāna Buddhism, Amitābha's Western Pure Land (Sukhāvatī) is the counterpart to Akṣobhya's Eastern Pure Land (Abhirati). While especially recognized by the Japanese Shingon sect, Eastern Pure Land Buddhism is less popular than Western Pure Land Buddhism.

While doing the proposed study the following objectives would be kept in mind:

1. To elaborate upon the Concept of Pure Land and to present a coherent picture of the origin and development of the Classical Pure Land Buddhism.
2. To find out the traces of Pure Land Buddhism in classical Buddhist literatures such as Pali (Early Buddhism) and Buddhist Sanskrit (Mahāyāna Buddhism) literatures.
3. To discuss the contents of the basic sutras and their ancillary literatures of Pure Land Buddhism.
4. To discuss and delineate briefly the spread of Pure Land Buddhism in the countries like China, Japan and Vietnam.
5. To discuss the special characteristics of various concepts of Pure Land Buddhism like, the place of Amitābha’s Pure Land in the Universe,
Amitābha’s Pure Land as a world free from all types of sufferings and Amitābha’s Pure Land as secure place to get enlightenment.

6. To analyse the different Philosophical ideas of Pure Land Buddhism such as the Concept of Suffering, the Concept Faith and Wisdom and the Concept of Liberation in Pure Land Buddhism.

7. To discuss the various methods and techniques of Pure Land Buddhist practices which are the basic foundations of Pure Land Buddhism.

8. Lastly an attempt would be made to study the contemporary relevance of Pure Land Buddhism and its role in bringing peace and harmony in society.

The proposed work has been mainly based on the three basic Sūtras of the Pure Land Buddhism as well as literatures available in modern language like English, Chinese and Japanese (only those Japanese works will be consulted whose Chinese or English translations are available) to make the work more comprehensive and authentic.

While carrying out the thesis, sincere effort would be made to follow the various methods of social science research such as analytical, critical, historical and comparative methods.

The proposed thesis has been titled as “An Analytical Study of the Philosophy of Pure Land Buddhism and Its Contemporary Relevance” and will consist of six chapters including an Introduction and the Conclusion. All chapters are summarized as below:

**First chapter** of the thesis briefly deals with the history of the origin and development of the Pure Land Buddhism as well as the introduction to the three main Sūtras of the Pure Land Buddhism just mentioned above.
The Pure Land Buddhism is sometimes designated by the term "Amidism". It originated in India around the second century BCE and continued to grow rapidly. We find ample evidences of Pure Land Teachings in numerous works, both Sūtras and commentaries. From India, the Pure Land Buddhism spread to China by the second century CE where there was a strong presence of the cult of Amitābha. The Pure Land Buddhist cult started to flourish in China from the fourth century CE (402 CE), when the scholar Hui-yuan [慧 袁 (334–416)] laid the foundation of a society of monks and laymen who meditated in the name of Amitābha in a monastery upon the top of Mount Lúshān (廬 山). It spread throughout China quickly and was systematized by a series of elite-monastic thinkers, namely, Tánluán [Ch: 曇 鸞 (476–542)], Daochuo [Ch: 道 綽 (562–645)], Shandao [Ch: 善 導 (613–681)], and other. From there, it spread to Japan around the sixth century CE and slowly grew in prominence.

Hōnen [法 然 (1133-1212)] established the Pure Land Buddhism as an independent sect in Japan, known as Jōdo shū (浄 土 宗 or The Pure Land School). Hōnen’s disciple Shinran [親 鸞 (1173–1262)] is regarded as the founder of the Shin or True sect (also known as Jōdo Shinshū - 浄 土 真 宗 "True Pure Land School").

Based upon such Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures as the Sukhāvativyūha-Sūtras, the Pure Land schools originated in China and later spread in different forms into Japan and other East Asian countries and now to the West. Jodo Shinshu or True Pure Land School founded in the thirteenth century by the Japanese master Shinran, is one of those sects, and most of its followers in the West are Japanese, some of them second-and third-generation immigrants. The central of Jodo Shinghu or Shin Buddhism, is in the existence of the Pure Land of Sukhāvati, a heavenly environment in which one may be reborn and achieve enlightenment. This Pure Land was created eons ago by the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who dedicated the merit of his practice to the creation of this ideal realm for all who sincerely and joyfully entrusted themselves to the Buddha he was to become, namely, Amida, or Amitābha, meaning "Infinite

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Amidism: An English term sometimes used to refer to Japanese Pure Land Buddhism as a whole, as opposed to individual schools such as the Jodo Chu, the Jodo Shinshu, and the Jishu.
Light” Amida is regarded by Shin Buddhists as the source of all love and compassion, and the possibility of achieving rebirth in his Pure Land stems from his power, not that of the individual practitioner. Unlike all the preceding Buddhist traditions discussed here, this school believes that all practice that rely upon one’s own powers—of meditation and so forth—are fruitless.

Outwardly, the central practice of Pure Land Buddhism or Shin Buddhism is the recitation of the name of Amitābha or Nembutsu, pronounced Namu Amida Butsu, meaning "Homage to Buddha Amitābha." This is chanted not as a means to gain rebirth in the Pure Land, but as an expression of joyful gratitude to Amida for having already granted this desire. Psychologically, chanting this phrase is a way of entrusting oneself to Amida, which leads to insight into the Mahāyāna doctrines of interdependence of all things in the universe and the oneness of all sentient beings.

In addition, Pure Land Buddhists or Shin commonly perform specific ritual practices associated with the principal holy days of their Buddhist calendar. Worldwide, followers of various sects of Pure Land Buddhism also express their faith by engaging in altruistic social action, such as charity disaster-relief work, ritual release of captive animals and following a vegetarian diet.

The Pure Land teaching directed its attention to the notion of Karmic (S: Karman; Pali: Kamma; Chinese: “業”) rebirth in another realm of consciousness called the Pure Land (浄土) or “Sukhāvatī”. In the Pure Land Sūtras, it has been described that the presence of the Amitābha Buddha helps all devotees who wish to be “reborn” in his realm which would help being able to make rapid progress, eventually leading to enlightenment instead of living in the world full of suffering. It is also believed that in Pure Land, there is nothing which possesses defilements or delusions. Instead, people who attain rebirth in Pure Land never ever fall back in lower realm such as hell realm, ghost realm or animal realm, etc. Since it largely depends on one’s

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5 Sukhāvatī: Sanskrit term for “Land of Happiness” or “Land of Bliss”. It is the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha or Amida Buddha located in the west.
effort of cultivation and one’s own karma, the decision would hold one short or long of lives in the Pure Land until complete enlightenment.\(^6\)

In the \textbf{Second Chapter} an attempt has been made to discuss the Doctrines and Philosophies of Pure Land Buddhism under various sub-titles. According to the Pure Land texts and \textit{Amitābha}’s original vows, the Buddha who established the Land of Bliss have been all fully described in the \textit{Sukhāvatī} texts excellently. As pointed out in the texts, here we have known that; “His vow is to establish the Land of Bliss for the sake of all beings. An ideal land with adornments, ideal plants, ideal lakes or what not is all for receiving pious aspirants.”\(^7\) However, whatever successive stages of the universe there is neither ‘bodily pain (Kāyaduḥkham) nor mental pain (Cittaduḥkham)’ for living beings.

As it appears in the \textit{Sukhāvatī} texts the sources of happiness are innumerable. It has been stated that “Buddha-country is level on every side, lovely like the palm of the hand, with districts full of jewels and treasures of every kind. Nowhere there is any kind of mountain, nor fire, sun, moon, planets, \textit{naksatras} and stars or of building darkness. Earth in the \textit{Sukhavati} is lovely and of golden color. Ground here is constituted of lapis lazuli transforming and shining both within and without. There are seven terraces, seven rows of palm trees and seven strings of bells, in this \textit{Sukhāvatī} world where sweet and enrapturing sounds proceed from the trees and the bells when moved by the wind causing reflections of the \textit{Buddha} (\textit{Buddhānusmṛti}), the Law (\textit{Dharmānusmṛti}) and the order (\textit{Saṅghānusmṛti}) in the minds of the listeners.”

Furthermore, \textit{Sukhāvatī} is described as adorned with lotus-lakes, themselves embellished with seven gems, water, possessed of eight good qualities, golden sand, four stairs on four sides, beautiful and brilliant with four gems, gem trees on every side and lotus-flowers. These lotus-flowers of blue, yellow, red and white colour are sometimes described to be as large as the wheel of a chariot, sometimes as of twelve


\(^7\) Junirō Takakusu., \textit{The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy}, (Ed.) Wing-Tsit Chan & Charles A. Moore, University of Hawai, Honolulu (First Ed), 1947, Motilal Bararsidass, Delhi (Rep), 1975, P. 181.
It is apparent from the above description that all the immeasurable good qualities and excellences exist in the Buddha-country only. Especially, among the Sukhāvatī texts, namely, the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra and the two Sukhāvatīvyuha Sūtras go on to describe that “Here one finds jeweled trees, beautiful pavilions, perfumed breezes, and magical, dharma-playing musical instruments. But there are also five gates, each of which is associated with one of the five standard mandallic Buddhas.”

They further describe that; “There are trees made of seven gems, masses of kadalī trees and rows of nets entirely surrounding the area. Also it is said that four gems enclose every side of the paradise and make it beautiful and brilliant.”

Moreover, it is also stated that “the world system of Amitābha Buddha is prosperous, rich, peaceful, bountiful, lovely, and teeming with gods and humans. But, especially, in that world there are neither hells nor existence as animals, nor a realm of hungry ghosts, nor the hosts of the asuras, nor births into unfavorable circumstances, and fragrant scents by the various flowers and fruits, adorned with jewel trees and inhabited with various sweet-voiced birds miraculously… (L. Sukh. V. § 52-53).”

Further, “the jewel trees with various colors in numerous colors, i.e., the jewel trees make in golden color, silver color, emerald color, crystal color, mother of pearl color, red pearl color, and sapphire color...all that trees have flowers, leaves, branches, limbs, trunks, and roots made by silver only, but fruits made by crystal. The trees make by crystal, then fruits made by mother-of-pearl. The trees made by mother-of-pearl, then fruits made by the sapphire. And the trees made by sapphire, then fruits made by gold...However, there are only made by jewel, gem, silver, sapphire, mother-

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of-pearl, emerald for all the various of trees, roots, trunks, limbs, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits, etc.,

Therefore, on that world, one can enjoy interesting by the wind, a sweet and pleasing sound, with encircled by the rows of many kinds of trees and screened by golden nets in everywhere, then they never grows tired and never unpleasant to the ear (L. Sukh. V. Parag. § 54-55-56-57-58-59).”

Furthermore, “in the Land of Bliss one can find many kinds of Mountains, or great oceans, or flow rivers, etc, bringing various sweet-smelling perfumed waters, musical instrument with the tuned in harmony, lovely, sweetly, with heavenly voices to realize the words of ‘impermanent, dukkha (suffering), selfless, and calm…’ therefore beings in that Land are endowed with all enjoyments and pleasures, exactly like the Paranirmitavaśavartīn gods (L. Sukh. V. Parag. § 61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70).”

In this way, some characteristics of the world system of Amitābha can be traced from the Dharma is extremely profound that have ever attained by a wonderful expedient device for the practitioners and hearers easies to get enlightenment in stated such as “Ānanda, there are many precious trees in that Tathāgata’s land: gold trees, silver trees, lapis lazuli trees, crystal trees, red pearl trees, agate trees, and jade trees…Moreover, because he sees the Bodhi-tree, he will acquire three kinds of realization. What are the three? First, the realization derived from sound; second, the realization of pliancy; third, the realization of the non-arising of Dharmas. All this is possible because Amitāyus Buddha has vested [in the Bodhi-tree] the divine power of his original vows….“ However, as stated above, the scene in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha by with some things are adorned up to seven treasures to represent the wonderful and innumerable meanings of instance as a secure place for the hearers and practitioners enter into the Buddha-hood, a stage of enlightenment.

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12 Ibid., pp. 84-85.
13 Ibid., pp. 85-86-87-88.
The third chapter has pointed out the ways for practice and its relevances in Pure Land Buddhism. In order to benefit all living beings, right after the enlightenment, the Śākyamuni Buddha saw people having more afflictions, worries, and wandering thoughts. Due to our deep-seated bad habits, which tend to become even more entrenched over thousands of lifetimes, it becomes impossible to liberate ourselves solely by our own efforts. The Buddha knew that to end one’s problems and attain lasting happiness, many people would need the help of other's power such as Amitābha Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life, so on and so forth.

There are three essential conditions for practitioner, who wants to fulfill their wish to reborn in pure and peaceful place in the Buddha’s land so they must base themselves on these three categories mentioned below without missing anyone:

1. The meaning of Faith
2. The meaning of Vows
3. The meaning of Practice

The above three essential conditions for rebirth which are called the three factors or elements are the corner-stones of Pure Land Buddhism. They are also counted as the assets and credits necessary for the rebirth in Pure Land.

So, the three essential conditions for rebirth are very important principles for the practitioners; and they are the three prerequisites of the Pure Land Dharma-door. For this reason, the practitioner, one who wishes to go to the Land of Ultimate Bliss depends upon the three essential conditions of Faith, Vows and the method of practice along with the recitation of the Buddha’s name. Their importance has been rightly discussed in the book The Buddha Speaks of Amitābha Sūtra by Venerable Master HsuanHua state that; “One who goes on a journey takes along some food and a little money”\(^\text{15}\). Therefore, the method of recitation of the name of the Buddha requires

strong determination as well as, faith, vow, and practice. In this connection, the practitioners must understand that; without a vow equals no faith, vow without action equals no vow, action without resolve equals no action: it also indicates that the vow is not sincere. An insincere vow means lack of true faith. A sincere vow reveals true faith and vice versa. Whenever the vow is sincere, the action is vigorous and diligent.

For all the practitioners of Pure Land Buddhism, they should establish vows. Making vows to attain rebirth in the Pure Land signifies a fundamental reorientation of the practitioner’s motivation and will. Vows are the determination to be reborn in the Pure Land in the practitioner’s pure mind. Therefore, vows are the source of power for maintaining the faith more firmly. Only faith without vows, the followers of Pure Land Buddhism in particular and the Buddhists in general cannot attain complete Enlightenment.

**Fourth Chapter** has widely discussed the significance of the nine grades of rebirth focused on the two famous Pure Land Patriarchs in the modern time. These are *Hui-Yuan* (慧遠) and *Shan-Tao* (善導) who contributed to the ranking of the nine grades of rebirth for the foreordained social status on the basis of occupation and *karma* of the practitioners. Thus, the ranking of the nine grades of *Hui-Yuan* can be delineated as follows.\(^{16}\)

1. Highest of high *Mahāyāna* Fourth *Bhūmi* and above.
2. Middle of high *Mahāyāna* First three *Bhūmi*-s.
3. Lowest of high *Mahāyāna* Practice of Resolution and Lineage stages.
4. Highest of middle *Hīnayāna* People of the initial three [Āryapudgala] stages (Stream-winner, Once-returner, Non-returner).
5. Middle of middle *Hīnayāna* Inner and Outer *Prthagjana* prior to Path of Insight.

\(^{16}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83. Also see: T 1749.37.182a12-c22.
6. Lowest of middle  Hīnayāna  Worldly Prthagjana-s prior to Path of Insight.
7. Highest of low  Mahāyāna  Outer Prthagjana-s those who have begun to Train in the Mahāyāna path. They are not even in the Path ranking.
8. Middle of low  Mahāyāna  Outer Prthagjana-s those who have begun to Train in the Mahayana path. They are not even in the Path ranking.
9. Lowest of low  Mahāyāna  Outer Prthagjana-s those who have begun to train in the Mahāyāna path. They are not even in the Path ranking.

Similarly, Shan-tao’s ranking can be summed up as follows:¹⁷

1. Highest of high  Mahāyāna  [Prthagjana-s] of utmost virtue
2. Middle of high  Mahāyāna Mahāyāna Prthagjana-s
3. Lowest of high  Mahāyāna  [Prthagjana-s] who generate the Mahāyāna mind
4. Highest of middle  Hīnayāna Prthagjana-s who observe Hīnayāna precepts
5. Middle of middle  Hīnayāna Prthagjana-s without virtues
6. Lowest of middle  Hīnayāna  [Prthagjana-s] who have not encountered the Buddha Dharma [prior to their deathbed]
7. Highest of low  Mahāyāna  Prthagjana-s who require the help of a teacher

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 83. Also see: T 1753.37.248b7-250a8.
8. Middle of low Mahāyāna [Prthapajana-s] who cannot maintain [precepts]
9. Lowest of low Mahāyāna [Prthagjana-s] who commit such evil acts as the

Five Grave Transgressions and the Ten Evils

In the light of the above mentioned classifications, it is clearly understandable that the rank of Hui-Yuan has assigned higher position. On the other hand, Shan-Tao’s ranking of the highest of the high grade is at par with or even lower than Hui-Yuan’s lowest of the low. However, neither is disputed in this case. Further, in the discussions on between Hui-Yuan and Shan-Tao, it has been stated: “Hui-yuan explicitly assigns the nine grades as objects of visualization that directly inspire the devotees engaged in the visualizations towards higher ranks of rebirth in the Pure Land. Shan-tao, in contrast, treated the nine grades not as objects of visualization but as descriptive statements of the nature and capability of the devotees, with Vaidehī as an example of such a devotee”.18

Fifth chapter mainly focuses on the status of women in the Pure Land Buddhism. The recent developments in science and technology have affected all walks of life throughout the world. It has changed the world view of the people. The position accorded to women in traditional societies has been also changed drastically in all spheres of activity whether it be social, religious, economic or political. Such developments have led us to ponder over the status accorded to women in the main religious traditions of the world. It is evident from the perusal of religious scriptures of different faiths that almost all of them depict women as a temptress and harbinger of all sorts of miseries in this mundane world.

So far as the history of women in Buddhism is concerned one can find several passages in numerous Sūtras (early or later) which are clearly andocentric and deny their equal status in the clergy (Saṅgha). Many scholars have suggested that such elements were inserted into the texts later, while others argue that, the discrimination

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18 Ibid., pp. 84-85.
against women in Buddhism has its roots in Vedic society and is symptomatic of the patriarchal structure of human society since that time. The Buddha may seem misogynistic to us today, his attitude was liberal for the 6th - 5th century B.C.E.$^{19}$

Whatever are the reasons, throughout the history of development or evolution of Buddhism, we do encounter misogynist and protagonist attitudes counter-influencing each other. However, it is a fact that women were part and parcel of Buddhism and were involved in each and every activity almost from the very beginning, whether it is the role of nuns, or of sponsors and supporters of the Saṅgha of ordained practitioners.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to examine the status of women in the Pure Land Buddhism. The discussion includes the following three points:

- **The position of women in society at the time of the Buddha,**
- **The Lord Buddha's attitude towards women - A misogynist or A protagonist of women's cause as reflected in the Pāli literature and**
- **The status of women in the Pure Land Buddhism.**

**Sixth Chapter** is the last chapter captioned as "Conclusion" It presents the summary of all chapters of the thesis. Besides, it also mentions the contemporary relevance of Pure Land Buddhism.

The work is mainly based on the three basic Sūtras of the Pure Land Buddhism as well as literatures available in modern language like English, Chinese and Japanese (only those Japanese works will be consulted whose Chinese or English translations are available) to make the work more comprehensive and authentic.

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$^{19}$ *An Argument against Gender Discrimination within the Buddhist Sangha*, Anthony Burns, International Buddhist College, Thailand.