

GENDER RELATIONS IN THE BUDDHIST JĀTAKAS

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Masters of Philosophy

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Salomi Rai**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled "**Gender Relations in the Buddhist Jātakas**" submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the **Degree of Master of Philosophy**, is my original work and it has not been submitted earlier to this or any other University for any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**Gender Relations in the Buddhist Jātakas**" submitted to the **Sikkim University** for partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the Department of History, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Miss. Salomi Rai** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any Degree, Diploma, Association and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the investigation have been duly acknowledge by her.

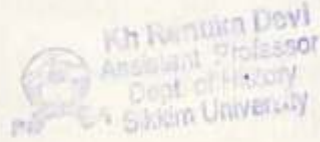
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gender is an integral part of our daily lives, socially and culturally defined appropriate roles of male and female. It does not necessarily mean only one's sexuality based on biological differences but is gradually constructed through various social processes from the birth of a child itself. Through years scholars working on Gender have defined this in various ways. Gerda Lerner in her work defines Gender as "...the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is set of cultural roles. It is a costume, a mask, a straitjacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance"¹. Every society tends to prescribe the definite roles for men and women based on various factors like biological and psychological differences. They set norms on how a men and women should behave, act and so impose the sex roles. V. Geetha writes "...norms of control lie at the very core of practices of gender. In the first instance, these norms are held in by social and economic structures which determine a person's access to resources, culture and power"².

Recently another author gives a more comprehensive idea of Gender saying "gender itself is multidimensional"³. She views these dimensions as Gender Identity: associating oneself as either male or female, second is Gender Role: this include behaving in ways that are considered proper by the related culture, third is Sexual Orientation: it includes the attraction towards one's own or other opposite genders. It has been said that "History is filled with pronouncements about the nature of, and differences between, women and men"⁴. These differences at the initial phase can be seen on the context of division of labor between the two

¹Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 238.

² V. Geetha, *Gender*, (Kolkata: STREE, 2012), 135.

³ Hilary. M. Lips, *Gender: The Basics*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 2.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

leading to the superiority of one over another. Where man were mostly connected with hunting and performing tasks that needed more manual power while women on the other were more connected with the household affairs and doing less heavy works. In other words “Gender division of labour refers to the different roles and responsibilities that women and men has to fulfill based on the societal idea of what each gender are capable of doing and should do”⁵.

The unequal gender differences are not a recent phenomenon but have a long history since the ancient times. Such differences in case of Ancient India are depicted in various texts and literatures, among which the *Jātakas* is one of the major Buddhist text that throw much light on society’s perception of Gender, their roles and relations. It comprises of 547 birth stories of Buddha. The *Jātaka* consists of fables, riddles, puzzles and moral stories and is said to be the “oldest surviving folklore”⁶ in the world.

Gender differences manifests through various organization and institutions like that of family, marriage, polity, work etc. The inequalities that exist between male and female; the domination of men over women have given birth to the concept of ‘patriarchy’ or male domination. To define patriarchy literally it holds the meaning of “rule of the father”⁷. It is a term commonly and widely used to describe the condition of male superiority over the females⁸. Another definition we can see is “it refers to a social situation where men are dominant over women in wealth, status and power”⁹. With numerous writings on Gender in the modern context various scholars have tried to define it. Feminists try to define and use patriarchy as a concept to denote the power relationships between the two genders¹⁰. Gerda

⁵ Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2003), 32

⁶ H.Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: Essence of Buddhism*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), 55.

⁷ Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, ed. *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, (London: Routledge, 2004), Vol II, 711.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 711.

⁹ S.S. Shashi, ed. *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt Ltd, 2007), Vol. 14, 3593.

¹⁰ Abeda Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis”, *The Arts Faculty Journal*, (July 2010- June 2011), 2.

Lerner very brilliantly explains patriarchy in her work. She pointed out that the term ‘patriarchy’ holds various connotations to it; where in its narrow and constricted sense it means a system which represents the absolute legal and economic power of the head male of the family over his dependent females and other males¹¹. This form is said to be ended in the 19th Century with the receiving of civil rights by women. However, wider meaning of the term is said to imply the “manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general”¹².

The feminist writers have seen it as the domination of male over females. As Kamla Bhasin says “Patriarchy is both a social structure and an ideology or a belief system due to which men are superior”¹³. A much recent work defines Patriarchy as a “social system which gives the male head of the family power and authority over his lineage, control over his sons and treatment of wives and daughters as property”¹⁴.

However, Patriarchy is connected with a set of ideas i.e “patriarchal ideology” which justifies this dominance of men over women by emphasizes the natural differences between men and women as men being more superior to women¹⁵. Family and household can be seen as one of the main upholder of this idea. Particularly husband or the head male member in a household tends to strongly adhere to the idea of subordination of female members. Certain *Jātaka* stories deals directly or indirectly with regard to the relationship between men and women, the societal structure and the nature of their existence. A typical trend that is visible in the *Jātaka* stories in connection with gender relations is its description of women as adulterous such as in the case of *Bandhanmokha*, *Mudullākkhaṇa*, *Culla-kālinga*, *Culla-dhammapāla*, *Sambulā*, *Sujāta Jātaka* and so on. The text provides a very stereotypical view of all women

¹¹ Gerda Lerner, *Creation*, 238.

¹² *Ibid.*, 239

¹³ Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, 21.

¹⁴ Rekha Pande, *Gender and History*, (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2018), 1.

¹⁵ Abeda Sultana, ‘Patriarchy’, 3.

be it a Queen, common wife or even a courtesans as being a hindrance to ascetics, harmful, wicked, murderer. Men especially the hermits were suggested to stay away from them. Thus, it suggests how gendered was the societal attitude towards them. The institution of marriage proves to be an effective instrument in controlling women and maintaining the purity and the patriarchal values. Its rules and norms exhibit a lot in the social standing of women. The text gives references to various forms of marriages and was considered as an important part in a women's life. It is this institution which made women the property of her husband. "Buddhist *Jātaka* tales reiterate the social sanction for the use of violence by kinsmen to keep women in control"¹⁶.

Dealing with text as a source of history it becomes imperative to understand the context in which the text was written as "all literary works are connected to the historical contexts in which they are produced and in which they circulate"¹⁷. Equally important is to analyze its structure, language, authorship and audience. *Jātakas* are said to belong to the second or early third century BCE. As this period marks the period of second urbanization, this text though not always is based mostly in an urban milieu. *Jātaka* legends seems to be recognized in Buddhist Literature that can be confirmed by the fact that the scenes are found in the carvings on the railings of Sānchi, Amravāti and especially Bhārut and were widely known and considered as part of their sacred religious history¹⁸. It is believed that for many centuries these stories was transmitted orally; and only in fifth century CE it was written down. Originally it is believed to be derived from the Ceylonic native tradition and translated into Pāli by Buddhagoshā in about 430 A.D who also translated other Singhalese commentaries into Pāli¹⁹. However the exact date of the text is still debatable. This difficulty in dating of the

¹⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*, (Kolkata: STREE, 2006), 76.

¹⁷ Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, (Noida: Pearson India Education Services, 2009), 13.

¹⁸ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka or the stories of Buddha's Former Birth*, (London: Cambridge University Press), Preface VII.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Preface VIII.

text has been ascribed to its diverse and layered content which makes it hard to arrange in a chronological order.²⁰

Looking into the structure of the text, it is pointed out that “The *Jātakas*...are marked by a comparative looseness of structure and somewhat dispersed ideological content, even though the various strands are gathered up and held together within an overall Buddhist world-view”²¹. The *Jātaka* stories contains of story within a story. Each tale has four parts: foremost is the part of the story from where the title of the story is taken. This is followed by introduction which opens with the ‘*Paccupannarathu*’ or ‘story of the present’ it talks about the Buddha at his present birth. It is this event in his life that leads him to tell the ‘story of past’ bearing the same story line in a more lengthy form. It is the third part of the story and set in some mythical past or ‘*atitavatthu*’. This begins with mentioning the period and place where the event took place generally under whose reign. The story often begins with ‘once upon a time in the reign of King Brahmadatta of Benares, the Boddhisatta was born as....’ It introduces the other characters in the story. One of the remarkable features in the narration is in some stories there are thread of stories within one *Jātaka* that are interlinked or different stories clubbed into one. This kind of multiple narratives are thought to be made possible by connecting it with the larger frame work of *karma*, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth²². The last part is usually a verse that links the story of the past and the present and also identifies the main characters with his present births. It is said that the original Ceylonic version of *Jātakas* consisted only of the *gathās*; this can be known from the fact that the language of these *gathās* are more archaic than that of the stories²³. It has also been said by T.W Rhys

²⁰ Uma Chakravati, *Everyday Lives Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and the Brahmanas of ‘Ancient’ India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2006), 198.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

²² *Ibid.*, 202.

²³ Cowell, *Jātaka* , Preface VIII.

Davis “The oldest forms have, for the most part, no framework and no verse. They are fables, parables, legends entirely (with two exceptions) in prose²⁴.

Talking about the audience it is difficult to ascertain the precise group for whom these stories were composed. But looking into the various themes in the stories it can be said that it was meant for diverse and heterogeneous audience. Jātaka is said to be consisting of negligible presence of Buddhist philosophy. Yet, the fact cannot be denied that they take up Buddhist ethics and morals in their narration. “The minimal presence of philosophical content and the adoption of a narratives strategy make it possible for more of everyday life to be represented in the *Jatakas*”²⁵. However, it is true that it has its own limitations as a source and also some authors are doubtful regarding the use of this text in evaluating the period of Buddha. This is mostly attributed to the many layered stories as it is difficult to ascribe them chronologically²⁶. In Jātaka stories we see an attempt to link together the different time period, regions and also the human and the animal worlds²⁷ this can be considered as a unique feature of this text. It is to be understood that existing Jātaka is only a partial record and out of 550 stories we have only 547 stories. Yet despite of these limitations using Jātakas as a source of history, several authors attaches a great significance to the information provided by these wide ranging stories. “It is so full of information on the daily habits and customs and beliefs of the people of India, and on every variety of the numerous questions, that arise as to economic and social conditions”²⁸. Uma Chakravati aptly says in her work that “The Jātaka represents a genre of literature, possibly the only one of its kind for early India that enables us to get a glimmer of the total experience of men and women who inhabited the world for which the texts of high tradition made rules”²⁹. It is therefore undoubtedly one of

²⁴ T.W Rhys Davis, *Buddhist India*, (London: T.Fisher Unwin, 1911), 196.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives Everyday Histories*, 198.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁸ T.W Rhys Davis, *Buddhist India*, 189.

²⁹ Uma Chakravati, *Everyday Lives Everyday Histories*,198.

the most valuable sources for understanding the society that might have been prevalent during the period of its composition. Thus this work will attempt to bring out the social relations, patriarchal domination, the concept of adultery and the attitude towards the prostitutes as has been depicted in the *Jātakas*.

Statement of the Problem

History from the very remote past was mostly connected with the political history. This has led to the negligence of social dimension creating a huge gap in understanding of social history. With the negligence of social history, the contributions of women are naturally largely denied and ignored. Women have always been considered as dependent on men and subordinate to them. This has left many lacunas in understanding of their contribution.

Talking about social history, in India Buddhism emerged as an alternative force to the inegalitarian society, showing an attitude of sympathy towards the common and downtrodden. But in contrast to this, woman in the *Jātakas* has been stereotyped as adulterous. Thus it becomes crucial to understand the concept of adultery, the causes for the existing prejudices and evaluate the changes in terms of gender relations.

Among various categories of women, we have prostitutes as an important category which finds significant mention in the *Jātaka* text. Prostitution is an important institution that emerged during the period of Urbanism. However, as a subject it is gaining importance only in the recent years. Therefore, it becomes significant to study how this institution came to be the victim of Patriarchal system.

Woman in Buddhism as a subject of research is very popular not only among the Indian authors, but also the foreign writers. Thus there is no dearth of writings based on this area. But most of the authors have focused on the literatures like the *Vinayas*, *Therīgāthā* etc as a source for evaluating women's condition during Buddhism, rather than the *Jātakas*. Moreover, they seem to confine their work mostly focusing on the women of certain

categories such as the upper section or the Nuns. Common women of the society are not focused much. Also when it comes to gender or gender relations in *Jātakas*, no comprehensive writings are available.

Review of Literature

Gail Omvedt in a section of her book *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste* (2003) has talked about how with the coming of pastoral society women began to be associated with household affairs, giving rise to a patriarchal society. With the rise of patriarchal values this principle and sexuality of women came to be regarded as bondage. The main aim now was to achieve freedom from this temptation. She notices, both Brahmanism and Buddhism shows patriarchal elements but yet they manifests in different ways. In spite of the fact that the *Jātaka* stories show women as untrustworthy, Buddhism shows a lenient attitude towards women as compared to the orthodox Brahmanism.

Uma Chakravarti in her book *The Social Dimension of Early Buddhism* (2015) has focused primarily on the treatment of the nuns and the formation of *Bhikkunī saṅgha*. She notices, in contrast to the idea of higher status of women in the *samana* culture the Early Buddhism is more supportive of the patriarchal values. Women clearly were subordinate to men not only in social life but also within the *saṅgha*.

Kumkum Roy's *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power* (2010) is an excellent work for studying Gender history of early India. Written from a feminist perspective, she tends to bring out the histories of women by drawing from several textual traditions of both Brahmanical and Buddhist. Regarding *Jātaka*, the author elaborately describes how the professions/ occupations were gendered with men doing most of the works outside the household. She brings out instances from *Jātakas* where in very few cases women were described to work alongside men but these did not seem to have legitimacy and were not really appreciated. The occupation listed for women in these texts tends to subside them into

what has been called as the 'framework of sex work'. The author discusses about the ambiguity that exists regarding the courtesanal tradition. She attempts to contextualize this on the basis of two things economic and socio-political. It is the economic power that differentiates courtesans from other women. She draws her argument from comparing and contrasting the texts like *Kāmasūtra*, *Mṛcchakaṭīka* and *Jātaka* where women as courtesans are more clearly visible. She also focused on how gendered were the political spaces. Queens did not have political power as compared to the king as has been represented in the *Jātakas*. The participation of women in political affairs was much lower that has been evident in the text.

Me Me khine's *Understanding Noble Women in Jātaka Stories (2016)* in the Journal of International Buddhist Studies, attempts to bring out the contribution made by the four noble women *Amāra*, *Maddī*, *Kanari* and *Sambula* in the *Jātaka* stories. She highlights their role as a life partner and as a helper of *Bodhisatta* in achieving the final goal. She also presents critical analysis on work done by various scholars in this topic. According to her re-reading of the *Jātaka* text will serve as a great help to women in their way of perception towards themselves. She concludes that the stories tend to show women are in no way inferior to men. She confined herself to the description of only on some exceptional cases of the noble women. But she did not try to look beyond these four characters and understand the condition of other women who though showed devotion and love were ignored by their husbands. She seems to present a partial view.

Neelima Pandey's *Women in Primitive Buddhism (2015)* brings out how the stories portray women in a negative role. The ideal role of women was that of a slave. In this connection, the *Jātaka* text has been seen as a supporter of the Hindu code law. She traces the similarities that exist between the texts like *Manusmṛti*, *Arthasāstra* and *Jātaka*, in its presentation and perception of women and also the ways of controlling them. But unlike the former two texts

the latter shows a peculiar feature i.e it does not suggest any punishment for the adulterous women. While the other texts being a normative contains rules and punishments. The author here analyses the status of women but has confined mostly to the Royal women. The common women are not discussed.

Taniya Roy's article *The Notion of Objectifying Women as Represented in the Jātakas (2012)* revolves around three themes, women as Resources, Women and Procreation and Courtesan: portrayal of a viable alternative. Through which she attempts to highlight how women were objectified. First theme deals with women being treated as a property of the patriarchal lord. Second talks about how women's womb was commodified, as the procreation power of women was controlled by men. The third theme deals with the courtesans occupying a different status because of her economic stability. But she was not encouraged to marry. The author notices a contrast in the objectification of a courtesan which needs to be examined further.

Shalini Dixit in her article *Position of wife in Early Buddhism (2001)* discusses about the wife's position in the household and different categorization of wife as has been presented in the Vinayas and the Anguttara text. Undoubtedly, a wife who was chaste and devoted was considered to be the ideal wife in both the Brahmanism and Buddhist order. But as Buddhism was more of an ascetic religion along with the above qualities, virtuous wife was given more importance. She also provides a comparative analysis regarding the position of wife in the early texts and the Pali *Jātaka*. Where the latter through its stories seems to solidify and preserve the misogynistic conception.

Sukumari Bhattacharji in her essay *Prostitution in Ancient India (1999)* gives an elaborate discussion on how the concept of prostitution has been prevalent in Indian society since the ancient times. There seems to be a hierarchical form in relation to the economic standing of the prostitutes. This categorization also finds its place in the *Jātaka* stories. She also brings

out various causes for women becoming a prostitute and how it became regularized in the latter centuries. She points out the emergence of courtesans as a class with the rise of towns and cities. Yet they were present in the Vedic times and even the *Jātaka* stories tend to give different names to them. These various names suggest their economic and social standing. She here shows no matter how important and high the status of prostitute was she was regarded as a chattel of king or rich men. No doubt we do hear of powerful courtesans. Their social standing was based on the appearances but with the incorporation of prostitute into social structure it created a better condition for the old courtesans. She excellently highlights how women from the very ancient times has been treated as a commodity and granted as gifts. And eventually were sold as slaves and prostitute.

Anil kumar Tyagi in his article *Women workers in the Jātakas (1984)* discusses about women worker of different categories. Employed mostly for the domestic works, female slaves' cost was based on her Varna, caste and appearance. Indicative of the fact that slavery was not confined to any caste or class. Women wage workers seem to be more involved in economic activities, in comparison to the women of upper Varna. He also deals with Prostitution and courtesans. He notices it was mainly the lower caste women who entered the profession of prostitutes. Courtesans were the 'pride of the citizens', but even then their work were looked down as 'vile trade'. He highlights about relationship between the masters and women workers, wages etc. He explains about how the women workers in *Jātaka* play an important role in society by performing diverse works and duties. But looking much further, it can be noted that the works attested to them was very menial. This in no way suggests a woman holding a significant rank.

Uma Chakravarti's *The Rise of Buddhism as Experienced by Women (1981)* is one of the important work. In this work she observes that the Buddhist Literature indicates women as being subservient to men- father, husband, brother and son. Women's life revolved around

husband and son. Also she could not become a *Bhikkunī* without the consent of her husband where as husband did not require permission. The text frequently displays prejudice against women and keeps on emphasizing them as passionate, envious, adulterous, and dangerous. Buddha himself was reluctant to admit women to the *Saṅgha*. The courtesans were seen as someone who raised the ‘Prestige of the city’ and were often imposed with the sex role by the society. The nun or *Bhikkunī* was a woman of greater independence and mobility. But yet there is evidence of lack of appreciation for them.

Objectives

- To analyze and evaluate the gender relations within the family.
- To understand the concept of Adultery as reflected in the text.
- To examine the societal attitude towards the Prostitutes.

Methodology

The study will be conducted through a historical methodology based on interpretation of the primary as well as the secondary sources. It will be an attempt to bring out the social relations between genders as has been depicted in the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories. It will critically analyze the extent to which their roles and relations were gendered. Also it will look into the notions and concept of Adultery, Prostitution and courtesans in the text and trace how far they have been prejudiced and how were they perceived by the patriarchal society.

Thus the Primary sources for the research include the original and the various translated versions of the *Jātakas*. The first translation is by E.B Cowell which will include Volume I to Volume VI, Second is H.T. Francis and E.J Thomas translation of the *Jātaka*. However, these primary sources will be supplemented by many other secondary sources like books, articles and journals in order to further enrich the information in the research work.

Chapterization

➤ **CHAPTER I**

Introduction:

This Chapter deals with the structure, style, narration and nature of the text, highlighting on how the *Jātakas* serves as an important source for constructing the history of Early India. It also gives an overall view about the study consisting of Literature Review, Objectives, Methodology and Overview of the Chapters.

➤ **CHAPTER II**

Gender Relations within the family:

This chapter focuses on the gender relations and roles within the family, household and marriage systems. It examines how far their roles and relations were gendered.

➤ **CHAPTER III**

Gender and Perception of Adultery in the Text:

This chapter analyzes the concept of adultery as has been depicted in the text.

➤ **CHAPTER IV**

The institution of Prostitution and Patriarchy:

This chapter examines the institution of prostitution, their social and economic status and if they were or were not the victim of patriarchal domination.

➤ **CHAPTER V**

Conclusion:

This chapter critically analyzes and sums up all the work discussed above in each chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER RELATIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Family has always been the basic unit of a social system. As an institution, it is an intrinsic element to a society. It is this organization that enables the process of production and reproduction through generations. With these functions it has played an indispensable role in shaping the social norms and upholding it. It imposes the sex roles and creates division of labor among the genders. Gender division of labor refers to the different roles and responsibilities that women and men must fulfill based on the societal idea of what each gender are capable of doing¹. In the earlier matriarchal society where agriculture was the main source of economy, women occupied an important position, as they were considered as the discoverer of agriculture. But with the coming of Patriarchal system the position of women was subdued. It is said “The Matriarchal family in the initial phases gradually gave way to patriarchal organization with the change in economic activity”². Family therefore cannot be taken as a static unit but it is ever changing and dynamic. This change in the structure of family determines the gender relations to a great extent. In a male dominated society there was a huge change in the position of women and guided by the patriarchal values the perspectives of men towards them became derogatory. This system of domination of males led to the subjugation of the other as the general idea appears to be that the females should be under the male counterparts, be it father, husband or son. In a family or household the first inference to the gender differences and gender biases comes from the works that are attested to the male and female members. We see male members doing most of the works outside the household and being connected with more masculine features, while female roles

¹ Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2003), 32.

² Vinita Chandra, *Gender Relations in Early India*, (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2010), 41.

seem to confine mostly within the household works, rearing children and taking care of the male members. A feminine character is attached to her considering them as a weaker sex. The main role of the women was considered to be that of housewives and managing the household affairs according to the wishes of their husbands. She was the center of the domestic world. Even as a wife the life of women was often seem to be miserable. Again with the birth of the child they became more tied to the household making them more subservient to their male counterparts³. This can be seen as what we call as the division of labor. Economic control by men makes this distinction more visible in a family.

These differences in roles of two individuals are constructed by the society overtime on the basis of their biological features and family as a part of it seems to strongly adhere to this. Looking beyond the mere structure of a family as a basic social unit, it contains the “seeds of Exploitation”⁴. The traditional social roles attested to them by the society that are maintained by the families have widened the gap for the gender differences. However, there can be seen an overlapping between the two concept of family and household as family represents the conjugal unit whereas household a consumption unit, both an indispensable feature of an individual life. Here, these two concepts have been used interchangeably. The understanding of gender relation within a family in a society is necessary to be studied because it is through these social institutions that the mindsets of individuals are constructed and therefore they act. According to Kumkum Roy, household is one of the major institutions where the relations between the genders are more definite⁵. Where the position and treatment of women in a society is one of the major indexes to measure the developmental extend of a society.

³ Gail Omvedt , *Buddhism in India: challenging Brahmanism and Caste*, (New Delhi: Sage publication, 2013), 81.

⁴Ibid., 41.

⁵ Kumkum Roy, “The kings household: structure space in the sastric tradition”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, oct-24-31, 1995, 55.

Family in the ancient times represented not only a social but also a political unit. The early Aryans did not have an elaborate social organization; their society was based on Tribal kinship⁶. The 'Jana' and 'vish' were the two important units, where the former denoted a whole village and the latter was clan. However, the basic unit of society of the period was family. For instance, during the Vedic period we come across the concept of 'Kula' meaning 'family' with 'kulapa' as its head. The Later Vedic period represents the patriarchal society with rigid rules and norms which led to the confinement of women within the four walls, basically making them more dependent on their male counterparts. The relation between them was skewed. It is generally accepted that during Buddhism because of its more lenient and inclusive ideology there occurred many changes in the society. Especially women enjoyed more freedom as compared to the earlier period. But it is interesting to note that the Buddhist *Jātakas* show another picture to this generally accepted view. Talking about the gender relations within the household, the text revolves more relating with the royal household and other affairs but nevertheless there are also instances of a common householder as well. The head of the family or household 'grha' was always the father also known as 'grhapati' or an equivalent term to this in Pali is 'gahapati', who held the power and control over the house and other members of the family indicating the unchallenged patriarchal values of the earlier period. Wherein "The family organization being patriarchal, there is a definite and very significant correlation between womanhood and family life...The study of gender relations within the family is thus, inalienable from the understanding of women within the society"⁷. It has been pointed out that "Buddhism in spite of its catholic ideas did not at first place women on a level with men"⁸.

In order to understand their relation during the period of Buddha, this chapter will focus on certain factors such as the concentration of power and the social standing of women as

⁶ D.N. Jha, *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2016), 48.

⁷ Vinita Chandra, *Gender*, 42.

⁸ Bimala Churn Law, *Women in Buddhist Literature*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2007), 1.

reflected in the text basically dealing with the family and the marriage systems and practices. As “Marriage and family are basic institutions in all societies whether primitive or modern and the position of woman in particular society is influenced by and expresses in the status she holds within these institutions”⁹.

Power and Authority

Gender relation refers to the relations of power between women and men. Power and authority plays an indispensable role in controlling and shaping the rules and norms of a society. Where in a patriarchal society power is concentrated in the hands of the male members and is controlled by them. Men hold control of every important social institution which women on the other hand is deprived of. This leads to the suppression and subjugation of the females. There is no scope of women being a central authority. All the rules and norm are set by the patriarchal lords in favor of themselves while neglecting the others interests. Thus it is here essential to study the distribution of power and authority between the two genders in a society to be able to evaluate the relationship between the two. The later part of the Vedic period represents one of domination and disapproval of women. This can be known from many of the normative texts like Manu, Dharmashāstras etc. These Ideas of the subjugation of females are not absent in the *Jātaka* stories and can be seen as a legacy of the preceding Brahmanical views. The stories throw light on the asymmetrical relations between the two genders not only in connection to the political holdings but also social and economic. These differences can be vividly seen when we look it in the context of the King’s household and affairs. Moreover the *Jātaka* stories focuses mostly on the Royals. The disparity between the two sexes is quite evident in the text right from the birth of the child. Meena Talim rightly says “The birth of a daughter was rarely welcomed in India even from early times...Buddhist

⁹ R.K Pruthi, S.Ram, Archana Chaturvedi, *Women in Buddhism*, (Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 2011), 5.

society too, was not averse to this tradition”¹⁰. As for this we find in *Culla-palabona*¹¹ and *Kussa Jātaka*¹² the heirless kings and queens praying for the birth of a male child nowhere in the story it is found that a couple aspiring a daughter. Also In regards to the education of Princes, there are several references of them as in *Culla-Dhanuga*¹³, *Ayakuta*¹⁴, *Arañña*¹⁵, *Sandhibheda*¹⁶, *Dhonasākha*¹⁷ *Jātakas* etc. that after reaching of the age of sixteen or so, going abroad mostly to Takshila for educating themselves from the renowned teachers. But the story remains silent regarding the education of daughters; it is not referred that a daughter for educational purpose being sent abroad along with boys or any kind of process for educating the daughters. The cause for these differences again can be related and understood from the context of polity as the successor to the throne was generally male or the king’s son. This can be evident from *Culla-paduma*¹⁸ *Jātaka* where the king before sending his sons to exile says when he is dead the princes shall be back and ascend the throne which belongs to their family. Similarly in *Rahuka Jātaka*¹⁹ there is a reference of the Prince being the king when his father passed away. Kingship was held in perpetuity but in case of failure to produce a natural heir to the throne immediate measures would be taken to fill the gap through election of the most competent person as the king²⁰. Several instances are there which give an upper hand to a male member over the female even when it is not the son of a king or a direct and legitimate heir to the throne. For instance, mention may be made of

¹⁰ Meena Talim, *Life of Women in Buddhist Literature*, (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2015), 270.

¹¹ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka or the stories of Buddha’s Former Birth*, Vol II, No.263, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 227-229.

¹² Ibid., Vol V, No.531, 141-164.

¹³ Ibid., Vol III, No.374, 144-148.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol III, No.347, 96-98.

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. III, No.348, 98-99.

¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 349, 99-101.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 353, 105-107.

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, No.193, 81.

¹⁹ H.T Francis and E.J Thomas, *Jātaka Tales*, No. 156, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 156-158.

²⁰ Benoychandra Sen, *Studies In Buddhist Jātakas(Tradition and Polity)*, (Calcutta: Saraswat Press,1960), 74.

*Asilakhaṇa Jātaka*²¹. Here the king who only had a daughter and a nephew decides to make his nephew the heir to the throne but not his daughter. He thinks to marry his daughter to his nephew but on second thought decides to marry her to a different prince as this matrimonial alliance would gain him two kingdoms. Here one can sense the patriarchal value that has been preserved. She was not thought worthy of being the successor to the kingdom but has been used as a medium for gaining a kingdom. It can be observed that kingship was the central aspect of the polity. It has been rightly observed by Benoychandra Sen that “According to the prevailing conception of the State in the Jātakas, kingship was a necessary and inseparable factor in polity”²². The preference of a son over daughter as the heir can be understood as the rooted patriarchal ideas that led to the subjugation of women. As patriarchy is said to be the ‘prime obstacle to women’s advancement and development’²³.

The narratives reveal about instances where the identity of the father becomes important for a child which is obvious in a patriarchal society. In one story, we find the king of Kosala asks for the hand of the daughter of the sakya clan but the latter being too proud of their high birth tricked the king by getting him married with the daughter of the slave women. Later after having a son with the women the King came to know about her low origin. The king became enraged. The Master in order to pacify him says “what matters the mother’s birth? The birth of the father is the measure”²⁴. Thus this talks about how the mother’s birth/ origin were not an important measure of a man and also the maternal significance and identity has been overlooked by the society. This can also be evident in *Kaṭṭhahāri Jātaka*,²⁵ the Bodhisatta being born of a union of the king Brahmadata of Benaras and women of a low origin. The pregnant woman was left by the king giving her a signet ring, on a condition that if a son was

²¹ E.B Cowell, Jātaka, Vol. I, No.129, 276-280.

²² Benoychandra Sen, *Studies in Buddhist Jatakas*, 74.

²³ Abeda Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis”, *The Arts Faculty Journal*, July 2010- June 2011, 3.

²⁴ Cowell, Jātaka, Vol.IV, No.465, 91.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol I, No.7, 27.

born then the king shall accept him as his heir but if a girl was born then the women will spend the ring nurturing the child. The story goes on and she gives birth to a son, and as he grows his friends begins to insult him by calling “no-father” as having no paternal identity. The mother then seeks to prove the king as his father at the risk of her child’s life. This tells much regarding the importance of the patriarchal identity for social acceptance. Also apart from the paternal importance we can also see how the differences existed between a son and a daughter, the stories reveals son as being more important and worthy of inheriting the Kingdom where as a daughter was not taken to be suitable for the same. Though, she was not totally neglected.

There are also clear divisions of the routine works between the two genders. The king on the one hand has always shown as brave, delivering justice, hunting, forging wars and playing dice. On the other hand the queens are mostly confined within the houses. This can be evident from the story of *Mahajanaka Jātaka*²⁶ where the queen had to run away to save her life after her husband’s death, it is said that she did not know the way or even know a place as she had never went outside. And only have heard of a city named Kāḷacampā but she wasn’t able to ‘fix the points of compass’. The unequal share of power and authority in the royal household is evident in the *Culla-Dhammapāla Jātaka*²⁷. Here, the queen of king (Mahapatapa) in Benares gave birth to a son. While she was playing with the child she forgets to rise up on the entry of the king. The king thought that after giving birth to the child the queen was filled with pride and being jealous of her affection towards her child he called an executer and ordered to kill the child by cutting his body parts one by one. The queen requested to cut her own limbs instead of her child but the king didn’t listen to her pleadings. At last she fell dead on the spot as she could not bear the pain that befell on her child. This serves as a glaring example of mother’s love towards her child but at the same time the story reveals the

²⁶Ibid., Vol VI, No.539, 19-37.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol.III, No.358, 117-120.

authority and the power holder and the state in which the other sex was. A mother did not have the claim over her own child.

Similarly, there are several stories that give an insight into the plight of women in accessing the resources as well, the injustices done to them in this regard are known from the stories like *Succaja Jātaka* where the king Brahmadatta of Benares sent his son to exile, the Prince's Wife follows him throughout his journey but when asked if the mountain turned into gold how much of it would he give to her. The king refuses to give even an atom to her. When he came to the throne he gave her the titular title of Queen but totally neglected her. The deprivation of queen over the resources and her pitiable condition can be known from the story as one day when the Bodhisatta asked for the alms to the Queen she humbly replied "If I were to receive aught, I would give it to you, but if I get nothing, what am I to give"²⁸. Similar is the story in the *Godha Jātaka*²⁹ where the Prince does not share the food given to them by the hunters in the jungle and ate all by himself. When he came to the throne he also did not give importance to her. It was only at the intervention of Bodhisatta that the king realizes his mistake. Also we see the plight of the devoted queens who were ignored by their husband. Such case can be found in *Sambula Jātaka*, it records a character of devoted wife. The husband (Prince) struck by leprosy left the city and went to the forest followed by his devoted wife. She nursed him and took every care of him; finally due to her devotion he is cured. And after returning to their kingdom he completely ignored his wife and took pleasures with other women. Being heartbroken the queen began to grow thin and pale. When asked about the reason she said "A woman may be in splendid attire but if she be an unloved wife she should put an end to her life by fixing a rope"³⁰. The stories reflect how in a male dominated society, men by their authority influence and mould the minds of their female counterparts. She cannot do anything but just live a miserable life if she was ignored by the

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, No.320, 44-47.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 333, 71.

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. V, No. 519, 48-54

husband. However the patriarchal lords do not seem to have any consideration for their wives and were indulge in pleasures. Women lived on so confined environment where only thing they had to do was serve their man. In one story a women mentions “for a husband is a woman’s real covering and she that lacks a husband—even though she be clad in garments costing thousand pieces—goes bare and naked indeed”.³¹ The above two stories reflects clearly how the entire world of a woman depended and revolved around her husband. It was the husbands who controlled the lives of the wives. Naturally women in such environment subdued to the position of mere objects for the other.

One of the glaring examples of the concentration of power and authority in the hand of the male comes from the *Cullapaduma Jātaka*.³² The king Brahmadata of Benares exiles the sons fearing their popularity in his court. Obeying the order they left the kingdom and went to forest where due to hunger and thirst, starting with the youngest brother’s wife they decided to kill their wives in order to save themselves. The eldest prince (Bodhisatta) and his wife manage to save half of the meat of their share. When the turn of the Bodhisattva’s wife came, he hands over the saved meat to his brothers promising to find food for the next day. Bodhisatta escapes along with his wife at night. What seems to be strange here is the story remains silent on any form of resistance from the victims this leads to several questions as to, why is it that the seven women were not able to show any kind of resistance? Can it be interpreted as the devotion or else the domination of patriarchal values of serving the males at the cost of one’s life? Nevertheless it becomes clear of how husbands had a total control over their wives and women were certainly thought no more than a commodity and animals.

In the light of the above statement it can be said that the Jātaka stories contains in them the notion of objectification and commodification of women. This can here be elaborated through

³¹ Ibid., Vol. I, No.67, 164-166.

³² Ibid., Vol.II, No.193, 81- 85.

various instances one of which is *Anabhirati Jātaka*³³, where a pupil of Bodhisatta found his wife unfaithful, thus the Bodhisatta for the edification of his pupil says that woman is not a private property and that they are common to all like those of highways, rivers and courtyards.

“Like highways, rivers, courtyards, hostelries or travens,
While to all alike extend one universal hospitality
Is womankind; and wise men never stoop
To wrath at frailty in a sex frail”

The comparison of women with roads and rivers certainly do not hint to her respectable position or as what it is suggested by the phrase “common to all” must be analyzed. Why there is no point for a wise man to get depressed or angry with the women who are a frail sex? Again the word ‘frail’ might suggest women to be weak or delicate towards things such as lust and desire and to betray was considered her nature clearly reflecting the male stereotypical perception towards female. It would here not be wrong to say that, the objectification of women became more pronounced due to the unequal participation of women in the process of procreation³⁴. The womb of women has been treated as the ground or space for bearing offspring of what can be called as ‘patriarchal lords’. Women had no control over her womb. Most glaring evidence of this comes from *Kussa Jātaka*,³⁵ where the heirless king sent his dancing girls on the street to bear a child for him but when they all failed to conceive, he sends his own queen consort on the street to beget a child or heir for him. The fate of a queen thus was no difference than that of the dancing girls. It can be understood that wives accepted this as it was the order of their lord and to disobey him was not an option. The king’s inability to bear a child was too explicit but yet it is his wives who had to suffer. Here, one can witness the existence of unequal treatment on the basis of gender; and how one gender was dominant over another that led to their subjugation. In other words,

³³ Ibid., Vol.I, No.65,160-161.

³⁴ Taniya Roy, “The Notion of Objectifying Women: As Represented in the Jātakas”, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol.73, 2012, 126-131.

³⁵ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. V, No.531, 141-146.

this unequal treatment can be understood on the basis of the capability of exercising their authority over the other by the males that were recognized in a society of patriarchal domination. Where in a patriarchal society there is a tendency to hold the female of womenfolk responsible for such things like progeny.

The objectification of women as wife becomes glaring in *Dasañṇaka Jātaka*³⁶ where a king's household priest's son becomes enamored by the beauty of the chief Queen of the king. When the king came to know about this he gave the Queen to him for seven days with a promise that he will return the Queen again in the eight day. The wish of the Queen was not asked if she wished to go with the priest son. She had no other choice but to go with him. Thus it is clear how the women were controlled by the males and treated nothing other than as a form of property. Another story where the commodification of women's procreative power can be visualized lies in the *Andabhuta Jātaka*³⁷, here the story revolves around a chaplain who plays dice with the king but losses every time, in order to save his ruin he sought to find a maiden who had never seen a man in her life. For this he bought a pregnant lady. A girl was born and was kept under confinement. The story says the lady was given money for the unborn baby by which the chaplain eventually becomes her master who had full control over her. Thus it cannot be denied that the relation between the two genders was that of domination and subjugation of one over another, reflecting the rooted patriarchy that was present in the country since ages. Even Buddhism inspite of its egalitarian concepts cannot do away with the idea that had been prevalent for such a long period of time.

The skewed relationship between the two genders and the unequal share of power was not limited only to the Royals but also among the common householders. The disparities between them are vividly seen in the routine works they were involved in. We find references to

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 401, 207-210.

³⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 62, 151-155.

certain works that are not associated with the women folk and thus it can be said that occupation of men and women were gendered. The *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka*³⁸ speaks of a merchant or caravan leader who successfully leads his carts even through difficult roads women are never shown as doing such tasks. Most of the works of men are outside the house maybe for trade or in case of Brahmans they went to other areas for performing various ceremonies as a way of livelihood also when coming to the context of those practicing agriculture for living the reference to ploughing are always connected to man- Gahapatis, dasas or halikas³⁹. We find in a story⁴⁰, where the father goes with his son to plough the field leaving his wife daughter and female slave at home. At the death of his son at the field he sends message to his wife to prepare food for one only. The food is brought to the field by the female slave. The *Takkala*⁴¹ story talks about a poor layman who used to work in the field to procure rice gruel and support his old father. His father suggested him to get married because he did all the work by himself and by doing so his wife would do the household work for him. Therefore it can be understood that women remained inside the household doing the domestic works only and were confined within the walls of their house.

Women are shown to be engaged with works like pounding rice⁴², keeping watch over the rice fields⁴³, fetching water from the river⁴⁴ etc. *Sūcci Jātaka* gives reference of a daughter fanning her father while he was resting after his daily meal. However in some rare case like that of *Gaṅgamāla Jātaka*⁴⁵, man and woman are shown as working together. The story talks about a poor man who carries water to earn his livelihood; it is said that his wife also does the same work as him. It has been pointed out “References to sowing, weeding and

³⁸ Ibid., Vol.I, No. I, 1-9.

³⁹ Uma Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives Every Day Histories: Beyond the King and the Brahmanas of ‘Ancient’ India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2006), 112.

⁴⁰ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No.354, 107-111.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, No.446, 27.

⁴² Ibid., Vol. I, No. 45, 117.

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. I, No.140, 300.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. V, No. 536, 219..

⁴⁵ Ibid., Vol. III. No. 421, 26.

transplantation are general, performed by both the sexes”⁴⁶ but in any cases men were the breadwinner of the family which naturally gave him authority over the female members.

Talking about their relation as a family, it has been rightly observed by Uma Chakravarti “The husband –wife bond is characterized most often by negative attitudes rather than neutral and positive ones, involving adultery, suspicion or outright physical aggression...”⁴⁷ The *Jātaka* text tends to show women as wicked and tyrannical. The *Durajana Jātaka*⁴⁸ portrayed wife as a sinful and wicked woman , who was as meek as a slaves on days she had done wrong and when she has not done wrong, she was tyrannical who harassed her husband.

To wicked wives there are no considerations for husband’s poverty. Once a poor man’s wife planned to go to a festival putting a safflower- coloured cloth but the husband was too poor to buy it. The wife was so adamant that she made him to risk his life and steal it. At the end the man got caught by the king’s guard and was put to death⁴⁹. Also it records how due to wickedness of women discontent and strife occurs in a household; mention may be made of *Kaccani Jātaka*⁵⁰ where a wicked wife could not live with her mother-in-law and poisons her husband’s ear and finally the old woman had to leave the house. The tyranny of the wife upon her husband can also be evident from the *Udancani Jātaka*⁵¹ who made her husband a slave making him run errands for every single thing she wanted. The text shows a tendency to portray women in a negative sense as vile and wicked which makes her husband suffer. This kind of representations of woman in the stories when understood and analyzed carefully provides an insight into the underlying stereotypical and misogynistic perception of men towards women that were guided by the patriarchal conception embedded in the society.

⁴⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives Everyday Histories*, 112.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴⁸ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. I, No.64, 158-160.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 147, 312-313.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.III, No. 417, 253-256.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 106, 248-249.

An idea regarding the position of wife in relation to her husband can be gained through the seven types of wife that Buddha himself has categorized in *Sujāta Jātaka*⁵². They are:

- i. Destructive wife (bad at heart, destroys her husband's wealth, non compassionate, who hates her husband and loves others).
- ii. Dishonest wife (she is a thievish wife who steals from whatever has been provided to her by her husband)
- iii. High and Mighty wife (she is careless of duty, foul mouthed, lazy and tyrannical)
- iv. Motherly wife (she is the one who takes motherly care of her husband),
- v. Sisterly wife (one who is obedient to the will of her husband and modest, respects her husband as her brother)
- vi. Friendly wife (one who is virtuous and finds pleasure in husband's sight as a friend),
- vii. And the last is the Slavish wife (one who is patience, passionate, quite when abused and submissive to her husband).

Among the seven types the last four has been considered to be an ideal one. He further says the above three wife are reborn in hell while the last four are born in the fifth heaven. The ideal types of wife when analyzed, basically bore a common characteristic that is providing service and comfort to their husbands. According to this categorization, in any case if the wife is not submissive and disagree with her husband or protests when her husband is being tyrannical she might not fit into the category of an ideal wife. This can be seen as an attempt to restrict the activities of women and guide and create the norms of the society that the women on the basis of getting sanction as an ideal wife must follow. On the other hand, it is not mentioned anywhere in the text such distinct types of categorization and quality a husbands should possess. Buddha himself cannot do away with the concept of the male superiority and treatment of men as a perfect being.

⁵² Ibid., Vol. II, No. 269, 239- 242.

Marriage

The sacrament of marriage has always been a central aspect of Indian society and looked upon with great respect. It is said that the rites that are involved in marriage gives an “occasion for giving expression to relationships at several levels-- between bride and groom, within and among varṇas, and among kinsfolk”⁵³. Marriage therefore can be taken as a center around which revolves “a person’s social existence concerning power, status, and well being, both material and spiritual”⁵⁴. It is this institution of marriage that ensures the continuity of society by ensuring procreation. The important of this system can be known from the fact that it was one of the four āśramas or stages one had to follow. Marriage sanctions the social acceptance for living together of man and woman as husband and wife. Thus it is the basis of family and the household stage. For woman it was considered to be a second birth as she would enter into a new life of *gr̥halaxmi* or wifehood. It proves to be another important institution which has got considerable attention in the texts of early Indian textual tradition.

Even during the Vedic period marriage formed an essential aspect of individual’s life and the development of man’s personality was considered as incomplete if he does not marry and have children. He was considered as impious or *yajñavihina* as marriage was taken to be a pious act.⁵⁵ Similarly like in the other periods of history, marriage in the Buddhist epoch constituted an essential part of women’s life. There are several references to various forms of marriages in the Jātaka stories but the text is silent as for the appropriate age of marriage. Thus I.B Horner mentions “No age is prescribed as the correct marriageable age but girls probably married as a rule between sixteen and twenty”.⁵⁶ Moreover in one case of

⁵³ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender and The Gender of Power*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 223.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 223-224

⁵⁵ Mani Ram Sharma, *Marriage in Ancient India*, (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1993), 1.

⁵⁶ I.B Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Alms Women*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Pvt Ltd, 1989), 28.

Asilakkhṇa Jātaka, we find that the princess was married when she was sixteen years of age⁵⁷.

B.C law⁵⁸ mentions mostly three types of marriage viz: *Brāhma Vivāha* (arranged marriage by the parents of both parties), *Svayamvara Vivāha* (the girl was to choose husband from the people assembled) and *Gāndharva Vivāha* (bridegroom and bride choose themselves their partner on their own without the knowledge of their parents) as prevalent mostly. Apart from these forms we do find references to Rāksha(elopement) form of marriage.

Brāhma Vivāha was the common form of marriage that was prevalent, where the marriage was arranged by the parents of both the parties mostly between the same caste and status. This is attributed by the stories like that of *Kulāvaka Jātaka*⁵⁹ which mentions parents taking for their son wife of the equal rank. The *Babbu Jātaka*⁶⁰ and *Nakkhatta Jātaka*⁶¹ also talks on the same direction. The former story is about a Savatthian girl whose name was Kāṇā, she is given to marriage with the man of another village but of the same caste. The second story acquaints us with an instance where a gentleman of the country near Savatthi asked for his son's marriage a young Savathian lady of equal rank. Also *Suruci Jātaka*⁶² presents a story where the Prince Suruci and Prince Brhamadatta of Benaras were two friends who decide to give their children in marriage to one another after coming to the throne.

Virtue and chastity was/is very essential and central to the Buddhist ethics. Thus the decision for marriage required careful judgment. Mostly preferences were given to the virtuous one, as *Sīlavīmāmsana Jātaka*⁶³ refers to a story where the Master decides to marry his daughter to the most virtuous disciple of his. Thus he to test them asks to steal dresses and ornaments for his daughter without the knowledge of others all the disciples does so except for the

⁵⁷ H.T Francis and E.J Thomas, *Jataka Tales*, No. 126, 112-115.

⁵⁸ B.C Law, *Women in Buddhist Literature*, 4.

⁵⁹ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol I, No. 305, 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol.I, No.136, 294-297.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol .I, No.49, 124-126.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, No, 363, 198.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Vol III, No.305, 12.

Bodhisatta. Finally being pleased by his virtue he gives his daughter in marriage to Bodhisatta. The story also provides an insight into the silence of mother in choosing husband for her daughter, reflecting the decision making power of women in the contemporary society. Another instance is provided by *Sādhūsīla Jātaka*⁶⁴ where the Brahman gives his all four daughters to the one of his four disciples who was virtuous; inspite of the fact that the other three students also possessed very good qualities but yet virtue was thought above them all.

Being virtuous enough was equally important for women to get married, this is suggested by various stories like *Seggu Jātaka*⁶⁵ where a greengrocer to test the virtue of his own daughter takes her to the woods and holds her hand acting like he has developed passion for her but she refuses to commit the sin with her father. Finally the man brings her home and as proven her virtue gives her in marriage to a young man. This marriage can also be seen as the *Prājāpatya* marriage where the father gives the daughter without dowry and bride price. Also being proficient in some form of arts and crafts can also be seen as a prerequisite for Brāhma marriage. This can be understood from *Sūci Jātaka*⁶⁶, where the Village head smith gives his daughter in marriage to Bodhisatta as he was extremely proficient in his crafts. Similar case can be found in *Culla-dhanuggaha Jātaka*⁶⁷, the marriage of the girl was done by her father with one of the student of his when he saw that the man had become so proficient in archery. Thus also by looking at the personality and art of the man the woman was given in marriage. It is interesting to note that there is no reference to questioning or rejecting the decision of marriage made by the father. The daughters are not asked if they wanted to marry the person the father chose. Particularly among the common household, the women did not have the right to protest against the decision made by their father. Here one can also see the underlying

⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 200, 96-97.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 217, 216.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 387, 178.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 374, 144-148.

concept of the domination of men and control over the females. The daughter was objectified as a reward or given as a gift to his best proficient disciple.

However, in this case the Royal women seem to enjoy a little freedom as *Svayamvara Vivāha* was more in vogue amongst them. It was the second form of marriage where the princess could choose their own partners from among the members assembled. In *Kunāla Jātaka*⁶⁸ there is reference of the *Svayambara* form of marriage of Princess Kaṇhā. She on seeing the five sons of king Pāṇḍu i.e. Ajjuna, Nakula, Bhīmasena, Yudhiṭṭha and Sachadev in the *Svayambara* assembly fell in love with them all and decided to marry all the five men. She was allowed to have these five men as her husband. Also in *Nacca Jātaka*⁶⁹ we find the story of a princess who asked her father to allow a boon to choose her husband by herself, the king arranged *Svayamvara* to grant her wish where many princes were invited.

The third kind of marriage we can get reference in the text is that *Gāndharva* form of marriage. It is a type of marriage where the boy and the girl decide to marry without the knowledge of their guardians. Mention may be made of *Sujāta Jātaka*⁷⁰ where the King falls in love with the poor fruit bearer by just listening to her voice and makes her the chief Queen Consort. The *Katthahari Jātaka*⁷¹ presents us with the example where the king wandering in his garden sees a woman singing and falls in love with her and becomes intimate with her. The women told the king that she would become a mother, on hearing this king gave her the child and said: “If it be a girl, spend this ring on her nurture; but if be it a boy, bring ring and the child to me”. Thus a son was born but it was proved with great difficulty it was his son. Only then the king made the woman his chief consort. Moreover it is this form of marriage where inter caste and class marriages were common. There are references to woman of the lower category and caste becoming a Queen Viz, *Sujāta Jātaka* where the King falls in love

⁶⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, No.536, 219-245.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Vol. I, No.32, 83-84.

⁷⁰ H.T Francis & E.J Thomas, *Jataka Tales*, No, 306, 221-223.

⁷¹ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. I, No.7, 27-28.

with a poor fruit seller and makes her the Queen Consort. Also in a story⁷² king Brahmadata is said to have married a woman of low origin.

The text reflects also the stories of elopement with the lover. Rākshasa vivāha (elopement and carrying away) seems to have existed then. In the *Mudu-Pani Jātaka*⁷³ a princess elopes with her paternal cousin. The princess defies all the security apparatus around her while running away with her lover. Apart from elopements there are instances of abduction as well. *Asātarūpa Jātaka*⁷⁴ speaks of the King of Benares being attacked by the great force of the Kosalan king, who slew the former and took his wife for his own. Also in *Takka Jātaka*⁷⁵ a woman who was the wife of the hermit living in the village was abducted by a robber chieftain. According to B.C. Law “To guard against these elopements and abduction and unions not sanctioned by customs, women were often kept inside the purdah”⁷⁶. Many scholars argue that during the Buddhist period the *pardah* system for women did not exist but we do find a reference of veil suggesting the restriction towards women as in the case of *Cullakalinga Jātaka*⁷⁷ which mentions the use of the covered carriage.

It is interesting to note that we find one instance of Sister-Marriage in the text, though the common view happens to be it was absent in Ancient India, *Kunāla Jātaka*⁷⁸ in this case appears to be an exception, where we find an instance of marriage between one's own sisters. In the story the Koliya tribe criticized the people of Kapilavatthu for marrying their own sisters saying “Be off with your people of Kapilavatthu, who like dogs, Jackals and such like beasts, cohabited with their own sisters”. Thus it can be understood that though it rarely existed it was not approved by the society. Another example in the Jātakas regarding sister

⁷² Ibid., Vol. I, No. 7, 27-28.

⁷³ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 224-226

⁷⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 100, 242-243.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 65, 160-164.

⁷⁶ B.C. Law, *Women in Buddhist Literature*, 10.

⁷⁷ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No.30.1, 1-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, No. 536, 219.

marriage comes from Udaya Jātaka⁷⁹ where Prince Udayanhadda of Kasi married his sister with the same name Udayabhaddā she was the daughter of his stepmother, when his parents could not find for him a suitable wife. Sister marriage is what we find as a distinctive feature that is depicted in the text.

Again when we look for marriages between cousins this too was by no means uncommon. There are various references especially between the royals where they would marry their cousins. One such example is *Asilakhaṇa Jātaka*⁸⁰ as mentioned above where the princess marries his cousin from the paternal side. Also princess Vajirā married King Ajātsatru, he was the son of her father's sister.⁸¹ The acceptance of this kind of marriage is attested by the instance presented in the *Cullapaduma Jātaka*⁸², where the princess after elopement with the mutated robber who was her paramour carried him on her shoulder and begged around. When asked about the identity of the man she would say "His mother was sister to my father, he is my cousin; to him they gave me". The people then would show more sympathy and give her more food. She would not be criticized for marrying her cousin, which reflects the general acceptance of marriages between cousins.

Dowry

The system of dowry in marriage can be seen as a *dāna* or gift in cash or kind, given to the bridegroom or his family from the father of bride at the time of his daughter's marriage. Usually the amount for dowry is determined by the bridegroom's parents according to his qualification, economic and social status etc. If a father of the bride could not afford to fulfill the exorbitant demands of the person with whom he wants to get his daughter married then he would not succeed in securing the bridegroom for marriage. However, there is a chance for the reduction of the amount of dowry on the basis of qualification and beauty of the bride but

⁷⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, No.458, 66-70.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Vol. I, No.129, 276-280

⁸¹ Ibid., Vol II, No.239,164-165

⁸² Ibid., Vol. II, No. 193,81-85

the reduction is very meager⁸³. When we look into the history of the evolution of this system it appears that it was introduced by the society with the concept of providing a kind of material assistance to the newlywed couples. It also acted as a financial security on the part of the bride in case she was ill treated by her husband and his family. Regarding the existence of this in Indian society, Altekar says “Dowry system...was generally unknown in early societies...no references either in smṛtis or in dramas to the dowry”⁸⁴. But as far as the system of dowry is concerned, it will not be out of place to say that the system of dowry had its existence in a crude form even at the period of Buddha more in connection with the royals and nobility. Though the term dowry was not used as such in case of present day but there are references to bath-money and bridegroom’s family receiving various materials like perfumes, garlands, garments etc at the time of the marriage from the bride’s family. As in *Haritamāta Jātaka*⁸⁵ the Kosalan king Mahā kosala, at the time of his daughters’s marriage with Bimbisara gave a village in kasi as a part of her bath money. Again when Pasenadi of kosala lost war against Ajātsatru he gave his daughter Vajirā in marriage to him and kasi as a gift⁸⁶. In the above mention *Nakkhatta Jātaka*, the usual practice of the bridegroom and his party coming to the bride house for marriage where they were received with great honor, good lodgings and many other materials like perfume, garlands etc. are reflected in the stories. The payment of dowry at the time was most probably voluntary but an exception to this view can be found in the *Culla-kāliṅga Jātaka*⁸⁷ here the king of Kāliṅga when lost the war against the king Assaka of Potalia kingdom was forced to forward a portion of his territory as a part of the dowry of her four daughters. The King of Kāliṅga fearing the warning sent the suitable portion of his territory and thus it is said they lived happily.

⁸³ K.M Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India*, (Calcutta:Oxford University Press, 1966), 137.

⁸⁴ A.S Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu civilization: from Pre Historic to the Present Times*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2009), 71.

⁸⁵ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol II, No.239, 164-165.

⁸⁶ T.W Rhys Davis, *Buddhist India*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 2011), 4.

⁸⁷ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No. 301, 1.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the system of dowry as an evil custom was not developed at that very point of time. It was voluntary and cannot be seen as the financial obstacle to marriage. During the period under review it was considered as a sign of love and affection of the bride's family towards their daughter. It was in the later years it became compulsory and also became the factor for the measurement of the economic and social status of the bridegroom, the big amount of dowry meant very high status in the society. Marriage was regarded as a social institution and personal event but with the transformation of such system of dowry becoming rigid in society marriage became an economic and commercial aspect based on transactions of property.

Polyandry and Polygamy

It is widely accepted that during the Buddhist epoch as in the Vedic period the general rule for marriage was Monogamy. But yet the concept of polyandry and polyandry in the society was not unknown. Though it cannot be denied that polyandry was very rare if not totally absent. The *Jātakas* have only one reference to this practice in *Kuṇḍala Jātaka*⁸⁸, where Princess Kaṇhā was allowed to marry all five sons of King Pāṇḍu. We can get an idea from the above story that Polyandry was not something that was appreciated and accepted in the society. According to general rule women could not marry more than one man at a time. This is known from the story presented in the *Nakkhatta Jātaka*⁸⁹, here the bridegroom failed to reach the house of bride for marriage on the fixed date and the bride was given to another man. When the first bridegroom came to the place the next day he was told that the girl was already given in marriage the other day and cannot be married twice. It can however be examined that on the one hand women were not allowed to marry more than one husband but it as has been said during the time was "Polyandry was the matter of convenience and

⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, No.536, 219-245.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Vol .I, No.49, 124-126.

expediency”⁹⁰. Men on the other would take as many as wives that he pleased. There is plethora of evidences for the practice of polyandry on a full swing. This was more common and prevalent among the royals and the people of upper section. In some of the Jātaka stories⁹¹ there are references to King having thousands of wives though the number seems to be overly exaggerated. Marrying more than one wife was also in vogue among the common householders. It would be interesting to note that Buddha himself approved of this system, we find in *Sādhusīla Jātaka*⁹² a Brahman master had four daughters and also four students each bearing different qualities, one was virtuous, one elderly, one beautiful and one noble. The Brahman could not decide with whom he would marry his daughters when asked to Bodhisatta about the problem he said that how virtue of a man is all above all the other qualities. Thus the Brahman gave all his four daughters to the one who was virtuous. Now here it can be analyzed that there was a simpler proposition that the Brahman could have married each of his daughter to each of the suitors but yet he presented his all his four daughters to only one man who was virtuous. This suggest that polyandry was not always followed only among the wealthy and nobles.

However when we look into the causes for the practice of Polygamy, there can be seen various reasons that can be traced from the stories. One of the main cause for the husband marrying of many wives was definitely the barrenness of the present wife which was regarded as justifiable, this has be seen by I. B Horner as a continuance of the Vedic tradition of the importance of heir that cannot be up rooted even during the period⁹³. Motherhood since ages was considered as the most important part of a woman’s life. As the main function of marriage was the procreation to ensure the continuity of one’s lineage. This was why it was one of the major duties of a householder. In view of the fact that motherhood was

⁹⁰ K.M Kapadia, *Marriage*, 54.

⁹¹ Cowell, *Jātaka* , Nos. 461, 531, 538, 524.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 200, 96-97.

⁹³ I.B Horner, *Women under primitive Buddhism*, 37.

considered a pivot element of the family and was cherished ideal of a woman, barrenness of a woman was taken to be a grave misfortune. A childless woman suffered from great misery and ill treatment from the family in particular and society in general. Talking about her position in her husband's house she might have to live with the co-wife which again was the primary reason for her sufferings. Also the harassment that she probably received from her in laws is not to be ignored. In *Nigrodha Jātaka* we find a merchant who brought for his son a daughter of another merchant. Later when it came to be known that she was barren, she was given less respect. The family member always kept on saying “while there is a barren wife in our son's household, how can the family kept up?”⁹⁴ They would harass her so much that finally she decided to trick them by pretending to be pregnant. Also in *Bhadda-sala Jātaka*⁹⁵ we see Mallikā, wife of King's Commander-in-Chief was said to return to her own family when it was known that she was barren. Thus a barren woman would lose all the respect in the society. Here it is interesting to note the differences in the treatment that existed between an infertile man and woman. It has already been mentioned above while dealing with the objectification of woman's womb, how a king because of his incapability to produce children sent his several hundred dancing girls on the streets to bear a child moreover he sent his chief queen to beget a son. But nowhere in the narration is it to be found that the king was being criticized for his infertility or else he losing his respect in the eyes of his subjects and courtiers. Here again one can relate this with the rooted concept of male superiority; even if they were incapable of producing a child which for a woman was considered the most valuable task. It can be seen that in any case of either the problem or inability to beget a child lies within a woman or with the male partner of hers, women were the worst sufferers. Barrenness for her can be considered as a curse. It determined how the society would perceive her and the extent of respect she will get. It must be kept in mind that though

⁹⁴ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol.IV, No.445, 22.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol, IV, No. 465, 91.

motherhood was rejoiced and appreciated it cannot be taken as the status of mother in society was very high and elevated. Though to some extent it can be thought to be true but the Jātaka stories have a tendency to show mother as wicked and adulterous. Again it must here be highlighted that the reason for man having many wives was not only connected to wife being unable to produce offspring but yet it sometimes happened when the first wife failed to follow the order given by her husband. This is attested by *Babbu Jātaka*; here, the husband marries the second wife when the first wife could not return from her father's house in the said time by her husband. Still another reason apart from those mentioned above was the husband being depressed by the wickedness of his wife. This is seen in one of the story⁹⁶ where the husband being tired of the wickedness of his wife threatens her that he will get married with another woman.

The practice of Polygamy can be taken as the major reason for the prevalence of large number of co- wives. As had been said “The worst misery for a women is to have a co-wife”⁹⁷ It is in the context of the royal household that we can get a glance over the relationship between the co-wives. In majority of the cases the relation between the co-wives are not very cordial making the household full of chaos and jealousy. This is evident from *Suruci Jātaka*⁹⁸ when the King asks his queen what might be the worst misery for a women. She answered “To quarrel with her fellow- wives”. Further in the same story the King Brhamadatta to save his daughter Princess Sumedhā from this misery agrees to give her in marriage to Prince Suruchi only if he would not marry anyone other than her. A woman could not withstand the existence of another wife and her husband taking pleasure with other women as mentioned above in *Sambula Jātaka*. Also in *Bhūridatta Jātaka*, the Naga woman was well aware of her anger that she could not tolerate being with her co-wives and refused to go with his husband to his Kingdom. When asked by her husband to come with him she

⁹⁶ Ibid., Vol. IV, No.446, 27.

⁹⁷ B.C Law, *Women in Buddhist Literature*, 17.

⁹⁸ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. IV, No.489, 198-200.

refused and warned him saying “the Anger of a Co-wife is a dangerous thing”⁹⁹. This rivalry between the co-wives was not only limited to them but sometimes also extended to the children of the co-wife. One glaring example of this is provided by *Dasaratha Jātaka*¹⁰⁰ where the second wife of King Dasaratha received a boon after she gave birth to a son. Later she utilized that boon to make her son heir to the throne and banished the sons of the first queen from the kingdom. In *Takkala Jātaka*¹⁰¹, Vasitṭhaka, a young man had an old father but his wife did not like to wait upon the old man and told him to get rid of him. At first he agreed but at the intervention of his wise son he realized his mistake. Seeing the wickedness of his wife he pretended to bring a new wife. She on knowing this lamented “Ah, then I am undone! ...there is no place for me”. Whatever may be the reason for husband marrying another wife; though in this story the husband pretended to marry again because of his wife’s impiety, This line reflects about the helplessness of women in case if she is was forsaken by her husband. All these above mentioned instances without any doubt show that the relations between the Co-wives were not very pleasant and happy. We get a depressing picture of their co-existence filled with envy and jealousy of one over another making them conspire against each another. It can be said definitely that their life was miserable.

Speaking about the co-wives it is equally important to analyze if a widow had the opportunity to get married for the second time. The narrative from the *Jātaka* stories show that the system of remarriage of women and widows were not unknown during the period of the Buddha. One fine example is presented from the *Ucchaṅga Jātaka*¹⁰²-- a woman’s husband, brother and son was imprisoned. She lamented aloud in front of the king, where the latter decided to give her a favour by sparing life of any one. When asked whom she wanted to save then she requested to spare the life of her brother. Further she explains that if she lives, she will be

⁹⁹ Ibid., Vol. VI, No.543, 80.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 461, 78-82

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, No.446, 27

¹⁰² Ibid., Vol. I, No.67, 164-166

able to get another husband and child but as her parents are dead she cannot get a brother. Being pleased with her answer the King gave her all three. Also there are ample examples of widow remarriages such as *Bhūridatta Jātaka*¹⁰³. In this story a Naga widow due to her carnal passion left the Naga world and was wandering in the forests where she met and marries Prince Brhmadattakumara who was sent to exile by his father. Though the widow remarriage was permitted yet it was not very common. It was hard to lead the life of a widower. Also we can see men fearing that their wife will remarry, a similar case can be evident in the story¹⁰⁴, an old man fears that his wife will take all his wealth and remarry after he dies. The *Assaka Jātaka*¹⁰⁵ mentions the King Assaka of Potalia who after the death of her beloved queen Ubbarī married another wife.

Although widow remarriage was not restricted it was also not very much commonly practiced. There are not many references to the life of women as widows or widowhood. But probably they suffered the same as the earlier period. We have a reference to a queen who fled after the death of her husband and later gave birth to a son. As the son grew up his friends would insult him by calling him a ‘widow’s son’. Thus it gives an idea of how the society has constructed the perspective towards the widows. The custom of ‘sati’ is not mentioned anywhere. But yet their lives seem to be miserable as one can understand it from the view point of a patriarchal society where the importance of husband needs no explanation.

It is of interest however to note that the Jātaka have certain stories which might hint towards the practice of *Niyoga*. Basically, *Niyoga* is an ancient Hindu tradition or practice that allows a childless widow to procure a child from her brother in law or a close relative of her husband by keeping them in a restricted environment where again the marital relation between the two would be temporal as till she conceives a baby or after the child was born. The existence of

¹⁰³ Ibid., Vol. VI, No.543, 80.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Vol.I, No.39, 98-100.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Vol, I, No. 207, 108-110.

this system in the Indian society can be traced back to the days when the practices like child marriage and sati were absent¹⁰⁶. However, it has been said “The societies practicing niyoga were largely patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal but the levels of patriarchal hold certainly varied”¹⁰⁷. P.V Kane has defined it as the “appointment of a wife or a widow to procreate a son from the intercourse with an appointed male”¹⁰⁸. It is to be noted that we do not find the use of the term *niyoga* as in a direct sense but can relate this through some indirect references in the text. In stories like *Suruci Jātaka*¹⁰⁹ the king of Mithilā fails to get an heir even when he sends his several wives to beget a son for him. At last the chief queen resorts to “divine intervention” by which the couples are gifted a child. Similar case can be seen in *Kussa Jātaka*¹¹⁰, where the heirless King Osākka of the Kingdom of Malla sent his several thousand dancing girls on the streets to conceive a child for him. When everyone fails he sends his chief queen Sīlavatī for this task. As a result of her virtue and meditation the abode of Sakka trembled, he thought of giving her a boon. He disguised as an old man went to visit the Queen, took her by the hand to his abode. The king seeing this was highly displeased but no action was taken. She later realized that he was Sakka himself. Finally he granted her with two sons. Also this system was not always resorted to divine intervention as we find other form of arrangements as well. In *Khaṇḍahāla Jātaka*, here the king when about to sacrifice his son, Candā the wife of the prince pleads and laments before the king to spare the life of her husband but the King says she need not worry as she has many brothers- in- law who will take care of her—“...gallant brothers-in-law hast thou, they will console thee...”¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁶ R.S Sharma, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1995), 38.

¹⁰⁷ Smita Shagal, “Exploring the Beneficiaries: A Gendered Peep into the Institutions of Niyoga in Early India”, *Indian Historical Review*, Sage Publications, Delhi: 2012, 39/2. 164.

¹⁰⁸ P.V Kane, *History of Dharmasāstras*, Vol.II, Part I, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), 599.

¹⁰⁹ Cowell, *Jātaka*, 198-205.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. V, No.531, 141-146.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Vol. VI, No. 542, 68-80.

However with such kind of meager instances we can hardly come to any conclusions and be sure about the prevalence and practice of this system in full swing. Yet they are very important indicators of the inheritance of the Vedic ideas and values. Niyoga as a practice can be identified as an attempt to restrict the women to get married for the second time by confining her within the household which in the long run or else after the birth of the child will completely remove the possibility of second marriage.

In conclusion, the relations between the two genders as has been represented in the text do not seem to be very sound. It will not be wrong to say that the relation between the two was that of domination and subjugation of one over another. The ideal role of a women in the society was definitely only to serve their husbands, his family and ensure the continuation of their lineage. Failure in which will make her life miserable. The females remained under the males who attested the notion of objectification and commodification of the latter and were treated as mere objects. The obsession with male child has been rampant; a daughter was never independent as son. She always had to live under the protection of male. However, in case of the royals we see certain extent of freedom to choose her life partner but again once she was married she became the property of her husband. Married life in the text cannot be regarded as a happy one. Chaste married life in the text seems to be a little doubtful. Though monogamy was the rule this was not something that was strictly followed particularly among the royals and the nobles. There are references to show husbands taking more than one wife as the law prohibiting this was absent; whereas though there is one reference of wife marrying more than one husband it was considered against the custom. Thus it was a misfortune on the part of women that they had to live with her co-wives. This created chaos and jealousy in the household and can in no way considered as an ideal environment to live in.

CHAPTER THREE

GENDER AND PERCEPTION OF ADULTERY IN THE JĀTAKAS

The concept of ‘Adultery’ in Indian society is not a new one. It has been there since ages, there are references to this even in the earliest literatures of India. It was also existent in the society during the time of Buddha that can be attested through several *Jātaka* stories. This text show a peculiar trend when it comes to adultery. *Jātaka* stories are rampant with such examples of adultery. The text frequently represents stereotypical view towards women as being adulterous and deceitful. More than half of the story talks about women’s wickedness and how they affect the lives of the males that are related to her. In a period where women were considered as a commodity and property, adultery in a way can be considered as the violation of one’s property by the other. Also it has been observed “A number of the *Jātaka* stories have been woven around the unsatisfied sexual desire of the queens who have been presented as adulterous women perennially hungry of extra-marital liaison”¹ Because the “Buddhist Indian texts generally believe that a women’s sexual drive is stronger than a man’s”². It is in this sense that man beholds the outmost moral virtue as virtue being good and moral second to it. A virtuous man indeed can preform the sense of their duty that would lead him to be in a state of happiness and close to a God. Women on the other hand being dominated by the unnecessary desires fail to attain this goal, most probably she will be astray from happiness submerged in vices and affecting others as well. Therefore, women not just becomes opposite to physical body but also of psychic and so remains vulnerable to an evil forever losing privilege of God’s desire. Their incapability to resist their carnal desires would

¹ Neelima Pandey, “Women in Primitive Buddhism”, *The Clarion, International and Multidisciplinary Journal*, Vol.4, No.1, (2015), 135.

² Vijay Laxmi Singh, *Women and Gender in Ancient India: A Study of Texts and Literature*, (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2015), 50.

certainly corrupt their soul and living life full of misery and deceitful which is illustrated in many texts.

It has been already mentioned above that women have been frequently stereotyped as adulterous and wicked. To understand the perspectives of adultery in connection with gender; it is imperative to look into the concept of Gender stereotyping because they “affect the ways sexuality is expressed in relationships”³. Thus it is the stereotyped idea of genders that led to the association of adultery by females than males. For a clear understanding of how the stereotypes play its role in validating their character and how the perception of adultery varied when committed by a male or by a female the discussion in this chapter will focus on two categories of women under the following heads:

Adultery among the Royal Women

Regarding adultery among the Royals Kumkum Roy observes that, “In a sense the question of adultery and its implications are brought into sharper focus in the context of royalty...”⁴. The most glaring evidence of adultery can be seen in the story of *Cullapaduma Jātaka*⁵, where a dutiful husband doing his karma aid a handicapped dacoit and in response his wife begins an illicit relation with the dacoit. First, it is to be noted that the impression made by the wife i.e. in choosing a deficit male and of course this crippled existence was due to his karmic fruit. Second it is interesting to note that the society governed by patriarchal value where male holds the specific status and given this the authority of female in choosing the partner was highly based on physical and material appearance. A proper study of story gives a serious impression where a wife becomes a source of trouble with no wit, just attracted by unknown person. Also, *Cullapaduma Jātaka* doesn't even care to mention why the princess

³ Hilary.M. Lips, *Gender: The Basics*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 52

⁴ Kumkum Roy, “Justice in the Jatakas”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.24, No.4/6, April-June 1996, 35.

⁵ E.B. Cowell, *Jātaka or the stories of Buddha's Former Birth*, Vol II, No.193, (London: Cambridge University Press,1895), 81-85.

was attracted to a robber that too who was devoid of his limbs. Instead, the story seems to be concentrated more in prescribing the faulty character of women and building the noble attributes of men.

In *Bandhanamokkha Jātaka* we see the story of a wicked Queen who seeks sole devotion from her husband when he was going out of his Kingdom for war and asks him to send one messenger per day to her so she could be ensured about his health. But she makes love with the sixty-four messengers that the King sent. At last the King's chaplain who was a Bodhisatta exposes the Queen before the King and explains about the nature of women's folk as: "The passions of women are insatiate and she does but act according to her inborn nature"⁶. Similarly in *Parantapa Jātaka*⁷, the King on account of being attacked by the enemy ran from his Kingdom with the queen, main priest and his servant Parantapa. When the King and the priest went to collect fruits the queen develops a love relationship with the servant though she was pregnant with *the* King's child. To escape from King's rage on being caught the queen conspires with the servant and kills him. The priest who saw this did not have the courage to reveal. When the prince was of sixteen years, the former tells him the entire story. The prince kills him and finally the three returns to Benares. The text shows how deceitful a woman can be towards her husband that she can do anything to cover up her sin without fearing for the consequences. *Padakusalamāṇava Jātaka*⁸, gives us an instance to this, the Queen consort of Brhamadatta after committing sin was questioned by the King but she refuses to accept that she has done anything wrong and instead takes an oath to prove her point that if she has done anything of that sort she would be turned into a Yakkha with horse face. After her death, she became so. Yet after becoming a Yakkha, she still captures a

⁶ Ibid., Vol.I, No.120, 264-267.

⁷ Ibid., Vol.III, No.416, 249-253.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 432, 298.

Brahmin and makes him her husband. The story tends to show how the desire of woman for a man cannot be satisfied and to the extent a woman can go to fulfil her desires.

The text recurrently talks about women as someone who cannot be kept safe by her husband; as she will always find a way to deceive him and fall in the arms of her paramour at any given chance. In this context we can see *Samugga Jātaka*⁹, in this story a demon falls in love with a noble woman of Kāsi. He carries her off to his cave and makes his wife. He takes every care of her. To keep her safe he used to put her in a box and swallow. But yet he fails to keep her safe, she commits sin with the son of Vāyu. Also similar theme appears in the *Andabhuta Jātaka*¹⁰, here a pregnant lady is brought, and she then gives birth to a daughter. The girl then is kept by Chaplain under confinement in the highest tower with several women guards in order to ensure that the girl won't see any men but the Chaplain himself. Eventually, it is interesting to note how the girl defies all the security apparatus and develops a relationship with another man. She cannot remain loyal to the Chaplain. Thus the stories show that women are so passionate that no guard is able to keep them right. Also *Ghata Jātaka*¹¹ runs on the parallel theme, here the King Mahakaṃsa of Uttarāpatha had two sons and one daughter named Devagabbhā. On her birth the fortune teller says the sons born from her womb will lead to the decline of their power and lineage. The King could not kill her as he loved her very much. When the King died her brothers built a tall tower and kept her there so that she won't be able to marry. And was under the constant surveillance. But as the story progresses, she falls in love with Upasāgarā who had come to visit the kingdom as he was the companion of one of her siblings. Thus she intrigues with him and conceives a baby. On being known about the matter the two brothers gave her as a wife to Upasāgarā on the

⁹ Ibid., Vol, III, No.436, 313.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol, I, No. 62, 151-155.

¹¹ H.T Francis and E.J Thomas, *Jataka Tales*, No. 454, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 314.

condition that they will spare the baby if it was a daughter. The condition was reversed making her mother of ten sons. She fulfils the prophecy in a very intriguing way. It is a different story of how she saves all of them, what needs to be paid attention is how the girl inspite of being locked in the tower was able to develop a relationship with the man. These confinement of women are instances where her procreative right was denied by the male members by imposing on her coercive confinement.

An interesting instance of how women cannot be watched over can be found in *Mudupāni Jataka*; here the King as he knew that his daughter was in love with his nephew decides to keep her in check so that he could marry her to some other Prince. One day she decided to elope with the lover and tricked the King that she wanted to bathe. The king was holding her hand while she was bathing but so cunningly she replaced her hand with one of the page boy and eloped with her lover without the knowledge of the king inspite of the fact that he was holding her hand. The King in rage exclaimed “Can anyone guard a woman. Thus women it is impossible to guard”¹². Women, therefore, earn the title of trickster or magician that can do things beyond normal, but as she has the weak heart and vulnerable to temptation such skill will only be used to gratify their unnecessary desire and in doing so she brings pain even to those who wish her happiness. *Pabbatūpathana Jātaka*¹³ throws light on how helpless a man can be when he has a wife who shows no consideration for his love. In the story, the King had to turn a blind eye on the intrigues of his Queen with his minister because of the fact that she was really dear to him and the minister was useful. Here it can be understood how King has been shown as an ideal ruler that forgave both of them. It must here be noted that he did not take any recourse of their actions as the minister was regarded useful to him. One can get sense of the hidden political motives of the King to keep his ministers in support

¹² Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. II, No.262, 224-226.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 195, 88-89.

of him given the fact that he was an ideal King. *Jātaka* stories are flooded with such instance of intrigues and vices especially we can see this is a sharp focus among the royals. In words of Benoychandra Sen “the royal household is frequently a den of vices, corruption and intrigues, which not only disturbed the peace of mind of Kings...sometimes caused political turmoil and unrest...”¹⁴

The vivid picture regarding the intrigues of the royal women can be found in the *Kuṇḍala Jātaka*¹⁵; here Princess Kaṇhā in her swayamvara expresses the view to marry all the five sons of the King Pāṇḍu. The King gave his daughter to five of them. Now, she has a hump-backed attendant. Kaṇhā by her passion won the hearts of all the five, but as soon as they went out she sinned with the hump-backed. She cunningly tricked all of them. To the hump-backed she would say “I will slay these Princes and have your feet smeared in the blood from their throats” when she was with the eldest she said “You are dearer to me than those of the four...” In the company of other she would say the same to each one of them. Finally, in the end, she was exposed. The five brothers then went to the Himalayas and renounced the princely life. This again shows her carnal desire cannot be satiated. On the contrary the five princess whose heart remains pure and follows virtue, seeing her such action and generalizing the women’s character with that their wife’s tries to find happiness not in marital but in *sanyās*.

Stereotyping of women as adulterous and full of vices has been also extended to the character of a mother. It is already discussed above how motherhood was idealized in the ancient times. Altekar holds a high view regarding apotheosis of motherhood in ancient India¹⁶. However this apotheosis does not mean that they had a high perception of women as mothers. They

¹⁴ Benoychandra Sen, *Studies In Buddhist Jātakas(Tradition and Polity)*,(Calcutta: Saraswat Press,1960), 113.

¹⁵ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. V, No. 536, 219-245.

¹⁶ AS Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu civilization: from Pre Historic to the Present Times*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasisidass,2009), 71.

were treated as a medium to procreate the child (male) for their husbands. The *Jātaka* text attached the adulterous and vile nature to mothers irrespective of their age. A glaring instance of this is shown in the story of *Astamanta Jātaka*¹⁷— a master had a mother whose age was hundred and twenty years. He used to take every care of her. Now, there was a prince who was his disciple, in order to teach the prince about the wickedness of women, the master on his behalf told the prince to take care of the old mother. The old woman thought that the young prince has fallen in love with her and finally she asks the prince to kill her son; on refusal by the Prince she herself attempted to kill her son but she died instead. Her son knowing her ill will, how women having no knowledge about virtue and vice will cloud the distinction between good and bad. Master or in this manner becomes a sage and having full knowledge as he was morally good and virtues knows his mother better than herself. She becomes the victim of her own vice. Also this view can be found in the *Māha-paduma Jātaka*¹⁸, the queen consort falls in love with her step son who was the Bodhisatta and in the absence of her husband (King) she tries to seduce the prince. On the refusal from him, the queen plans a conspiracy against the prince and to have him beheaded. It was with great difficulty the Bodhisatta was able to prove his innocence.

Also, we find in *Susīma* story, the Queen consort falls in love with the Bodhisatta who was the friend of her son. They both grew up together as he was the son of King's chief priest. Still, when he came of age the queen without considering him as his child when saw him says "If I cannot win him, I shall die"¹⁹. She stopped eating and when asked by his son who had now become king she could not answer what ailed her as she was ashamed. It shows that women will not refrain from desiring someone or something even though she knows it is

¹⁷ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. I, No. 61, 147.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.IV, No.472, 116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, No. 411, 237-239.

inappropriate. On being asked by her daughter in law she revealed and she had the man married her. Even after that as Bodhisatta was not interested in worldly things; she thought that she is being avoided because of her old age, she then tricks her husband by pulling out a grey hair of hers and telling that it was of the Bodhisatta's. Thus the story portrays how a woman is so passionate about love even if it is to be taboo. Moreover she is a strong believer of physical appearance of her that would make her happy but this has been by Jātaka text constantly by morally and virtuously proven wrong.

Adultery among the Common Women

The illustration of women as adulterous is not confined only among the royals but is widespread among the common women as well. The *Radha Jātaka*²⁰ records the story of a wife of a Brahmin, who in absence of her husband commits sin with endless number of men. Bodhisatta and his brother at the time who was born as a parrot who lived in the house as the son of the Brahmin says it is futile to stop her as the women are not safe even if they are carried in the arms. The text throws an insight into how female sexuality was dangerous to men and can cause distress to them if they were guided by passion for women²¹. It has been said “Passion makes them completely blind. No woman is ever faithful to one man alone... Jātakas leave no stone unturned to prove this”²². The *Gahapati Jātaka* talks in the same direction, the story revolves around a wicked wife who intrigues with the Village headman and deceives her husband. It says “Woman can never be kept right, somehow or other they will sin and trick their husbands”²³. *Ucchiṭṭha-Bhatta Jātaka*²⁴ bores a story where a wife used to call her paramour when her husband was out for work. *Kosiya Jātaka*²⁵ tells us about

²⁰ Ibid., Vol.I, No.145, 309.

²¹ Ibid., Vol I, No. 34, 87.

²² Ratilal.N.Mehta, *Pre-Buddhist India*, (Bombay: Examiner Press, 1939), 288.

²³ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. I, No. 199, 94-95.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 212, 117.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 130, 284.

a wicked wife who spends her nights in gadding about, and during the day faked illness. She did not work while her husband slaved the entire day with her demands of luxuries. No sooner the back of her husband was turned, she fell in the arms of her paramours. *Sattubhastā Jātaka*²⁶ talks about a Brahman who gives his daughter to an old Brahman when he cannot return his thousand gold pieces. The young girl was not satisfied with the old husband and sinned with another Brahman. Now here, it is told that there are sixteen things that are never satisfied. Among them one is said to be that ‘women are never satisfied with three things- intercourse, adornment and child bearing’. Here father fulfill his virtue not just marrying her to creditor but ensuring her good life. But her carnal desire overwhelms her and clouds her judgement that unable her to distinguish between unnecessary pleasure as happiness or being virtuous is happiness.

*Takkāriyā Jātaka*²⁷ holds the story of a Chaplain whose wife has another man as her paramour. The Chaplain decides to have the man killed. But his wife being aware of it succeeds to flee him away. The treachery of a woman towards her husband is also confirmed in the story²⁸ where a girl is married to one of the most proficient archer. On the way to Benares they encounter fifty robbers, the husband killed forty nine but as he was out of arrow the chief of the robbers was left, thus he asked his wife to pass the sword. The wife falling in love with the chief gave the hilt of the sword to the robber and sheath to her husband, the robber then killed the man. However, it is a different story that the robber fearing her wickedness tricked her and fled with all her jewelry. Again the notion of karma and fate revolved. Her such vice ultimately gave her misery and sorrow as her desire remained unfulfilled.

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 402, 210.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 481, 153.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol III, No.374, 144-148.

However, the need for the representation of women as adulterous and the troubles associated with them can be understood in this way, Buddhism is a religion that focuses mostly on achieving salvation; for which renouncing the worldly life and following asceticism was fundamental. So the reason for the theme of adultery getting more attention in the text might be because of the fact that, sexuality of women has been always considered as a disruptive and serious problem that pose obstacle in the way of attaining salvation. Thus these stories have a propensity of being critical towards such things which hinder the approach towards living a good and happy life. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that women has been stereotyped and perceived as such because the society then was dominated by the conventional patriarchal outlook. The text bears an attitude of antipathy towards woman kind and has left no stone unturned to prove this. They have been presented as black snakes, traitors, seducing traitresses and so on. Having said this, here it becomes imperative to look into the relation between women and the ascetics as this two can be taken as a complete opposite to one another. The former is largely associated with worldly pleasures where the other is of godliness and pious. It is by evaluating their relations we can see the underlying causes for the stereotyping of women as adulterous, seductive that cause destruction and distress to man in general and astray the ascetics form the path of salvation and achievement of liberation from the worldly things in particular.

It has already been mentioned above that, how the sexuality of women has often been considered as the hindrance to the path of salvation not only in the Brahmanical texts but it is viewed as evil and all-encompassing even in the Buddhist literatures. Women have often been considered as dangerous or a danger to ascetics as they led the hermit to stray from the path of devotion and sacredness. It has been rightly pointed out that “The activity, energy and sexuality of women was interpreted as a part of ‘*maya*’ and was seen as leading to bondage to

the world”²⁹. The text reflects that women were perceived by the society as the cause of temptation to men. There are ample examples of how society perceived women’s uncontrollable sexuality as being the main reason for the obstruction to salvation.

The Stereotypical view towards women can be seen almost in every other story in the text. They have been seen as a cause of defilement even in the sanctified souls. The story explains of Prince Anitthi-gandha, who was a women hater from the birth itself so much so that even he had to be breast fed by dressing up like man. The King laments that his son does not care for pleasure “O who can tell me what to do! O is there no device? Who’ll teach him joys of love to crave, and who can him entice?”³⁰. There happens to be a maiden of beauty who knew songs and dances. She agrees to entice him on the condition that the King will get her married to the Prince if she succeeds. Thus the women tempted him by singing songs. The Prince was led by lust and passion after listening to her sweet voice. He cries “No other man shall love”, “But I will love alone” yelling this he went about slaying everyone he would reach. The King then cast out him from the Kingdom with the woman. It is interesting to note how the story tends to portray that the inducement for woman will led to the fall from chastity and what might befall on the man who cannot control one’s lust. But it has to be kept in mind that it was the King who wanted to drive him out of the virtuous life and appointed the women to do so. But in the end, it was the woman who was held sole responsible for this: “The woman tempted him: - now see how vile a thing was done”. Furthermore it says: “Seducing traitresses, they tempt the holiest to his fall:”

“Down- Down they sink, who women know should flee after from all”

²⁹ Gail Omvedt, *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*, (New Delhi: Sage publication, 2013), 81.

³⁰ Cowell, *Jātakas*, Vol. IV, No. 501, 290.

Furthermore, a sin is a sin. King commits a mistake for he was not a virtuous man by introducing him with the taste of physical pleasure and women teaches his son on the basis of lust of being princess. Therefore not knowing and understanding their virtue causes a fortune to be lost. Here it can also be talked about *Alambusā Jātaka*, which projects a concern of a dying ascetic towards his son regarding women who have been seen as a cause of destruction of mankind. The ascetic words can be noticed here ‘...women as fair as these flowers: they bring destruction on all that fall into their power: You must not come under their sway’.³¹ The perception of men towards women thus can be understood here. Women have been taken as easily tempted by vice who will most likely encourage men for temptation that will lead both of their lives to live in misery and sadness.. Women seducing the ascetics and leading them astray into the worldly things form one of the theme of the *Jātaka* stories. *Samiddhi Jātaka*³² acquaints us with the story where a heavenly nymph on seeing the beauty of the ascetic falls in love with him and tries to seduce and lure him into the worldly life:

“Begging brother do you know
 what of joy the world can show?
 Now’s the time-- there is no other
 Pleasure first, then-- begging brother”

Yet in the end she finds no encouragement as the ascetic remains stick to the religious life and she vanished at once. This indeed is the prime example of an end that is happiness where his virtue becomes an instrument for attending the supreme goal. In general this text shows the accomplishment of men that is possible for them to attain happiness (for sage happiness is coming close to a God). Women on contrary pursue her happiness on the basis of her beauty which is temporary as forms remains eternal. Here beauty becomes an instrument for getting her end. Therefore it is the clash between the virtue and pride where virtue remains sole

³¹ Ibid., Vol. V, No.523, 70-84.

³² Ibid., Vol. II, No. 167, 39.

victory. *Haliddirāga Jātaka*³³, talks about how a maiden seduced a young ascetic to leave his world and come with her. The Jātaka stories portray women as being weak to the urges and sexual drives which has to be controlled by men. It shows female sexuality to be frail and this is identified as the main reason that keeps her from the spiritual growth. Women to a most by such text becomes easily victim of vices that on short term grant them happiness. Also *Aranna Jātaka*³⁴ shows how a damsel fled into hermitage for refuge and by her seduction tried to lure into premarital sex. *Culla-Narada* story runs on the same premise, the robbers raided the borders and took the people as prisoners and among them was a cunning maiden. She deceived the robbers and fled into the forest, where she came to the hut of the ascetic and his son. Since that his father was not there, the maiden tempting the young ascetic said “while dwell in the forest? Come let us go to the village... there it is easy to enjoy all the pleasure and passion of sense”³⁵. These stories depict how women can lose their senses and shuts down their soul for passion and love for physical pleasure that even her reflection brings pain and sorrow on those who makes companion of her.

An excellent example of the treachery of wife can be seen in *Takka Jātaka*, Bodhisatta who was an ascetic, saved the life of women who because of her wicked behavior was pushed into the Ganga River by her servants. The women lived in the hermitage for several days and made the ascetic fell in love with her. She being uninterested in the life of the hermitage took her husband to a border village and sold dates for livelihood. One day the robbers raided the village and abducted the women. The Bodhisatta waited for her return but she seemed to enjoy the company of the robbers. Now the woman fearing that someday her husband might come and take her decided to kill him. She sends a message that she was not happy with the

³³Ibid., Vol, III, No.435, 311.

³⁴ Ibid., Vol.III, No. 348, 98.

³⁵ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 477, 136.

robbers and asks him to take her. The Bodhisatta reaches to rescue her but she let him beaten by the robbers till their heart's content. The former only cries, "Cruel ingrates! Slanderous traitors"³⁶ On the next morning the robber asked him the reason for saying that explained the entire story of how the woman deceived him. After listening to this the robbers decided to become an ascetic with him and went to the Himalayas. This again reflects, men by nature are morally good as robber who was full of vice was able to detached his quality which for women was impossible to attain.

Turning consideration towards the noble women in making the hermit lose his track, Kumkum Roy in her article has interestingly noted that "Queens are virtually never depicted as deliberately leading the ascetics astray--they do however expose themselves literally and somewhat inadvertently to holy man while offering hospitality in absence of their husbands"³⁷. This is obvious in the story of *Samkappa Jātaka*³⁸, Bodhisatta stayed in the Kingdom of a king for twelve years, one day the King had to go to the border to suppress rebellion. The Bodhisatta came to ask for the alms on the window of the Queen, her dress slipped when she rose hastily on seeing him. The former filled with evil passion and desire and his senses lost all the purity. He then went to his hut, driven with passion he from that day could not eat. The King on returning asked what ailed him. The ascetic then realized his folly and went to the Himalayas, he says:

"I see no wound from which blood might flow

My own heart's folly 'tis that pierces so"

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 63, 155-158.

³⁷ Kumkum Roy, Justice In Jatakas, 35.

³⁸ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. II, No. 251, 189-193.

The conscious of morally doing wrong and leading astray from the path of virtue and acknowledging such is the vice and repenting or correcting himself is the virtuest duty and most women lacks such ethical judgement as supposed by Jātaka text.

*Hārīta Jātaka*³⁹ mentions an instance of rape by the hermit. The story is same like the one mentioned above, the hermit lived with the King, one day the King was out of his kingdom to quell the disturbances leaving the charge of the ascetic to the queen. When the Queen rose hastily to serve food to him her cloth slipped and the ascetic on seeing her fell into desire which has been described as “Then the sinful feeling that had been dwelling for countless aeons in his heart rose up like a snake lying in a box, and put to flight his mystic meditation”. He driven by evil passion seized the queen and then misconducted with her. Thus from that day became a regular feature until it was known to all in the kingdom. The King also came to know about this but he did not believe. On returning from the frontier he asked his queen and the Queen told the entire story still he did not believed her. Only on hearing from the ascetic himself he was convinced. Yet no mention of king being enraged on such doings of the ascetic is mentioned by the text. He did not believe his wife on telling about such grave issue talks itself regarding the stand of the Queen in compared to the ascetic. Thus coming to the question of Queens and Royal women in leading the ascetic astray of their sanctified life, we do not see the former being directly involved in such course.

Moreover it is also interesting to note that in many cases, the women be it a daughter or wife were ordered to indulge herself in such illicit relationships by their own husbands and father for their selfish motives of political gains. This is even evident in case of the God (Sakka) who in order to keep his heavenly throne safe sends nymphs to cause disturbances to the meditating ascetics. Therefore, it becomes clear that the concept of adultery of women

³⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 431, 295- 297.

indulging in illegitimate relations were not taken to be improper when it is ordered by her husband or father. Women had been prejudiced as such only to restrict their movement and upheld the tradition of attaining salvation. As a matter of fact even if a woman abstains from committing such sin she was forced to do so. There are ample evidences in the text to show how women's sexuality has been used as a scapegoat just in order to fulfill the demands of the patriarchs. The Jātaka stories are filled with instances of how women's sexuality was used as a pawn to fulfill the political objectives of the patriarchs. This is bore in the story of *Culla-Kāliṅga Jātaka*⁴⁰; the King Kāliṅga was ruling Dantapura with his very strong army and has a desire to conquer the neighbouring kingdom . When he asked his ministers how shall we wage a war, the ministers suggested to send his four extremely beautiful daughters properly dressed with ornaments on a covered carriage along with an armed escort. Thus the King shall fight anyone who wishes to take the princess. In this story the princesses has been used as a sacrificial horse in order to fulfill the desire of her war-hungry father. Again greed and pride which offcourse can give happiness to a fleeting time but indulging on pride and greed sacrificed their fortune causing pain misery and sorrow across the kingdom.

At this instance, it is noteworthy that in the stories sometimes the husband particularly the King gives his wife or the queen to some other person if he wishes to and that does not make her adulterous but shows how obedient is she to her husband's order. The gifting of one's wife to another is something peculiar that is found in the text. The story in *Dasaṅṅaka Jātaka* is attention-grabbing in this regard. The King's household priest's son becomes captivated by the beauty of the chief Queen. When the King comes to know about this he gives the Queen to him for seven days with a promise that he will return the Queen again in the eight day. Now the Queen and the man fell in love and eloped on the eight day. The King on knowing

⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 301, 1.

this becomes sick as he longed for his wife; his sorrow is said to be so grave that his heart became hot and poured out blood. In spite of all inquiries they both were not found. Finally the King at the advice of the Bodhisatta left the hope for her. He says “If she loved me she would not forsake her Kingdom and flee away. What have I to do with her when she has not loved me but fled away?”⁴¹ Now it seems strange that had the King loved his wife so much why he gave her to the other person for seven days? When the order was given by the King, the text is silent on any question that was raised neither by any of the courtiers nor by the Queen. Usually Queens are thought to be having high status among the royals but this story defies this view. She happens to be taken as an object here. Again at the end we find King lamenting over not his doings that he gave his wife to some other man but shows the faulty character of the queen that had she love him she would never did so. It is the lack of love towards the King that she went. But it must be remembered that the queen was obedient to King at any situation. Yet the stories are portrayed in such a way that will reflect the deceiving and fraudulent character of a woman.

In *Mudulakkhana Jātaka*⁴², an ascetic gets attracted to the beauty of a queen during the warm reception awarded by her. The King on knowing that, hands over his wife as a gift to him. According to the King’s plan, the queen harasses the ascetic with new demands on failure of which she ill-treats him. Finally, the ascetic realizes his mistake and apologizes to the King. This is a story of a queen who is devoted to her husband and does not disobey him. What needs attention is the husband’s decision to gift a good-hearted wife to another man. The personal will of the queen that whether or not she likes to go with the ascetic finds no mention in the story. She has been used as a means to teach a lesson to the ascetic.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 401, 207-210.

⁴² Ibid., Vol.I, No.66, 161-164.

Women has been frequently used as a medium for distracting the ascetics from their meditation to save the throne of the Sakka who is identified as Indra. The *Nalinika Jātaka*⁴³ contains story of a young ascetic due to his meditation caused Sakka's throne to tremble. He stops rain for falling for three years. Sakka then tells the King that the reason for this was the young ascetic and asks him to send his daughter Nalinika to break the virtue of the ascetic and only then it would rain. The Princess goes there and seduces the ascetic, he falls for her and thus his virtue breaks. Sakka being glad makes it rain in the Kingdom. Also the use of sexuality of women for securing the Sakka's throne can be seen in *Lomasakassapa Jātaka*⁴⁴, in this story Lomasakassapa was an ascetic by whose virtue the abode of Sakka was shaken. To save his throne, he appeared to the King of Benares and lured him that if he was able to break the virtue of the ascetic by making him sacrifice animals then he would become the sole ruler of India. The next day the King sent his councilors but failed. On the second day Sakka suggests him to send her beautiful daughter Candavatī adorned in beautiful clothes to tempt him. It happened that this hermit now fell for the beauty of the princess and came to the Kingdom to perform the sacrifice. However it is said that at the last moment on hearing the cry of the animals he came to his senses and refused to do so. What can be highlighted here is the fact that God himself acknowledged that women had a very destructive power that they can manipulate even the virtuous one. Their sexuality and beauty has been used as a medium to fulfill the demands of the patriarchs. The story does not throw light on the will of the girl to do this sinful job. Women can be here seen to be a puppet in the hands of their male relatives. There are also stories that portray how the beauty of women causes distress to men or her husband regardless of the fact that she is a virtuous wife. Women's beauty has been

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. V, No. 526, 100.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 433, 306.

shown as a cause for enmity between two men. In one of the story⁴⁵ Sujātā was the wife of a householder (Bodhisatta) in Benares, she was of extreme beauty. Once she wished to visit her father's house; on way to which the King sees her and falls in love with her. He came to know that she was married and decides to kill her husband. The King conspires against him and tells henchmen to secretly hide his Jewels on the cart of Sujātā's husband. Finally they start investigation for the lost jewel which was obvious to be found in the cart of the man. They beat him, kicked and tormented him to every street until he was unconscious. This story holds a unique view, king becomes a passionate lover and admirer of her physical appearance but not a slave to carnal desire as women. Therefore a sin committed by a king is indeed great but such cases are rare to be found.

The use of women's beauty for one's own selfish need can be vividly seen in the story of *Alambusā Jātaka*; we find that Isisinga, an ascetic was indulged in mystic meditation which caused the Sakka's throne to tremble. Sakka in order to stop this send a nymph named Alambusā to bring destruction to the saint's virtue. Alambusā shows her reluctance in doing this which she regarded as a "hateful task". But Sakka forced her to seduce the hermit as she was the most beautiful nymph. She succeeded in the task Sakka being glad after seeing this offered her a boon. To which she asked never to send her to violate and tempt any ascetic. The same story also highlights how powerless were women against man and to deny their orders were not something they had the privilege to do. The plight of women can be understood from the lines spoken by the nymph:

"Sent by Sakka, here I stand

A willing slave at thy command"⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 194, 85-87.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol II, No.523, 79-84.

Thus it reflects how women were no more than a slave who had to follow her master's command at any cost. It can also be seen on *Abbantara Jātaka*,⁴⁷ Sakka because of his jealousy towards the Bodhisatta deploys the Queen to cause trouble on the latter. The Queen was driven by the desire for a son that she provides herself to be used as a pawn. But it turns out that she did not beget a son after eating the magic fruit as Sakka said her. Sakka thus took advantage of the Queen and her desire for a son just to get rid of the Bodhisatta.

Another excellent story of how lust can bring sufferings can be seen in *Mahāmora Jātaka*⁴⁸, it is the story of a golden peacock that because of his Virtue was safe and secure for six hundred years from the snare of many hunters several succeeding Kings sent. The seventh time a hunter was sent to catch the bird. He realized that the peacock was some kind of great being who prays for safety and it is because of its holiness that no one for so many years unable to catch him. The hunter then brings a peahen, before the peacock could offer a prayer the hunter made her cry. On hearing her cry the peacock filled with lust ran immediately towards her. On being sick with lust his feet catch the snare. Another variant of the same story is presented in *Mora Jātaka*⁴⁹, a golden peacock kept itself self safe in the hills of Daṇḍaka for several years by reciting spells. The King on knowing that eating the meat of a golden peacock who lives in the Daṇḍaka hills would make him immortal and forever young allotted a hunter for bringing the peacock to him alive. The hunter on being aware that even though the feet of the peacock catch the snare it did not close and realizing some kind of spell being recited was the reason for this. He brought a peahen and made her utter a cry on the early morning before the peacock would recite his prayer. On hearing this, the peacock's heart filled with desire and thus was caught and taken to the king. However, the peacock was

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol II, No. 281, 267-272.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 491, 210-216.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 159, 23-26.

released in the end after listening to his discourse. The story presents how lust for a female can cause sorrow and trouble, hundred years of virtue was of no avail if one falls into lust for few minutes. Thus it shows how passion and uncontrollable desires cause sufferings to self. Now adultery in a way can be seen as a fallout of carnal desires for lust and satisfaction. Adultery existed in the then society both overtly and covertly. Drawing in the parameters between the royal and the common women, many scholars are of opinion that royals were engaged more in such activities⁵⁰. Looking into the stories a greater number is associated with the Royal women committing adultery. Having said this, it simply cannot be concluded that the royals were mainly engaged in such activity. It is here remarkable that though the text draws the Queens or chief consort of the King as being adulterous, the reason becomes inadequate. The text simply gives an explanation on the basis on ethical principle where by nature man is good and can hardly be influenced by vices and unnecessary desire. Whereas women remains reverse. Nevertheless, what can be said unquestionably is that both categories of women were very much engaged with such kind of activities. Treating of adultery as a heinous crime and an immoral activity and associating the culprit with vices and evil are very much present in the story. But moving beyond this issue of good and bad, it here becomes imperative to understand the underlying causes that led them to engage in such relationships. As a matter of fact, it is mostly associated with womenfolk in particular. Therefore attention must be given to why it is mainly women or females that are attacked as for committing such crime. However, it cannot be denied that both section of women had their own reasons to associate themselves with such activity. Looking into the trend of the stories of depicting the royals as more involved in these intrigues, there can be listed out few factors for such association. It can be said that it might probably be because we see the existence of

⁵⁰ For details see: Kumkum Roy, Justice in the Jatakas, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No 4/6, April-June, 1996, 35. Also Benoychandra Sen, *Studies in Jātakas (Tradition and Polity)*, Calcutta, Saraswat Press, 1960, 113.

large number of co-wives in the royal household ; it is a possibility that they were not satisfied with their married life. In addition to this, their movement and freedom were more restricted than other group of women. Thus they intrigue with mostly the king's own ministers, messengers or the one who had an easy access to the palace. This is attested by several stories. Like in case of *Bandhanamokkha Jātaka* as the King was out of his Kingdom for war, the Queen makes love with the messengers he sends to inform her about his health and well being. Equally important is to remember that, on the one hand the King was primarily regarded as a major supreme authority to prevent this crime as he was associated with virtues and just on greater part or maximum of the story though not all⁵¹. Similarly on the other hand Queens have been taken as a symbol of disruptive worldly pleasures and charm that leads even the ascetics astray from their path. However, being the victims of vices and crimes could be both men and women but most man can overcome such vices but for women it was nearly possible. This can again be connected with the idea of female body as impure and inferior to men and unsanctified.

Moreover, when we try to grasp the causes for the association of common women for entering into such kind of illicit relationships, the reasons are more definite. The main reason given was the unhappy and unsatisfied married life. This is clearly indicated in several stories⁵² where a women enters into illicit relationships with the other man as she was not happy with her husband and his family. Hence, the marriage of a daughter without taking the consent of her tends to culminate in establishments of those relationships later. However it must not be lost sight of women who inspite of being treated in a good way by her husband

⁵¹ Some exceptional cases can be seen where King has been depicted as wicked and evil. For details see: Jataka No.194, 443.

⁵² For details see, *Jātaka* stories No. 374, 257 , 402.

getting every facility but yet entered into such relationships⁵³, for those women their reasons may be varied. Furthermore, keeping in mind the above discussions on how adultery was a thought to be a serious crime, it is of interest to see on how gender differences or disparities existed in case of consequences and penalty.

Punishments and Gender Bias

An idea can be gained on how gender had a major role to play even when relating to the concepts of justice and punishments. Yet even if we see no severe punishments prescribed for the women, the text shows a tendency of prescribing men to stay away from them as an insubstantial sex towards urges. This required them to be controlled by the stronger sex which was palpable to be the males. Thus it becomes clear of how women's sexuality and body came to be under the control of men. However, there are various ways by which they tried to restrict the movement of women be it building a huge storied buildings⁵⁴, beating and threatening⁵⁵ humiliating etc. It has been aptly said that the punishments for adultery and the need to control women can be seen in the context of the emergence of private property.⁵⁶ The surfacing of private property meant the transmission of property from father to son. Thus the restrictions were necessary in order to guarantee wife's chastity for legitimate succession of the wealth. In the above background one can understand how the projection of women's sexuality as dangerous and the fear attached to it had its role to play.

Accepting the fact that *Jātakas* are stories concerning ethics, morals, values, and behavior one must remember that along with these Justice forms a central aspect to Buddhism. The idea of justice in Jataka has been taken to be interlinked with five Virtues or *Pancasila* which include restrain from taking life, taking what is not given, misconduct, lying and consuming

⁵³ See, *Jātaka* stories No. 130, 145, 199.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, No. 62, 151-155; Vol. IV, No. 454, 50-58.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 212, 117; Vol. I, No. 199, 94-95.

⁵⁶ Uma Chakravarti, *The Rise of Buddhism as Experienced by Women*, *Manushi*, 1981, 6.

intoxicants.⁵⁷ In Jātakas justice has been taken in two level one as a way of maintaining relation between the rulers and ruled on the other hand amongst the ruled⁵⁸. The notion of justice is not an imperative element only in the Buddhist texts but also in the Brahmanical texts. Both these texts seems to work with a consideration that the “administration of Justice is typical attribute or even prerequisite for kingship”⁵⁹. It is for this reason the notion of ‘just king’ is centralized in this text. However, it can be witnessed that though the King is said to be the righteous and just ruler; differentiations are made between the good and the evil one. For instance, there are references to wicked king suffering the grave consequences of their wrong doings. There are varied treatment a wicked King would receive, he could be executed and the other person put in his place⁶⁰. In *Cetiya Jataka*⁶¹, a King who commits the sin of lying is said to have sank under the earth to Hell. There are references to evil King being punished by his own subjects. The King was thus required to have the ability and insight in imparting justice. It has been seen that a King was looked upon as a authority to guard against the adultery, in this context and interesting story is presented in *Gāmaṇi-Caṇḍa Jātaka*⁶², here a women is not happy with her husband and his family as she has another lover. She used to say that she was going to her father’s house but on the way she spends time with her lover and again when coming back from her paternal house she stays with him for few days. Thus this woman says to Caṇḍa who was being taken to the king that she could not stay with her husband and desires to leave him. The king on knowing this says “Go tell her there are Kings in the land; say, she must dwell with her husband, and if she will not, let her have a care, the King will cause her to be seized, and shall die.

⁵⁷ Kumkum Roy, “Justice”, 28.

⁵⁸ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender and The Gender of Power*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 304.

⁵⁹ Kumkum Roy, “Justice”, 29.

⁶⁰ Cowell, *Jātakas*, Vol. II, No. 194, 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, No. 422, 271- 276.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol.II, No. 257, 207.

On the light of this it becomes important to analyze and draw a parameter of the punishment that was approved for the men and women guilty of adultery. It is of no doubt that adultery was in those days a heinous crime and a punishable offence as attested by a story⁶³, where the wife fearing about her evil deed when asked by her husband lies and deceives him. It is noteworthy that how the gender differences and biases had its role to play even when it comes to justice and chastisement. We can see a sharp contrast in the treatment of an adulterous Kings and Queens. The Queen indicted of adultery in the end of the story and at the intervention of Bodhisatta is usually humiliated and pardoned. She is not subjected to other form of punishments, this can be related to the fact that it was considered as ‘women’s inborn nature’. This can be seen in every story like the Queen making love with number of messengers is also pardoned at the end. Also in the previously mentioned story of Parantapa, it is interesting to see that the Queen is humiliated to have her husband killed in the company of her paramour but nothing much was done to punish her rather she was taken to Kingdom by the prince, in contrast to this the paramour who just followed or executed her plan was killed by the Prince. Similar is the story of the other *Jātakas*. Rare are the instances where the queen was severely punished for adultery.

In the case of *Cullapaduma Jātaka*, the Queen who eloped with the handicapped paramour has been ordered to be put to death by cutting her nose, ears individually but however she was not killed. Also in the above mentioned kuṇāla story, the wife indulged in affair with hump-backed who already had five husbands. But when she was exposed there is no description of her being punished rather her five husband being depressed over the deed of their wife renounced the world and went to the Himalayas. On the other hand, when we looked and compare it in case of the Kings, the penalty ascribed for them appears to be more

⁶³ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 212, 117.

severe and strict as compared to that of Queen. These divergences between the two can be analyzed and understood from the point that the *Jātaka* stories portray the King as righteous and just, who in this sense was responsible for the prevention of adultery. On the other level the Queen has been taken as a disruptive who threatens the social and political norms.⁶⁴

Talking about the King indulging in such cases, we tend to find few references where the King falls in love with the beauty of woman or wife of another man. The infatuation of king towards the wife of another and later realization of his doings and then change of heart forms the theme when it comes to the King being adulterous. As it has been seen that “the king who refrain from the taking another wife and overcomes his infatuation is considered as exemplary”⁶⁵. The first recourse the King would take was finding out whether the girl is married or not. This can be seen in *Ummantanti*⁶⁶ story, the King is enamored by the beauty of the wife of his commander-in-chief, where the latter knowing this makes the King to give up his infatuation for her.

Also the King sometimes gets attracted to the wife who had turned into ascetics. The *Cullabodhi Jātaka*⁶⁷ tends to show the same theme – Bodhisatta and his wife after the death of his parents renounced the world. One day they happen to come to the royal park and were sitting there. The King falls in love with the beauty of the wife of Bodhisatta. Now the King abducted the wife and brought her to the palace to marry her. Finally on hearing the discourses of the Bodhisatta, he realized his folly and let the women return to her ascetic life. Such cases would not lead to any kind of punishments for the King as well. But in case where the King does not realizes and acts evil punishments were often severe. The brilliant

⁶⁴ Kumkum Roy, “Justice”, 35.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁶ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. V, No. 527, 107.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 443, 13-16.

illustration of this is found in *Manicora*⁶⁸ story, the King tries to snatch the wife of Bodhisatta, Sakka on seeing the dismounted the King from the elephant he was riding and put down his head in the place of execution and had him beheaded. Sakka then installed the Bodhisatta to the throne.

In case of ascetics developing an illicit relationship with the women, especially the Queens as in the above mentioned story of *Samakappa* and *Hārīta Jātaka* it is remarkable to note that in such state of affairs no one is punished. The ascetic in the end realizes his folly and retreats to the Himalayas. The cause for this difference in the punishment of the ascetic who has violated the moral ethics according to Kumkum Roy has been seen as “a means of attaining higher state of realization”⁶⁹. Even in case of rape we do not find any punishment prescribed for the hermits.

However, coming to the common householder there is similarity in the penalty the adulterous male or female had to accept. These include beating up of wife and her lover as in case of *Gahapati Jātaka*, where the man seized the headman who intrigued with his wife and dragged him to the courtyard and beat him till he fainted. Also he held his wife by her hair and threatened her “If you ever do this kind of thing again, I’ll make you remember it”⁷⁰. Also he demanded the damages from the headman “Damages, please, for injury done to the chattels under another man’s watch and ward”. It is said that the wife from that day did not dare to transgress even in thought. In *Ucchiṭṭha Jātaka*, the man dragged the lover of his wife out of the store room and had both him and the wife beaten up and rebuked. He taught them a lesson not to repeat this mistake again.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 194, 85-88.

⁶⁹ Kumkum Roy, “Justice”, 35.

⁷⁰ Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. II, No. 199, 94-95.

Sometimes the decision to punish the adulterous wife was handed over to the husband himself as in *Sattubhasta* story. The Bodhisatta as a judge with a clever device helps a Brahman to identify the lover of his wife. However, at the end when the lover was exposed, the Brahman was asked if he wanted to keep his wife or leave him where the former replied in affirmative. Thus the wife was given to him and the lover punished. In another story on knowing the wife is having relationship with other man, the Bodhisatta advised the husband to assert his control over her. He devised a plan to give her pickled cow dung to eat to get rid of her illness and robe or a stick in case if she denies or to honestly work for her food. She on being terrified repent and became good. Often it can be seen that the adulterous wife is scolded and humiliated but pardoned. As it is no doubt that women were regarded as a property of her husband, in some instances the husband were asked that if he wanted to leave the wife or else he will forgive and live with her. In one story⁷¹ a pupil finding his wife unfaithful tells his master who was Bodhisatta. The latter says that women are common to all and cannot be regarded as a private property. When she heard that the master knows about her doings, she stopped doing such deeds. It is only in the story of *Takka Jātaka* that it is mentioned the robber on finding the truth regarding the treachery of the woman towards the Bodhisatta ‘clove the woman in twain’. But usually when it comes to punishments for women for committing adultery, humiliating her in front of everyone was taken to be the measure for her doings. However in the text, with regard to men we see theft and adultery was considered as one of the most heinous crimes that would lead to the severe punishments like cutting of limbs and sometimes the man was also awarded the death sentence.

It is interesting to note in every story the person to commit adultery and start an illicit relationship is mainly women. This can be seen on the light of the context that being deceitful

⁷¹ Ibid., Vol. I, No. 65, 156.

and evil was considered as the 'inborn nature' of women that cannot be taken out of her. The story often represents prejudice against women and the misogyny has been a dominant feature of the stories. They have been shown as weak and frail to urges and sexual drives. It can here be agreed to the view advocated by Vijay Laxmi Singh that "Women were believed to be the recipient of a portion of Brahmanic God Indra's excess energy or sexuality, Buddhist literature frequently incorporated this belief in some of the misogynist literature"⁷². These representations of women in the text can be perceived as an indication towards the attempts made by the patriarchal society to confine women within the so called concept or category of an 'Ideal women' those being obedient meek to their lords. Also it must be remembered that even in that condition of subordination, the procreative power was the power that women still had. It was something that men had to depend upon the women⁷³. It was the recognition of this fact that effective attempts were made to guard and control women's sexuality by amplifying it as being horribly dangerous. It was in this background the need to be in command of women's sexuality by the paternal power became essential in the new era of urbanism which led to the emergence of different social classes. This would ensure the new political and social planning which was again completely dominated by male.⁷⁴ Also moving little beyond the resentment of women as depicted in the text, the main cause for this disapproval against them can be identified within the teaching of Buddha himself. His main teaching can be seen as "...the end of all suffering can only be reached by overcoming the illusion of the self and the illusion of the material work"⁷⁵. Now women or

⁷² Vijay Laxmi Singh, *Women and Gender in Ancient India*, 50.

⁷³ Uma Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives Everyday Histories: Beyond the King and Brahmanas of 'Ancient India'*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 146.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷⁵ Céline Grühagen, *The Female Body in Early Buddhist Literature*, *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, Vol. 23, Jan, 2011, 102.

female body has been taken as one of the things that tempt men and lead them astray causing obstruction in the way of salvation.

It has been appropriately said “Early Buddhist Literature reflects an understanding of the female body as being more closely related to material world and the cycle of reincarnation, due to its biological qualities”.⁷⁶ Thus we find certain resentment towards the so called female body and sexuality is said to have traces of its roots even in the ‘cosmogonic myths’ that was innate in the older cultural tradition of India.⁷⁷ Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to say that it was these notions and perception towards women’s nature and sexuality of causing hindrance that could not be simply wiped away from the minds of people. It is against this background that women have been frequently labeled as insatiable and adulterous suggesting men to keep away with this frail sex who cause destruction. But these depiction of female character cannot be taken literally as they represent rather a stereotyped idea that ignored the bright side of one’s nature and only highlighted its dark side. It however is a common belief that these stereotypes to some extent holds some amount of truth in it but such argument is hard to entertain as these gender stereotypes are dynamic and everchanging. It has been said that “ If gender is a social construction... then gender stereotypes are social constructions too”⁷⁸. However, understanding the depiction of women being adulterous as stereotyped and prejudiced doesnot mean that these kinds of activities did not existed in the then society. But if these notions of female characters are literally to be taken as true then it becomes doubtful also in the character of male, which finds no mention in the stories. As it is not possible for women alone to indulge in such activity alone. But the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 107.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁸ Hilary. M. Lips, *Gender*, 27.

stories are more focused in painting dark the attributes of a female character while totally remaining silent on the part of the other.

CHAPTER IV

THE INSTITUTION OF PROSTITUTION AND PATRIARCHY

By definition, Prostitution is the “act or practice of engaging in promiscuous sexual relations esp. for money”¹. This as a profession is argued to be present in societies since the time immemorial: “The earliest history of every civilized nation testifies to the existence, and often abounds in the description of this oldest profession of the world”². In this regard, India thus cannot be thought of as an exception. *R̥g Veda*, the most ancient literary work of India records the initial mention of prostitution; seen in context of an illicit lover, *jāra* and *jatini*— who is a male and female lover of a married person³. But this kind of relationships and promiscuities cannot be taken as prostitution which might be because of the fact that prostitution is thought of as fallout of marriage institution⁴. On the one hand, this can be understood in the background of rigid marriage rules and monogamy which tends to make women the property of her husband who bears certain responsibility towards her. While on the other, a woman not belonging to any particular man and serves many men do not become the responsibility of any. She becomes her own bread winner and lives her life by accepting the payment she gets from various men she obliges. Thus she is denoted as *Panyastrī*⁵ (someone who can be bought with money). So, during the later *R̥g* and *Yajur Veda* though marriages emerged as an established institution, did take several years to attain its rigid form⁶. The rules were simple and the only restrictions for marriage were between father daughter and brother sister.⁷ Moreover, the illicit relationships or the extra-marital affairs can be distinguished from what we call

¹ Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. Eleventh Edition, (USA: Merriam- Webster, Incorporated, 2003), 998.

² S.N Sinha & N.K Basu, *History of Prostitution*, Vol. I, (Calcutta: The B.N Association, 1993), 1.

³ Kumkum Roy, *Women in Early Indian Societies*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2011), 196.

⁴ S.N Sinha & N.K Basu, *History of Prostitution*, 1.

⁵ Kumkum Roy, *Women in Early Indian Societies*, 197.

⁶ S.N Sinha, *History of Prostitution*, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

as 'prostitution' in the context of payment or rewards received in lieu of the favors served. Where in these cases the consent is more mutual that makes gifts and payments discretionary. If the affair was mainly confined to the same person, it may hint towards a form of temporary contract between the two that cannot be taken as a profession⁸. Gradually, we tend to witness the emergence of certain women as prostitutes. The reasons however are varied as to why they took up to such profession. The most common among them was the psychological factors that include unsatisfied married life, early widowhood, forceful abductions which led to the loss their respectful position in the society, and more interestingly giving of women as a gift to the religious institutions. Given to the social stigma and practice of religious context, the concept of adultery as one of many was simmering that was to legalize the prostitution. Such generated concept was to create work force that was to employ the categorical victimized women and girl as a general priority. Prostitution was a profession which made women their own bread winners while the rest had to depend on their male counterparts. Patriarchy, on the other hand, as discussed in the earlier chapter appears to be an institution which gives an upper hand to the males. It has been said that "Patriarchal institutions and social relationship are responsible for inferior or secondary status of women"⁹. Thus this system can be characterized by the power and dominance of male over female; where women were forced to remain under the men's control both in private and public spheres. Regarding the origin of this system, Gerda Lerner says "Patriarchy is a historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly around 2500 years to its completion"¹⁰. However, it is to be noted that patriarchy is not same everywhere. Its nature is ever

⁸ Kumkum Roy, *Women in Early Indian Societies*, 196.

⁹ Abeda Sultana, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis", *The Arts Faculty Journal*, (July 2010- June 2011), 11.

¹⁰ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 212.

changing with the passage of time¹¹. But the principle or the central idea of patriarchy is almost same that includes the superiority of men over women and the control of men over every important social institutions and also economy. As a result of which all the power and authority of family in particular and of society in general were vested on their hands. The males in a patriarchal society try giving legitimacy to their claims of being superior on the basis of biological feature of masculine and feminine, associating masculinity as more dominant. They become so powerful that they can dictate the rules for women which were intended for their own benefit.

Similarly, the Jātakas also reflects society dominated by such patriarchal ideology. Therefore, in an environment guided by several norms and many restrictions imposed on a woman's movements; prostitution emerged as an independent category totally opposite of the existent values and rules that were set for women. It therefore becomes essential to look into the perception of this category of women by the society that was dominated by male.

In India, how and when prostitution did begin as an established and recognized profession is not known. Yet it has been argued that it was a concept borrowed from the Egyptians: "As India once bore in her soil the seed and plant of phallic worship...gradually clustered the cult of virgin...and different aspects of religious prostitution...similarly Egypt was the natal chamber of legal and real prostitution found its way to India, some time or other during the Brahmanical period"¹². Earlier 'Vishya' was the term that denoted the prostitutes. They are thought to be created probably to attend the *Vish* or the Vaishya castes people¹³. Eventually this *Vishya* of the Brahmanical period changed to 'Beshya' coming from the word 'Besh'¹⁴. With this term associated to

¹¹ For Details see: Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2003), 20.

¹² S.N Sinha & N.K Basu, *History of Prostitution*, 28.

¹³ As connected with trade and commercial activities, they used to stay away from their home for long.

¹⁴ S.N Sinha & N.K Basu, *History of Prostitution*, 29.

them, they began to lose the earlier connotation and came to mean “one who is approachable to and by all” or “one who nicely bedecks herself”¹⁵.

The emergence of Prostitution as a social institution was not a sudden development and definitely took several years. Early Buddhist Literatures specially the Jātakas hold indication regarding the different categories of prostitutes. They mention of *gaṇikā*, *vannadāsī*, *veśī*, *gamaniyo*, *nagarasobhānī*, *itthī*, *muhuttiā*, etc. It has been argued that these variations in the terms not only hint towards the regional variations and extensive stretch of this institution but also the social hierarchy and the financial status of the women belonging to this section¹⁶. However, it is to be noted that the text does not make a clear cut distinction between a courtesan and a mere prostitute or sex worker as such. But the difference between these categories of women can be known from the stories that they are presented in. It is said that, Jataka holds much simpler classification of women belonging to this section¹⁷. Jātaka generally classifies the sex workers in accordance to two ranks, *vannadāsī* and the other is *nagarasobhānī*.¹⁸ The former represents female slaves who also were sex workers and the latter are more illustrious and famous. They were usually known as the ‘adornment of the city’ or the ‘Prestige of the City’. They were the ones who were prosperous and wealthy. Proficient in all forms of arts like singing, dancing etc they got a huge amount of money from the man they oblige. Therefore, it can be understood that the *Nagarasobhānī* were equivalent to the ‘*Gaṇikās*’ who were very famous and rich courtesans. Nevertheless, apart from these women, the text also mentions other women as also being engage in those works of obliging men but who were not as proficient and prosperous as that of the *gaṇikās*. They lived their life by providing service to their clients. Also it is said that, in terms of having access to

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Sukumari Bhattacharji, “Prostitution in Ancient India”. Kumkum Roy, *Women in Early Indian Societies*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2011), 201.

¹⁷ For details see; Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 111

¹⁸ Ibid., 94.

resources and the exchange activity there can be no comparison between a Gaṇikā on the one hand and a Kumbha dasi on the other¹⁹.

It can be said that during this period prostitution emerged as an important institution of leisure. The reason for this can be better understood by outlining the broad contours of economic activities of this period. It was during this time we see flourishing cities and urban centers, which emerged from the sixth century BCE. There was also a growth of religious centers for Buddhism and Jainism. The most remarkable representation of the urban milieu in the text can be seen of a vibrant activity and social mobility.²⁰ It can be seen in the description of cities as prosperous having fortified walls, gates and watch towers. The text also frequently talks about different commercial activities, merchants, caravans and specialized crafts, occupation and various routine work then men and women were involved or engaged in. The rural areas seem to have a highly segregated agrarian social order ranging from wealthy absentee landlords to prosperous peasants, tenants to agricultural laborers and at the bottom of the hierarchy laid the slaves²¹. Excluding the Royals and noble women, it is obvious that the ordinary women had to work for their livelihood. The work done by the women in the Villages was like that of watching over fields, fetching water, spinning and weaving. Apart from that they took up occupations like fruit seller who went about selling fruits²², waiting women²³, maid servants²⁴ and nurses²⁵. Similarly when turning towards towns and cities there were various social groups like rulers, rich setthis, craftsman, and artisans also the other population of men and women who had come to the areas in search of their fortune.²⁶

¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power: Explorations in Early Indian History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 91.

²¹ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 116.

²² E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol.III, No.306,13.

²³ Ibid., Vol.I, No.62, 181. Vol. III, No.540, 38.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. III, No.402, 210.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 263, 227.

²⁶ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 117.

This was a period where there took place a huge scale of transactions and exchanges. But it is to be noted that evidences are lacking to show women being part of this complex transactions and economic activities. The period of urbanism thus marks a striking change in the social and economic condition especially when we look into the emergence of the category of 'prostitutes'. In words of R.S Sharma, "The urban surroundings and break-up of the old tribal family life created a class of alienated women who took prostitution as a source of livelihood"²⁷. The Jātaka stories do not throw light on women being necessarily connected with the trading activities. It has been said that "The range of occupations that are documented for women in the urban context appears impoverished in comparison to those listed for men"²⁸.

Women figure more as gifts exchanges and recurrently as sex workers. However, the occupation that women adopted in the urban centers was the "shady ones of prostitution"²⁹. The narratives hold a 'tendency to collapse these categories within the framework of sex work'³⁰. There are sporadic references to serving women being incorporated to be a sex worker. Such instance is found in *sulasā Jātaka*³¹ here, a female servant wears an ornament of her mistress worth hundred thousand pieces while going to the pleasure garden. There she is equated to be a courtesan by the robber chief. With the desire to kill her and take the jewel he gave her fish and drinks and pretended to love her. In the end she doubts that he wanted to kill her, she cunningly pushed him inside the well and killed him instead. Here the intelligence of women outwitted her lover.

Prostitutes belonged to that category of women who had no role to play in the household affairs and were mainly reserved for the purpose of pleasure and enjoyment by the people

²⁷ R.S Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 1983), 126.

²⁸ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 94.

²⁹ Ratilal.N. Mehta, *Pre-Buddhist India*,(Bombay: Examineer Press, 1939), 294

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94

³¹ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol.III, No.419, 260.

who can afford to pay their fees. Thus apart from the employment of courtesans by the King, rich merchants and bankers who had huge wealth at their disposal and could afford the luxury were the patrons of accomplished courtesans. Moreover, it has been aptly said that “courtesans were not a monolithic category; there was an enormous amount of social-economic differentiation within the broad classification”³². They represent a complex category that emerged during this period as the definite imagery between a courtesans and a prostitute are blurred with their overlapping descriptions in the text. So for a better understanding of these different categories of prostitutes, it is important to look into the social and economic status of the courtesans and dancing girls.

Social Status

Among the various categories of prostitutes, *gaṇikā* because of her accomplishments, youth and beauty belonged to the superior social status. Regarding the *gaṇikās* it is said to have its origin in the oligarchies “...the institution of *ganikas* was started by the *ganas*, the case of *Salavati* who is called the *ganika* of *Rajagriha* (which was under a monarchy) shows that the word has lost its specific meaning and implied a rich courtesans.”³³ This concept was borrowed by the rich merchants who were getting richer and richer by gaining wealth in the monarchical states as they might have wanted some kind of entertainment source in the towns. It has been said that, with the decay of Oligarchies later, the word ‘*gaṇikā*’ also lost the earlier connotation to the term.³⁴

There were prostitutes who belonged to the lower class. The female slaves were sometimes kept as concubines, in addition to this the Pitcher women slaves that were termed as *Kumbha-dasī* also are said to be involved in this profession³⁵. *Kumbha-dasī* are

³² Kumkum Roy, *The Gender of Power*, 117.

³³ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, (Delhi: Hindi Pocket Books, 1976), 38.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁵ Anil Kumar Tyagi, “Women Workers in the *Jātakas*”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 45 (1984): 121- 128.

said to be women of loose character but skilled in dancing and music³⁶. They are in one reference said to be street walkers and their status has been equated as a *gamaniyo*³⁷. Another category of prostitutes were *itthī*. They were usually hired by the sons of the *Setṭhis* on festivals and is also said to be a mistress to the lawful wife³⁸. One of the prerequisite for becoming a prostitute was the beauty. Thus they were also called *rupajjivaniyā* which means ‘living on beauty’³⁹.

Their position in the patriarchal society can be understood by looking into the depiction of women of this category. At this juncture, mention may be made of *Kaṇvera Jātaka*⁴⁰; in this story a love of a courtesan for a lover is recounted. *Sāmā* was a courtesan (*gaṇikā*) who lived in Benares. She was favourite of kings and her usual fees is said to be thousand pieces. She had a suite of five hundred female slaves (*Vaṇṇadāsiyo*). A young merchant who was charmed by her beauty presented her every night with thousand pieces of gold. One day it happened that while she was standing at the window of her house saw a robber who was captured. She fell in love with him. She got the robber released by sending thousand pieces to the city governor as a bribe and said that the robber was her brother. She tricked the young merchant and sent him as a substitute for the robber and got him killed. After that she took nothing from any other men and spent her time with the robber. The men thought that if she could get the merchant killed for her then one day she will also have him killed for another man thus he took the woman along with her ornaments to the garden and squeezed her till she became insensible and ran away with all her ornaments. She fasted and resolved every means to find him. But finally when she learned that the man was unwilling to stay with her, she turned to her former profession.

³⁶ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 39.

³⁷ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. V, No, 536, 219-245.

³⁸ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 39.

³⁹ Meena Talim, *Life of Women in Buddhist Literature*, (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2015), 302.

⁴⁰ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No.318, 39.

The similar kind of narrative is given in one story⁴¹; Sulasā was a courtesan (*nagarasobhānī*) of Benares who charged thousand pieces at night. She fell in love with Sattuka, a robber who was as strong as an elephant. He was caught and was taken to the place of execution. Sulasā then had him freed and lived in delight. But after four five months the man thought to run away taking the jewelries: “I might not be able to stay in this one place: but one can’t go empty handed. Sulasā’s ornaments are worth a hundred thousand pieces: I will kill her and take them”. With this plan he took her to the top mountain by saying that while he was being hauled by the King’s army he promised an offering to the tree spirit on the mountain. There she was told that he had brought her there with the motive of killing her and taking her jewelries. She pleaded that she was the one to save him from the King and since then she has not looked upon another man but yet this pleadings of her was not paid any heed, Sulasā thought of an idea to save herself and expressed her last desire to embrace him once. She then acted as offering obeisance stood behind him and threw him from the mountain. The robber crushed into pieces and died. It is however interesting to note that a courtesan in this story is depicted as bearing wits and courage. Also it is evident from the above instances that they could marry if they wished to.

However, they are also represented as one being hungry of money and wicked. The *Aṭṭhana Jātaka*⁴², talks about a courtesan (*nagarasobhānī vaṇṇdasi*) who was prosperous. A merchant’s son gave her thousand pieces daily and took pleasure with her. One day as he was talking with the King it was late. He went to the courtesan empty handed. The courtesan did not allow him to enter as he did not have money. He begged her but to no avail. He said “Oh, Womankind are wicked, shameless, ungrateful, treacherous” and being disgusted turned ascetic. The King, who was the friend of him knew and at once

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol.III, No. 419, 260.

⁴² Ibid., Vol. III, No. 425, 25.

ordered the girl to go and apologize to him and bring him back: “wicked, vile woman, go quickly to where my friend is and fetch, if you fail, your life is forfeit”. Another Jātaka acquaints with the story of a gaṇikā named Kālī who lived in Benares and earned thousands of pieces of money. She had a brother named Tuṇḍila; he was a debauchee, a drunkard and a gambler. He would waste all the money; one day he was beaten, lost his cloths and appeared before her. But she had him driven out of her house. Now, there happens to be a certain merchant who frequently visited Kālī. On seeing Tuṇḍila weeping outside he asked what had happened, he then consoled him, entered the house and asked why she would treat her brother that way. “I will give nothing, If you are so fond of him, give it yourself”⁴³ she replied. We here see a peculiar rule in her house that the person who visited her had to put on the garment provided for him for the night. The man put on the cloths and gave his to Tuṇḍila. Next day Kālī ordered her maids to take off the garment worn by the man. He then had to go away naked being ashamed and lamenting. However, we can here see the authority and power a courtesan had as in comparison to a common woman. Uma Chakravarty mentions that a woman can come out of their traditional role as a wife and mother was by becoming a courtesan. A courtesan appears to belong to that category of women who did not have to suffer social condemnation and was in a better position as compared to wives⁴⁴.

In certain stories like in case of Vaṭṭaka Jātakas⁴⁵ courtesans are showed as temptress. During the Kattikā feast, the friends of the Bodhisatta to divert him from the path of renunciation employed a courtesan. She tried to lure him by using all her blandishments and beauty but failed to evoke any response from him. He gave her money and let her go. While she was coming out from the room she met a nobleman in the street who gave her

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 481, 157.

⁴⁴ Uma Chakravarty, “The Rise of Buddhism as Experienced by Women”, *Manushi*, (Nov-Dec, 1981), 9.

⁴⁵ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol.III, No. 118, 261.

some gifts to accompany him to his house. Indriya Jātakas⁴⁶ talks about many beautiful courtesans who used to sit on the bank of rivers where the men bath and tempt them. It can be said that these women were someone belonging to the lower class of prostitutes as gamaniyo or veśīya as there are mention of street walkers who used to earn their living by selling their charm and undoubtedly the prostitutes of high social status cannot be thought of as doing so.

It is interesting to note that courtesans are sometimes represented as someone keeping virtues and righteousness. This can be seen in *Kurudhamma Jātaka*⁴⁷, in this story it is said that in the Kuru kingdom the one to keep the virtue and righteousness was a courtesan. Sakka king of gods, planned to try her goodness; she received thousand pieces from a youth (Sakka disguised himself as a youth) saying “I will come by and bye”. Then he did not visit her for three years. She for her honor’s sake did not take even a piece of betel nut from any other man. Thus she by time became poor to even sustain her life. She then went to the chief justice and explained about her miserable life. Listening to her story the chief justice told him to earn wage by her former profession. As soon as she left the court a man gave her a thousand pieces he was the man three years ago who showed him as Sakka and said “Be like her, and like her keep your honour”. Thus the Jātaka stories tend to throw light on the fact that courtesans apart from being proficient in arts, they were infamous for their fidelity as well.

It has been argued by Kumkum Roy that, “...courtesans are not stereotyped as adulterous, or as women with insatiable appetites. The relative absence of stereotyping, and the creation, transmission, and preservation of varied representations is perhaps significant, and allows us to move beyond the tedious and monotonous discussion on ‘women’s

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, No. 423, 276.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. II, No. 76, 259.

nature”⁴⁸. But it must be remembered that inspite of them being out of the pale of common women, they were denoted with the terms like harlots, wenches, street walkers⁴⁹ and murderess. Women even as a courtesan has been stereotyped as untrustworthy and wicked as is found in the above mentioned stories of sāmā and Kāli in the text.

There was no social dishonor attached with keeping company with a courtesan but yet it has to be said that the moral aspect of Buddhism cannot be disregarded even in this case.

This profession though popular was not appreciated in the society. This can be understood from the fact that this occupation has been described as ‘vile trade’ or *nichakamma*⁵⁰, ‘a house of ill fame’ or *gaṇikāgraha*, low women or *duritthi kumbadasī*.⁵¹

Talking about morals, among courtesans too they did follow some kind of regulation. In a story when the merchant who was a regular visitor of a courtesan went empty handed she refused him to provide her service saying “Sir, I am but a courtesan. I do not give my favours without a thousand pieces: you must bring them”⁵². Thus, she did not admit him.

But here though she was following the custom she has been presented as ungrateful and treacherous. “Women kinds are ungrateful, treacherous, and untrustworthy; of old wise men could not satisfy a woman, even by giving her a thousand pieces a day: one day when she did not get thousand pieces she had them taken by the neck and cast out”. But

again in contrast to this in a story⁵³, it is said that the courtesan who had grown poor and lost her worth even to that of a betel-nut is said to have reached to that condition as she was not following her custom of fully satisfying the first man and going off with another.

The comparison between the two stories shows some kind of partiality. As when it comes to the interest of a man the custom had to be followed but when it was the question of a

⁴⁸ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 115.

⁴⁹ Here street walkers or *gamaniyo* has been equated as a *veśīya*. For details see: E.B Cowell, *Jātaka or The Stories of Buddha’s Former Birth*: London: Cambridge University Press, 1895, Vol. V, No. 536, 219.

⁵⁰ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No. 318, 39.

⁵¹ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 37.

⁵² E.B. Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No. 425. 282.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 257, p.207

courtesan demanding her fees she was said to be ungrateful. Though they were an important category, the references in the text do not hint towards appreciation for them.

This is very well reflected in one story⁵⁴ which says:

“They are like robbers with braided locks, like poisoned drinks, like merchants that sing their own praises, crooked like a deer’s horn, evil tongued like snakes, like a pit covered over, insatiate as hell, as hard to satisfy in a she- ogre, like all rapacious Yama”

The above statement clearly defines how they were perceived by the society. In this context the view of A.S Altekar can be brought forward as courtesans in ancient India were held in low estimation. As they were thought to be persons who had lost the honorable attribute of a woman. But yet society treated them with certain consideration as the ‘custodian of fine arts’ which stopped to be developed elsewhere.⁵⁵ The courtesans of extraordinary caliber and beauty were patronized by the kings and were kept in their harem and they were officially installed to the position. It has been said that the famous capitals like that of Rājagriha and Vaiśālī had their own chief courtesans and maintained and kept by the state in great pomp and luxury.⁵⁶

Economic Status

Prostitution as a profession is thought to be emerged as popular and flourishing, not only with regard to the unhappy lives of the householder but a great impetus was given by the huge accumulation of money due to trading activities⁵⁷. This has also been attested by another author, “As townships and cities arose along the trade routes of northern India around sixth century BC, internal and maritime trade flourished in these...where courtesans plied their trade and attracted money from travelers, merchants, soldiers and

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. V, No. 536, pp.219-245

⁵⁵ A.S Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization: From Prehistoric Times to the Present Day*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2009), 180

⁵⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁵⁷ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 37.

men of various trades.”⁵⁸ The text generally talks about Prostitutes enjoying a sound financial status especially the ones belonging to the higher social reputation. It is possible to understand and analyze their economic standing on the basis of various terminology used to denote them. The *Gaṇikā* occupied an important position in the King’s court. They were placed on top of the category of prostitutes, often been called as *Vannadāsī* and *nagarasobhānī*⁵⁹. It has been discussed above the *gaṇikās* like *Sāmā*, *Kālī*, *Sulasā* were very prosperous who led a luxurious life and earned a thousand *kāṛṣāpaṇas* every night. They were well trained and accomplished and could name her price. She was patronized by kings and visited by rich merchants. Because of her high fees only the wealthiest could approach her.⁶⁰ They could have under them large number of maids and female slaves or *Vaṇṇadāśīyo*⁶¹, also it is interesting to see that they could own ornaments and money.

Next to her was *vaṇṇdāśī*, she was usually a female slave under *gaṇikās* or else she can work independently on her own. It has been said that her personal status was equal to that of a *gaṇikā*. However, as a slave of a *gaṇikā* she also earned money for her mistress and received much less visitors⁶². *Veśīya* seems to be different from that of the *gaṇikā* and lived by selling her charms. *Buddhagosa* equates *veśīya* with *rūpajīvā* i.e seller of charms⁶³. Moreover, she does not seem to possess talents and proficiency like the *gaṇikās*.

There certainly were prostitutes who lived their lives in beggary or even as menial working women⁶⁴. It is thus noteworthy that all categories of prostitutes did not offer the

⁵⁸ Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 200.

⁵⁹ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 37.

⁶⁰ Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 203.

⁶¹ For details see: E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. III, No. 318, 419, 425; Also, Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 37-39.

⁶² Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁴ A.L Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, (Calcutta: Picador, 1974),184.

same kind of economic security. The fees of the prostitutes were of two types: *Bhatti* and *Parivvayam*⁶⁵. The text does not throw much light on the amount received by the lower categories of prostitutes as their fees or the economic security they enjoyed. But it can certainly be said that their fees depended on the category to which they belong also with age and fading of beauty their price and social prestige also came down. It has been said that “...middle-aged unaccomplished or plain looking women had to agree to mere subsistence rates or even less”⁶⁶. A wealthy prostitute could develop to be so poor even to live her lives and her worth not even to that of a betel-nut. An interesting example is provided in the *Gāmani- Canda Jātaka*⁶⁷, in this story Gāmani Canda reaches a village where lived a courtesan. When she knew that he was going to see the King she made him ask a question to the king that “Afore time I used to make great gains, now I don’t get the worth of a betel-nut, and nobody courts me”. After he met the King he asked him the courtesan’s message and the king answered the reason for that was earlier the she used to receive price from one man and did not went to other until she was off with him or *ajirāpetvā*⁶⁸ but now she had changed as she left one and went to the other without taking the proper leave from the first. This was the reason why she was left and receives nothing. The economic stability of women depended entirely upon men. However, the text does not suggest any information on the real ownership of those properties. Yet it is maintained that in other texts like that of *Vātsyāyana’s Kāmasūtra*, the prostitutes were not the real owner but she merely had the right to use the wealth. Also the concubines were to pay her mistress one paṇa for her own maintenance⁶⁹. As a matter of fact, the difference between a common woman or wife and a courtesan lies in her holding of wealth. Some of which can be seen in varied contexts of donating gifts, where a courtesan

⁶⁵ For details see: Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 204.

⁶⁶ Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 210.

⁶⁷ E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol. II, No. 257, 207.

⁶⁸ i.e, until she had made him enjoy his money’s worth.

⁶⁹ Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 204.

acts both as a donor and donee or either the business is carried out on the basis of service given to the clients⁷⁰. Despite of her association with material transactions the Jātakas nowhere mentions courtesans as being involved in donating gifts, property or any other building activities; though it may be the courtesans of the high standards like the gaṇikās who earned huge amount of money from her clients.

It is also imperative to note that the text remains silent regarding the question of inheritance of the property of a prostitute or a courtesan. Nothing is mentioned regarding the real ownership of property. Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that the gaṇikās disregarded their sons but the daughters were brought up with great care expecting that in future she would also indulge in the same profession as hers⁷¹. Going by this argument it can be said that the property earned by a courtesan or prostitute having a daughter might be inherited by her; also as a matter of fact one of the reason for a women following this occupation included that she was born of a prostitute. Thus there is the possibility that the wealth was inherited by her daughter contradicting the fact that in those days the ordinary women did not have such inheritance of property rights which is also the main basis for their dependence and subordination in relation to the men of the contemporary society.

Dancing Girls

Among the other categories the text mentions dancing girls or nāṭakī. They were proficient in music and dancing. Several stories are there where the kings kept as many as sixteen thousand dancing girls (*solassasu nāṭalisahassesu*) for amusement in the harem. For instance, *Cullapalobhana Jātaka* talks about a dancing girl who was hired to seduce and lure the Prince who was a women hater and indifferent to worldly pleasures. The girl was so skilled in dancing and singing that she could bring any one under her possession that happened to come across her. The Prince was driven with lust when he heard her

⁷⁰ Kumkum Roy, *The Power of Gender*, 112.

⁷¹ Moti Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, 38.

voice that is described to be as sweet as honey: “with a voice of honey, so that the music was sweet as the song and the song as sweet as the music”⁷² The Prince was filled with desire and passion by listening to the captivating song of the women. So much so that he does not wanted any one to have the possession of her except him. Thus he went into killing any men that he could find on his way. The King then had the Prince captured and banished him from the kingdom with the girl. Thus it is seen how the Prince had to undergo penalty because of his infatuation. These girls have been often witnessed to be treated as a ground for producing the heir for the king. It is attested by various stories where the King appoints his sixteen thousand dancing girls to bear a son for him. They too received patronage form king and sometimes served as wife. However, it is not possible to say whether these dancing girls or *nattāki-itthīs* were slaves or if they belonged to the family of singers and dancers⁷³. Also it is here unable to say anything regarding how they were procured but their number seems to be quite exaggerated. The conventional number of dancing girls are said to be sixteen thousand⁷⁴. They are usually shown as accompanying kings to the garden and entertaining him. As in the story of *Khantivadi*, there is an⁷⁵ instance where King *kalābu* being intoxicated with strong drink comes into the park in great pomp surrounded by a company of dancing girls. Then he seats on the royal seat of stone laying his head on the lap of favorite of the harem. On the other side the nautch girls skilled in singing and instrument and in dancing provided him entertainment. Interestingly, in terms of their wealth and status the dancing girls seem to differ in comparison to the courtesans. As the text depict the latter having more economic stability that made them relatively less dependent on their male counterparts. On the

⁷² E.B Cowell, *Jātaka*, Vol.II, No. 263, 227-229.

⁷³ Anil Kumar Tyagi, “Women Workers in the Jātakas”, 121- 128.

⁷⁴ For details see: *Kussa Jātakas* Vol. V, No. 531, p. 141, *Bhadda-sala Jātakas* Vol. IV, No. 465, 91.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, No. 313, 26.

contrary, the text is silent on any of such economic holdings regarding the dancing girls. They were mostly depicted as part of the king's harem.

It is remarkable that the text does not associate the dancing girls with temple dancers. This custom seems to be absent during this period. Also it has been said that Kautilya in his work does not associate professional dancers with temple prostitution⁷⁶. It is thus clear that the association of the dancing girls with that of temple prostitution was a much later phenomenon. Tracing its beginning it has been argued that "From the sixth century AD onwards, literature and epigraphy bear many evidences of its existence"⁷⁷. During the period of Buddha or Jātakas though they were shown sometimes as providing sexual services was not given as a gift to the religious institutions. But they were to remain under their patron mostly kings and act according to his orders.

It can be concluded that, prostitution during the time of Buddha undoubtedly emerged as an important institution. Jātakas tends to interlink courtesans with amusements, singing and dancing. The courtesans were present wherever there was a gathering for pleasure and enjoyment. In comparison to other lay women the status of the courtesans and dancing girls were considerably well. The reason for this can be associated with the economic power they had as they acted independently being their own bread winner and guardian. But if we carefully examine this it is clear that they enjoyed that position only because the men of wealth and artistic choice find delight in their company. They have been working directly or indirectly to fulfill the demands and the roles that was set by the patriarchs and was depended upon them. Also, it is remarkable that the king could depose or employ a courtesan from her position. Thus it might not be wrong to say that the freedom they enjoyed by choosing this profession is only a relative one that ultimately ends with their counterpart. Again, it must be remembered that though prostitution was an

⁷⁶ Sukumari Bhattacharji, *Prostitution in Ancient India*, 200.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

important feature of the society it was not appreciated and said to be *nichakamma* or vile trade. The courtesans who were associated with this vile trade seem to be condemned by the society. Yet, this condemnation is not associated with the men folk though they were equally involved in such activity. Women are the only one who were treated as an outcaste and were despised.

The profession of prostitution was not always easy. As has been said "...we see that even after retirement from the world...much more was the risk in the life of those who followed this profession"⁷⁸. Talking about the relation between the two genders the domination of male over female reflects the unchallenged and dominant feature of a society dominated by the patriarchal ideology. It is therefore of no doubt that the courtesans though seen as a more independent profession that could be adopted by women were still under the patriarchal domination.

⁷⁸ Meena Talim, *Life of Women*, 302.

CONCLUSION

Jātaka stories comprises of the former birth stories of Buddha; it is believed to be transmitted orally around early third century BCE for several centuries and written only in the late fifth century CE. The exact date is still uncertain yet it is known that these stories are derived from the Ceylonic tradition and translated into Pāli by Buddhagosa in around the 430 CE. The narratives are mostly based on ethics and morals prescribed by the Buddhist principle which gives an idea of what is considered to be an ideal type. The chief and unique feature of the text however lies in the fact that unlike other texts focusing more on the elites, the Jātaka stories revolve around a wide range of social classes and focused not only on the elite classes but also with the common people and their daily way of life. Thus, it gives an important account of the people belonging to the non elite groups and nuances of the society that was prevalent during that period. It would not be inappropriate to say that this text represents one of the remarkable sources for reconstructing the history of ancient India, particularly during the period of historic urbanism i.e from 200 BCE to 300 CE. The most striking feature of this period was extensive growth of economy. There was a widespread increase in the agricultural surplus due to various factors like use of iron implements, ploughshares, sickles, hoes etc. The extension of agriculture paved the way for the rise of cities and towns. Also in exchange of the agricultural goods, we hear of *kārshāpaṇas* that can be thought of as a money economy instead of barter system. The usage of coins gave an impetus to the trading activities. Based in an urban milieu, the text gives a vivid account of the environment of this period; frequently it talks about caravans, specialized craftsmanship, guilds, merchants, various ivory works and building activities.

However there are also references to several important trade routes from which the trade were carried out. These complex economic activities gave rise to a highly stratified society. Society however during the time of Buddha is thought of to be more egalitarian in nature encompassing all irrespective of class, caste and gender which is also seen as a major principles of Buddhism; but in the Jātakas men features to be more dominant. There is a frequent attempt of subordination of females as a weaker sex being vile, wicked, seductive and untrustworthy. They have been shown as sexually insatiable who cause hindrance for attaining salvation not only for her but also the men related to her as well. It is only in certain rare instances where the bright side of a woman is highlighted in these stories. The text reflects on the skewed relationship between the two, where the female always had to remain under the constant vigilance of the male members. The text shows a kind of disparity among the two genders in various aspects such as the existence of authority and dominance of males in the household, authority over material resources, political power and so on. In other words it can be said that the males were dominant not only in the social aspect but they were also overriding the economic and political spaces. The text clearly speaks of the division of labor on the basis of gender. This means the division or differentiation of works and responsibilities based on their gender as to what is thought appropriate for them to do or prescribed by the society to which they belong. The Jataka stories show such kind of differences in the works performed by a male and female. On the one hand, the males are shown doing works outside the household; they have been more connected to agriculture, ploughing the field and other trading activities. While on the other hand the females were mainly engaged in managing the household affairs. Thus the daily works they were engaged in were no doubt gendered. Nevertheless, in certain rare cases we see women working along with men for livelihood but generally they were mostly confined within the four walls and engaged in the household works. There are

several references that give the notion of objectification and commodification of women by the powerful patriarchs. Various instances are given of how the male head either a father or a husband tends to treat the other sex as objects by giving them as gifts and lending them to the other person. This is vividly seen in case of giving a daughter in marriage by her father and the authority enjoyed over her by her husband after marriage in the text. Marriage is taken to be one of the most basic social institutions that play an indecisive role in the society. It is marriage that ensures the continuation of one's lineage. It might be for this reason that it was considered to be a central aspect of ancient Indian society and also included in the four āśramās. Marriage here can be seen as an occasion or ground that made the husband a complete owner of his wife, where a wife then was thought of as a movable property. In case of royals, women have been taken as a breeding ground for producing the heir to the throne. This affirmation becomes evident when the King sends his thousand dancing girls or even his chief consort when he was unable to bear himself a child. However, for the social acceptance of a child the identification of father seems to be essential and in addition to that the father's origin was attached more significant than the mother's. But it is interesting to see that in the case of the Kings they would send his slaves and wives to street to bore a child from any one. One can here notice that Jātaka differs from the traditional text. Firstly, though it prescribes importance to man's superiority over woman in case of child birth but did not followed that overtly. Secondly, on the basis of being obsessive of the higher caste as though there are instances of the treatment of lower caste as impure yet there was scope for even a low origin woman to be a queen and her son a legitimate heir to the throne.

The Jātaka stories are woven in such a way that makes the reader constantly aware regarding the innate wickedness and the notion that they belong to the fragile sex who is incapable of differentiating truth from falsehood and therefore cannot be trusted. It

illustrates instances regarding the deprivation of female sex. In other words, the text renders how women folk driven by their carnal desire, in order to fulfill her lust and passion will defy every security apparatus set by the males to guard and restrict her movements. Women are shown as engaged mostly in illegitimate relationship which was considered her innate behavior. But the text does not consider the legit causes for women being involved in such case neither anything is said regarding the character of the other man with whom she develops this relation. However, as a matter of fact this is something a woman cannot commit alone. Thus there is an attempt to set down the faults on the part of women. Committing of adultery and thefts like in any ancient Indian normative texts were considered as a most heinous crime even in the narratives of Jātaka that could lead to very harsh punishments. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the text does not prescribe harsh punishments for women who commit adultery and is usually humiliated and pardoned at the end while on the other the punishment of the same crime for men were not that simple and sometimes could cost him his life. It has been already mentioned that the Jātakas are stories concerned with ethics which holds ascetic's life central to it. Thus the tales point the finger at women for conducting all misconducts which makes her an obstacle to the ascetics for attaining salvation who are advised to keep distance from them. However, it is to be noted that the male protagonist or males tired of treachery of womenfolk usually at the end of the story renounces the world and adopts an ascetic's life. It cannot be denied that the main idea during the early phase was the consideration of women's body as impure because of biological features; also the stereotyping of female innate character as being weak to urges and of insatiable sex could not attain salvation. It is of interest to see how on one side woman was considered a danger to man and restricted their movements but on the other the period witness a flourishing institution of prostitution. The text mentions various categories of prostitutes

based on their social and financial status. Usually they belonged to the category of women who had the least role to play in the household affairs and were mainly employed by the kings or wealthy people for their entertainment and amusements. As they earned their livelihood by attracting and luring rich men with their charm, it is of no doubt that most of them were proficient in dancing and singing and other forms of art. In comparison to a common wife, this category of women seems to enjoy a relative freedom on the basis of economy and social norms. Especially, talking about the rich prostitutes they used to have huge wealth at their deposit and could spend their money at their will. When we look into their relation with the elites they were depended on them for money. Also their worth was based on their beauty and youth. The stories show that with their fading beauty and charm their worth might not even be of a betel nut.

Lastly, as a matter of fact, both the earlier communities and the Indian textual traditions tend to have certain elements of influence from the social and economic surroundings that prevailed in Northern India. Thus, the dominant ideology of Brahmanism of treating women as a hindrance and the need to restrict her movements by her male counterpart that dominated the Indian society finds its way even in the early Buddhist literature like the Jātakas. Also it is essential to bore in mind that Gautama Buddha lived or was born in a completely patriarchal society, having the traditional outlook of women being subordinate to men in every possible way. So it is of no surprise to see the existence of this idea reflected in the text. Buddha's attitude towards women though seem to be more liberal than that of the earlier period however was not altogether free from the patriarchal mindset that dominated the Indian subcontinent for such a long time. Thus, Jātaka represents a tradition which does not totally disregard with the ideology that was existent during the preceding period with regard to women. Nonetheless, it has to be said that the narratives differs with them in some extent though it has not challenged the idea of subordination and

stereotyping of women to the fullest degree. In a nutshell, we see the Jātakas reflecting the similar notions of relations between the two genders like in any other patriarchal society where men seems to be more dominant and overriding. The various stories in the text gives an impression that men were the one to set the social norms and gender roles that were considered as appropriate for the two sexes thereby creating differences between the genders.

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