CHAPTER II
THE SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

2:1 Buddhists attitude toward Social Stratification

One of the important things that should be criticized to highlight the clear picture of our survey is the social stratification of women in Buddhism. And it is also looked at how the social strata dominant does to the women and what are the advantages of it. Moreover by utilizing it what understood is that what Buddhism launches as well as promotes the position of women unlike before.

In fact, human beings themselves cause the social stratification. Such social divisions into strata regarded as not only high or low in status but also weak or strong in power. The strata, of course, are influenced by biological, physical, psychological and karmic factors pertaining to spiritual phenomena.

Buddhist thinker attempts to understand these influences which, coming together causes the formulation of a particular stratification system. Primarily it is man's ignorance which causes the division of society into different levels, either based on ascription or achievement. The Buddhist approach is to understand the basis of this ignorance and realize the futility of social stratification in human society.

Buddhist thinking sometimes attempts to understand people in a society by dividing them into strata based on the internal qualities they possess. The state of inner development would provide, according to Buddhism, a
better way of grouping into various strata if at all such a system is necessary. In such a division there is logical explanation and a moral or ethical base where, as in social stratifications based on caste, class or ethnicity one can not find either an ethical or a logical explanatory process.

(a) Spiritual Division

The Buddha contributed his ideas to this interpretation of arranging the role and the status of an individual based on inner qualities. This stratification which was divided by the Buddha is called spiritual division. In this context the person who belongs to the spiritual division of Buddhist society is called Sāvaka.

According to Buddhist approach, in this context, the social stratifications of women are spiritually divided by fourfold as follow:

1) stream-enterer, sotāpanna, one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbāna for the first time.

2) one-returner, sakadāgāmi, means one who returns to this world of human beings only once. After attaining sakadāgāmi in this life he may be born in the heavenly realm and attain Arahantship seeking birth in the human plane.

3) non-returner, anāgāmi, means one who will not return to this sense-sphere, Kāmaloka and such beings are born in the 'Pure Abodes', Suddhavāsa, higher Brahma realms where anāgāmīs abides till they attain Arahantship.
4) a worthy one, ārahanta means who has destroyed all defilements and it is also synonymous with Khīṇāsava.\(^7\)

There is, on the other hand, fourfold kind of being who possess the Path-consciousness, maggacitta. However, according to Buddhist ultimate doctrine called Abhidhamma, these four classes of the person of Path-consciousness, maggapuggala, are lived for one moment, ekacittakkhana only. Hence the conditions of these four persons do not stable for one moment and they can not be counted. It is at this great moment that Nibbāna is intuited for them.

It is also here noted that both laity and clergy belong to it. Therefore in the stratification of spiritual division the women in Buddhism are eightfold: fourfold in laity and fourfold in clergy, as mentioned above.

(b) Secular Division

Apart from it, the Buddhist also attempts to understand the strata of the women in society regarding their outer qualities such as high or low in status and weak or strong in power. Its classification is known as secular division in the Buddhist point of view.

Accordingly there is a class apart from above mentioned spiritual division and it is known as Puthujjana, those who unheard what the Buddha taught. Besides, not only laity but also clergy belong to it and in the secular division the stratification of women are finally twofold only. However this secular division was caused in various strata regarding their

\(^7\) A manual: 424-426
status, power, properties, education and other factors that could be criticized its level such as four caste systems prevailing in the history of India.

To compare who is more powerful than the other: whether women or men, it should be added the stratification of men. Both spiritual and secular Buddhist societies are of male-devotees, *Upāsakas*, female-devotees, *Upāsikās* who belong to the group of laity and monks, *Bhikkhus*, and nuns, *Bhikkhunīs* are of clergy. In fact these four classes are known as the four audiences, *Parisās* in Buddhism and Buddhist stratification of society widespread in this way.

Which stratification and who belonged to, during the time of the Buddha, in the spiritual division, is a counter question to be asked in this regard. These accounts are seen in the Buddhist discourses when we carefully examine.

1) Visākhā is stream-enterer, *sotāpanna*,  
2) Sumanadevi is one-returner, *sakadāgāmi*,  
3) Mātikamātā is non-returner, *anāgāmi* and  
4) Khemā, Paṭācārā and etc are the worthy ones, *arahants*.

The attempt made in this stratification, to show the equality between man and woman is not seen in any other religion. Even though it is not possible to give a detailed argument in this regard in this context, a resume of the argument is given below to the extent needed in the present context.
All members of the fourfold society, in the secular division, that is Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, are equal as uninstructed ordinary men and women, assutva puthujjano. There is no spiritual distinction between them. They all belong to the plane of ordinary men and women, Puthujjanabhumi.

2:1:1 The spirituality differences between Men and Women

What the difference between men and women in spirituality is to be asked as another question. In this context, one differs from another only when entering from the Puthujjanabhumi to the plane of instructed disciples, Savakabhumi. It is here noted that Savakas are the persons who were instructed men and women, sutaah savako.

Therefore all members of fourfold community in secular society have equal rights and opportunities to leave mundane plane and enter the spiritual plane. The Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis as well as Upasakas and Upasikas who belong to the Savakabhumi are endowed with the same level of spirituality. Therefore, men and women, whether they are members of laity or clergy, livings in the Buddhist secular society are equal.

The superiority or inferiority of an individual as decided and measured not on the basis of his position among the fourfold community, but on his spiritual attainments in the Buddhist thought. The Savaka is hence always superior to the Puthujjana. And there is no distinction between laity and clergy in spiritual consideration. Likewise, there is no distinction between men and women regarding their sexes. In this regard, Gopikā's story of
Dīgha Nikāya\textsuperscript{71} is beautifully explained in order to focus there is no sexual difference between spiritual divisions.

There was, at Kapilavatthu, a daughter of the Sakyans named Gopikā, who trusted in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, and who fulfilled the precepts. She having abandoned a woman's thought, and cultivated the thought of a man, was at the dissolution of the body after her death, reborn to a pleasant life, into the communion of the thirty-three gods, into sonship of the Sakka.

On the other hand, there were three monks, who having followed the religious life prescribed by the Buddha and were very familiar to Gopikā while they were in Kapilavatthu, were reborn into a lowest state among the Gandhabbas. Gopikā remembered them when they met once together. Having this Gopikā said that it was a sad thing, indeed, when we behold our coreligionists reborn into the inferior condition of Gandhabbas.\textsuperscript{72}

Gopikā said about this to Sakka on the following verses:

\begin{quote}
"O Indra! In the world of men
A Buddha, called the Sakya Sage,
Is conqueror o'er the world of sense,
And these his children, who had lost
All conscience when they left the world,
Through me their conscience have regained.
One of the three yet dwelleth here,
Reborn among the Gandhabbas folk;"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{71} D.N: II. 216
\textsuperscript{72} Dialog: II. 306
And two on highest wisdom bent,
In deepest rapture scorn the gods.
Let no disciple ever doubt
That by the kind who here abide
The Truth may yet be realized.
All hail to Buddha who hath crossed
The flood and put an end to doubt,
Great Conqueror and Lord of all!" 73

According to Gopika’s interpretation, Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs of the category of Puthujjana are not as superior as the Upāsakas and Upāsikās of the category of Sāvaka. Similarly Upāsakas and Upāsikās of the category of Puthujjana are not as superior as the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs of the category of Sāvaka. It makes it clear that, according to the Buddhist stratification of society, man has no claim to stand over and above woman.

What Buddhism emphasizes in this regard is that the position bestowed on women in Buddhism stands on a theoretical foundation. For a better understanding of this theoretical foundation, the distinction between the Bhikkhusamgha and Sāvakasamgha should be well recognized.

When the Buddha concedes the women as nuns due to the help of Ānanda, it is seen that women having taken to the life of Pabbajjā in Buddhism, are capable of attaining the higher fruits of religious life as far as Arahantship. 74 It indicates nothing but the spiritual equality between

73 Dialog. II. 308-309
74 A.N: IV. 276 & Vin: II. 254
man and woman. The Buddha took further steps to establish this equality by making all posts of competence for the monks, Bhikkhusamghas common to the nuns, Bhikkhunīsamghas and all posts of competence created for the men, Upāsakas common to the women, Upāsikās.

Apart from this the Buddha himself evaluated to balance the level of men and women in his community and ordinary society as well. It is stated in various discourses of the Buddha that how he performs and maintain to the whole society for this purpose and what his attitude to the women are.

It is clearly seen in the translation of Jātaka Stories that the Buddha condemned such an attitude when some monks in the Order began to exert influence, being conscious of their birth or lineage. And these monks believed that the best lodging, best food etc. should go for those of noble ranks. i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas. The Buddha said as follow:

"In the religion I teach, the standard by which precedence in the matter of lodging and the like is to be settled is not noble birth or having been a Brahmin or having been wealthy before entry into the Order."

Accordingly what the some monks, asking such question aim at nothing but the custom of caste accepted by the Brahmanism. The Buddha however stood without taking the custom of caste and denied it in his order and giving the same opportunities to all, whether they are low or high in caste.

Jat: tr. I. 92-93
2:1:2 Buddhists attitude toward Caste System

In fact caste system was prevalent in India from immemorial times. During the time of the Buddha caste system was a fundamental principle in the social life of the people. A person belongs to a caste by virtue of his birth and there are no other circumstances this caste could not be changed during his lifetime.

The Buddha's contribution, in this context, is his acceptance of the fact that one's caste could be changed. He put his thinking to practice by accepting people from all castes—considered high and low into his community of monks and nuns Order.

This evident is beautiful narrated in the story of Upāli\textsuperscript{76} who admitted into the community of monks. Not only Upāli, who was belonging to one of the despised occupations of the lower castes, admitted to the order of monk, but also he was recognized as an expert on Buddhist monastic law. Sunīta who is an individual, a scavenger was also admitted to the Buddha's Order of monks regardless of the fact that he came from the Cāṇḍāla caste, one of the lowest in the caste hierarchy, virtually and outcaste. In the Order of Buddhist Nun, these two slave girls, Puṇṇā\textsuperscript{77} and Puṇṇikā\textsuperscript{78}, are examples from women who were admitted to the Order.

According to Rhys Davids, what he said is that 'eight and half percent of women admitted to the Order of nuns were base-born' and he further stated that 'it is most likely that this is just about the proportion which

\textsuperscript{76} Vin: IV: 337
\textsuperscript{77} Thig: A: 210
\textsuperscript{78} Apa: II. 294
persons in similar social rank bore to the rest of the population.' His words light on the condition of the social stratification of the women in the Buddha's day.

The Buddha was once asked by Brahmins that what his caste was. The Buddha's reply was:

"Do not ask me for my birth."

Not only the Buddha but also his disciples performed, in this regard, what the Master aim. Ānanda the disciple of the Buddha once went into the city for alms. As he desired to drink some water and come near a well. A girl of very low caste was drawing water from the well at this particular time. When Ānanda requested water from her the girl said, "I belong to Mātaṅga caste, Sir." Ānanda replied, "I did not ask for your birth, Sister. I asked for water." Then she gave water to Ānanda.\(^7\)

The final emancipation for the caste system, according to Buddhism, is that caste can be changed. In certain districts, instead of four-fold castes system, one finds only two castes. Those are masters and slaves and a member of the master caste can become a member of the slave caste and otherwise a member of the slave can become a member of the master. Similarly it is understood in the Order that they are the only one caste, the caste of the sons of sage Sakya, *Sakyaputta* after they entered to the Order.

In this sense, in the Majjhima Nikāya it is stated a valuable account for the life of human being without seeing the caste system. It is also stated

\(^7\) E.J. Thomas: 242
that the skilled and the educated Brahmin stands about others and the morally superior one about even the skilled and the educated. This shows that the value of human being lies not in birth but in the attainment of skills, knowledge, moral habit etc.\footnote{M.N: II. 148-154}

The Buddhist thinks that the secular social stratification is actually divided by their position that they perform in the society. It is mentioned that this secular division is nothing but the caste that representing from the immemorial time to the modern day especially in India.

Therefore using the following five arguments it should be analyzed that whether in the caste system men and women are equal or not? Those arguments are:

1) biological argument,
2) evolutionary argument,
3) sociological argument,
4) ethical argument and
5) spiritual argument.

The first \textbf{biological argument} shows that all human beings, both men and women are of one single caste. It is clearly seen in the following statement:

"If as Brahmins affirm, all men proceed from one individual Brahma, how could a fourfold inseparable diversity among men arise?" A Brahmain's sense of pleasure and pain does not differ from that of a human being coming from another caste. A man or a woman from the Brahmin caste sustains life in the same way as
other in different caste. They all die from the same cause or illnesses. Hence there are no differences between among human beings. The variations in skin color, hair, shape of nose or head found among groups of human beings are negligible when compared to specific variations in various animal and plant species. Therefore human being is one species and men and women are equal biologically.\(^1\)

The **evolutionary argument** goes on to say how caste names originated as mere conventions. With the division of occupations such a conventional grouping according to the work that one does become necessary. According to Asvaghosa quoted by Jayatileke, the distinction between Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Sudras are founded merely on the observance of diverse rites and the practice of different professions. One who engage in trade come to be known as a merchant, *Vessa* in Pāli, one who indulges in military pursuits is known as a soldier and one who administers the country as a king, *Khattiya* in Pāli. It was not by birth that one becomes a merchant, soldier or king, but by actions that one performs or the job one does.

The four castes, it was laid down by tradition, were created by the god. As such people born into a caste should perform whatever work assigned to that caste by the creator. The Buddhist theory rejecting the idea of creator god accepts the fact that society evolved itself from simple beginnings. The aptitude and functions that the particular caste specialized arose due to the conventional practice that the caste was engaged in. People are not born in certain castes with special aptitudes

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\(^1\) Buddhist Sociology: 53-55 & See also D.N: III., 82
which are genetically determined. There is no pure caste from the evolutionary point of view. No one can say at least his or her parents and grandparents even up to seven generations had observed caste 'purity' in their inter-marriages.\textsuperscript{82}

The Buddhist discourses describe the evolution of society in detail. Human beings began to live in households and due to their lust; right of property came to be recognized. When such people began to infringe on the rights of each others they chose men differing from the others in no wife except in virtue to restrain the evil-doers by blame or fine or banishment. These were the first Kshatriyas and the others chose to restrain the evil deposition which led to the evil-doing. And these were the Brahmins differ from the others in no wise, except only in virtue. Then certain others to keep their households going and maintaining their wives started occupations of various kinds and these were the first vaishs.\textsuperscript{83} Due to the evolution, therefore, the four castes brought out in the society.

The third argument is based on \textbf{sociological considerations}. When one examines certain societies, one finds two caste systems. In some other societies there is no caste system at all. If the almighty God created the four castes and the four-caste system should be available in all human societies. Besides, as such, there is no logic to accept the fact that the four caste system was a divine creation.

\textsuperscript{82} D.N: I. 92-99
\textsuperscript{83} SBB. I. Vol: II. 106
Based on the divine origin, the Brahmins consider themselves as the most superior "born of the mouth of Brahma," but one compares the Brahmins with other human beings. Nevertheless, there are no differences so remarkable as to distinguish them as a super caste is observed. Caste prejudices, discrimination and attitudes are social in origin, having nothing to do with creation or a god. The Brahmins purposely cultivated such prejudices and attitudes in order to derive material advantages for them. Rigidity of caste was maintained by them with such an ulterior purpose in mind.

The social conditions existing in the society enabled the so-called high castes, the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins who possessed more wealth to command the services of others. It is because of such wealth and power which they possessed that they were able to utilize the services of Sudras. It was not the caste superiority that was at work, but sheer economic power.

Purity of caste depended on the magical belief in pollution. Pollution would ensure if a high caste person, that is Brahmin, comes into contact with the low caste Sudra. In this context the Jātaka story in the Buddhist tradition shows the futility of this claim. When possessed by the pangs of hunger, a high class Brahmin snatches the half-eaten food packet of a low caste Caṇḍāla and eats it.\textsuperscript{84} In another story the food remaining after a Caṇḍāla had finished his meal was used to cure the high caste Brahmins of a spell cast on them.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{84} Jat: 179
\textsuperscript{85} Jat: 497
In the Dhammapada, the Buddha said that as follows:

"I do not call him a Brāhmaṇa because he is born of a womb or sprung from a Brāhmaṇa mother. He is merely a 'dear addresser', if his is with impediments. He who is free from impediments, free from clinging, him I call a Brāhmaṇa."

The ethical argument attacks the privileged position that the Brahmins desired to maintain in the religious sphere. Buddhist thinking argues that anyone could develop spiritually one's faculties and reach the highest possible point of spiritual development. The Buddha in contract to the Brahmin doctrine said that, "It is they who alone are saved, and not others." starting that spiritual salvation was possible for men and women of all castes, irrespective of the fact that they are born high and low. That was the ethical dimension to measure human beings, adopted in Buddhist thought.

The spiritual unity of mankind could be understood when one looks at the lot of human beings all over the earth. These human beings are subjected to disease, decay and finally death. The different gender or caste or races to which they belong do not absolve them from these inevitable processes which are the lot of human beings everywhere. Thus all of them "desire for self-gratification, personal immortality, and for final domination over death."

Although these general divisions were found in Buddhist discourses, the most important development for Buddhist teachings is the meaning that the Buddha gave to wealth, Dhana. One may possess great material
wealth but unless one possess spiritual wealth. It would be impossible to make use of and sustain already available material wealth. Spiritual wealth consists of wisdom, Paññā and virtues, Sīla. Virtues are qualities as sharing, discipline, sacrifice etc. There is no value in wealth gained by means of violence and injustice. In the same manner, wealth is there for making oneself happy and also to be shared with others. Value of wealth enhances when it is divided and shared without clinging on to it.

By analyzing the spiritual arguments women are capable of attaining spiritual goals that the men can. In this sense what the Buddha taught to Ānanda when questioned about women in the following manner:

"Are the Buddha born in the world for the benefit of men? Assuredly it is for the benefit of female as well. When I delivered the Tirokudha Sutta, many women entered the path as did also many Devas when I delivered the Abhidhamma in Tāvatimsā, have not Visākhā and many other Upāsikās was entered the paths? The entrance is open for women as well as men."\(^{87}\)

Thus a woman said to have used when her husband joined the Order of Buddhist monks: "the Buddha could not have born for the benefit of men but for women as well."\(^{88}\) Gathering the fruits from the Buddha's teachings was possible for both the men and women. Final liberation was not the privilege of any sex. And be it woman, be it man for whom such chariot doth wait, by that same car into Nibbāna's presence shall they come.\(^{89}\)

\(^{87}\) The Psalms of the Early Buddhists, XXV. Intro:
\(^{88}\) A.N: 1. 176
\(^{89}\) S.N: 1.5 & M.N: 1. 165
Somā, a female disciple who had entered the Order of female monks was once dissuaded by Māra, the evil one who addressed her contemptuously belittling her spiritual abilities and Mara's words undoubtedly echoes the belief of the day according to which the women were considered outside the pale of intellectual development.

"No women," Māra says, "with the two fingers wisdom which is hers, could ever hope to reach those heights which are attained only by sages."\textsuperscript{90}

The nun Somā replies by solving that there are no differences between men and women as follow;

"When one's mind is well concentrated and wisdom never fails, does the fact of being a woman make any difference?"\textsuperscript{91}

\textbf{2:1:3 Women \& the Society in Buddhism}

The study of the position of women in the time of the Buddha and the later time of the Buddhist thinkers who has focused such field by taking various considerations that were stated the condition of the women who were acting their activities in her family and society as well.

The family is the basic unit or group in society and as an institution family is highly valued in the Buddhist system of thought. The nuclear family as well as the extended family is often referred to in Buddhist literature. In a family, relationships between the members are intimate, expressive and specific.

\textsuperscript{90} S.N: I. 129
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid: 129
A family, whether extended or nuclear is closely connected with the kin-group. Duties in a family comprise the support extended and respect paid to the parents, the provisions made for the sustenance of wife and children and the treatment extended belong directly to the family and the kinsmen's support is vital for the family to continue its functions successfully in society.

Among such functions of the family, the following, according to Nandasena Ratnapala, who is sociologists and the author of the book named Buddhist Sociology, are important in a Buddhist sense:

1) economic activities: earning what is necessary to maintain the family and to sustain it,
2) socialization of children by inculcating positive values in children,
3) satisfaction of sexual needs and
4) providing emotional support and security to the members at all times.\(^{92}\)

**2:1:3:1 Economic condition**

According to Sociologists economic activities that is necessary to maintain and sustain for the family is the first one. Economic condition of the families based merely on the heads of the families. Here the heads of the families are nothing but father and mother. Father earns the incoming properties for the whole family as one of his duties uttered by the Buddha in the Sigālovāda Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya while mother who is left behind

\(^{92}\) Buddhist Sociology: 21
the house in order to do the activities of the house and the members of the family maintains the properties that the husband's handed over to her. She, as a wise person, engages in it to know the economic position of her family.

The important function of looking after what the husband has earned is vital duty of the wife. She should protect such wealth without squandering it or letting it go waste. In carrying out such a function she should never be one of lazy disposition. She should conduct her affairs intelligently and skillfully. In this context, the assumption is that a wife should be educated and accomplished.

The other important thing for the success of family is thrift. As the wife is entrusted with the task of home management, it is incumbent on her to see that household expenditure is kept well within the family budget provided by the husband. To accomplish this task, the wife has to economies on her expenditure and exercise thrift, even to the extent of being frugal in doing so.  

2:1:3:2  Child care

According to Buddhist thought the second is nothing but child care and, in this regard, the parents should attend upon their duties by socializing their children while the children should discharge their duties toward parents as preached in the Sigâlovâda Sutta. Hence the mother should attend to her children by establishing correct values and attitudes in them, providing them with suitable education, enabling them, sons and

93 Human life and Problems, 48
daughters, to select the correct partners when they grow up and taking measures to hand them the control of their property after them. Mother love is in fact the foundation of all love in the world. As a devoted mother she would through her maternal instincts, even venture out at the risk of her life, for the protection of her only child.

Parents are the teachers at home preached by the Buddha and teachers are the parents in school. Both parents and teachers are equally responsible for the future and well-being of the children, who become what they are made into. They are, and they will be, what the adults are. They sit at the feet of the adults during their impressionable age.

They imbibe what is imparted. They follow in their footsteps. They are influenced in thoughts, words and deeds. As such it is the duty of the parents to create the most congenial atmosphere both at home and in the school.

Simplicity, obedience, co-operation, unity, self-sacrifice, honesty, straightforwardness, service, self-reliance, contentment, good manners, religious zeal and other kindred virtues should be inculcated in their juvenile minds by degrees. Seeds so planted will eventually grow into fruit-laden trees.  

The education of the children is important thing and a decent education is the best legacy that parents can bestow upon their children. A more valuable treasure there is not. It is the best blessing that parents could confer on their children.

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94 Human life and Problems. 54-55
Education should be imparted to them, preferably from youth, in a religious atmosphere by training them to uphold noble human disciplines and humane qualities. This has a far-reaching effect on their lives.

2:1:3:3 Sexual needs

Sexual need is another important thing for both husband and wife. According to Buddhist teaching, in a marriage, the husband can expect the satisfaction of sexual need from his wife. Her love upon him is a deep and should be an abiding love and it is the most emotional and spontaneous expression of desire and self-fulfillment a husband expects of his wife. It is indeed the basis of an intimate life-long mutual relationship and the means of bringing into the world children whom they will love and cherish as long as they live. Here love is not limited to mere attachment, pema but it is an all pervading quality of wishing for the genuine well-being of her husband.

Sex is an important factor in family life, whereas the role of husband and wife are concerned. In marriage, among other factors, sexual compatibility was regarded as of great significance. This is why a marriage where there is a great disparity in age between the bride and the groom is openly discouraged. The husband as well as the wife should see that they are sexually satisfied in their relations with each other.

A woman's sex role is emphasized in her relation to the husband. The obligation as to the sex functions lies equally on husband as well as on the wife. This is the reason why celibacy is appreciated both in men and women before marriage and after marriage faithfulness to each other is
considered as a cardinal virtue that should not be violated. This faithfulness is not one-sided with its burden laid only on women. The man should satisfy himself sexually by associating his wife only and not other women. The wife should see that this highest sexual satisfaction is given to the husband as part of her responsibility. A husband who being not satisfied with his wife becomes unfaithful to his own wife and seeks other women will ruin himself and also the family.

Faithfulness is always underscored with this purpose in mind. Being faithful has to be understood in its positive sense. Here, the wife and the husband bound in marital union should be sexually responsive to each other to the extent that there should be no need for either of them to seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere.

The Buddha once advised a group of girls about to marry. The young wives are advised to get up early, work willingly, order their affairs smoothly, and to cultivate gentle voices. Honor and respect should be paid to them to all persons honored and respected by the husband. The young wives should be skilful in various handicrafts. They should care for the sick and the servants, allot the food suitably. They should study the approval of the husband, keep safe whatever money, corn, silver or gold the husband brings home. In this manner the wife would 'win powers and this world is within her grasp.'

In another discourse, it is said that a wife is expected to organize the work of the household with efficiency, treat her servants with concern, strive to

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95 A.N: IV. 270
please her husband, take good care of what he earns, possess religious
devotion and be virtuous in conduct, kind and liberal.96

The success of the particular role of a wife and her husband depends on
her attitude, preferences and character. The Buddha is once said to have
delivered a sermon to a lady, who being proud of her birth and beauty
was behaving rudely towards her husband and parents-in-law. The
sermon was particularly directed at her to bring down her pride and
arrogance. The Buddha states that there are a number of alternative roles
that the wife could adopt in her relationship with the husband.

Having explained each of these roles in detail, the particular lady was
asked to choose the role she would like for herself. The lady now
apparently humbled by the Buddha's talk selected the role of the servant­
like one. However, Buddhism appears to prefer to the role of the friend­
like wife. A woman is regarded as the best friend of the husband.97

A woman brought to a family by way of marriage or a man getting
married to a woman initiates a family of his or her own within the
framework of the extended family, and the web of kinship ties. The idea
is to allow the extended family in its formative period. Socialization of a
new family by another collective group such as the extended family and
the kin-group was a cardinal factor in Buddhist thinking.

A young woman coming into a new family after marriage automatically
earns a new father and mother. The young man on the other hand is

96 A.N: IV. 271
97 S.N: I. 87
expected to treat the wife's parents as his second parents. This attitude fostered by Buddhism made the integration of a couple to another family easier; the strategy not only enabled the groups, families as well as kin-groups, to integrate, but it also facilitated the inter-action within the family itself. It was thus not necessary to cast new roles and duties for the new wife or the husband or the other family members. The new wife of the son was a daughter to the man's parents, and the young man a new son born to a wife's parents.

The young wife leaves her parents and often goes to live in a new household. This is time of great psychological and cultural stress and strain for her. She loses her former associates, the company of her parents and has to live under unfamiliar conditions in her new surroundings. It was because of this that at the time of the marriage a group of families was selected to act in an advisory capacity to the couple in the new life.98

Motherhood is an essential characteristic of all females. The potential of motherhood exists in all women. The young are future mother; adults are mothers already and the old had given birth to children in the past. Even though a woman may not have given birth to a child, she still is regarded as a potential mother. Thus, on this account alone women demand the respect and regard of the society. The respect accorded to women in Buddhist society and the special status accorded to women with children and pregnant women explains this attitude.

A woman reaches her full potential in marriage and in becoming a mother. In the Indian society of the day, an unmarried woman was

98 Dhp.A. See, Visakavatthu
regarded as inferior. "But the spirit of Buddhism was against such an attitude. Unmarried women under Buddhist influence could go unabused, contended, adequately occupied at home, caring for their parents and younger brothers and sisters," said I.B. Horner.99

The establishment of the order for female monks enhanced the position of women, particularly that of unmarried girls. The possibility of gaining the admission to the Order enabled such women to embark upon a new career.

With the increasing independence attained by women under Buddhism, even the father's traditional role of selecting his daughter's husband, irrespective of the daughter's preferences was to a considerable extent eroded.

One interesting point to ponder here is the Buddhist practice of bestowing wedding-portions, mātāpettikam on the daughter at the time of marriage. This wedding-portion is the inalienable property of the woman and was never considered as a dowry or bride-price and could never be alienated. The wedding-portion was given as a support which the woman could master in any time she deems it useful. This fact is attested in instances where married women desiring to enter the female community of monks handed over their wealth to the husbands.100 The fact showed that women although married were the owners of their own property, the wedding-portion being a vital and integral part of it.

99 Women Under: Thig.A: XXXVII
100 Thig.A: XXXVII
The position of widows in the society of the day was a sad one. The Buddhist teachings do not leave any room for widows to be abuses or humiliated or even to be taken as a sign or symbol of ill women. The restriction of the widows by loss of privileges such as the right to inherit property and manage it, take part in domestic festivals etc. were not encouraged in Buddhist practice. Widows according to Buddhist thinking could remarry and if they so desire, enter the religious Order as female monks, bhikkhuniśs.

Slave women were not unfamiliar phenomena in the Indian society of the Buddha's day. They were obviously a part of the household property of the well-to-do. Buddhism did not encourage slavery and offered freedom to slave women. Once such slave woman, by name Khujjutarā not only became emancipated when converted to Buddhism, but also was elevated to a higher spiritual status by her employer-queen Sāmāvadī. ¹⁰¹

Yet the Buddha admitted courtesans to the female Order of monks as its members. Padumawadī, Aḍḍhakāśī and Ambapālī are well-known similar examples. These courtesans were wealthy. The description of a brothel owned by one Kāḷī¹⁰² says that as follows:

"in that house of ill-fame, the fashion was this-out of every thousand pieces of money received, five hundred were for the women. Five hundred were the price of the clothes, perfumes and garlands. The men who visited that house received garments to clothe themselves in and stayed the nights there; then on the next

¹⁰¹ Dhp.A: on verses. 21-23
¹⁰² Ibid: on verse. 3
day they put off the garments they had received; and put on those they had brought and went their way.  

Although the Indian society of the day preferred the male issue to female issue, in the Buddhist discourses, a child is referred to without specifying the sex. In the instance, the Pāli word for children is puttimā and it is intentionally used. Buddhist teachers did not lay down the rule that sons are essential for their father's safe transition to heaven after death as in the case of Brahmins. It is also supported in the discourse that adoption of daughters is found in the Buddhist literature. Such young women were treated as one's own daughters: "hitherto you have been daughter of the great merchant of Bhaddavati; but from this day forth you shall be my very own daughter."  

Thus I.B.Horner brilliantly sums up the position of women in Buddhist thought in the following memorable lines:

"In the view of the available evidence, it may be concurred that the position women in Buddhist India was more enviable and more honorable that it had been pre-Buddhist days. Daughters and widows were no longer regarded with such undisguised despair and on the contrary, both they and wives commanded more respect and ranked as individuals. They enjoyed more independence and a wider liberty to guide and follow their own lives."  

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103 Jāt: 318, 481  
104 S.N: I. 232  
105 Dhp.A: I. 122  
106 Women under: 82
2:1:4 Women & Sīla in Buddhism

It is important that in the study of the position of women the virtue, sīla, she sustained is the significant for the Buddhist society base on it. Likewise the future society depends on the women as well. As a chief of the house the women's qualities especially virtue are, no doubt, the primary requirement of the progress of her home and the society that is the environment of her house. The more she has this virtue the more her house and society ascent to the peace, stable and progression. In the Order the woman, as a nun could be virtue for the benefit of her and the community as well.

The Buddha stated in his first sermon called Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta the path that can give the final emancipation for the being. The early path, paṭipadā which was the Eightfold Path, aṭṭhaṅgikamagga embodied the threefold precept of virtue, sīla, concentration, samādhi and insight knowledge, paññā and came to be identified as the threefold training, tisso sikkhā.

Of these three cardinal precepts virtue, sīla formed the basis on which rested the other two. It is mentioned in the Dīgha Nikāya that the well practiced virtue brought about concentration leading to wisdom, whereby the cankers are destroyed, sīlaparībhāvito samādhi, samādhi parībhāvitā paññā sammādeva āsavehi vimuccati.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107} D.N. II. 81
The Anguttara Nikāya further expressed that the purity of mind brought about by virtues conduct was the aim of recluse life, *sīlavīsuddham kho haṁ Sālha aṁñataraṁ sāmaṁnaṁgaṁti vadāmi.*

In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya it is described the minor virtues, *cūḷasīla* and it sets out ten precepts:

1) abstinence from taking life, *pāṇātipātā veramani,*
2) abstinence from taking what is not given, *adinnādānā veramani,*
3) refraining from adultery, *kāmesu micchācārā* or *abrahmacāriya veramani,*
4) abstinence from telling lies, *musāvādā veramani,*
5) abstinence from slander, *pisūṇavācā veramani,*
6) abstinence from harsh or impolite speech, *pharussavācā veramani,*
7) abstinence from frivolous talk, *samphappalapā veramani,*
8) abstinence from covetousness, *abhijjhāya veramani,*
9) abstinence from malevolence, *byāpādā veramani* and
10) abstinence from heretic views, *micchādiśṭhiyā veramani.*

Further elaboration on these precepts and other profane and secular activities performed by certain recluses of other sects, incompatible with the ideal recluse life in Buddhism were grouped under great virtues, *mahāsīla.* A monk abiding in the precepts experiences within himself a sense of ease without alloy. The importance attached to keeping these precepts is witnessed in the last sermon of the Buddha where he states

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108 A.N: II. 200
109 D.N: I. 63
that so long as the monks adhered to the precepts and abided by the virtues, their prosperity was assured.\textsuperscript{110}

The eight Pārājikas that mark another aspect of training in the lives of the early nuns were set out as the basic virtues to be adopted by a nun in the process of training. Nos. 1, 2 and 4 of these additional rules which were peculiar to the monks, \textit{asādhāraṇa paññatti}, pertain to sexual life in some way or another and can therefore be looked upon as secondary rules driving from Pārājika (1) of the monks. However, in the life of the nuns they are serious considered enough to be ranked under Pārājika. Hence half the number of Pārājika rules laid down for the nuns deal with sex and it in fact is the first Pārājika of the monks. Not only these but also other two in the Pārājikas of the nuns are embodied in the virtues, \textit{sīlas} themselves. Here it shows that violating a Pārājika rule amounts to transgressing the training of reclusehood, \textit{Brāhmaṇḍarini} and thereby involves falling from recluseship.

These are not only attempt at safeguard the chastity of the \textit{Brāhmaṇḍarini} but also try to keep the whole body of the nuns above reproach. Unchaste behavior of female mendicants was a reality in contemporary society\textsuperscript{111} and seeing the possibilities of similar incidents within his monastic Order the Buddha was prompted to provide these extra safeguards. There is an evidence of incidents in the history of the Buddhism to the nuns who were serious enough for public censure\textsuperscript{112} and the nuns were forbidden to indulge in frivolous with members of the opposite sex. A number of rules of the nuns which supplement the contents of the \textit{Samghadisesa} (3, 5 and

\textsuperscript{110} D.N: II. 77  
\textsuperscript{111} M.N: I. 305  
\textsuperscript{112} Vin: I. 58
6) and Pācittiya (11, 14 and 36) groups of the monks regulate the conduct of the nuns with adequate caution so that they may not fall victims to the lustful desires of unscrupulous men.

Buddhaghosa copied what the conduct is in the Visuddhimagga Commentary in twofold. According to it the first one is the virtue that must be abstained is called "Vārittasīla" and the other is the virtue that must be done is called "Cārittasīla." The five precepts, pañcasīla, eight precepts or the precepts abstained in Uposatha day, aṭṭhaṅgasīla, nine precepts, navaṅgasīla, the virtue of the novices, sāmanerasīla and the discipline code for the monks and nuns are included in the first category.

In the second category, the category of Cārittasīla consists of the various duties of householder preached in the Sigālovādasutta of Dīgha Nikāya. Apart from these the duties of the monks and nuns stated in the Khandaka of the Mahāvagga and Cūḷavagga of Vinaya Piṭaka are also included in the second one. Therefore to be a good woman or nun she does and obeys all these two kind of virtue in order to maintain and progress the saturation of her house and the society.

There are several noble feminine characters in the Mahābhārata. They seem to have attained to their honored position, not on account of their feminine nature but in spite of the virtue of a wife. Like some of the Jain and Buddhist texts, the Mahābhārata maintains that feminine nature is inherently base, much more base than masculine, and a good woman must always strive to overcome her essentially evil nature by piety and obedience to husband.
In the Samyutta Nikāya the Buddha said that such a virtuous lady who possesses religious devotion, cultivates virtue, is endowed with wisdom and learning and is given to charity makes a success of her life in this very existence. Her virtuous character gives to her life in the household poise and dignity. In fact the virtue of a woman here is the five precepts, pañcasīla. Pañcahi bhikkhave dhammehi sampannāgato mātugāmo visārado agāram ajjhāvasati. Katamehi pañcahi? Pāñātipatā paṭivirato ca hoti......surāmerayamajjanādaṭṭhānā paṭivirato ca hoti.\(^\text{113}\)

The following are also given in the same Nikāya as virtues by means of which she can make her life fruitful, both here and here after:

1) religious devotion, saddho,
2) sense of shame, hirima and fear, ottappi,
3) not given to anger, akkodhano anupanāhi,
4) not jealous, anissukī,
5) not niggardly, amaccāri,
6) chaste in behavior, anaticāri,
7) virtuous, sīlavā,
8) learned, bahussuto,
9) zealous, āraddhaviriyo,
10) mentally alert, upatthitasati and
11) wise, paññāvā.\(^\text{114}\)

All these virtues enumerated so far are within the reach of a woman living in the household. She is not rooted out of her domestic setting. The

\(^{113}\) S.N: IV. 250
\(^{114}\) Ibid: IV. 243-244
good and successful life of the laywoman, as much as of the layman, seems to have loomed large in the ethics of Buddhism.

It is further stated in the Nikāya\textsuperscript{115} that two sets of virtues are given whereby a woman is said to strive for success in this world, *idhalokavijaya* as well as in the other, *paralokavijaya*. Of them, the virtues for the first set are:

1) by doing her duties well, *Susamvihitakammatā*,
2) by hospitality to the attendants, etc., *Saṅgahitaparījānā*.
3) by her fidelity, *bhattumanāpam caratī* and
4) by looking after his earnings, *Sambhataṇa anurakkhati*.

In the second set the following virtues are occurred:

1) Religious devotion, *saddhāsampanno*,
2) virtuous, *sīlasampanno*,
3) generosity, *cāgasampanno* and
4) wise, *paññāsampanno*.

What Buddhism, as it's a great and remarkable social role for the society, performs one of its social roles is that the establishing the social norms and values in the society. The instances for the above mentioned are explained in the Sigālovāda Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya.

According to its social role, Buddhism performs in the society its part of the twin-role: husband-wife, parent-child, teacher-pupil, servant-master, monk-layman represent "pairs" of such dyadic relationships in which norms and values find eloquent expression.

\textsuperscript{115} S.N: 269
The twin-role underscores the duties or functions to be performed on both sides and also the responsibilities each side should discharge. In a family, for instance, children should be obedient but when they are of age, they should be given in marriage and entrusted with the responsibilities of managing their parents' property. The children in their turn have to look after their old parents in their advanced age.

The function if not performed, would lead to the loss of privileges. This loss of privileges is institutionalized by incorporating the functions involved in the corpus of disciplinary law. The recognition rendered by such disciplinary laws to this kind of role-play contributed too much to the development of a socialization process encouraging wholesome thoughts in place of unwholesome thoughts. Otherwise, it may take place unwholesome thoughts, *akusalakamma*, that use to censure in society, instead of wholesome thoughts, *kusalakamma*, that do not use to censure.

The norms relevant to the institution of family, was reinforced by the community to which one belongs. One reason why people do not commit offences is the fear of social censure. There is the well-known case of an old man who was persuaded to divide his wealth among his four sons. Here, Buddhism teaches us how the role of the parents is intimately connected with the role of the children. The Dyadic relationship establishes two twin norms: parents entrust their wealth to the children when the later grow up, the grown-up children in turn should look after the old and supportless parents.

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116 Buddhist Monastic: 112
When the norm is violated, social censure inevitably ensues. The old man when he was cast away by his selfish sons came to the Buddha. Thereupon the Buddha taught him four verses which he was made to learn by heart and recite. When the populace had assembled in the village hall, the verses explain this vital norm in all its details.

The Buddha's strategy appeared to have had its intended results. The force of public opinion and the shame arising out of public censure made the sons to realize their mistake and amend their behavior accordingly.¹¹⁷

This indicates how norms and values in small groups are fortified by similar values in groups larger in size. The norms and values of the institution of the family here are strengthened by those in the community. The community comprises friends, relatives and those who live in close proximity to each other. There was a customary meeting place where the villagers belonging to the community assembled from time to time in order to transact their business. Such meetings among those who live in one community were considered very important in Buddhist practice.

Frequent community meetings strengthened the norms and values in smaller groups such as the family. Smaller groups are made up of a network of dyadic relationships. These relationships are reciprocal in character, i.e. not one-sided, but depending on the performance of the complementary role on both sides.

The norms and values in the institution of the family are fortified by a peripheral set of reciprocal duties involving teacher-pupil and monk-

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¹¹⁷ S.N: I. 175-177
layman relationship. These two sets of duties involving parallel reciprocal rules, primarily deal with different steps of socialization. But as both the group of rules impinge on the family; one cannot forget their importance for the sustenance of the institution of family.

In the family the mother as her duty prepares and presents meals to the other member of the family. Not only for meals but also for all other basic necessities she has have provide because the condition of the family depended on her skill. In order to sustain this much needed relationship between the parents especially mother and other the members of the family.

The socialization process begins even before the actual birth of the child. Rituals and customs found in the family are oriented to socialize the yet unborn child. The mother should be restrained in their physical action. Otherwise, such an action for example violent behavior engaged in, crude or harsh words or even thoughts of anger or hatred would affect the unborn child.

In the family, due to her virtue, already mentioned above, mother is treated with equal respect and adoration as father. She is like gods. In common parlance the mother is comparable to the Buddha living in one's own house. In this saying we observe how in the institution of the family the mother is treated equal, but more superior in her role to that of the father.

Buddhist thought underscores the virtues of a mother's important position in the institution of the family. What is significant is to note that among
forms of address used in the case of the Buddha, one refers to him as "the immortal mother" or "the mother who gave the world the nectar of Nibbāna."\textsuperscript{118}