

Quick Dharma Series

Brief Thoughts on Women and Buddhism

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The historic Buddha clearly taught that women were equal to men. While it may yet be the case that some traditions do not provide for the ordination of women, we should remember that it was the historical Buddha, after all, who first acknowledged and ordained women. The Path He strode may have been covered over by the overgrown Jungle of Ignorance but it was never entirely lost.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has acknowledged the persistence of patriarchal thinking and discrimination. Refusing to downplay it he has acknowledged our need to move past it. Rather than shun our past missteps, our vision blurred by desire, anger and ignorance, we delight in greater clarity, however slow and incremental seeming. This is called —Patience in the Non-production of Dharma,|| which is the cornerstone of Bodhisattvas' Compassion and Skill inseparable from Wisdom.

Modern feminist philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, at the University of Chicago, writes that our essential goal, far from self-sufficiency and actualization, is interdependent caring in and through relationship. The Genome Project in science has led to the astonishing —Eve Hypothesis.|| Its basis is a genetic fingerprint every human being has in common — an enzyme — that suggests a common ancestor, either a single woman or She and her Sisters, as the progenitor of all humans now or ever living. Having picked up the trail again, let us continue on in confidence, further clearing as we go in order that others may follow. Such have we heard and thus recall the fundamental orientation of the Dharma to its Teachers as —Highest Mother.||

Karida was formed to promote greater balance in ourselves and in the world and doing so necessitates this mediation on how we should acknowledge the contribution through struggle of all our mothers. Peace, true peace, will elude us while the imbalanced view and treatment of women continues on our planet. Let us recognize the subtle and not-so-subtle downplay of women and work to restore balance to the fullest measure of our essential nature. Education is the key, in my view. We must also do our part to pass on knowledge, but in particular, any contribution we can make to organizations that work to the education women, especially in the third world, is vital.