



## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & BUDDHISM

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**Introduction** - Women hold up on half of the sky, make up one half of the world's task force, and fulfil one half of the planets potential.

**Concept of empowerment** – while in India as in other countries, studies on women appeared in greater frequency after the second world war, the women in India dates back to nineteenth century in that period there was an equally powerful wave of reflection & action on the status of women.

**A Galaxy of women in India** - In democratic system, the place of women like men is of great importance. These days women are conscious about their rights & obligations that's why National government had launched a major scheme for the development but it is not enough women empowerment .e.g. Mahasweta Devi, Kiran Bedi.....

**Empowerment of Buddhist women in the world** - For over two decades Mae chee khunying, Kanitha Wichiencharoen, a Thai Buddhist nun, provided shelter for forty four thousand abused women & children at the emergency home for women & children in distress in Bangkok.

**Conclusion** - We are nature's finest force. We are the planet's cherished hope. And our time has come

In Sanskrit Subhashit we can see the Importance of women –|

नास्ति स्वसा समः मान्या

नास्ति मातृ समो गुरुः |

नास्ति भार्या समः मित्रम् |

गृहेषु तनया भूषा ||

**Introduction** - Women hold up on half of the sky, make up one half of the world's task force, and fulfil one half of the planets potential.

## **Concept of Empowerment**

Building a positive self image and economic independence-the need for every one to have a positive self image - relationship between positive self image and economics.

### **Meaning of empowerment of women**

In women lie nature's best qualities of the motherhood, compassion, humanity & love. Because they have been blessed with the capacity for giving & nurturing life, women also have the capacity for a deep commitment for preserving & nourishing not only their own offspring, but of the entire planet as well.

Because they have been downtrodden & disfranchised for centuries, women have developed unparalleled skills of frugality economy & resource – management.

Because they have been bestowed with softer, gentler qualities, women naturally eschew wars, violence & destruction of the planet.

To women then, the world must turn to bring healing, & the spiritual qualities of positivity & patience.

### **Empowerment of women**

Preparing women for action –

Need to adjust to spouse, subordination, boss while traveling and even when going not a holiday.

Participate political process of the country.

The different categories of complaints included dowry, harassment, second marriage of the husband ill-treated by husband in laws.

Awareness about government schemes/projection for social, upliftment of women , helping her indistress .

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual political social or economic strength of individuals & communities. It is often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Having decision making power of their own & taking proper decision.

Ability of positive thinking.

Ability of learn skills of improveing group power, Increasing one's positive self image & overcoming stigma.

### **Let us see some examples , galaxy of women in India**

**Mahasweta Devi** –: one of the ace writer. She combines passion imagination & political commitment in her fiction & real life.

**Indira Jaisingh** -: has acquired a position of eminence in the legal world because of her excellence she has always taken up causes for women's rights and human right-

**Indira Hinduja** -: is our flerence the lady who gave hope to thousand of childless women . She is a women wonder we admire her for her guts , intelligence dedication & harderrle

**Mira Nair** -: is deeply mdian, a citizen of the world she is Toofan Express furred by passion & wicked sense of humar.

**Ahilya Rangnekar** -: has the spirit of figth against injustice.

**Kiran Mazumdar Shaw** -: a human who has succeeded in a man's sphere in a field like biotechnology which is geared towards global benefit.

**Kiran Bedi** -: she over comes every hurdle challenge & obstacle. The word impossible doesn't exist in her dictionary. I admire her courage.

### **Empowerment of women at the time of The Buddha.**

It was the Buddha who first attempted to abolish slavery & vehemently protested against the degrading caste system which was firmly rooted in the soil of India . It is also the Buddha who raised the status of down-trodden women & only brought them to a realization of their importance to society but also founded the first celibate religious order for women with rules & regulations.

The Buddha did not humiliate women but only regarded them as feeble by nature. He saw the innate good of both men & women & assigned to them their due places in his teaching . Sex is no barrier to attaining sainthood.

Sometimes the pali term used to denote women is 'Matugama' which means mother- folk or society of mothers. As a mother, women holds an honourable place in Buddhism. Even the wife is regarded as " the best friend".

Although at first the Buddha Refused to admit women in to the order on reasonable grounds, yet later . He yielded to the entreaties of his foster- mother,Pajapati Gotami, Saripatta & Moggallana were made the two chief disciples in the order of monks, even so he appointed Arahats Khema & Uppalavanna as the two chief female disciples. Many other female disciples (e.g. Khujotra Ther, Ther Punna, Patachara, Ambapali, Kissa, Gotami) too were named by the Buddha himself as the distinguished and pious followers.

On one occasion the Buddha said to king Kosala who was displeased on hearing that the daughter was bron to him .

“ A women child, o Lord of men , may prove Even a better off spring than a male .”

Many women, who otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, distinguished themselves in various way, and gained their emancipation by following the Dhamma and entering the order.

In this new order, which later proved to be a great blessing to many women, queens, princesses, daughter of noble families, widows, bereaved mothers, destitute women, pitiable courtiers - all, despite their perfect consolation & peace, and breathed that free atmosphere which is denied to those cloistered in cottages & palatial mansions.

### **Outstanding women in world Buddhism**

In recognition of the United Nation's International Women's Day March 8, 2002, an international committee of Buddhist clergy, scholars and laity convened to select and honour Outstanding Women in World Buddhism. Seven female spiritual leaders and a temple in Taiwan received awards for their outstanding contributions to Buddhism.

Below are the names of the awardees and brief background information on each.

#### **Mae chee Khunying Kanitha Wichiencharoen**

For over two decades, Mae chee Khunying Kanitha Wichiencharoen, a Thai Buddhist nun (*mae chee*), provided shelter for forty-four thousand abused women and children at the Emergency Home for Women and Children in Distress in Bangkok, Thailand, which she founded. A lawyer by training, she played a pivotal role in pushing for legislation to ensure equality for women in Thailand and is a co-founder of the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women. She launched the Thailand's first college for Buddhist nuns — Mahapajapati Theri College in Korat. — She passed away on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

#### **Khun Mae Dr. Siri Krinchai**

Khun Mae Dr. Siri Krinchai is a prominent meditation master; she has conducted meditation classes and talks on Dhamma for both the Thais and the International community for several decades. The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, where she is a senior teacher, has become a leading centre for Insight Meditation (Vipassana). She has trained many prominent meditation masters who actively follow in her footsteps.

#### **Bhikkhuni Dr. Gotami ( Dr.Prem Suksawat)**

Dr. Gotami is an outstanding American woman. She has proven how Buddhist teachings can be integrated with Western psychotherapy to treat social ills. She ordained as a bhikkhuni (female Theravada Buddhist monk) in India. She studied psychiatry at Harvard Medical School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, she works with immigrants from Southeast Asian countries, offering counselling on a wide range of issues: drug rehabilitation, family problems, compulsive gambling, rape, child negligence and abuse. She established a Buddhist temple in the same US state. Her family heritage came from Thailand.

### **Bhiksuni Guong Saeng**

Bhiksuni Guong Saeng, an outstanding philanthropist, has built three Mahayana Buddhist temples in Thailand, and is currently building a healthcare centre. She has donated generously to schools, hospitals and other temples. She took her vows as a Bhiksuni (female Mahayana Buddhist monk) in China and has subsequently accompanied her students to China and Hong Kong for Higher Ordination.

### **Reverend Helen Jandamit**

Born in the United Kingdom, Helen Jandamit was ordained in Korea in the Mook Rim Mahayana Buddhist lineage as a Field Reverend. Since 1974 she has been leading Insight Meditation (Vipassana) classes and has written several books on meditation techniques. She set up and currently runs the House of Dhamma in Bangkok and is also a co-founder of the International Buddhist Meditation Centre in Thailand.

### **Bhiksuni Thubten Chodron**

A Master of the Amitabha Buddhist Centre in Singapore and founder of the Dhamma Friendship Foundation in Seattle, USA, Bhiksuni Thubten

Chodron, an American Buddhist nun ordained in the Tibetan Vajrayana lineage, has travelled the world teaching Dhamma. Her teacher is His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet. She is renowned as an initiator of inter-religious dialogue between Buddhists and Jews. Books she has written, such as: *Open Heart/Clear Mind; Working with Anger; and Buddhism for Beginners* have been well received. With Santikaro Bhikkhu, she now establishes an Integrative Buddhist temple in the US state of Missouri where Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana Buddhists may live and practice together.

### **Bhiksuni Dhamma Master Cheng Yen**

Bhiksuni Dhamma Master Cheng Yen is the founder of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, with four million members internationally. It is the world's largest and most successful Buddhist social work organization. Master Cheng Yen received the Magsaysay Award in 1991. Her foundation has established hospitals, universities, schools, and cultural centres and provides humanitarian aid to the Taiwanese and the international community since 1966. Her disaster relief programs have reached people in all corners of the world. She asks her followers to have the heart of a Bodhisattva and actualise their Buddha nature in altruistic service to humanity.

## **Nuns of the International Relations Department**

Fo Guang Shan Temple

This temple in Taiwan is a leading centre for women on their ordained Buddhist spiritual path as Bhiksunis. Of its 1,5000 monastics, 1,200 are nuns and 300 are monks. They have temples around the world; 95% of which are run and operated by women. They have 3 million members internationally. Their department of International Relations accepts devotees, regardless of differences in Buddhist lineage, and welcomes women from all around the world to travel there, practice, study, be ordained and participate in the life of a Sangha community in Bodhgaya, India, they have coordinated international Higher Ordination ceremonies honouring and restoring the Bhikkhuni lineage for Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist Bhikkhunis.

### **Bhikkhuni Voramai Kabilaingh**

As a young woman, Voramai Kabilaingh, rode her bicycle from Bangkok, Thailand all the way to Singapore. This was a small indicator of this amazing woman's endurance and power. For many years she was the only Bhikkhuni in Thailand. She ordained in 1959 in Taiwan, and returned to Thailand in saffron robes to establish a centre for children and women. Her orphanage, educational and social welfare projects have particularly benefited the poor and pregnant women in need. Her daughter is Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilaingh, the Buddhist scholar, now a Buddhist Samaneri, ordained in Sri Lanka.

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