

Buddhism and Empowerment of Women

Dr. Mahenderakumar Anandrao Jadhav

Professor & Head Department of Sociology,
Night College of Arts & Commerce, Kolhapur.

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 31st Dec 2025 Accepted: 15th Jan 2026 Published: 22nd Jan 2026</p>	<p>Generally the Women constitute nearly half of the total population in any country. So the social development of the country is not possible without women's development. Women in India are suffering due to discrimination, exploitation and harassment in different domains of life. Both economic and religious system play dominant role in keeping the women either empowered or powerless. Hinduism in its essence stands for hierarchy among men and women and women are conceived by it as polluted and secondary. Broadly speaking because of this the women in Hindu Society are the most sufferers. But in the history we have seen that Buddhism has emerged as an emancipator of mankind including women freed from suffering and degradation.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Buddhism</i> <i>Empowerment</i></p>	

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Generally the Women constitute nearly half of the total population in any country. So the social development of the country is not possible without women's development. Women in India are suffering due to discrimination, exploitation and harassment in different domains of life. Both economic and religious system play dominant role in keeping the women either empowered or powerless. Hinduism in its essence stands for hierarchy among men and women and women are conceived by it as polluted and secondary. Broadly speaking because of this the women in Hindu Society are the most sufferers. But in the history we have seen that Buddhism has emerged as an emancipator of mankind including women from suffering and degradation.

The process of empowerment of women has begun from Buddhist period. In the course of history, again the triumph of Hinduism made women again the slaves of male Hindus. But in the modern period, due to economic and political reasons as well as the rise of Buddhism in India under the leadership Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the background of M. Phule and Chatt. Shahu Maharaj, the intensity of empowerment of women in India has been increasing day by day. In the post Independent India, the empowerment of the women in the field of economic, political and education has taken place through the introduction of different legislation and schemes.

In this paper attempt has been made to understand the impact of Buddhism, in terms of assertive role played women in India. The data is gathered from case studies. This insider view and experiences are also used to understand the relationship between Buddhism and empowerment of women.

In Buddhism, as against Hinduism, women are considered as pure as men. Buddha stood against the discrimination on the basis of sex, caste and creed. In the days of Buddha, women are treated at par with men. However, the burden of Vedic religion on the cultural life Hindus was tremendous. Although the protagonists of Vedic religion that Brahmanism deny the allegation that women are treated with bias and held women as polluted begins. Both in the religious books and in practice Hindu women are treated as polluted projected as the bottom occupy impure by birth. So they are considered as symbol of stigma women are thus segregated from the family decision making process.

Buddhism attacked the problem of segregation of women who have equal opportunities to improve themselves. Buddha has open mind to allow all women to join, Bhikkhu Sangha contribute to the welfare of mankind.

Women in India, are most sufferers. But, in the history and at present day, though India is becoming open system, the women, still face supporting and degradation. The triumph of Hinduism made women again slaves of male Hindus after Ashokan period. Again, in Post-Ashokan and Mauryan period, women was considered as only the duty performer of male! (Chul-Mul Role only).

But, in the Ambedkarian era, the Hindu Chaturvarna system and its mechanism are again working against the secular and equal status given to her. The empowerment process has begun. There is a loose association between the Buddhism and the rise of status of women. It is hypothesised that higher the level of Buddhist consciousness among the women, the greater is the assertive personality of women. It is, generally observed that those women who are more active in Buddhist cultural activities, their level of courageousness and assertiveness and role performance seemed to be goal-oriented and distinguishing than other Hindu women.

As Buddhism, basically rejected the notion of purity impurity conceived by Hinduism, the discriminative or segregative did not arise. Secondly, the polluted status attached to hereditary was also rejected. Women were/are being considered as equal, pure and possess all those qualities at par with male. The women who have come under the influence either through conversion or thorough exposure to Buddhist organizational activities, the seems to be sea change among women. We have attempted here to study some aspects of the hypotheses mentioned above. To understand the associational relation, the case study method is used. Only to point out some elementary relations and highlight the major trends in the cases, the cases are referred. We are not intending to generalize our observation.

Among many encountered cases, we have selected five cases only on the basis of personal proximity and deeper discussions carried with them.

The first case relates to a family in which husband and wife are Buddhists. Both are seen actively involved in propagation to Buddhism. They show in discussion with them, that both are equal and share opportunities equally at home. The decision making process is influenced by their deep understanding of

the issues involved and free and frank expression of opinion. There seems to be reciprocity among the couple.

Their children (2+1) are being shaped under the Buddhist environment in the home. The names are given to their children with Buddhist thought (Think of good names and meaning attached with it). Narration of events occurred in Buddha's period and sharing of deliberations during functions.

The relationship with other blood-relations, we come to know that healthy relations prevailed. We had cross-verification of our perception.

Both, being employed, have fought in their respective offices against the injustice done by the upper-caste officials. Their efficient working style, with vision in their life, they said, has enhanced their assertive image.

Another case is that of joint Buddhist family. Father is experienced person in the working of Panchayat Raj. He being Buddhist was able to win the other people on his side to get the work done. The sons and the grandsons and daughter-in-laws have been brought up in the family with more Buddhist values and ideas. The women in the family are assertive but not like that of women noticed in the first case. The assertive aspect among the female members is enlarging year as they oriented out in the discussion.

The third case is that of president of Panchayat Samiti. She has imbibed some Buddhist values and fought again all upper caste-politicians and forced them to implement pro-people welfare schemes. She is active Buddhist assertive person.

The fourth case belongs to a person who is intellectual-ideologue of Buddhism. Both husband and wife work together in resolving disputes. Engaged in propagation of Buddhism. Both are assertive and their children are shaped in to the Buddhist ethos. The radical culture programmes are implemented after concretization.

The fifth case is that of retired person served as teacher, who is moving around the villages for propagation of Buddhism. His home is decorated with all Buddhist symbols and photos/statues. Most radical person among the intellectuals, but equally sober Buddhist.

All these case substantiate our assumption. But this exercise needs further study with appropriate methodology.

We have also come to know that non Buddhist activist are not found to be culturally radical and in the sphere of cultural practices, they are very silent, which means, they do not want to re-educate the educated or ignorant people.

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