CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

This chapter, the conclusion of the thesis is stated as followings:

5.1 What are the problems of women in present world?

5.2 Why the women in present world have problems?

i) Are they related with their ignorance about themselves?

ii) How they are caused by Trṣṇā?

iii) Are they related with women’s ignorance about the society and the society’s ignorance about women?

5.3 How such problems will be solved?

i) Self-realization of women.

ii) Removal of society’s ignorance about women.

5.1 What are the problems of women in the present world?

The problems that women face in the twenty-first century are those which are related to their lack of awareness of their own identity. Though some advances have been registered in certain areas, the basic problems have remained the same. The problems that women face even in the present times are i) gender discrimination ii) domestic violence, iii) attitudinal bias that leads to the acceptance of the subordination of status, iv) prejudiced action that gives a free hand to male dominance, v) the total ignorance of the self and vi) the perennial lack of power. Basically, the psychological perspectives of biased attitudes and prejudices lead to the negative actions such as
discrimination, violence, subordination and powerlessness. What is necessary is to bring about a change in thinking. It is said that either tragedy or a comedy does not exist in itself but it is our thinking that makes it so. Similarly, it is our thinking that can turn the negatives into positives. Women suffer on account of the ignorance of the self and so it becomes inevitable that such ignorance needs to be removed.

The removal of ignorance is like the removal of a veil and the removal of psychological barrier to the knowledge of the self and the social conditions. The problems of the present world have their roots in the past and most of the influences that led to the subordination of women still continue make their impact. These anomalies need to be done away with so that the positive effects may be attained from the present-day problems that women are subjected to face.

Gender discrimination is the problem that is still in existence in the present-day world. It is quite clear from the fact that the number of seats reserved in a bus or in a train is not proportionate but far inadequate to the number of female travellers. There is still the prevalence of gender discrimination in respect of the prize money that is awarded to players – male players getting much more than what the female players are expected to receive. Serving and cooking food is still considered to be the work of women. Most of the advertisements still carry a woman’s snap considering them to be safe bait to be tempted for making purchases. These illustrations show that woman is deliberately treated with discrimination. A lower status is accorded to her. She is addressed as the fair sex, a weaker set and an inferior person. Gender discrimination is still a reality and an unjust practice that illustrates the unequal position that is accorded to women in general in almost all the countries of the world even in the present times.

Domestic violence is the problem of the present-day world which is on the rise constantly. Domestic violence has shot up all over the world. Eve-teasing has become rampant. Pinching and other physical acts of harassing women in the public have increased tremendously. Rapes and other acts of cruelty have gone up and are continuously increasing. Crimes in vowing the domestic violence to women have multiplied. The husband or the in-laws are found to be guilty of harassment to women.
Abusing, taunting, touching, displaying obscenities, physical assault, torture and cruelty have been recorded to be growing day by day. There are laws against such domestic violence in almost of the countries. The letter of the law is not yet translated into the spirit of the law. Provisions are made on the paper but reality is far from these provisions. Domestic violence has become the most menacing of the present-day problems women are forced to face.

Biased attitude is the third current problem that women face on account of the wrong psychological perspective. Even in the present times, human experience is mainly regarded as a masculine or male experience. The vision of the world is still the biased and distorted male-dominated world view. The female is still denied an equal status. Women are still forced to lead a mute and stifled existence. Equal civil and economic right and equal opportunities for developing the moral and intellectual potentialities and qualities are still a far cry. The problems of the women in the present times are her identity, her equality, her independence, her economic freedom, her cultural affiliation and her political authority. In the present times, women are still fighting for their identity as an individual. The women as weaker and inferior are mainly the ground for such a situation. The overall attitude appears to be somewhat ambivalent and still somewhat contradictory even in the twenty-first century. Without strong will, without effective implement action, without solid commitment to the right and might of women this situation will not change. Biased attitude can only be changed through true knowledge.

Prejudices lead to actions which have caused problems for women in the present times. These prejudices are mainly about the role and status of women. It is a prejudiced view that the only suitable role for a woman is that of a housewife within the four walls of the house. It was a prejudice that was entertained for centuries that a woman’s place is in ‘A Doll’s House’ and not beyond that. The role that has been traditionally assigned to a woman and the present times have not changed that perception is that of a housewife. The role of a housewife is the tragic acceptance of the helplessness of her sex in general and her own unavoidable dependence on her husband. In the present socio-cultural set-up, women feel deeply frustrated by their restricted and
 regimented lives as housewives. The free growth of the feminine self has been obstructed by the lack of privacy, the physical burden and the drabness of a monotonous family life. These circumstances prevail today even in the twenty-first century. Therefore every mother today is compelled to tell her daughter not to become simply a housewife but to fulfill and assert herself as a woman in a full-fledged manner. Prejudices are psychologically conditioned. This psychological conditioning needs to be changed forthwith. Prejudices thwart the vision, restrict the perspective and blind the path to be pursued. Prejudices are like jaundice that colours the vision negatively. This psychological drawback can be removed with real knowledge about women, their role and their status in the social set-up

Ignorance is the major problem that has caused today’s women’s problems. This ignorance is the ignorance of herself, the women’s ignorance of the society and the society’s ignorance of women. The problem of women’s identity is the outcome of her ignorance of herself and of the society around her. Ignorance is the cause of today’s woman’s problems. The problem of identity is related to the inevitability of human existence in the face of the totally menacing environment which is frighteningly brutal and callous. In the present times, there is an ambivalence about the identity of woman. Is woman only a passive shadow of the dominant male figure? What is the core of her personality? Is she a housewife? Is she a career woman? The present-day woman is hesitant, is uncertainly propping, is stumbling, and is not sure of her own self. If she becomes fully independent in her economic status would that add more to her already heavy burden? Her constant demand is the status of equality. The awakening of woman’s consciousness is needed for this. The prompting device that pushes individuals forward to possess whatever they desire is an incessant desire - \( Tṛṣṇā \). This becomes the ground for the material and physical desires that have involved individuals in the web of circumstances. The material desires make an individual; whether male or female, neglect the search for identity. The ignorance about herself and her \( Tṛṣṇā \) – desire for the material pleasures become the ground for the increasing problems for women of the present times. It is therefore unavoidable to remove the veil of ignorance at all costs so that the present-day problems of women would be solved.
The lack of power is the sixth problem of the women in the present-day world. The solution is empowerment of women. Empowerment of woman means the self-realization of woman and her active participation in decision-making, in her social and personal life. Theoretically, it is possible to think that woman can realize herself and can play a significant role in making personal and social life meaningful. At the practical level, empowerment is not only related to her abilities and capacities but also to the customs, traditions and religious practices. These either provide or restrict the space for woman to bloom. These are the decisive factors which decide whether a woman can participate in social activities beyond the four walls of her domestic fire. These factors neither allow her to participate in decision-making nor do allow her to play an important role in her social life. This is due to the lack of power. This lack of power is caused by her ignorance of herself and the society around her. Knowledge is power and ignorance therefore is lack of power. The solution is empowerment. It is noticed that theoretically, empowerment is possible but not practically. Why is there a gap between theory and practice? How to bridge the gap between empowerment of the woman at theoretical level and empowerment of the woman at practical level?

5.2 Why the women in present world have problems?

The six problems of women in the present-day world are gender discrimination, domestic violence, biased attitude, prejudices, ignorance and lack of power of these the psychological factors like biases and prejudices lead to the result actions like discrimination and violence. The psychological factors cause the basic grounds like ignorance and lack of power. It is appropriate and relevant to find out the nature of ignorance and lack of empowerment in order to discover the key to the solution of these ground realities of the current problems of today’s women. The fundamental questions that are posed are: Are the problems of women in the present-day world related to the ignorance of women about themselves? Are the problems caused by Ātman? Are these problems of woman in the present-day world related to the women’s ignorance about
the society? Are these problems related to the society’s ignorance about women in the present-day world? Buddhist philosophy helps us to answer these questions.

1) Are they related with their ignorance about them themselves?

In Buddhism, there are two āvaraṇa or perspectives, namely, Kleśāvaraṇa and Jñeyāvaraṇa of these, Kleśāvaraṇa is that sort of perspective which is related to the individual’s knowledge about herself and Jñeyāvaraṇa is that sort of perspective which is related to the individual’s knowledge about the external world on one hand and to the external world’s knowledge about the individual on the other hand. There is a gap between theoretical and practical aspects of empowerment due to Kleśāvaraṇa and Jñeyāvaraṇa. If Kleśāvaraṇa and Jñeyāvaraṇa are removed, the gap between the two aspects of empowerment will be removed. Then a woman can enjoy her empowerment in the true sense of the term. The nature of empowerment, nature of Kleśāvaraṇa and of Jñeyāvaraṇa and their relation with the knowledge of the individual and with the knowledge of the external world, the creation of the gap and its removal will be discussed.

Empowerment of woman is widely and specially used with reference to woman’s holistic empowerment. Holistic development means her social, cultural, economic, political, mental and spiritual development. Empowerment means women’s realization of her own capacities and power so that she can face challenges and overcome social and cultural barriers. It builds a positive image about herself. It creates enough confidence in her so that she takes an active part in decision-making related to herself and her family. However, empowerment does not mean something that is external to her but it has to be excavated by her. Theoretical and practical aspects of women’s empowerment are important and necessary. Even if society is interested in providing woman with the opportunities to explore her capacities in her personal and social life, if it does not have a proper theoretical background, it is not possible to make the use of such opportunities. Similarly, even if there is an ideal theory of
empowerment but society is not ready to actualize it then such a theory will become useless. Therefore, without theory, practice is useless and without practice, theory is empty.

The concept of Kleśāvaraṇa can be used to understand the nature of wrong understanding of woman about herself. Like any other human being, a woman is also composed of five elements. She has good and bad qualities. Besides these, she does not have built-in qualities of being a mother, a sister or a wife into herself. She is not born with these qualities. While living in the social, some roles are ascribed to her. However, due to the wrong understanding about herself, Kleśāvaraṇa, she thinks that all these are her characteristics and they are built into her. Accordingly, she tries to behave within the framework of that role. This sort of behavior gives her pleasure, she loves these roles and therefore she becomes proud of them.

Jñeyāvaraṇa is that kind of ignorance which is caused by wrong understanding of the nature of an object and its relation to the knower. The ignorance and wrong perspective about the nature of an object gives rise to the duality of knower and the known. It is generally accepted that whatever exists in the external world is the object of knowledge and what an individual experiences exists in the external world. The wrong understanding about herself and her roles in the social life is Kleśāvaraṇa, and the wrong understanding about the nature of the object to be known is Jñeyāvaraṇa. The Buddhist perspective shows that to solve the woman’s problem, it is enough to make a change in the social structure but it is also necessary to remove the Kleśāvaraṇa of the woman and the Jñeyāvaraṇa of the society.

Though woman has the capabilities to be an individual due to the first sort of epistemic relation, that is, Kleśāvaraṇa and due to the conservative members of the society, she cannot do it. Similarly due to the second sort of epistemic relation, that is, Jñeyāvaraṇa, though society offers the opportunities to woman for her progress but due to the impact of enculturation and socialization her mind becomes so dual and conservative that she is not ready to take advantage of these opportunities. These two
sorts of epistemic relations act as obstacles in her understanding of herself and her understanding of the objects in general.

It is therefore necessary to remove the obstacles of the veils of ignorance. It is already noted that women’s problems today are discrimination, violence, bias, prejudice, ignorance and powerlessness which lead to the problems of identity, of equality, of independence and problems of economic freedom, cultural assertion and political power. Women suffer in the present times on account of the ignorance possessed by them. This ignorance is the ignorance of the self - \( \text{Kleśāvaraṇa} \) and ignorance about the society around - \( \text{Jñeyāvaraṇa} \). Women will have to remove these two veils of ignorance, stumbling blocks in the path of real knowledge, in order to find real and effective solutions to their present-day problems.

\[ \text{ii) How they are caused by } \text{Trṣṇā} ? \]

The questions that were raised can be answered: The problems of women in the present-day world are related to the ignorance of women about themselves as clear from both \( \text{Kleśāvaraṇa} \) and \( \text{Jñeyāvaraṇa} \). It is also noticed that these problems are caused by \( \text{Trṣṇā} \). These problems of women in the present-day are related to women’s ignorance about the society. These problems are also related to the society’s ignorance about women in the present-day world.

In other words, the first cause of the present-day women’s problems is the ignorance of women about themselves. The problems of identity are caused by this ignorance. Women are incessantly demanding equality as inequality is another problem for them. The incessant demand or \( \text{Trṣṇā} \) is the ground for the material and physical desires which have involved individuals in the web of the circumstances in the contemporary age. The women’s ignorance about the society and the society’s ignorance about women is the second cause of the problems for women in the present times. The women’s ignorance about the society in which they are required to exist and
in which they have to pass through the various stages of life as a member of society is the cause of their problems. In the social world, the different systems of the social fabric such as the marriage system, the family bonds, the social fabric, the political framework, the economic grid and the cultural network are functioning. A woman has to go through different roles such as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a housewife, a social unit, a political voter, an economic consumer and a cultural representative.

In order to play these roles successfully and efficiently, it is essential to know what the roles mean, how to enact the roles, what purposes and functions are required to be fulfilled. In such a context, the roles need to be defined systematically and then to translate them into reality is a delicate exercise that requires knowledge, skills and tact. Without getting familiar with these aspects, a woman remains ignorant of the society in which she lives. The society in which she lives is equally ignorant about the woman. Religious faith, agrarian civilization and well-knit human relationships kept the parts cemented, fused and connected. The industrialization, the information explosion, the politicization of life and the overall predominance of economic forces have made both personal and social life disintegrated, disjointed, tattered and lost. Two types of ignorance – women’s ignorance of themselves - Kleśāvaraṇa and women’s ignorance of the society around and the society’s ignorance of women – Jīneyāvaraṇa – are the first two causes of the women’s problems in the present-day world.

iii) Are they related with women’s ignorance about the society and the society’s ignorance about women?

Ignorance leads to lack of power. Without power, there is no empowerment. In Buddhism, women are considered for both spiritual empowerment and religious empowerment. In Buddhist period, a woman was not just an accompaniment but an absolute performer of all the religious rites. She was eligible and free to perform all rites on her own. The moral values like truth, non-violence, generosity, honesty and good conduct have been imbibed on women through the aspects of spirituality of
attitude and religious faith. Honesty, sincerity and devotion as the part and parcel of ideal moral conduct were practiced by women in order to be morally empowered. The spiritual, religious and moral empowerments of women need to be considered as a single unit of religious life: Dhamma. In Buddhist perspectives, both Dhamma (religion) and Sila (moral character) were inseparable as the main doctrine of Buddhism advocated the triple surrender to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha (the Enlightened One, the Religion and the Order). Equality, justice, impartiality and fairness enjoined the social empowerment. The legal empowerment is the result of social empowerment that enabled women to improve their status and life-style. Economic empowerment empowered women to participate in all the professional tasks and household management actively, vigorously and productively without any hindrance. Political empowerment enabled women to act as counselors to mould the political affairs and influence the political decisions. This shows that empowerment is the exercise of power and it is attained through the knowledge of all-sided transactions of life in the social world. Ignorance of two types deprived women of power and they experienced lack of power.

Knowledge is power and ignorance is lack of power. The two types of ignorance: ignorance of self - Kleśāvaraṇa and Jñeyāvaraṇa – ignorance of surrounding – thus lead to the lack of power. The third cause of women’s problems in the present-day world is this lack of power. Thus the three causes of women’s problems at present are ignorance of the self, ignorance of the society around and the society’s ignorance about women and lack of power. After realizing what the causes are for women’s problems at present, it is desirable to find out the solutions to change these circumstances.

5.3 How such problems will be solved?

The solution to the problems of women in the present-day world is i) the removal of ignorance and ii) empowerment of women in the contemporary time. The
removal of ignorance involves two types of ignorance; women’s ignorance about they themselves and women’s ignorance about the society around and the society’s ignorance about the women.

i) Self-realization of women

Removal of the two types of ignorance – ignorance of the self and ignorance of the society and the society’s ignorance about the woman is the solution to the problems women face in the present times. The solution lies in the self-realization of the women themselves and the realization of the society around by women and the society’s realization of women’s problems. Women’s problems today are problems of identity of equality of independence and problems of economic independence, cultural assertion, and political power. Women suffer in the present times on account of the ignorance possessed by them. Their ignorance is of two types. It is firstly the ignorance of the self and secondly it is the ignorance about the society around. Women will have to remove the veils of ignorance in order to find real solutions to their present-day problems. The ignorance about the self is something that has kept hidden the real potentials of women. Women now drive, navigate planes and ships, work as missile director and cosmonauts but until recently due to their ignorance of their own self, these areas were considered for women. The covering of ignorance is like the dust that makes the brilliance of a diamond dim. The discovery of her own self will enable a woman to scale unprecedented heights and glorious achievements as attained by Sunita Williams. Self-realization will lead women to empowerment. The moral strength, the intellectual sharpness, the cultural aesthetics and the combination of loving care and duty-bound rigidity are the treasured possessions that women have the utmost utilization of these treasure is necessary for the fullest development of their capabilities.

Self-realization means the removal of ignorance of the self. The true potential, the true ability, the real strength physical, mental and spiritual – will come out shining provided the self is realized and ignorance is removed. Even in the present times the attitudes of women towards women themselves are ambivalent due to this ignorance of
the self. It is necessary for women to redefine their roles in the family and in the society. The age-old custody conventions of traditional pattern of life tied women to the fire-place and the cradle. Reproduction is a necessary function but that need not put the shackles of domestic servitude on women. The removal of the covering of the ignorance of self will enable women to redefine their roles in accordance with the present-day realities. The light of knowledge will remove the darkness of ignorance. New defined roles as a daughter, as a girl child, a full grown young woman, a mature woman and a senior citizen. The subordination of women in the family system and the marriage system should be stopped. The same would stop if a woman is seen to have realised herself and has become enlightened of her roles in personal and social life. This will enable her to go through the stages of her life efficiently from babyhood to womanhood and from maturity to ripened senior citizenship. The first solution to present-day women’s problems lies in the removal of ignorance of the self which leads to the realization of the self. Know thyself well is what needs to be emphasized in respect of the overall development of all the potentials of an individual, irrespective of gender. To know is to become powerful and empowerment of women is the second solution to the present-day problems of women.

**ii) Removal of society’s ignorance about women**

The removal of society’s ignorance about women and women’s ignorance of the society is a part of the removal of two types of ignorance - *Kleśāvaraṇa* and *Jñeyāvaraṇa*. The removal of the ignorance of the self, the women’s ignorance of the society and the society’s ignorance of the woman is the first solution that leads to the second solution of empowerment of women. The society in general is ignorant of the nature status and the spirit of womanhood in general. The two institutional systems of the society namely the family system and the marriage system have assigned specific roles to women which have designated them to the subordinate position in the family. In marriage bonds too the woman was relegated to the secondary position. The ideal of womanhood was an obedient, passive, chaste and hard-working woman. The social
institutions encouraged the dominance over woman by her husband or her in-laws. The social institutions determined the nature of roles that a woman was required to perform. The social code a woman was required to follow totally and to put in practice was something based on the orthodox conventions. These codes – social and moral – have become outdated and are unjust to women. These codes desire to bind women to the chains of a service existence. There is an urgent need to change these norms which are outdated and which are unjust. The new norms will have to assign equality of status, freedom both in economic and political spheres and an authoritative status to women.

In order to change the norms and reform the social institutions, it is essential to remove the ignorance of the society towards women. Biased attitudes prejudices views and actions and wrong judgment towards the nature of women have produced such ignorance in the society about women. Traditionally, a woman was supposed to be weaker individual. She was called a member of the fair sex. She was considered a better half of a married person. As an individual, the full stature of her personality was not properly grasped by the conventional social codes that the society adopted to treat women. This wrong and biased view is the result of the society’s ignorance of woman. It is necessary that the society changes its perspectives towards women. For this, fair vision, balanced attitude, impartial judgment and enlightened thinking are needed. The twenty-first century cannot afford to neglect this vast strength of womanhood through its unfair treatment to women. For the first time in the history of the world, Buddhism has shown the fair impartiality of not discriminating between the genders. Far-sighted vision and the compassionate wisdom are displayed in the teachings of the Buddha. This will enable women to remove their ignorance about the society around them and also the society’s ignorance about the women. The two types of ignorance, if removed, will enable women to view the world fairly, justly and rationally/ the problems of women in the present-day world will be solved through the first solution of the removal of the two types of ignorance – the ignorance of the women about themselves - Kleśāvaraṇa and the women’s ignorance of the society around them and the society’s ignorance about women – Jñeyāvaraṇa. Removal of ignorance will definitely lead to the enkindling of the light of knowledge.
Empowerment is solution to the problems of women in the present-day world. The concept of empowerment in the sense it is used at present was not known in the Buddhist period, although Buddhism brought equality and liberality in various aspects of empowerment. The spiritual, religious and ethical empowerment of women in the days of Buddhism enhanced the status of women to the levels of equality and of highest status and fairest opportunities of honorable progress. The social empowerment and legal empowerment entrusted women to the fair dealings in the social transactions and legal affairs. Economic freedom and political liberty was enjoyed by them. In the Buddhist period the levels of these empowerments were considerably high. The Buddhist period is remarkable in respect of women’s empowerment on account of clear vision of life as it is and as it ought to be in the compassionate prospective of Buddhism. Empowerment in the current sense means giving more control over their own life or the situation they are in. It is illustrated through a sentence likes: the women’s liberation movement actively empowered women and gave them confidence in themselves. The concept of empowerment is a modern concept that relevant in the twenty-first century, the present study deals with the empowerment of women during Buddhism – the period that spans between 500 B.C to 1000 A.D. – a period of approximately fifteen hundred years. The periods before this period and later this period are marked by the lack of power for women. The Buddhist religious and literary texts provide an ample evidence of empowerment of women in all the aspects of empowerment in those days. The lack of power is the cause of the problems of women in the present-day world.

The ideology of Buddhism in the ancient times and the ideal concept of empowerment of the contemporary times are combined to blend both the ancient and modern ideologies. Buddhism was the first ideology to make women empowered throughout the long span of the history of mankind of many millennia. All types of empowerment – social, political, economic, cultural, legal, ethical, religious, and even spiritual – were allotted to women by the compassionate and the Enlightened Buddha. He brought light in the darkness of ignorance of two types. The light of knowledge removed all forms of ignorance. The same cycle needs to be repeated now through the
knowledge – self-realization, realization of the social world and the society’s realization of the lot of women. Empowering will do away with the cause of women’s present-day problems – lack of power. Lack of knowledge that is ignorance causes lack of power. Empowering is the solution to remove lack of power. Empowering women is empowering the entire humanity. The hand that rocks the cradle to make the baby sleep soundly is capable of rocking the nation to peace and prosperity. The hand that cooks uses the fire creatively, constructively and positively. The second solution to the present-day problems of women is empowerment as the same destroys the lack of power. Both the solutions removal of ignorance and empowerment cause the enlightenment, the dawn of knowledge. The positive forces of knowledge and power destroy the negative forces of ignorance and powerlessness. Making women empowered is to stimulate the positive forces of knowledge of truth, goodness and beauty as the torches of human life in general and the life of women in particular. The forces of purity, sanctity, sincerity and maturity are strengthened through the empowerment of women.

Buddhism about twenty-five centuries ago inculcated the values of equality, justice and moral strength and spiritual energy by making woman empowered. The concept of women’s empowerment has gained more and more significance in the present times. The present study about women’s empowerment in the Buddhist period carries a contemporary significance. It offers the right path to remove ignorance and powerlessness among women. The right path is that of empowerment. Empowerment brings enlightenment. Enlightenment in the individual – both female and male – and social life enables humanity as a whole to tread the path of righteousness, truth, peace, progress, prosperity and justice. Empowerment of women mean empowerment of the entire mankind as in the present times, women are at the center of the world inside home and also hold the nucleus of the world outside home. Women have become the centre that holds all the parts together and does not allow any disintegration to happen. The ceremony of innocence is celebrated by women, the flag of fair dealing is held by women, the march of non-violence is continued by women and therefore women have become the path finders of latest advances and record-breaking performance. Women
have really proved themselves to be the solace for all the ills, all the pains, all the sorrows, all the sufferings and all the woes of men. In the woman lies the womb of progress, in her lies the cradle of prosperity, in her lies the hearth of peace and in her lies the throne of saintliness and she holds the key to happiness all over the world, peace in all the continents, brotherhood among all races and religious and woman will certainly in her reign of empowerment bring on this planet the Kingdom of Heaven.