

have the time or the selfish interest to seek their own salvation, by leaving their children unattended. Many young mothers would not have been able to leave the household and become a Bhikkhuni, because they would not have enjoyed the services of domestic servants to care for the children and attend to the chores of the household. Sometimes they would have been compelled to earn their living too, to feed the children. We do not hear much about such helpless, suffering mothers, and they would have been the mothers who reached the true Brahma state mentioned by the Buddha.

Much is written and reviewed about Maha Prajapati Gotami's battle to be ordained as a Bhikkhuni, about Buddha's refusal to admit women to the 'Sasana', and how Buddha's closest disciple, the young Ananda, convinced Buddha to admit Gotami and her followers. If Buddha at first had refused to ordain females and to create a Bhikkhuni Sasana, the reason, in some instances, may have been because of his genuine concern for the woman or her family, especially when the woman had to take care of her young children. Buddha would have realized the child's need for the Mother. With Buddha's infinite knowledge, he would also have known that a woman could follow the path shown by the Buddha, even if she remained a lay person, and a mother perhaps was placed in a far better position to attain Arhathood as she cared for her children and her family, as she was able to cultivate Brahmavihara.

“A female lay disciple grows in conviction and virtue, discernment, generosity and learning: she takes hold of the essence right here within herself.” (Vaddha Sutta, SN 37.4). A woman, specially a Mother, who has listened to the Buddha, who had developed a greater awareness of Brahma Vihara, who was stronger in mind, and even her body, as she has undergone so much pain and sacrifices would have realized she could be an Arhat whether she remained at home or in the forest. She would also have known that she was needed by her family, that she could be of service to her family and society and at the same time she could reach her own salvation. There would not have been a need to leave the household. Any person of any faith who respects and worships his or her mother is also a follower of the Buddha.

Once we realize that Motherhood deserves all our respect and is to be considered sacred, we shall be able to show our respect to all womankind.

We shall then realize every girl-child is a Mother-to-be, and need all our loving care as she grows up, and such respect for Motherhood will continue throughout our lifetime. If as Buddhists, we really want to worship Buddha, let us worship our Buddha at home, our mother. May our Mothers attain Nibbana!

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i. SN 1.6. Jara Vagga, Mitta Sutta

ii. Obeyesekere, Gananath (1984) *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*. (pp 293-96) Chicago. Chicago University Press