

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON**

**Women and Buddhism: Perspectives on Gender, Culture and Empowerment from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at C.V Mess, (opposite National Archives) Janpath, New Delhi, India**

Organized by:

**Indira Gandhi National Centre For The Arts, 11 Mansingh Road, New Delhi, India**

### **Conference:**

The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level. Indian tradition has generally respected womanhood. Even god is regarded as Ardhanarisvara. Manu said that when women are honoured, then the gods are pleased. Where they are not honoured all works become fruitless. In the Vedic age women enjoyed equal opportunities for education and work. They were eligible for initiation and Brahmacharya.

Buddha laid stress on the fact that a woman like a man reaps fruits of her past karma, and she must depend on her own acts for her future good or evil or salvation and in this none can help her, not even her parents. Buddhism does not consider women as being inferior to men. Buddha discarded the Brahmanic rituals in which wife played a secondary role and widow and barren women do not have any place in society. Buddha made no discrimination between a man and woman regarding the attainment of spiritual goals. Buddhism, while accepting the biological and physical differences between the two sexes, does consider men and women to be equally useful to the society. He delivered discourses for the benefit of both the sexes and the moral code prescribed by him was to be observed by both.

Buddhism does not restrict either the educational opportunities of women or their religious freedom. The Buddha unhesitatingly accepted that women are capable of realizing the Truth, just as men are. He opened the gates for the full participation of women in the field of religion by making them eligible for admission to what was known as the Bhikkhuni Sangha - the Order of Nuns – that truly opened to women new avenues of culture and social service and ample opportunities for public life. This brought to women recognition of their importance to society, and greatly enhanced their social status. They were able to develop and purify their minds and realize the bliss of Nibbana just as men were.

The testimonies of the Theris (Nuns) in the days of the Buddha speak amply to this fact. The Lotus Sutra teaches that men and women are equal both in enlightenment and in practice. It said each person has the innate potential and the right to realize a state of life of the greatest happiness. Each is a self which requires the other as its complement. The division of the sexes is a biological phenomenon.

The dharma expounded by Buddha is about becoming a full human being, awakened to and expressing totally our potential for wisdom and compassion. Being a woman or a man is only part of what makes us a human being.

There is a passage in Vinaya Pitaka regarding a change of sexual characters in a monk *annatarassa bhikkuns itthilingam patubhutam*. The text adds that this change necessitated the removal of the monk from the Order of the Monks to the Nuns. "The Buddhist myths assume the potential of a state of perfection which is asexual, non corporeal, and beyond notions of good and evil".

Women are the missionaries of civilization. With their immense zeal and capacity they are the unquestioned leaders. Rabindranath Tagore characterized modern civilization as a "civilization of power" dominated by men, and yearned for the development, through the efforts of women, of a "civilization of the spirit" based on compassion.

The Conference has many dimensions and is of global interest.

**Themes:**

- Ideal and position of women during the time of Buddha
- The Buddha's attitude towards women
- Family life and Buddhism
- Lives of early Buddhist nuns
- Women in Buddhist literature
- Prominent Women in Buddhism
- Gender equality and the empowerment of women in Mahayana Buddhism
- Women and Buddhahood
- Gender an issue in Buddhism
- Feminine principle and Tantric Buddhism
- Women and Engaged Buddhism
- Buddhist nuns and Contemporary Society: Women in the transmission and transformation of Buddhism
- Feminine symbolism in Buddhist Art

Dr R. B Sarkar

**Conference Dates and Venue:**

Conference will be held from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at Conference Hall at Indira Gandhi National Centre For the Arts, C.V Mess, Janpath, New Delhi, India

**Last Date:**

The last date for the submission of abstract and brief CV is 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Scholars will be requested to send their full paper before the conference (latest by 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2017).

**Publication:**

The papers presented at the conference will be suitably edited and would be published.

**Exhibition:**

To corroborate with the conference IGNCa will organize an exhibition on “ Guanshiyin/ Avalokitesvara: Feminine symbolism in Buddhist Art” during the time of the conference (March 27<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at Twin Art Gallery)

Contact: [eap.ignca@gmail.com](mailto:eap.ignca@gmail.com)

Dr Ajay K Mishra and Ms Gargi Goswami

Ph# 9968754941

9958569877