Siddhattha Gotama who was the Buddha in future was born during sixth century B.C. in the small Indian town of Kapilavatthu (birthplace: Lumbini in Gorakhpur District). Faced with various problems of life, he experimented with different philosophies and religious systems current at the time. Finally, by his own exertion, he discovered a new way of life which he identified as the Noble Eightfold Path. This path enables one to understand the four Noble Truths and thereby bring an end to one's sufferings in this world and in the empirical existence or countless other births.

The Buddha's teachings are available in the tradition in three divisions known as the Three Baskets, the Tipitakas. The discourses, Sutta, the disciplinary injunctions for monks and nuns, Vinaya, and the metaphysics, Abhidhamma are the three traditional divisions or Baskets in which all what was taught by the Buddha are recorded. It is also noted here that the teachings of the Buddha are not written down during his lifetime but committed to memory and passed down by the oral transmission, āgama, until in the second century B.C. and writing in Sri Lanka at the place known as Aluvihāra in Matale.¹

¹ Dpv: XX. 1466 & Mhv: XXXIII.3466
The present study based on Buddhist social thought which is dealing with the position of women that is interesting the feministic point of view of the present day. However it is totally different from it because it is extremism and it is beyond the way of the truth, the middle path, Majjhima-napātīpadā instructed by the Buddha in the first discourse known as the discourse of the Wheel of Righteousness, Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta.

The material of the present thesis is primarily taken from early Buddhist texts. The Pāli texts are accepted as the earliest available Buddhist sources, and as such, those sources were given the foremost attention. Later Pāli as well as Sanskrit sources are used only to expand, elaborate or elucidate what is already found in the "original teachings" or early Buddhist thought.

In interpreting the data collection, comparison with the Dhamma and the Vinaya, the totality of the teachings of the Buddha, was our guiding principle. As far as possible, the traditional interpretations of the Ācariyas portrayed in numerous commentaries were kept in mind. The best of Buddhist thought is inevitably rediscovered and reconfirmed in practice, and as such, considerable attention is paid to understand Buddhist thought applied to real situation of women in modern Buddhist life.

The Social dimensions, especially the position of women uttered by the Buddha are, of course, not found in one single place in the Buddhist Canon but are scattered all over. One has to go through the entire Tipiṭaka in order to collect stray-sayings which when gleaned, help us to formulate a coherent social theory. Buddha's primary aim was not to
weave a systematic social or any other theory, but to help us to free ourselves, both men and women from the innumerable suffering in this circle of birth without differences between them.

In the study of the position of women in Buddhist literature, the discourses, *Suttas* and the disciplinary injunctions, *Vinaya* are basically utilized because the majority of what relates to the position of women in Buddhism is found in those two baskets. The ultimate doctrine, *Abhiddhama* is of the comparative origin therefore it is analyzed when it is carefully compared to women and men, on a later occasion, by giving various references.

In fact Buddhist sociology is a systematic study of society from the Buddha's point of view so it is a more exhaustive scale would be necessary. This thesis aims at not only to fill some requisite blank that took place by misinterpretations but also to understand the position of women in Buddhism properly.

The aim of the becoming of the Buddha in the world is for the welfare and happiness of all being, both men and God and for this purpose he served for forty-five years to the world delivering his teachings. Throughout his lifetime, what he taught is, according to social point of view, to be harmony, equal in mankind and peace the whole and finally liberation from suffering faced by all human beings.

Buddhism performs human society so many ways. Out of these the most sociologists pointed out the four main social roles are as follow:

1) maintenance of social solidarity,
2) providing to the day to day problem of mankind,
3) establishing social norms and value in the society and
4) establishing psychological support to the followers.²

Out of these four the important roles are to maintain social solidarity and providing to the day-to-day problem of mankind for these two could absolutely create peace and harmony in the society. In order to focus these targets everybody, both men and women in the society, must have the equal rights and opportunities not only the social activities but also religious practices such as observance, chanting, ordination and so on. Nevertheless, the society has unfortunately faced no balance among them. Therefore from the beginning of the world to the becoming of the Buddha, who is the founder of Buddhism, male play the dominant role and female is assigned in the subordinate position in the society.

Furthermore it is believed in pre-Buddhist days that the status of women in the India was nothing but a source of anxiety to her parents, for it was a disgrace to them and inauspicious as well if they could not marry her. Yet if they could, they were often nearly ruined by their lavish expenditure on the wedding festivities.³ These are sadness things in the history of the world.

The Jains too in spite of their admission of women into the Monastic Order do not see to have differed very much from the Brahmin in their attitude towards women. The Ācārāṅga Sutta, in the course of a religious

² Aspect of early Buddhist Sociological Thought. ³ U. Theţihiya., Essential of Buddhist Themes.
admonition known as the Pillow of Righteousness, makes the following comment which stigmatizes woman completely:

"He to whom women were known as the causes of all sinful acts, he saw the true state of the world."\(^4\)

In addition to the position of women in Jainism is summed up as follow:

"Right in the earliest portions of the Canon of woman is looked upon as something evil that enticed innocent males into a snare of misery. They are described as ‘the greatest temptations,’ ‘the cause of all sinful act,’ ‘the slough’, ‘demon’ etc. their bad qualities are described in exaggerated terms. Their passions are said to destroy the celibacy of monks ‘like a pot filled with lace near fire.'\(^5\)

In Buddhism, on the other hand, the caution which men are called upon to exercise in their dealing with the opposite sex springs solely from the Buddhist attitude to \(Kāma\) or the pleasure of the senses. \(Kāma\) is described in Buddhism as leading to grief and turbulence. \(Kāma\) thwarts the path to transcendent happiness. This attitude is eloquently manifest in the counsel given to Arittha in the Alagaddūpama Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya.\(^6\)

The Buddha, who is the first and greatest introducer of the unique position and level of women in the world, launched the position of the women by promoting in so many ways. The following aspects are some of them:

1. establishing the Bhikkhunī Order, Buddhist nuns,

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\(^4\) Jaina Sutra. 1. 81  
\(^5\) History of Jaina Monachism. 493  
\(^6\) M.N: J. 181
2. giving to the greatest titles as Aggasāvikās and Mahāsāvikās,
3. uplifting the life of wife from the kitchen to the sitting room,
4. performing social and religious knowledge as the man can.

In brief, according to Buddhism, women can play all the religious activities that the men perform without any distinction. It is the main aspect of not only Buddhist thought but also our research project.

In addition, the other object of our research project is concerning two misinterpretations regarding the position of women in Buddhist literature that can primarily be identified in the contributions made by the present scholars. Those are:

1) the Buddha paid no appropriate attention to women and that he either ignored or condemned them and
2) Buddhism can easily be recognized as one of the oldest women’s liberation movements and that Buddhism has striking affinities to present day feminism.

The best example for those who represent the first view is A.S.Altekar who wrote a monumental book on “The position of women in Hindu civilization.” According to Altekar, the position of women not only in Buddhism but also in Jainism can be summarized as follow:

“Both these were ascetic religions, and they have not devoted much attention to the duties and ideals of lay women. The founders and leaders of these movements showed the indifference to, or
contempt of women, which is almost universal among the advocates of the ascetic ideals.”

The best example for those who represent the second view is Rita Gross who wrote a well-known book where an attempt is made to recognize Buddhism as a colossal movement which challenged the patriarchal society. She has identified four profound similarities between Buddhism and Feminism as follow:

1) Both Buddhism and Feminism, contrary to most of the Western philosophical and theological heritage, begin with experience, stress experiential understanding enormously, and move from experience to theory, which becomes the expression of experience. It is firstly what she thought.

2) Her secondly thought that allegiance to experience before theory leads between Buddhism and Feminism and the will and courage to go against the grain at any cost, and to hold to insights of truth, no matter how bizarre that seem from a conventional point of view.

3) Thirdly, Buddhism and Feminism perspectives use their willingness to hold to experience over convention and theory and their tenacious courage to explore how mental constructs operate to block or enhance liberation. For Buddhism, this exploration has involved the study of conventional ego, its painful habitual tendencies, and the underlying freedom of the basic egoless state.

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7 The Position of Women in Hindu: 208
8 Buddhism After Patriarchy: 130
For Feminism, this exploration involves looking into ways in which the social conditioning that produces gender stereotypes and conventional gender roles trap both women and men in half-humanity, encouraging mutual incompetence and threatening to destroy the planet....

4) Finally, both perspectives speak of liberation as the point of human existence, the aim toward which all existence strains. The language conceptualizing liberation is superficially different in the two perspectives...⁹

Having identified the four affinities thus, Rita Gross emphasizes that Buddhism strengthens Feminism more than any other religion. Those who are of the second view consider that this is a positive characteristic of Buddhism in relation at least to other world religions.

The climax of this research thesis is to show that both views mentioned above do not represent the true position of women as envisaged in Buddhism because they fall into extremisms which violate the middle path position, Majjhimapatipada the fundamental characteristic of Buddhism. And they do not incur any instant or everlasting advantage either to Buddhism or to women and that justice can be meted out to women not by blind adherence to those views but by proper understanding of the true position of women in Buddhism.

What is further emphasized in this thesis is that women will achieve their due place when both males and females act on such an understanding.

⁹ Reapprial: Vol: I. 2. JACBO.
The object of this project is therefore to trace what the Buddha placed the position of women unheard before and how he had tried to maintain social solidarity in the society since sixth century B.C.

The proposed work would be one of the unique figures of women given by Buddha in the Buddhist Literature. Such a work has not been done so far as the researcher understands. The researcher wishes that this project would be beneficial for understanding of the position of women as equal as men in human society.

**Chapterization**

The research would be confined under the following chapters;

**INTRODUCTION**

The sources of preliminary matter, including two misinterpretations that are grumble in the modern days, of this work will be discussed in this introduction.

**CHAPTER I**

**THE FIGURES OF WOMEN IN PRE-BUDDHIST DAYS**

This chapter is based on the study of Buddhist Canonical texts, the Pāli Nikāyas and Vinaya texts while references are made to the other contemporary texts such as Brahmanical and Jaina texts as well whenever it is found necessary. We have to analyze two points of views; social and religious point of view, and it is also adding the modern scholars' point of
views on the position of women from the time immemorial to the modern
days.

CHAPTER II
THE STRATIFICATION OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

We will mainly observe, in this chapter, the women in society in twofold;
one is secular division and the other is spiritual division. In the secular
division, there are two groups; the group of laity, *gabattha* and the group
of clergy, *pabbajjita*. On the other hand, in the spiritual division, there are
two groups also; the group of the persons, who had listened to what the
Buddha taught, *sāvakas* and the group of the persons, who do not heard of
what the Buddha taught, *puthujjanas*. Basically these twofold
communities belong to the whole society and not only how does the
Buddhism analyze it but also what is the differences between them are
beautifully surveyed in this chapter. Women & Virtue and women &
society should be stated in this chapter.

CHAPTER III
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BHĪKKHUNĪ ORDER, BUDDHIST NUNS

In the chapter III, we will briefly give historical accounts that come to the
Buddhist scriptures and other available contemporary events that could be
assumed the origin of Buddhist Order. Besides in this chapter what we
will present is the early Buddhists ideal of monastic life, the foundation
of monastic life. The history of *Bhikkhunī* Order, Buddhist nun is also
essential in the study of position of women and it is proved very
absolutely that it is different from *Paribbājaka*, Jainist nun. Why does the
Buddha delay to establish the nuns Order and why the monks always inferior to the nuns are very interesting so that are mentioned. Besides, what are it affects on family life and it can restore today are too discussed.

CHAPTER IV
TWO GREAT ASPECTS OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

In this chapter we will trace the figures of two greatest women: mother, mātā and wife, bharīyā practiced in Buddhism. According to Buddhist point of view they are very important in the house as well as in the society. Due to their skillful guiding the human beings, both son and daughter will become good and valuable persons and they are the forerunners of the future society. The more she, wife or mother, gives birth to the good son and daughter the more the development of future for society. Therefore these fields are traced in the Buddhist point of view: Buddhists attitude toward the daughter, the wife and the mother. And whether Buddhism accepts Polygamy or Monogamy, the reasons why the husband takes the second wife, mother's love is superior than that of father are also clarified.

CHAPTER V
THE BEAUTIFUL FIGURES OF POPULAR WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

One of the best ways to understand the position of women and to appreciate excellences of their characters, behaviors, their suffering and lamentation that had faced in their lives is to study the biographies of women. However, it is spread out the various portions of the teachings
because it is arranged by the Elders who participated in the First Council, Pathamasāṅgīyanā held in the three month after the Buddha's passed away in Rājagaha. It is therefore difficult to know even the rough scheme of nuns and it should be collected and arranged in order to focus the close figures of them. In this Chapter V, it is tried to mention the famous and popular women who are especially received the excellences, etadāggas, given by the Buddha himself. By researching their biographies, what are to be understood are the rough schemes of the figures of the women at the time of the Buddha.

CHAPTER VI
THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

Under the heading, in the Chapter VI, we will mention in order to understand the definite position of women in Buddhism by using the following arguments;

1. Historical argument
2. Causal argument
3. Physical argument
4. Biological argument
5. Legal argument
6. Ethical argument
7. spiritual argument
8. Moral argument.

According to these eight arguments, it is totally said that the position of men and women in Buddhism is equal. It therefore is to be asked the
unequal qualities of men and women and it is solved in the last portion of
the chapter, called conclusion.

CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

The implications of the present study will be discussed by taking into the
assumptions and the two misinterpretations stated in the modern writers
are answered in the Buddhist point of view.